

What is Medieval Architecture?

Worksheet

Medieval architecture covers Romanesque buildings (round arches, thick walls, small windows) and later Gothic buildings (pointed arches, ribbed vaults, flying buttresses, large stained-glass windows) built mainly as churches, cathedrals and castles.

Questions

1. Which arch type is characteristic of Gothic, not Romanesque, architecture?
 - A) Round arch
 - B) Pointed arch
 - C) Segmental arch
 - D) Flat arch
2. What is the main purpose of a flying buttress?
 - A) Decoration only
 - B) Support a roof's weight directly
 - C) Carry a vault's outward thrust away from the wall
 - D) Hold up a bell tower
3. Romanesque churches typically have
 - A) Huge stained-glass windows
 - B) Thick walls and small windows
 - C) No arches at all
 - D) Steel frames
4. Which building is considered the birthplace of Gothic architecture?
 - A) Durham Cathedral
 - B) Hagia Sophia
 - C) Abbey of Saint-Denis
 - D) Colosseum
5. What Romanesque features define Durham Cathedral (begun 1093)?
6. How does the Abbey of Saint-Denis (rebuilt from 1140) mark the start of Gothic architecture?
7. What structural innovation lets Chartres Cathedral (mostly 1194-1220) reach such height?
8. Define: What arch shape defines Gothic architecture?
9. Define: What is a flying buttress?
10. Define: What characterizes Romanesque walls?

Answer Key

1. B) Pointed arch - The pointed arch is a defining Gothic feature, replacing the Romanesque round arch.
2. C) Carry a vault's outward thrust away from the wall - It transfers thrust to an external pier, freeing the wall for windows.
3. B) Thick walls and small windows - Thick load-bearing walls with small window openings are typically Romanesque.
4. C) Abbey of Saint-Denis - Abbot Suger's rebuilding of Saint-Denis from 1140 introduced key Gothic elements.
5. Massive round-arched arcades rest on thick, deeply carved piers One of the earliest uses of ribbed vaulting over the nave, an engineering step toward Gothic Small, deeply set windows keep the interior dim and fortress-like Thick walls and few openings reflect the era's need for defensible, load-bearing construction
6. Abbot Suger introduces pointed arches to direct thrust more efficiently than round arches Ribbed vaults concentrate weight onto slender piers instead of continuous walls Thinner walls allow larger window openings filled with stained glass The result is a brighter, more vertical interior, a deliberate symbol of divine light
7. Flying buttresses on the exterior carry the outward thrust of the vaults away from the walls This frees the walls themselves from a load-bearing role With walls no longer needed for support, they are opened into vast stained-glass windows The nave reaches roughly 37 meters high, far taller than earlier Romanesque churches
8. The pointed arch, which directs weight more efficiently downward than a round Romanesque arch.
9. An external arched support that carries the outward thrust of a vault away from the wall, allowing thinner walls and bigger windows.
10. Thick, heavy walls with small windows, needed to support round arches and barrel vaults.

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