Content Area: Early Europe and Colonial Americas

Gothic Art 12

TIME PERIOD: 1140–1400, UP TO 1550 IN SOME SECTIONS OF EUROPE

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Medieval art is studied according to geographic placement, styles, and traditions. There are frequent interconnections between religions, governments, and artistic influences that create a variety of approaches.

Essential Knowledge:

- Medieval periods are the following:
  - Late Antique and Early Christian: Chapter 7
  - Byzantine: Chapter 8
  - Islamic: Chapter 9
  - Early Medieval: Chapter 10
  - Romanesque: Chapter 11
  - Gothic: Chapters 12 and 13
- There is no uniform medieval style. Some periods revive ancient classicism; others use geometric and natural designs.
- Medieval artists are influenced by contemporaries in other parts of Europe, as well as ancient traditions.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Medieval art is chiefly concerned with religious expression and court life. There is a strong culture of endorsing scholarship.

Essential Knowledge:

- Learning was centered on specific fields that were transmitted throughout Europe through trade, pilgrimage, and military activity.
- Medieval architecture is mostly religious.
- Medieval painting and sculpture avoids naturalistic depictions.
- At times medieval religions will reject images.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The beginning of the Gothic period cannot be dated precisely, although the place of its creation, Paris, can. The change in thinking that we call "Gothic" is the result of a number of factors:

1. An era of peace and prosperity in the region around Paris, owing to an increasingly centralized monarchy, new definition of the concepts of "king" and "kingship," together with the peaceful succession of kings from 987 to 1328.
2. Increasing growth and wealth of cities and towns, encouraged by the sale of royal charters that bound the cities to the king rather than to local lords and the increased wealth of the king.
3. The gradual development of a money economy in which cities played a role in converting agricultural products to goods and services.
4. The emergence of the schools in Paris as the intellectual center of western Europe that brought together the teachers and scholars who transformed western thinking by changing the way questions were asked and by arguing using logic.

The late Gothic period is marked by three crucial historical events:

1. The Hundred Years' War between France and England (1337–1453). This conflict devastated both countries socially and economically, and left vast regions of France ruined.
2. The Babylonian Captivity (1304–1377). French popes moved the headquarters of the Christian church to Avignon, France, creating a spiritual crisis that had far-reaching effects on European society, and on Rome in particular. With the popes away, there was little reason to maintain Saint Peter's; indeed Rome itself began to decay. When the pope finally returned to Rome in 1377, a schism developed as rival popes set up competing claims of authority, none of which was resolved until 1409. This did much to undermine the authority of the church in general.
3. The Black Death of 1348. This was the greatest cataclysm in human history: A quarter to a third of the world perished in a misdiagnosed pulmonary plague. The consequences for art history were enormous; in many towns there were not enough living to bury the dead: Consequently, architecture came to a standstill. Artists interpreted the plague as a punishment from God, thus painting became conservative and began to look backward to earlier styles. Europe spent generations recovering from the plague's devastating effects.

Patronage and Artistic Life

Master builders coordinated hundreds of laborers and artisans—masons, stonecutters, sculptors, haulers, carpenters—in the building of a cathedral. Indeed, the cathedral was the public works project of its day, keeping the local economies humming and importing artists as needed from everywhere.

Similarly, manuscripts were organized by a chef d'atelier who was responsible for establishing an overall plan or vision of a book so that the workshop could execute his or her designs. A scribe copied the text, but in so doing left room for decorative touches, such as initials, borders, and narrative scenes. Embellishments were added by artists who could express themselves more fully than scribes, who had to stick to the text. Artists often rendered fanciful designs to an initial or a border. Lastly, a bookbinder had the manuscript bound.

GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

Gothic architecture developed advances made in the Romanesque:

1. The rib vault. Invented at the end of the Romanesque period, and became the standard vaulting practice of the Gothic period.
2. Bays. The Romanesque use of repeated vertical elements in bays also became standard in the Gothic period.
3. The rose window. Begun as an oculus on the façade of Romanesque buildings, the rose window becomes an elaborate circular feature that opens up wall spaces by allowing more light in through the façade and transepts.
4. The pointed arch. First seen in Islamic Spain, this arch directs thrusts down to the floor more efficiently than rounded arches. More fanciful "S" shaped arches, called **ogee** arches, are developed at this time (Figure 12.3).

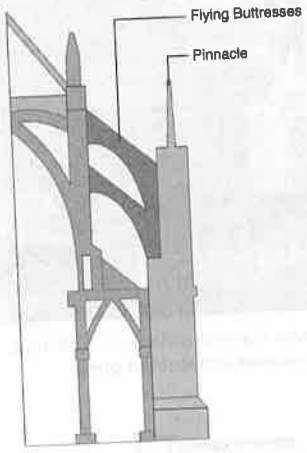

Figure 12.1: Flying buttress and pinnacle on a Gothic cathedral

What is new in the Gothic period is the **flying buttress** (Figure 12.1). These stone arches support a roof by having the weight bypass the walls and travel down to piers outside the building. This enabled the building to be opened up for more window space and to display more stained glass. Most importantly, flying buttresses also help to stabilize the building, preventing wind stresses from damaging these very vertical and narrow structures.

Ground plans of Gothic buildings denote innovations in the east end, or **chevet** (Figure 12.2). Increasingly elaborate ceremonies called for a larger space to be introduced between the transept and the apse, called the **choir**. While allowing for greater clergy participation, it also had the side effect of removing the public further from the main altar and keeping the ceremony at arm's length.

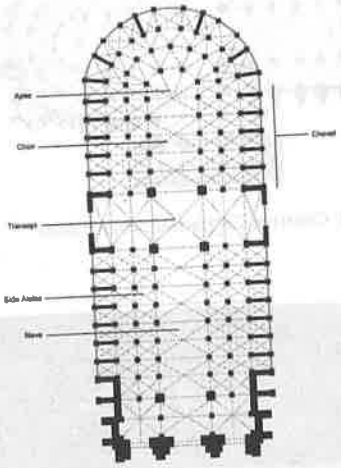
Figure 12.2: Plan of Notre Dame, Paris

Another innovation is the introduction of decorative **pinnacles** on the roof of Gothic churches. Long thought to be mere ornaments on flying buttresses, pinnacles are now understood to be essential architectural components that act as stabilizing forces in a wind storm.

Gothic buildings are tall and narrow, causing the worshipper to look up upon entering. The architecture, therefore, reinforces the religious symbolism of the building.

French Gothic buildings tend to be nestled downtown, surrounded by other buildings, and rising above the city landscape as a point of civic and religious pride. In sort of a competition, each town built successively taller buildings, seeking to outdo its neighbors.

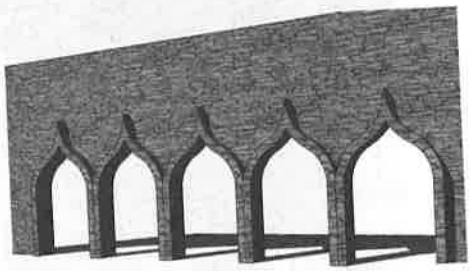
Figure 12.3: Ogee arches

Figure 12.4a: Chartres Cathedral flank, c. 1145–1155, later additions, limestone and stained glass, Chartres, France

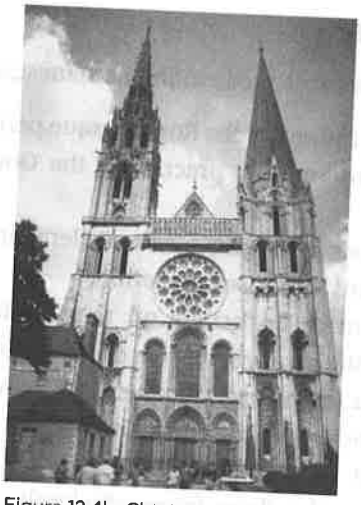

Figure 12.4b: Chartres Cathedral façade

Figure 12.4c: Chartres Cathedral interior

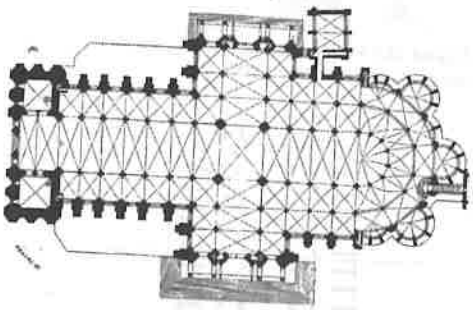

Figure 12.4d: Chartres Cathedral ground plan

Chartres Cathedral, c. 1145–1155, later additions, limestone and stained glass, Chartres, France (Figures 12.4a, 12.4b, 12.4c, and 12.4d)

- Started in 1145; fire in 1194 forced reconstruction of everything except the façade
- Dedicated to Mary; a Marian shrine
- Mary's tunic worn at Jesus' birth is most sacred relic; it escaped the fire and was seen as signal to rebuild cathedral
- Right spire is from 1160; left spire is late Gothic from 1507–1513—conceived in a different style: more elaborate and decorative
- Importance of church reflected in the speed of construction: 26 years
- Enlarged chevet accommodated elaborate church ceremonies
- Tall vertical nature of the interior pulls the viewer's eyes up to the ceiling and symbolically to heaven
- Dark, mysterious interior increases spiritual feeling
- Stained glass enlivens the interior surfaces of the church

Figure 12.5: Westminster Hall, 1097–1099; ceiling 1390s, stone and wood, London, England

Westminster Hall, 1097–1099; ceiling 1390s, stone and wood, London, England (Figure 12.5)

- Started under William II as largest hall in England at the time
- Meant for grand ceremonial occasions: coronations, feasts; later used as law court to dispense justice
- Bare walls were probably decorated with tapestries
- Windows placed high up surrounded by Romanesque arches
- Original roof replaced; debate over how the roof was originally vaulted, perhaps with beams that came down to the floor denoting a main aisle and two side aisles
- Remodeled roof under Richard II

- Hammerbeam style; made of oak; beams curve to meet in center of roof like a corbelled arch
- Richard II also placed six statues of kings at one entrance, along with his emblems
- When the old Houses of Parliament were burned to the ground, this remained as the last vestige of the medieval parliament building
- Cf. Houses of Parliament (Figure 20.1a)

GOTHIC SCULPTURE

Although Romanesque buildings had sculpture on the portals and on parts of building façades, its role was subsidiary to architecture. In the Gothic period, sculpture begins to emerge more forcefully on church façades.

Saint-Denis (c. 1140–1144) was the first building to have statue columns on the jambs, now mostly destroyed. Although still attached to the columns, jamb figures have rounded volumes that set them apart from their architectural background. The statue columns at the **Royal Portals** at Chartres (1145–1155) (Figure 12.6) appear to imitate the verticality of the church itself, but contain a robust three-dimensionality lacking in the Romanesque period.

There is also a change in the subject matter from the Romanesque to the Gothic portals. Romanesque sculptural programs stress the Last Judgment and the threat of being damned to hell. Gothic sculpture concentrates on the possibility of salvation; the believer is empowered with the choice of salvation.

In Romanesque sculpture, figures are flattened into the wall space of tympana or jambs, being content to be defined by that space. In Gothic sculpture, the statue columns progress away from the wall, building a space seemingly independent of the wall surface. The **Royal Portals of Chartres** (Figure 12.6) begin this process by bringing figures forward, although they are still columnar.

As Gothic art advances, the columns become increasingly three-dimensional and free-standing. In the thirteenth century, the figures are defining their own space, turning to one another with humanizing expressions and engaging in a narrative interplay.

By the fourteenth century, Gothic sculpture and painting develops a courtly S-curve to the bodies.

Royal Portals, 1145–1155, limestone, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France (Figure 12.6)

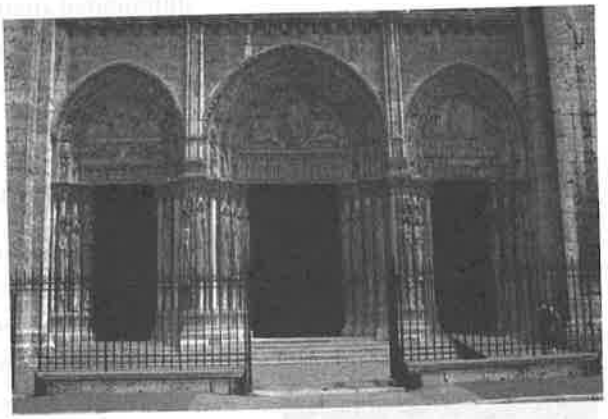

Figure 12.6: Royal Portals, 1145–1155, limestone, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France

- So-called Royal Portals because the jamb sculptures depict kings and queens from the Old Testament; connection made between French and Biblical royalty
- Portals used by church hierarchy, not commoners
- Originally 24 statues, 19 survive
- Jamb statues stand in front of the wall, almost fully rounded; cf. Romanesque figures which are flat against the surface
- Upright, rigid, elongated figures reflect the vertical columns behind, and the vertical nature of the cathedral itself
- Rich courtly dress with vertical folds
- Robes are almost hypnotic in their concentric composition, cf. Romanesque nervous excitement to drapery

Figure 12.7: *Röttgen Pietà*, 1300–1325, painted wood, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, Germany

- Heads: serenity; slightly heavy eyes; benevolent; humanized faces
- Heads lined up in a row, but feet of different lengths
- Central tympanum: Christ as Judge of the World, no menacing Last Judgment as at Conques (Figure 11.6a)
- Three portals linked by lintels, and by 24 capitals that contain the life of Christ

***Röttgen Pietà*, 1300–1325, painted wood, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, Germany (Figure 12.7)**

- An andachtsbild, used for private devotion
- Christ emaciated, drained of all blood, all tissue, all muscle
- Horror of the Crucifixion manifest
- Humanizing of religious themes
- Grape-like drops of Christ's blood a reference to Christ as "mystical vineyard"
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of Suffering**
  - *Coyolxauhqui Stone* (Figure 26.5b)
  - Munch, *The Scream* (Figure 21.11)
  - *Seated Boxer* (Figure 4.10)

GOTHIC PAINTING

Stained glass has existed for centuries; the earliest surviving examples are from the seventh century in England. It became an industry in the Gothic period. Craftsmen made the glass, while glaziers cut the big panels into the desired shapes, wrapping the leading around them. Details (i.e., facial expressions or folds of drapery) were then painted on the glass before it was refired and then set into the window frame.

Stained glass windows became the illustrations of a sophisticated theological program. Generally, larger images of saints appeared in the clerestory so that they could be read from the floor. Narratives appeared in side aisle windows where they could be read more clearly at a closer distance.

Illuminated manuscripts continue to be important, some seeking to emulate the luminous colors of stained glass windows. Forms have borders much like the leading of windows, and are painted in brilliant colors.

Figure 12.8: *Notre Dame de la Belle Verriere*, c. 1170, stained glass, Chartres Cathedral

***Notre Dame de la Belle Verriere, "Our Lady of the Beautiful Window,"* c. 1170, stained glass, Chartres Cathedral (Figure 12.8)**

- Mary is crowned as Queen of Heaven with the Christ Child in her lap
- Light as a manifestation of the divine; shades color patterns across the grey stone of the cathedral
- Part of a lancet window
- Undamaged by the fire of 1194; reset with framing angels on either side of the main scene
- Bands across the surface are typical of early Gothic stained glass
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Transparency and Reflection**
  - Kusama, *Narcissus Garden* (Figures 22.25a, 22.25b)
  - Mies van der Rohe, Seagram Building (Figure 23.18)
  - Versailles, Hall of Mirrors (Figure 17.3d)

***Scenes from the Apocalypse*, from a Bible moralisée (Moralized Bible), c. 1226–1234, illuminated manuscript, ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, Cathedral, Toledo (Figure 12.9a)**

- Eight medallions, format derives from stained glass windows
- Two vertical columns of four painted scenes
- Each scene has a text with a summary of the event depicted in the roundel
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Gold**
  - Golden Stool (Figure 27.4)
  - Ogat Korin, *White and Red Plum Blossoms* (Figures 25.4a, 25.4b)
  - Gold and Jade Crown (Figure 24.10)

Figure 12.9a: *Scenes from the Apocalypse*, from a Bible moralisée, c. 1226–1234, illuminated manuscript, ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, Cathedral, Toledo

Figure 12.9b: *Blanche of Castile and Louis IX*, 1226–1234, illuminated manuscript, ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, Morgan Library, New York

***Blanche of Castile and Louis IX*, 1226–1234, illuminated manuscript, ink, tempera and gold leaf on vellum, Morgan Library, New York (Figure 12.9b)**

- Moralized Bible
- Top left: Blanche of Castile, mother and regent to the king
- Top right: teenage King Louis IX
- Bottom: older monk dictates to younger scribe
- Luminosity of stained glass windows, strong black outlining of forms
- Modeling is minimal

JEWISH ART

Although Jews almost universally ban images in temples today, their ancient and medieval ancestors did not always follow this prohibition. Perhaps they were inspired by episodes in the Old Testament that mention incidents in which images could be valid; for example, in Exodus 25: 18–22, God orders Moses to install two cherubim above the Arc of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

Jews living in the Greco-Roman world were also influenced by pagan artists who created sweeping narratives of the heroic deeds of their gods. This is perhaps why there are a few ancient synagogues that have illustrations of episodes from the Old Testament. In the Middle Ages, wealthy Jewish patrons often commissioned luxury objects like illuminated manuscripts the same way their Christian or Muslim neighbors would. Jewish patrons often used Christian painters to decorate important sacred books, mostly for personal use.

Figure 12.10a: *Golden Haggadah: The Plagues of Egypt*
Upper right: plague of frogs initiated here by Moses, not Aaron as depicted in the Bible
Upper left: plague of lice: Pharaoh and his magicians are covered with lice
Lower left: Moses looks on as Pharaoh is attacked by wild beasts
Lower right: plague on livestock

***Golden Haggadah* (The Plagues of Egypt, Scenes of Liberation and Preparation for Passover), c. 1320, illuminated manuscript, pigment on vellum, British Library, London (Figures 12.10a, 12.10b, and 12.10c)**

- Illustrates the story of the Jewish exodus from Egypt under Moses and its subsequent celebration
- To be read at a Passover seder

Figure 12.10b: *Golden Haggadah: Scenes of Liberation*
Upper right: Plague and death of the first-born Egyptian child
Upper left: Pharaoh orders Israelites to leave Egypt
Lower right: Egyptians dressed in medieval armor attack the Israelites
Lower left: Israelites safely cross the Red Sea; Egyptians drown

Figure 12.10c: *Golden Haggadah: Preparation for Passover*
Upper right: Miriam, Moses' sister, holds a tambourine decorated with an Islamic motif and is joined by maidens dancing and playing contemporary musical instruments
Upper left: master of the house, sitting under a canopy, orders the distribution of *matzah* (unleavened bread) and *haroset* (sweetmeats) to the children
Lower right: a family prepares the house for Passover; women clean and the man searches for leaven
Lower left: people are preparing for Passover: sheep are being slaughtered and utensils are being purified

- Haggadah means "narration"; fulfills the Jewish requirement to tell the story of the Jews' escape from Egypt as a reminder of God's mercy
- Narrative cycle of events from the Books of Genesis and Exodus
- This haggadah used primarily at home; avoids the more stringent restriction against holy images in a synagogue
- Haggadot (plural) are generally the most lavishly painted of Jewish manuscripts
- Two unknown artists, probably Christian, illustrated the Golden Haggadah; a Jewish scribe wrote the Hebrew script
- Style similarities to French Gothic manuscripts in the handling of space, architecture, figure style, facial/gestural expression, and the manuscript medium itself
- Painted in the Barcelona area of Spain
- 56 miniatures using gold leaf background
- Book read right to left according to the manner of Hebrew texts; vellum pages
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Works as Part of a Series**
  - Rubens, *Henry IV Receives the Portrait of Marie de'Medici* from the Marie de'Medici Cycle (Figure 17.8)
  - Lawrence, *The Migration of the Negro, Panel no. 49* (Figure 22.19)
  - Giotto, *Lamentation* from the Arena Chapel (Figures 13.1b, 13.1c)

VOCABULARY

Andachtsbild: an image used for private contemplation and devotion (Figure 12.7)
Apocalypse: The last book of the Christian Bible, sometimes called Revelations, which details God's destruction of evil and consequent raising to heaven of the righteous (Figure 12.9a)
Chevet: the east end of a Gothic church (Figure 12.2)
Choir: a space in a church between the transept and the apse for a choir or clergymen (Figure 12.2)
Close: an enclosed gardenlike area around a cathedral (Figure 12.2)
Compound pier: a pier that appears to be a group or gathering of smaller piers put together (Figure 12.3c)

Flying buttress: a stone arch and its pier that support a roof from a pillar outside the building. Flying buttresses also stabilize a building and protect it from wind sheer (Figure 12.1)

Haggadah (plural: **Haggadot):** literally "narration"; specifically a book containing the Jewish story of Passover and the ritual of the Seder (Figure 12.10)

Hammerbeam: a type of roof in English Gothic architecture, in which timber braces curve out from walls and meet high over the middle of the floor (Figure 12.5)

Lancet: a tall narrow window with a pointed arch usually filled with stained glass (Figure 12.8)

Moralized Bible: a Bible in which the Old and New Testament stories are paralleled with one another in illustrations, text, and commentary (Figure 12.8)

Ogee arch: an arch formed by two S-shaped curves that meet at the top (Figure 12.3)

Passover: an eight day Jewish festival that commemorates the exodus of Jews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. So-called because an avenging angel of the Lord knew to "pass over" the homes of Jews who, in order to distinguish their houses from those of the pagan Egyptians, had sprinkled lamb's blood over their doorways, thus preserving the lives of their first-born sons.

Pietà: a painting or sculpture of a crucified Christ lying on the lap of a grieving Mary (Figure 12.6)

Pinnacle: a pointed sculpture on piers or flying buttresses

Portal: a doorway. In medieval art they can be significantly decorated (Figure 12.5)

Rib vault: a vault in which diagonal arches form riblike patterns; these arches partially support a roof, in some cases forming a weblike design (Figure 12.3c)

Rose window: a circular window, filled with stained glass, placed at the end of a transept or on the façade of a church (Figure 12.3b)

Seder: a ceremonial meal celebrated on the first two nights of Passover that commemorates the Jewish flight from Egypt as told in the Bible; marked by a reading of the Haggadah

Spire or **Steeple:** a tall pointed tower on a church (Figure 12.4b)

SUMMARY

A century of peace and prosperity brought architectural greatness to Northern France, where the Gothic style of architecture exploded on the scene around 1140. New buildings were built with great verticality, pointed arches, and large expanses of stained glass windows. The introduction of flying buttresses made taller and thinner buildings possible.

Gothic portal sculpture became more humanized than its Romanesque counterparts, stressing salvation and resurrection rather than judgment and fear. Figures are still attached to the wall space, but are more three-dimensional. As Gothic sculpture progresses, the body is increasingly revealed beneath the drapery.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

1. The cathedral at Chartres is typical of Gothic churches in that it

   (A) contains references of classical architecture
   (B) has an oculus to admit light
   (C) uses flying buttresses to stabilize tall naves
   (D) provides a separate space for coronations

2. Christian worshippers at Chartres had their attention drawn to

   (A) the relics displayed in the crypt
   (B) the mihrab pointing the way to Mecca
   (C) the royal tombs that line the side aisles
   (D) the apse, which was elevated from the nave

3. The great portal of the west façade of Chartres is similar to the Lamassu of ancient Assyria in that they

   (A) are both guardian figures protecting what is inside
   (B) are both attached to the walls behind the figure
   (C) both have the faces of the religious leaders of their day, forming a divine connection with the earthly
   (D) both show a military presence to frighten the viewer

4. The architectural achievement that, in part, makes Gothic buildings so tall and yet so stable is the use of

   (A) rib vaults
   (B) stained glass windows
   (C) a dome on pendentives
   (D) ashlar masonry

5. Perpendicular Gothic is a style of architecture unique to

   (A) Spain
   (B) France
   (C) Germany
   (D) England

Short Essay

The building on the left is the interior of the Cathedral at Durham, England, founded in 1093, and built in the twelfth century. The building on the right is the interior of Chartres Cathedral, built between 1145 and 1155, and then rebuilt from 1194 to 1220.

What architectural style is the building on the left done in?

Using specific examples, explain how buildings like the one on the left influenced the design of buildings like Chartres.

How do both works demonstrate a Christian sense of a spiritual space?

ANSWER KEY

1. **C** 2. **D** 3. **B** 4. **A** 5. **D**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(C)** Flying buttresses were first introduced at Notre Dame in Paris and were used to stabilize naves that were getting increasingly tall.
2. **(D)** In order for the altar to be seen more effectively in a darkened church, it was generally elevated above the floor of the nave.
3. **(B)** Both the Lamassu and the great portals at Chartres are attached to the walls behind them and, therefore, are not entirely free-standing.
4. **(A)** Rib vaults stabilize the stone roofs and help pass pressure down to the walls below. Gothic buildings do not have domes, and ashlar masonry is rarely used. Stained glass windows do not have a supporting function in a building.
5. **(D)** Perpendicular, a form of late Gothic architecture, is unique to England. Westminster Hall is Perpendicular Gothic.

Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
What architectural style is the building on the left done in?	1	The building on the left is Romanesque.
Using specific examples, explain how buildings like the one on the left influenced the design of buildings like Chartres.	2	Answers could include: ■ Rib vaults ■ Articulated columns ■ Open central space that faces an altar ■ Rose windows ■ Side aisles
How do both works demonstrate a Christian sense of a spiritual space?	2	Answers could include: ■ Dark interiors connoted an otherworldly experience ■ Stone surfaces acoustically echo medieval chanting ■ Stained glass depicts religious images casting colored lights across the wall surface ■ Congregants face a common point, the apse, where the ceremonies take place

Content Area: Early Europe and Colonial Americas

Gothic Art in Italy 13

TIME PERIOD: 1250–1400

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Medieval art is studied according to geographic placement, styles, and traditions. There are frequent interconnections between religions, governments, and artistic influences that create a variety of approaches.

Essential Knowledge:

- Medieval periods are the following:
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- There is no uniform medieval style. Some periods revive ancient classicism; others use geometric and natural designs.
- Medieval artists are influenced by contemporaries in other parts of Europe, as well as ancient traditions.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Medieval art is chiefly concerned with religious expression and court life. There is a strong culture of endorsing scholarship.

Essential Knowledge:

- Learning was centered on specific fields that were transmitted throughout Europe through trade, pilgrimage, and military activity.
- Medieval architecture is mostly religious.
- Medieval painting and sculpture avoids naturalistic depictions.
- At times medieval religions will reject images.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Italy did not exist as a unified entity the way it does today. The peninsula was divided into a spectrum of city-states, some quite small, ruled by an assortment of princes, prelates, and the occasional republic, like Venice. Citizens identified themselves as Sienese or Florentines, not as Italians. The varied topography and differences in the local dialects of the Italian language often made the distinction from one state to another even more profound. Sometimes, as in

the case of modern Sicilian, the linguistic differences are enough to be classified as a separate language.

Nothing seems more complicated to the modern viewer than Italian medieval politics, characterized as it is by routinely shifting allegiances that break into splinter groups and reform into new alliances. Those who lost power were either killed or driven from their city. Sometimes they regrouped and returned for revenge. Add to this military interventions from outside forces, such as the Holy Roman Empire or France, and medieval Italy becomes a complicated network of splintering associations.

With such instability it is a wonder that any works of art were completed, but this behavior does explain why many pieces come down to us in fragmentary condition, and why artists who were favored by one monarch may not have completed a work when another ruler came to power.

Patronage and Artistic Life

Medieval artists worked within an elaborate network called the guild system, in which artwork was regulated as an industry like any other. Guilds were artist associations that determined, among other things, how long apprenticeships should take, how many apprentices an artist could have, and what the proper route would be for an artist trying to establish him- or herself on his or her own. However, female artists were rare, because apprentices lived with their teacher, creating a situation unthinkable for females.

After a successful internship, former apprentices entered the guild as mature artists and full members. The guild helped to regulate commissions as well as ensure that not too many people entered the field, a situation that would have driven down prices. The guild system remained in effect until replaced by the free-market approach that took hold in the eighteenth century.

Artistic patronage was particularly strong among preaching orders of friars, such as the Franciscans, the devoted followers of St. Francis of Assisi, and the Dominicans, the faithful followers of St. Dominic de Guzman. Coalescing early in the thirteenth century, both groups abstained from material concerns and committed themselves to helping the poor and the sick. Since the Dominicans stressed teaching, they were instrumental in commissioning narrative pulpits and altarpieces for their churches so that the faithful could learn important Christian tenets. The Franciscan mother church in Assisi has a program of frescoes unequalled in **trecento** art, in part devoted to the life of the charismatic St. Francis.

Italian citizens had a strong devotional attachment to their local church, sometimes being buried inside. Families commissioned artists to decorate private chapels, occasionally with members of the family serving as models in a religious scene. If a family could not afford a whole chapel, they perhaps could sponsor a sculpture or an altarpiece. Analogously, rulers, church leaders, and civic-minded institutions led by laypersons commissioned works for public display, using them to legitimize their reign or express their public generosity.

The modern approach to art, as a business run by professionals, has its origins in the late Gothic period. Contracts between artists and patrons were drawn up, bookkeeping records of transactions between the two were maintained, and artists self-consciously and confidently began signing works more regularly. Artists' signatures indicate their rising status—a radical break from the general anonymity in which earlier medieval artists had toiled—and a self-conscious need publicly to associate their names with works of art of which they were particularly proud.

ITALIAN GOTHIC PAINTING

The trend in Gothic sculpture is to liberate works from the wall, allowing them to occupy space independent of their architectural framework. Concurrently, Italian painting of the late Gothic period is characterized by large scale panels that stand on their own.

Wall paintings in the Middle Ages, including frescoes and mosaics, emphasize the flatness of the wall surface, encouraging artists to produce compositions that are frontal and linear. Late Gothic artists prefer fresco and tempera, techniques that enabled them to shade figures convincingly and reach for a three-dimensional reality.

At first, artists accepted Byzantine formulas for pictorial representation, commonly referred to as the **maniera greca**. Subsequent Florentine painters, however, particularly under the guidance of **Giotto** and his followers, began to move away from this tradition and toward a different concept of reality that substantiated masses and anchored figures to ground lines. Through expressive faces and meaningful gestures, emotions become more palpable and dynamic. Florentine painting dares to experiment with compositional arrangements, moving the focus away from the center of the painting.

Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel, c. 1303, brick, Padua, Italy (Figure 13.1a)

- Arena Chapel built over an ancient Roman arena, hence the name
- Also called the Scrovegni Chapel after the name of the patron, Enrico Scrovegni
- Built to expiate the sin of usury through which Scrovegni's father amassed a fortune
- Some narrative scenes illustrate Biblical episodes of ill-gotten gains

Figure 13.1a: Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel, c. 1303, brick, Padua, Italy

Giotto, *Last Judgment* from the Arena Chapel, 1305–1306, fresco, Padua, Italy (Figure 13.1b)

- Christ as Judge, coming at the end of the world
- Heavenly powers arranged in an organized chorus; heads aligned in a row
- Twelve apostles arranged symmetrically around Christ
- Cross at bottom center divides the saved from the damned
- On the side of the saved is Enrico Scrovegni as a donor presenting a model of the church to angels
- At right is the devil who eats and excretes sinners
- Those guilty of usury or money-related sins like prostitution are particularly noted

Figure 13.1b: Giotto, *Last Judgment* from the Arena Chapel, 1305–1306, fresco, Padua, Italy

Figure 13.1c: Giotto, *Lamentation* from the Arena Chapel, 1305–1306, fresco, Padua, Italy

Giotto, *Lamentation* from the Arena Chapel, 1305–1306, fresco, Padua, Italy (Figure 13.1c)

- Lamentation shows scenes of Jesus' followers mourning his death: usually scene contains Mary, Saint John, and Mary Magdalene
- St. John throws his head back; Mary Magdalene cradles Jesus' feet; Mary holds Jesus' head
- At left is the Old Testament scene of Jonah being swallowed by the whale and returning to life; parallel with New Testament scene of Christ dying and rising from the dead
- Shallow stage, figures occupy a palpable space pushed forward toward the picture plane
- Diagonal cliff formation points to main action daringly placed in lower left-hand corner
- Modeling indicates direction of light, light falls from above right
- Range of emotions: heavy sadness, quiet resignation, flaming outbursts, despair
- Sadness of scene emphasized by grieving angels, barrenness of tree
- Figures on the lower left are seen from the back and isolate the main action
- Clear foreground, middle ground, and background
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Pathos**
  - *Seated Boxer* (Figure 4.10)
  - Kollwitz, Kollwitz, *Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht* (Figure 22.4)
  - Abakanowicz, *Androgyn III* (Figure 29.7)

VOCABULARY

Lamentation: shows scenes of Jesus' followers mourning his death. Usually the scene contains Mary, Saint John, and Mary Magdalene (Figure 13.1c)

Last Judgment: in Christianity, the judgment before God at the end of the world (Figure 13.1b)

Maniera greca: (Italian for "Greek manner") a style of painting based on Byzantine models that was popular in Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

Tempera: a type of paint employing egg yolk as the binding medium that is noted for its quick drying rate and flat opaque colors

Trecento: the 1300s, or fourteenth century, in Italian art

SUMMARY

It is not degrading to trecento artists to say that Late Gothic art in Italy is a bridge period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Italian artists were inspired by Roman works, broke away from Byzantine traditions, and established strong schools of painting in the trecento. Florentine artists like **Giotto** concentrate on mass and solidity, often using shading to create the suggestion of three dimensions.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

Questions 1 and 2 refer to the image below.

1. Among the innovations seen in this work is the artist's

   (A) combination of fresco, tempera, and oil paint, which allowed for greater detail
   (B) affinity for human emotions in Christian subject matter
   (C) ability to paint works in a series
   (D) referencing of Old and New Testament scenes side by side

2. The scene in the back of the Arena Chapel over the main door is the same scene depicted in

   (A) the tympanum of the church of Sainte-Foy, Conques
   (B) the Great Portal, west façade, Chartres
   (C) the *Golden Haggadah*
   (D) Blanche of Castile and King Louis IX of France in a moralized Bible

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3. The artistic revival known as the Renaissance began with painters like Giotto and was stimulated in part by the

   (A) use of fresco, which had fallen into disuse
   (B) building of Gothic cathedrals
   (C) preaching of the Franciscans
   (D) discovery of the ancient city of Pompeii

4. The fresco technique, as seen in Giotto's work *The Lamentation*, is the same used in all of the following EXCEPT

   (A) Tomb of the Triclinium
   (B) (attributed to) Juan Rodríguez Juárez's *Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo*
   (C) Diego Rivera's *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon at Alameda Park*
   (D) Raphael's *School of Athens*

5. Enrico Scrovegni, the patron of the Arena Chapel, had the building built and decorated to

   (A) expiate the sin of usury, which his family had committed
   (B) honor the memory of Saint Francis of Assisi
   (C) commemorate the Virgin of Guadalupe
   (D) house the tombs of his family and his descendants

Short Essay

The illustration below is the *Lamentation* by Giotto from the Arena Chapel, dated around 1305.

What is the scene in the margin on the left?

How does this marginal scene represent a parallel to the main scene?

Using specific examples, analyze the innovation in Giotto's technique that makes his style revolutionary.

ANSWER KEY

1. **B** 2. **A** 3. **C** 4. **B** 5. **A**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(B)** Giotto's techniques include painting figures with profoundly human expressions.
2. **(A)** Both the Arena Chapel and the tympanum of Sainte-Foy have scenes of the Last Judgment.
3. **(C)** Franciscan preaching was an important element in the revival of Renaissance art.
4. **(B)** The painting of a *Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo* is an oil on canvas.
5. **(A)** Enrico Scrovegni had the chapel built, in part, to expiate the sin of usury. His father amassed a considerable fortune at this practice, and Scrovegni felt the need to atone.

Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
What is the scene in the margin on the left?	**1**	**The scene on the left is of Jonah and the Whale, from the book of Jonah in the Old Testament.**
How does this marginal scene represent a parallel to the main scene?	**2**	**Answers could include:** ■ **Jonah is swallowed by a whale but later comes out of the whale's belly and is reborn.** ■ **Jesus has died on the cross but has risen from the dead three days later.** ■ **In a sense they are both reborn; hence, the parallel of the Old and New Testament scenes.**
Using specific examples, analyze the innovation in Giotto's technique that makes his style revolutionary.	**2**	**Answers could include:** ■ **Shallow stage, figures occupy a palpable space pushed forward toward the picture plane** ■ **Diagonal cliff formation points to main action daringly placed in lower left-hand corner** ■ **Modeling indicates direction of light; light falls from above right** ■ **Range of emotions: heavy sadness, quiet resignation, flaming outbursts, despair** ■ **Figures seen from the back seem to isolate the main action** ■ **Sadness of scene emphasized by grieving angels, barrenness of tree**