

Stained Glass Windows

In medieval times, great churches were constructed to honor God. These churches were adorned with all manner of artwork, all designed to honor the heavenly God. During the construction of the churches and cathedrals, a new art form developed - the stained glass window.

A stained glass window is a bunch of different colored pieces of glass that actually made a picture. In medieval times, sometimes they were just large pieces of colored glass in pleasing geometric shapes. Mostly though, they were designed to show a scene from the Bible.

These beautiful windows provided light for the interior of the church in a way that also reinforced the idea that the church was a place to worship the Christian god.

Stained glass windows are exactly what they sound like with different colored pieces of glass arranged in a way to create an image. Stained glass windows typically include aesthetically pleasing colors such as red, green, yellow and blue. Today, stained glass windows and objects can be found anywhere, but it was not always the case.

These beautiful windows first adorned the walls of the Catholic Church back in the medieval period. Illiterate patrons and worshippers looked at stained glass windows to read a story in the same manner we read a book. After this, large cathedrals with the beautiful stained glass windows were built all over Europe by the Catholic Church.

Stained glass windows were attacked by a major leader because they were associated with another church during the 17th century. The King of England, Henry VIII, split from the Catholic Church due to his feud with Pope Clement VII and as a result, ordered a staggering number of stained glass windows destroyed in the cathedrals. Henry VIII ignored the cost of replacing these glorious works of art and the incredible skill required to create them. Some of the older cathedrals were laid to rubble, robbing the world of historical churches and most importantly, the beautiful stained glass windows. There are also bathroom stained glass windows. For the next several decades, artists were unwilling to recreate past pieces or make new windows since Henry VIII was so vocal and adamant against the Catholic Church and any items that could be associated with it. Even through the Baroque period, the beautiful stained glass windows were not seen again in English churches. The trend moved towards decorative murals and intricate detail on the interior walls of churches. Also, the churches recognized the need for natural light to come through with all of the detailed décor within the church.

Stained glass windows were not being created on a large scale until the Gothic period when architects included them in their designs. The style of the Gothic period helped artists draw inspiration for the windows from biblical stories and events, just like in the medieval ages. Gothic architecture expanded from just churches to public buildings and brought Austin stained glass windows with it. Even the methods from the medieval period, such as using old pot metal glass, to create the windows were revived. Some medieval methods were lost over the centuries which helped give Gothic windows their distinct look. A very distinct style of stained glass windows emerged which combined the dark Gothic artistry with the colorful and light Renaissance look.

Vocabulary:

1. **Stained Glass:** Pieces of colored glass that are fitted together like parts of a puzzle, then framed to make a window.
2. **Transparent:** Possible to see through, such as a clear piece of glass.
3. **Translucent:** Glass pieces in which color lets you see light coming through, but not the details on the other side.
4. **Opaque:** Not allowing light to go through; the opposite of transparent.
5. **Medieval:** The Middle Ages, or Medieval Times, in Europe was a long period of history from 500 AD to 1500 AD. It covers the time from the fall of the Roman Empire to the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

This was a time of castles and peasants, guilds and monasteries, cathedrals and crusades. Great leaders such as Joan of Arc and Charlemagne were part of the Middle Ages as well as major events such as the Black Plague and the rise of Islam.

6. **Gothic:** The style of art known as Gothic developed in Europe during the Middle Ages. It was mainly a method of building: Gothic characteristics appeared first in architecture. Many of the world's great cathedrals and churches were built in the Gothic style between the 12th and 16th centuries.

Gothic cathedrals are tall, their arches soar heavenward, and rays of sunlight pour through high, stained-glass windows and bathe the wood, masonry, and marble. Walls, columns, entrances, and doors are carved with figures and scenes from the Bible. Not only great cathedrals and abbeys but hundreds of smaller churches were built in the style. The Gothic style became popular throughout Europe. It spread to houses and castles and then to painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts.

Medieval Timeline

- **476** - The fall of the Roman Empire. Rome had ruled much of Europe. Now much of the land would fall into confusion as local kings and rulers tried to grab power. This is the start of the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages.
- **481** - Clovis becomes King of the Franks. Clovis united most of the Frankish tribes that were part of Roman Province of Gaul.
- **570** - Muhammad, prophet of Islam is born.
- **732** - Battle of Tours. The Franks defeat the Muslims turning back Islam from Europe.
- **800** - Charlemagne, King of the Franks, is crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Charlemagne united much of Western Europe and is considered the father of both the French and the German Monarchies.
- **835** - Vikings from the Scandinavian lands (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) begin to invade northern Europe. They would continue until 1042.
- **896** - Alfred the Great, King of England, turns back the Viking invaders.
- **1066** - William of Normandy, a French Duke, conquers England in the Battle of Hastings. He became King of England and changed the country forever.
- **1096** - Start of the First Crusade. The Crusades were wars between the Holy Roman Empire and the Muslims over the Holy Land. There would be several Crusades over the next 200 years.
- **1189** - Richard I, Richard the Lionheart, becomes King of England.
- **1206** - The Mongol Empire is founded by [Genghis Khan](#).
- **1215** - King John of England signs the [Magna Carta](#). This document gave the people some rights and said the king was not above the law.
- **1271** - Marco Polo leaves on his famous journey to explore Asia.
- **1337** - The Hundred Years War begins between England and France for control of the French throne.
- **1347** - The Black Death begins in Europe. This horrible disease would kill around half of the people in Europe.
- **1431** - [French heroine Joan of Arc](#) is executed by England at the age of 19.
- **1444** - German inventor Johannes Gutenberg invents the printing press. This will signal the start of the [Renaissance](#).
- **1453** - The Ottoman Empire captures the city of Constantinople. This signals the end of the Eastern Roman Empire also known as Byzantium.
- **1482** - [Leonardo Da Vinci](#) paints "The Last Supper."