

Cultural Achievements of Western Europe During the Middle Ages

Intro.

In the **Early Middle Ages**, western European culture retrogressed as a result of barbarian invasions, feudalism, and people's concern for the barest essentials of life.

In the **Later Middle Ages**, western European culture began to progress because

1. The Catholic **Church** provided leadership and support,
2. The **Crusades** spread knowledge of the advanced Byzantine and Muslim civilizations, and
3. The **towns** provided centers of culture and learning.

Architecture.

Medieval Europeans expressed their intensely religious spirit by constructing awe-inspiring cathedrals

Romanesque Style

Before the 12th century, architects designed cathedrals in the massive Romanesque style, derived from ancient Rome.

The style featured thick walls, few windows, rounded arches and strong columns.

A famous example is the Cathedral in Pisa, Italy.



Gothic Style

Starting in the 12th century, Architects employed the more graceful Gothic style. It utilized thin walls, flying buttresses, pointed arches, tall spires, gargoyles and many stained glass windows.

Gothic architecture permitted more sunlight to enter the building.

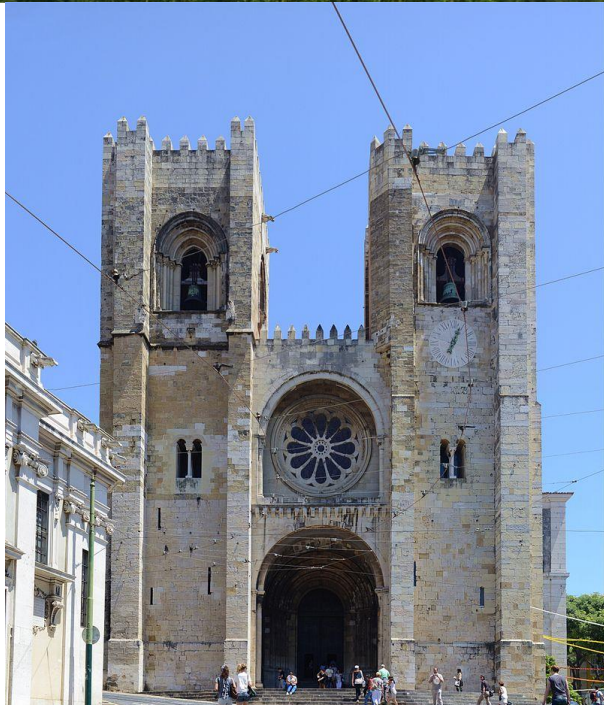
Some notable Gothic cathedrals are Notre Dame in Paris, and Westminster Abbey in London.



Gothic Cathedral



Romanesque or Gothic?



What style
is St.
Patrick's in
NYC?





Higher Education



In the 11th and 12th centuries, scholars founded many important universities: in France, the University of Paris, in Italy, the universities of Bologna and Salerno, in England, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Medieval universities taught geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, and logic – the basis of our modern liberal arts education.

Higher Education cont.

Students were prepared for careers in theology, philosophy, law and medicine.

Except in religion, the universities relied chiefly on the writings of the ancient Greek scholar **Aristotle**.

University students faced difficulties because they

- a. Were taught not in their own tongue, but in the Church language, **Latin**, and
- b. Lacked books, libraries, laboratories and comfortable classrooms.

Science and Invention.

Medieval scientists were, in our modern sense, quite unscientific.

They **rarely experimented or questioned**, mainly accepting popular superstitions and the ideas of Aristotle.

Science and Invention cont.

- a. **Alchemists**, while attempting to transform less valuable metals into gold, gathered information that served as a basis for modern chemistry.
- b. **Astrologers**, while seeking to foretell the future, furnished records of the planets and stars helpful to modern astronomy.
- c. **Inventors** developed magnifying lenses, mechanical clocks, glass windows and gunpowder.
- d. **Roger Bacon (1214-1294)**, alone of the medieval scientists, insisted that science requires experimentation and observation. Bacon's ideas were not accepted for several centuries.

Philosophy and Theology

Church scholars wrote books on philosophical and theological issues.

Their method of using pure **reason** in the defense of **faith** is called **scholasticism**.

Philosophy and Theology cont.



Peter Abelard (1079-1142)

A famous medieval teacher, wrote Sic et Non(Yes and No), which quoted differing views of Church leaders on many religious questions.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the greatest medieval philosopher, wrote Summa Theologica. In this work he summarized Christian doctrine and **denied any conflict between reason and religious faith.** His philosophy was influenced by the ideas of Aristotle.

Literature

Although few books were written, many kinds of literature flourished.

Epic poems celebrated gallant heroes and stirring adventures.

The outstanding medieval epics are:

Beowulf, an Anglo-Saxon (Old English) poem,

The Song of Roland, a French epic,

The Niebelungenlied, a German tale and

The Song of Cid, a Spanish work.

Literature cont.

Beginning in the 11th century, wandering musical entertainers, or minstrels – called **troubadours** in southern France and **minnesingers** in Germany – composed lyrical poems, mostly about love and chivalry.

Love between a knight and a married noblewoman. Courtly love was an experience between erotic desire and spiritual attainment, "a love at once illicit and morally elevating, passionate and disciplined, humiliating and exalting, human and transcendent".

Later medieval poets wrote stories of love and adventure called **romances**.