The term “Gothic” was popularized by the 16th c. artist and historian Giorgio Vasari who attributed the style to the Goths, Germanic invaders who had “destroyed” the classical civilization of the Roman empire. In its own day the Gothic style was simply called “modern art” or “The French style”
Gothic Age: Historical Background

- **Widespread prosperity** caused by warmer climate, technological advances such as the heavy plough, watermills and windmills, and population increase.

- **Development of cities.** Although Europe remained rural, cities gained increasing prominence. They became centers of artistic patronage, fostering communal identity by public projects and ceremonies.

- **Guilds** (professional associations) **of scholars founded the first universities.** A system of reasoned analysis known as scholasticism emerged from these universities, intent on reconciling Christian theology and Classical philosophy.

- **Age of cathedrals** (Cathedral = a church that is the official seat of a bishop)

- 11-13\textsuperscript{th} c - **The Crusades** bring Islamic and Byzantine influences to Europe.

- 14th c. - **Black Death** killing about one third of population in western Europe and devastating much of Europe’s economy.
England and France were becoming strong nation-states while the Holy Roman Empire was weakened and ceased to be a significant power in the 13th c.
French Gothic Architecture
The Gothic style emerged in the Ile-de-France region (French royal domain around Paris) around 1140. It coincided with the emergence of the monarchy as a powerful centralizing force. Within 100 years, an estimate 2700 Gothic churches were built in the Ile-de-France alone.

**Abbot Suger**, 1081-1151, French cleric and statesman, abbot of Saint-Denis from 1122, minister of kings Louis VI and Louis VII. In 1147, Louis VII left on crusade and Suger became the regent. Suger's work on the church of Saint-Denis was instrumental in the development of Gothic architecture.

Stained glass representation of Abbot Suger in the Jesse Window of the Basilique St-Denis. An 1800s product of the restoration work by Viollet-le-Duc.
Plan of the east end, abbey church, Saint-Denis, France, 1140–1144
Comparison - Romanesque.

Plan of the east end, St. Sernin, Toulouse, France, 1070-1120

Plan of the east end, abbey church, Saint-Denis, France, 1140-1144
Rib Vault
A vault in which the surface is divided into webs by a framework of diagonal arched ribs.

Ambulatory and radiating chapels, abbey church, Saint-Denis, France, 1140–1144.
Advantages of rib vaults with pointed arches:

- All crowns are at the same level.
- Channel the weight more directly downward, thus require less buttressing and permit opening up walls and placing large windows beneath the arch.
- Lead the eye upward thus make the vault appear taller.
- Flexibility permits vaulting of compartment of varying shapes.

The first wide use of pointed arches was in Sasanian architecture, and Islamic builders later adopted them. French Romanesque architects borrowed them from Muslim Spain and passed it to their Gothic successors.

Diagram (a) and drawings of rib vaults with semicircular (b) and pointed (c) arches.
Four story Early Gothic elevation (nave arcade, vaulted gallery, triforium and clerestory)

**Triforium**

The story in the nave elevation found below the clerestory and consisting of a series of arched openings. Usually without windows (blind arcade) or with stained glass.

**Notre Dame = Our Lady** (The Virgin Mary).

*Interior of Laon Cathedral (Notre Dame Cathedral at Laon)*

looking northeast, begun ca. 1190. 80 feet high. Laon, France
Nave elevations of four French Gothic cathedrals at the same scale.

Gothic nave design evolved from the Early Gothic four story elevation to the High Gothic three story elevation (nave arcade, triforium and clerestory). The height of the vaults also increased from 80 to 144 feet.
Flying Buttress:
An arched supporting pier outside a building which takes most of the weight of the roof, allowing the walls to be devoted to window-space rather than being used to support the roof.
Notre-Dame (looking north), Paris, France, begun 1163; nave and flying buttresses, ca. 1180–1200; remodeled after 1225. It was among the first buildings in the world to use the flying buttresses.
Notre-Dame, Paris, France, begun 1163;
On 15 April 2019 the cathedral caught fire, destroying the 19th c. spire and the oak frame and lead roof.
Gargoyles at Notre Dame Paris, France, begun 1163
(serve as drain pipes as well as decorations.)
Master masons were highly skilled lay craftsmen who combined the roles of architect, builder, craftsman, designer and engineer. They were in charge of hundreds of people and often worked on more than one project at the same time. Master masons gained in prestige during the 13th c.

*Masons at Work.*
Detail of a miniature from the picture Bible made in Paris during the 1240s.
Plan of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, as rebuilt after 1194
Plan of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, as rebuilt after 1194.
Aerial view of Chartres Cathedral (looking north), Chartres, France, as rebuilt after 1194.
**Interior of Chartres Cathedral**
(looking east), Chartres, France, begun 1194. 120 feet high

**Plan and Aerial View of Chartres**

**Typical Gothic architecture:** pointed arches and ribbed groin vaults rising from compound piers over rectangular bays supported by exterior flying buttresses.
Interior of Chartres Cathedral (looking east), Chartres, France, begun 1194. 120 feet high

The relic of the Tunic of the Virgin from Chartres Cathedral.
Chartres Labyrinth, 42’ in diameter.
We offer monthly candlelight labyrinth walks with beautiful live music. These events are typically held from 6 – 8 pm on the second Friday of each month.

The labyrinth at Grace Cathedral

Lewis P. Hobart. *Grace Cathedral*  
SF. 1928-1964

*Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris.* 1163-1270s
ROBERT DE LUZARCHES, THOMAS DE CORMONT, and RENAUD DE CORMONT, *Interior of Amiens Cathedral* (looking east), Amiens, France, begun 1220. 144 feet high.
ROBERT DE LUZARCHES, THOMAS DE CORMONT, AND RENAUD DE CORMONT, vaults, clerestory, and triforium of the choir of Amiens Cathedral, Amiens, France, begun 1220.
Comparison: Romanesque.  

Saint Chapel was built as a repository for the crown of thorns and other relics of Christ passion


6,450 square feet of stained glass account for more than three quarters of the structure.
In Gothic architecture the guiding principle was to reduce sheer mass and replace it with intricately framed void.

*West facade of Laon Cathedral*, Laon, France, begun ca. 1190.
Comparison - Romanesque. West facade of Saint-Étienne, Caen, France, begun 1067. (The spires are a Gothic addition)

West facade of Laon Cathedral, Laon, France, begun ca. 1190.
Early Gothic - West facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145-1155. (left tower - 16\textsuperscript{th} c.)

West facade of Laon Cathedral, Laon, France, begun ca. 1190.
Church walls were decorated inside and out with engaged columns, applied filigree or tracery, horizontal moldings, pinnacles and finials.

Early Gothic: West facade of Laon Cathedral, Laon, France, begun ca. 1190.

High Gothic: West facade of Reims Cathedral, Reims, France, ca. 1225–1290.
Tracery: Ornamental work of interlaced and branching lines, especially the lacy openwork in a Gothic window.

*Rose Window*, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220. Rose window 43’ in diameter.
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

- Elegant tall buildings
- Light penetrated through stained glass windows
- Ribbed Groin Vaults
- Pointed Arches
- Flying buttresses
- High towers flanking the facade
- Deep porches decorated with architectural sculpture
- In France – large rose window
**Cutaway view of a typical French Gothic cathedral**

1. pinnacle
2. flying buttress
3. vaulting web
4. diagonal ribs
5. transverse rib
6. springing
7. clerestory
8. oculus
9. lancet window
10. triforium
11. nave arcade
12. compound pier
Discussion Question

What are the key architectural and decorative elements of the French Gothic cathedrals? Bring specific examples.

*Notre-Dame*, Paris, France, begun 1163; nave and flying buttresses, ca. 1180–1200.

*West facade of Reims Cathedral*, Reims, France, ca. 1225–1290.

_*Interior of Chartres Cathedral*, Chartres, France, begun 1194. 120 feet high.

*Rose window and lancets*, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220. Stained glass, rose window.
Late Gothic Architecture in England
(14th – 16th c.)
Perpendicular Style

Phase of late Gothic architecture in England. The style, concerned with creating rich visual effects through decoration, was characterized by a predominance of vertical lines in stone window tracery, enlargement of windows to great proportions, and conversion of the interior stories into a single unified vertical expanse.


Comparison: West facade of Reims Cathedral, Reims, France, ca. 1225–1290.
Robert Vertue. *Bath Abbey.*
Interior. Nave. Fan vaulting, c. 1499-1536 (restored in the 19th c.)

**Perpendicular Style**
Fan vaults, springing from slender columns became popular.

The Gothic Tomb in England
The tomb resembles a miniature Perpendicular Gothic chapel with its forest of gables, ogee arches and pinnacles.

**Ogee Arch**

The double-curve ogee (oh-jee) was introduced from the Arab world in the 14th century and became popular throughout medieval England.

The tomb is the Tomb of Edward II, Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester, England, ca. 1330–1335.
French Stained Glass Windows
Virgin and Child and angels,
a window in the choir of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, (center panels ca. 1170, with 13th century side panels.) Stained glass, 12’9”.
Virgin (Theotokos) and Child enthroned, apse mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 867

Virgin and Child and detail of a window in the choir of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1170. Stained glass
The western rose, Chartres Cathedral, made c.1215 and 12 m in diameter shows the Last Judgement

**Rose window:**
A large round window on the west façade or transept, containing tracery (interlaced and branching lines) that became more elaborate as the Gothic era progressed.


Rose window, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220. Stained glass, rose window 43’ in diameter.
Lancet window:
A narrow window with pointed arches.

Rose window and lancets, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220. Stained glass, rose window 43’ in diameter.
At Chartres Cathedral, for the first time in medieval art, the lowest register of stained-glass windows depicts working artisans and merchants instead of noble and clerical donors. (Early 13th c.)

Wheelwright (a person who builds or repairs wheels)

Shoemaker
The St Cherón Window - Masons, Stonecutters and Sculptors
Gothic Sculpture
Jamb statues
Figures carved on the jambs of a doorway or window.

*Royal Portal*, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155. (Left – Christ’s Ascension to heaven, center – the Second Coming of Christ, Right – Virgin and Child).
Comparison - Romanesque.


Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

The Second Coming of Christ (Christ in Majesty) Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.
The Second Coming of Christ (Christ in Majesty) Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Gislebertus, Last Judgment, west tympanum of Saint-Lazare, Autun, France, ca. 1120–1135. Marble, approx. 21’ wide at base.
The Second Coming of Christ (Christ in Majesty) Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Comparison: Romanesque. Last Judgment. c.1115 Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vezelay

The Second Coming of Christ (Christ in Majesty) Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Comparison: Early Christian. *Christ as the Good Shepherd* from the catacomb of Callixtus in Rome. mid-third century.
Old Testament kings and queens, jamb statues, central doorway of Royal Portal, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Comparison - Romanesque. Lions and Old Testament prophet (Jeremiah or Isaiah?), from the trumeau of the south portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac, France, ca. 1115–1130. Marble, approx. life-size.
Saints Martin, Jerome, and Gregory, jamb statues, Porch of the Confessors (right doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220–1230.
Old Testament Kings and Queens,
jamb statues, central doorway of Royal Portal, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Saints Martin, Jerome, and Gregory,
jamb statues, Porch of the Confessors (right doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220–1230.
Saint Theodore, jamb statue, Porch of the Martyrs (left doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1230.

Comparison: Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear Bearer). Roman marble copy from Pompeii, Italy, after a bronze original of ca. 450–440 BCE, 6’ 11” high. Museo Nazionale, Naples.
Christ (Beau Dieu – Beautiful God)
Trumeau statue of central door-way, west façade, Amiens Cathedral, Amiens, France, ca. 1220-1235

Annunciation and Visitation,
jamb statues of central doorway,
west facade, Reims Cathedral,
(Notre Dame de Reims), France,
ca. 1230-1255
• Made by three different sculptors
Visitation, jamb statues of central doorway, west facade, Reims Cathedral, (Notre Dame de Reims), France, ca. 1230-1255

Roman with Busts of Ancestors
1st c. BCE-1st c. CE
Old Testament Kings and Queens, jamb statues, central doorway of Royal Portal, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155.

Annunciation and Visitation, jamb statues of central doorway, west facade, Reims Cathedral, Reims, France, ca. 1230-1255.
The Gothic Sway: exaggerated S-curve of the body typical of Late Gothic.

Virgin of Jeanne d’Evreux from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, France, 1339. Silver gilt and enamel, 2’ 3 1/2” high. Louvre, Paris.

- The Virgin’s scepter, in the form of the fleur-de-lis, contained hairs believed to come from Mary’s head.
- The Virgin originally had a crown on her head.
Virgin of Jeanne d’Evreux, detail from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, France, 1339. Silver gilt and enamel, 2’ 3 1/2” high. Louvre, Paris.
Virgin of Jeanne d’Evreux, detail from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, France, 1339. Silver gilt and enamel, 2’ 3 1/2” high. Louvre, Paris.

(on the pedestal – scenes from Christ’s Passion)
Virgin and Child (Virgin of Paris), Notre-Dame, Paris, France, early fourteenth century.

Virgin of Jeanne d’Evreux, from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, France, 1339. Silver gilt and enamel, 2’ 3 1/2” high. Louvre, Paris.
Gothic Sculpture in the Holy Roman Empire
Death of the Virgin, tympanum of left doorway, south transept, Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1230.
Visitation, jamb statues of central doorway, west facade, Reims Cathedral, France, ca. 1230-1255

Death of the Virgin, tympanum of left doorway, south transept, Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1230. (artist probably studied the French jamb statues)
Comparison: Romanesque.


*Death of the Virgin*, tympanum of left doorway, south transept, Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1230.
Comparison:
Byzantine.

*Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, wall painting, Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia, 1164.

*Death of the Virgin*, tympanum of left doorway, south transept, Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1230.
Ekkehard and Uta, statues in the west choir, Naumburg Cathedral, Naumburg, Germany, ca. 1249–1255. Painted limestone, Ekkehard 6’ 2” high.
Her elegant face was used as a symbol of beauty in the Nazi era, maybe this is the cause that she served as model to the evil stepmother of Snow White, the beautiful queen in the Disney's film,
Equestrian portrait (Bamberg Rider—probably portrait of a German emperor, perhaps Frederick II), statue in the east choir, Bamberg Cathedral, Germany, ca. 1235–1240. Sandstone, 7’ 9” high.
Equestrian portrait of Charlemagne or Charles the Bald, from Metz, France, ninth century. Bronze, originally gilt, 9 1/2” high. Louvre, Paris.

Equestrian portrait (Bamberg Rider), statue in the east choir, Bamberg Cathedral, Germany, ca. 1235–1240. Sandstone, 7’ 9” high.
The Green Man: A foliate head in the shape of an acanthus leaf: a corbel supporting the Bamberg Horseman, Bamberg cathedral, Germany, ca. 1235–1240.
Pietà ("pity" or "compassion" in Italian):
A painting or sculpture of the Virgin Mary holding and mourning over the dead body of Jesus

Virgin with the Dead Christ (Röttgen Pietà), from the Rhineland, Germany, ca. 1300–1325. Painted wood, 2’ 10 1/2” high. Rheinisches Landemuseum, Bonn.
Gothic: *Ekkehard and Uta*, statues in Naumburg Cathedral, ca. 1249–1255. Painted limestone

Gothic: *Death of the Virgin*, tympanum from Strasbourg Cathedral, ca. 1230.

Discussion Question

Compare sculpture in the Gothic era to the earlier Romanesque sculpture. Discuss proportions (of the human figure as well as in relation to other figures), human body poses, depiction of drapery, treatment and organization of space, facial expressions, relationship with the architecture etc. Bring specific examples.

Romanesque: *Last Judgment*. c. 1115 Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vezelay

Romanesque: *Lions and Old Testament prophet* from the trumeau of the south portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac, ca. 1115–1130. Marble
Black Death

Widespread outbreak of plague, probably bubonic and pneumonic, that ravaged Europe during the 14th century, killing between 25 and 50% of the population in about 5 years.

Illustration of the Black Death from the Toggenburg Bible (1411)
The burning of Jews during the black death.

The Dance of Death (allegory on the universality of death in which the dead summoning representatives from all walks of life to dance along to the grave) (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Liber chronicarum by Hartmann Schedel.

Monks, disfigured by the plague, being blessed by a priest. England, 1360–75
Book Illumination and Luxury Arts

During the Gothic period book manufacture shifted from monastic scriptoria to urban workshops of professional artists.
Moralized Bible
A heavily illustrated Bible, each page pairing paintings of Old and New Testament episodes with explanations of their moral significance.

God as architect of the world, folio 1 verso of a moralized Bible, from Paris, France, ca. 1220-1230. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, 1’ 1 ½” X 8 ¼”. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.
God as architect of the world, folio 1 verso of a moralized Bible, from Paris, France, ca. 1220-1230. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, 1’ 1 ½” X 8 ¼”. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

Romanesque: Initial R with knight fighting a Dragon, Moralia in Job, Citeaux, 1115-1125. Ink and Tempera on vellum

Romanesque: Master Hugo, Moses Expounding the Law, Bury Bible, c 1135, ink and tempera on vellum. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.
Blanche of Castile, Louis IX, and two monks, dedication page of a moralized Bible, from Paris, France, 1226–1234. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum,

**Saint Theodore**, jamb statue, Porch of the Martyrs (left doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1230.
Abraham and the three angels, folio 7 verso of the Psalter of Saint Louis (Louis IX), from Paris, France, 1253–1270. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, 5” X 3 1/2”. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
**Annunciation and Visitation**, jamb statues of central doorway, west facade, Reims Cathedral, Reims, France, ca. 1230-1255

**Abraham and the three angels**, folio 7 verso of the *Psalter of Saint Louis* (Louis IX), from Paris, France, 1253–1270. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, 5” X 3 1/2”. 
Courtly Love: Late-medieval code that prescribed the behavior and emotions of aristocratic ladies and their lovers. It was the theme of an extensive literature that began with 11th-century troubadour poetry in France and swiftly pervaded Europe. The courtly lover, who saw himself as enslaved by passion but fired by respect, faithfully served and worshiped his lady-saint.

The castle of love and knights jousting, lid for a jewelry casket, from Paris, France, ca. 1330-1350. 41/2 x 93/4”. Ivory and iron. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (based on the allegorical poem “Romance of the Rose” that teaches about the Art of Love)