

# Gothic Cathedral

## Stained Glass



Medieval Gothic cathedrals are seen as works of architectural beauty and wonder today, not only for their flying buttresses, but also for their stained glass.

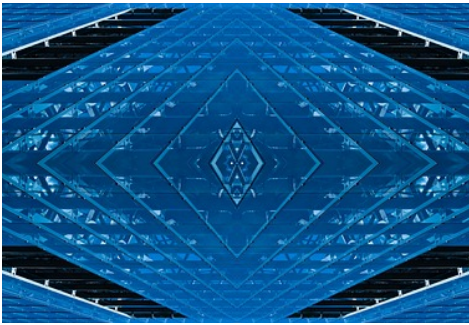
Stained glass served both practical and symbolic purposes in the spiritual lives of the people of the Middle Ages. It let natural light get into often-dark buildings.

Because the majority of European population could not read, the Church needed another way to teach the congregation (church members) the stories of the Bible and about the saints for whom the various cathedrals and churches were dedicated. The windows became the Churches storybook.

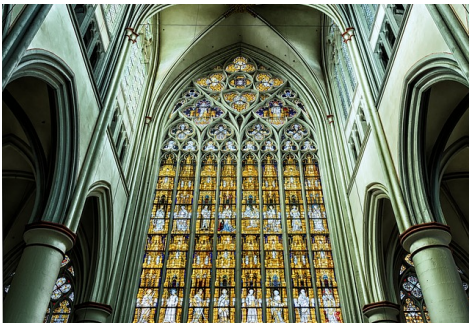
To make stained glass, crafters first heated tree ash and sand to extreme temperatures at which these solids became liquefied. They added color to the glass with bits of ores and minerals. Formulas for creating the colors were trade secrets. In the early days of stained glass making, colors were limited to reds, greens, blues and some purples. Over time the coloring process became more refined, new colors were added and the colors had more vibrancy and clarity.

Gothic  
Wonder  
Buttresses  
Congregation  
Storybook  
Liquify





However, the glass of the Middle Ages was very uneven in thickness and could only be made in small pieces. Glass workers cut the pieces into desired shapes by scoring the glass with a hot iron.



Then the glass worker put the pieces together according to a pattern created. Creating the images was like putting together a puzzle.

The glass worker soldered the lead strips together to hold several pieces of glass together. Lastly, the glass worker put a frame, called an armature, usually made of wood, completely around the stained glass creation to help hold all the pieces together.

Early stained glass designs in the 11th and 12th centuries usually showed only one figure. However, by the 13th century, several figures might have been depicted in the same scene. Often medallion shapes, circles, and other geometric shapes surrounded these figures. Color themes were still mainly greens, blues, reds and purples, but white glass was also becoming more commonly used. Intricate glasswork was waning by the 14th century, replaced by single figures surrounded by solid colors.

Stained glass  
Cathedral  
Church  
Gothic  
Iron  
Pattern  
Century