In the mid-16th century, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the “father of art history,” used “Gothic” as a term of ridicule to describe late medieval art and architecture. For him Gothic art was “monstrous and barbarous,” invented by the Goths. With the publication of his famous treatise, Vasari codified for all time the notion already advanced by the early Renaissance artist Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), who, in his Commentarii, characterized the Middle Ages as a period of decline. The humanists of the Italian Renaissance, who placed Greco-Roman art on a pedestal, believed that the uncouth Goths were responsible not only for the downfall of Rome but also for the destruction of the classical style of art and architecture. They regarded Gothic art with contempt and considered it ugly and crude.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, however, when the Gothic style was the rage in most of Europe, especially north of the Alps, contemporary commentators considered Gothic buildings opus modernum (modern work) or opus francigenum (French work). They recognized that the great cathedrals towering over their towns displayed an exciting new building and decoration style - and that the style originated in France. Clergy and the lay public alike regarded their new cathedrals not as distortions of the classical style but as images of the City of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, which they were privileged to build on the earth.

The Gothic style first appeared in northern France around 1140. In southern France and elsewhere in Europe, the Romanesque style still flourished. But by the 13th century, the opus modernum of the region around Paris had spread throughout Western Europe, and in the next century further still.

Although it became an internationally acclaimed style, Gothic art was, nonetheless, a regional phenomenon. To the east and south of Europe, the Islamic and Byzantine styles still held sway. Many regional variants existed within European Gothic, just as distinct styles existed in Romanesque. Gothic began and ended at different dates in different places. When the baker Jacques Coeur built his home in Bourges in the Gothic style in the mid-15th century, classicism already reigned supreme in Italy. The Gothic church of Saint Maclou was under construction in Rouen in the early years of the 16th century, Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

French Gothic - Architecture and Architectural Decoration
Saint Dionysos (Denis in French) was the apostle that brought Christianity to Gaul and who died a martyr’s death there in the third century. A church was built in his honor just a few miles north of Paris. The church housed the Saint’s tomb and those of French Kings, as well as a banner said to have belonged to Charlemagne. The Carolingian basilica was France’s royal church, the very symbol of the monarchy. The original building had fallen into disrepair and had become too small to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims. Its abbot, Sugar, also believed it was of insufficient grandeur to
serve as the official church of the French kings. Thus he began to rebuild the church in 1135 by erecting a new west facade with sculpted portals. In 1140, work began on the east end. Sugar died before he could remodel the nave, but he attended the 1144 dedication of the new choir, ambulatory, and radiating chapel. The dedication was also attended by King Louis VII of France, his Queen, Royal court members, and clergy, including five arch bishops.

Because the French considered the old church a relic in its own right, the new east wing had to conform to the dimensions of the crypt below it. Even with this confining prerequisite, the remodeled portion of Saint Denis represented a sharp break with the past and displays the basic features of the new Gothic style of architecture. **Innovative rib vaults resting on pointed arches cover the ambulatory and chapels.** These pioneering, exceptionally light vaults spring from slender columns in the ambulatory and from the thin masonry walls framing the chapels. The rib vaults distinguishing feature is the crossed, or diagonal arches under its groins, as seen in Saint Denis’ ambulatory and chapels. These arches, or ribs, form the armature or skeletal framework for constructing the vault. Gothic vaults generally have more thinly vaulted webs between the arches than Romanesque vaults have. But the chief difference between Gothic ribbed and Romanesque vaults is the pointed arch. The pointed arch was first widely used in Sasanian architecture and later was adopted by Islamic builders. French Romanesque architects borrowed the form from Muslim Spain and passed it to their Gothic successors. **Pointed arches allowed Gothic builders to make the crowns of all the vaults arches approximately the same level, regardless of the space to be vaulted. The Romanesque architects could not achieve this with their semicircular arches.** Pointed arches also permit the vaulting of compartments of varying shapes. Pointed arches more directly channel the weight of the vaults downward than do semicircular vaults. The vaults therefore require less buttressing to hold them in place, in turn permitting opening up of the walls with large windows beneath the arches.

**The lightness of the vaults enabled the builders to eliminate the walls between the chapels and open up the outer walls and fill them with stained glass windows.** Sugar and his contemporaries marveled at the “wonderful uninterrupted light” that poured in through the “most sacred windows.” Sugar called the colored light **lux nova, “new light.”** The multicolored rays coming through the windows shone on the walls and columns, almost dissolving them.

Pointed arches also visually lead the viewer upward, aiding the Gothic builder in his quest for soaring height in the interior. **Both the new type of vaulting and the use of stained glass became hallmarks of French Gothic architecture.**

**Sculpture**
Saint Denis is also the key monument of early Gothic sculpture. Little of the sculpture commissioned by Sugar survived the French Revolution, but much of the 12th century sculpture is still intact. It has a double tower Westworks as at Saint Etienne at Caen and
has massive walls as in the Romanesque tradition. A restored large central rose window (a circular stained glass window), was a new feature that became standard in French Gothic architecture, punctuates the facade’s upper story. For the three portals, Sugar imported sculptors that continued to work in the Romanesque tradition. But at Saint Denis, the sculptors introduced statues of Old Testament kings, queens, and prophets attached to the columns, which screened the jambs of all three doorways.

**Chartres Cathedral**  
Chartres was first built in 1134 and destroyed by fire in 1194 before it was completed. The lower parts of the massive west towers and the portals between them are all that is left of the cathedral built in 1134. Reconstruction of the cathedral began immediately in the high Gothic style. The wests portals constitute the most complete and impressive surviving ensemble of Early Gothic sculpture.

**Thierry of Chartres**, chancellor of the Cathedral School of Chartres, from 1141 until his death 10 years later, may have conceived the complex iconographic program. The archivolts of the right portal, for example, depict the seven female Liberal Arts and their male companions. The figures represent the core of medieval learning and symbolize human knowledge, which Thierry and others believed led to true faith.

The sculptures of the west facade proclaim the majesty and power of Christ. To unite the three doorways iconographically and visually, the sculptors carved episodes of Christ’s life on the capitals, which form a kind of frieze linking one entrance to the next. In the tympanum on the right portal, Christ appears in the lap of the Virgin Mary (Notre Dame). Scenes of his birth and early life fill the lintel below. The tympanums theme and composition recall Byzantine representations of Theotokos as well as the Romanesque Throne of Wisdom. But Mary’s prominence on the Chartres facade has no parallel in the decoration of Romanesque church portals. At Chartres the designers gave her a central role in the sculptural program, a position she maintained throughout the Gothic period. The cult of the Virgin Mary reached a high point in the Gothic age. As the Mother of Christ, she stood compassionately between the Last Judge and the horrors of Hell, interceding for all her faithful. Worshippers in the later 12th and 13th centuries sang hymns to her, put her image everywhere, and dedicated great theaters to her. Soldiers carried the Virgin’s image into battle on banners and her name joined that of Saint Dennis as part of the French king’s battle cry. Mary became the spiritual lady of chivalry and the Christian knight dedicated his life to her. The severity of Romanesque themes stressing the Last Judgment yielded to the gentleness of the Gothic art, in which Mary is the kindly Queen of Heaven.

Christ’s Ascension into Heaven appears in the tympanum of the left portal. All around, in the archivolts, are the signs of the zodiac and scenes representing the various labors of the months of the year. They are the symbols of the cosmic and earthly worlds. The Second Coming is the subject of the central tympanum. The signs of the Four
Evangelists, the Twenty Four Elders of the Apocalypse, and the Twelve Apostles appear around Christ or on the lintel. The Second Coming theme -- in essence, the Last Judgment scene -- was still of central importance, as it was in Romanesque portals. But at Early Gothic Chartres the theme became a symbol of salvation rather than damnation.

Statue-Columns
Statues and Old Testament kings and queens decorate the jambs flanking each doorway of the Royal Portal. They are the royal ancestors of Christ and, both literally and figuratively, support the New Testament figures above the doorways. They wear 12th century clothes and medical observers also regarded them as images of the kings and queens of France, symbols of secular as well as biblical authority.

Seen from a distance, the statue-columns appear to be little more than vertical decorative accents within the larger composition. The figures are rigid and tightly composed. The linear drapery of Romanesque influence, echo the vertical lines of the columns behind them. In this respect, Gothic jamb statues differ significantly from classical caryatids. The Gothic figures are attached to columns. The classical statues replaced the columns. And yet, despite these confining qualities, the statues display the first signs of a new naturalism. They stand out from the plane of the wall and are treated by the sculptors as three dimensional volumes. The new naturalism is especially noticeable in the human faces that replace the mask like features of most Romanesque figures. At Chartres, a personalization of appearance began that was transformed first into idealized portraits of the perfect Christian and finally, by 1400, into the portraiture of specific individuals. The sculptors of the royal portal statues initiated an era of artistic concern with personality and individuality.

Fundraising
Churches burned frequently in the Middle Ages, and church officials often had to raise money suddenly for new building campaigns. In contrast to monastic churches, which usually were small and completed fairly quickly, the building histories of urban cathedrals often extended over decades and sometimes over centuries. Their financing depended largely on collections and public contributions (not always voluntary), and a lack of funds often interrupted building programs. Unforeseen events such as wars, famines, and plagues, or friction between the town and cathedral authorities would often stop construction; sometimes for years. At Reims the clergy offered indulgences (pardons for sins committed) to those who helped underwrite the enormous cost of erecting the cathedral. The rebuilding of Chartres Cathedral after the fire of 1194 took a relatively short 27 years, but at one point the townspeople revolted against the prospect of a heavier tax burden. The stormed the bishops residence and drove him into exile four years.
Chartres after 1194
"In 1194, the master-builder of Chartres outlined new principles which would inspire all the great architects of the 13th century. The elevation was in three tiers as it had no gallery (the relationship between the three levels should be noted), and the vaulting was quadripartite, which eliminated the need for alternating supports. Externally, an important change was introduced by abandoning the five towers initially planned over the transepts."


Architectural historians usually consider the post 1194 Chartres Cathedral the first High Gothic building. The Chartres plan reveals a new kind of organization. Rectangular nave bays replaced the square bays with sexpartite vaults and an alternate support system. The new system, in which the rectangular unit in the nave defined by its own vault was flanked by a single square in each aisle rather than two, as before, became the High Gothic norm. A change in vault design and the abandonment of the alternate support system usually accompanied this new bay arrangement. The High Gothic vault, which covered a relatively smaller area and therefore braced more easily, than its early Gothic predecessor, had only four parts. The visual effect of these changes was to unify the interior. The High Gothic architect aligned identical units so that the viewers saw them in too rapid a sequence to perceive them as individual volumes of space. The nave became a vast, continuous hall.

High Gothic Elevation and Buttressing
The 1194 Chartres Cathedral was also the first church to have been planned from the beginning with flying buttresses, another key High Gothic feature. The flying buttresses made it possible to eliminate the tribune above the aisle, which had partially buttressed or braced Romanesque and Early Gothic naves. The new High Gothic tripartite elevation consisted of arcade, triforium, and clerestory with greatly enlarged windows. The Chartres windows are almost as high as the main arcade and consist of double lancets crowned by a single oculus. The strategic placement of flying buttresses permitted the construction of nave walls with so many voids that heavy masonry played a minor role.

The large amount of stone used in the buttressing system at Chartres reflects a high level of conservatism. Four-part vaulting in rectangular bays had not been employed at this scale before, and the masons "overbuilt" the buttressing to be sure adequate support would be provided.

Stained Glass
Despite the vastly increased size of the clerestory windows, the Chartres nave is relatively dark. The reason is the light muffling colored glass that fills the windows. These windows were not meant to illuminate the interior with bright sunlight but to transform the natural light, into what was called by Abbot Suger, “lux nova.” Lux
Nova was an effect created by the light coming in and filtered through the colored glass. The stained glass windows do not conceal the walls, as the mosaics and paintings of the Byzantine and Early Middle Ages, but rather replaced them. They transmit rather than reflect light. Suger wrote, “Stained glass windows are the Holy Scriptures... and since their brilliance lets the True Light pass into the church, they enlighten those inside. Suger felt he was “dwelling... in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven.” The church permeated with light was a weigh station on the road to paradise, which “transported him from this inferior to that higher world.” Sugar’s forceful justification of costly art set the stage for the proliferation of costly stained glass windows and sculptures in the great Cathedrals of the Gothic Age. Chartres retains almost all of its original stained glass windows enabling the viewer to feel the effect of the designer’s original intention.

The Virgin’s Window
One Chartres window that survived the fire of 1194 as was reused in the High Gothic cathedral is a tall single lancet the French call “Our Lady of the Beautiful Window.” The central panel, depicting the Virgin Mary enthroned with the Christ Child in her lap, dates to 1170 and has a red background. The framing angels against the blue background were added in the 13th century when the windows were installed in the new choir. The artist represented Mary as beautiful, young, and rather worldly Queen of Heaven, haloed, crowned, and accompanied by the dove of the Holy Spirit. The frontal composition is traditional showing Byzantine influence. Here we can the difference in the way Gothic and Byzantine builders used light to transform the material world into the spiritual, but in opposite ways. In Gothic architecture, light entered from outside the building through a screen of stone set colored glass. In Byzantine architecture, light was reflected from myriad glass tesserae set into the thick masonry wall.

A Queen’s Gift to Chartres
Chartres 13th century Gothic windows are even more spectacular because they were designed from the outset to fill the entire wall thanks to the introduction of flying buttresses. The immense rose window @ 43 feet in diameter, and tall lancets, placed in Chartres’ north transept were the gift of the Queen of France, Blanche of Castile, around 1220. The royal motifs of yellow castles on red background and yellow Fleurs-de-lis - three petaled iris flowers - on a blue background fill the eight narrow windows in the rose’s narrow spandrels. The iconography is fitting for a queen. The enthroned Virgin and Child appear in the roundel at the center of the rose window, which resembles a gem studded book cover or cloisonné brooch. Around her are four doves of the Holy Spirit and eight angels. Twelve square panels contain images of Old Testament kings, including David and Solomon (at 12 and 1 o’clock respectively). These are the royal ancestors of Christ. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come from the family of the patriarch Jesse, father of David. This genealogical “tree of Jesse” is a familiar motif of medieval art. Below in the central lancet is Saint Anne and the baby Virgin. They are flanked on either side by four of Christ’s Old Testament ancestors.
From the left are, Melchizedek, David, Solomon, and Aaron. Many Gothic stained glass windows iconographic programs are as complex as those of the sculptured church portals.

The light through the windows changes in hue and intensity with the different hours of the day. Solid architecture is turned into a floating vision of the celestial heavens. Here the Gothic passion for luminous colored light led to a most daring and successful attempt to subtract all superfluous material bulk just short of destabilizing the structure. The fact that this vast, complex fabric of stone set glass has maintained its structural integrity for almost 800 years attests to the Gothic builders’ engineering genius.

**Portal Sculptures After 1194**
The sculptures adorning the portals of the two new Chartres transepts erected after the 1194 fire are examples of the new High Gothic Spirit. The transept portals project more forcefully from the church than do the Early Gothic portals of its west facade. Similarly, the statues of saints on the portal jambs are more independent from their architectural framework. Three figures from the Porch of the Confessors in the south transept reveal the great changes Gothic sculpture underwent since the sculptures of the Royal Portal of the mid - 12th century. These changes recall in many ways the revolutionary developments in ancient Greek sculpture during the transition from the archaic to the Classical style. The Chartres transept statues illustrated here date from 1220 to 1230 and represent Saints Martin, Jerome, and Gregory. Although the figures are still attached to columns, the architectural setting does not determine their poses as much as it did on the west portals. The Saints communicate quietly with one another, like waiting dignitaries. They turn slightly toward and away from each other, breaking the rigid vertical lines. The drapery folds are not stiff and shallow vertical accents; the fabric falls and laps over the bodies in soft, if still regular, folds.

The sculptor gave the figures individualized features and distinctive personalities and clothed them in the period’s liturgical costumes. St. Martin is a tall, intense priest with gaunt features. St. Jerome appears as a kindly, practical, administrator-scholar, holding his copy of the Holy Scriptures. Saint Gregory is introspective and seems lost in thought as he listens to the dove of the Holy Spirit in his shoulders.

**The Ideal Warrior**
The south transept figure of Saint Theodore the martyred warrior on the Porch of the Martyrs, presents an even sharper contrast with Early Gothic jamb statues. St. Theodore is portrayed as the ideal Christian Knight. We see the turn of the head and the sway of the hip call to mind the contrapposto of Classical Greek statuary. It is not inappropriate to speak of the changes that occurred in the 13th century Gothic sculpture as a second “Classical revolution.”

**The Quest for Height**
Chartres Cathedral was one of the most influential buildings in the history of architecture. Its builders set the pattern that many other Gothic architects followed, even if they
refined the details. Construction of Amiens Cathedral began in 1220 while work was still in progress at Chartres. The architects were Robert De Luzarches, Thomas De Cormont, and Renaud De Cormont. The builders finished the nave in 1236 and the radiating chapel by 1247, but work on the choir continued to almost 1270. Amiens nave elevation is derived from the High Gothic formula established at Chartres. But Amiens proportions are even more elegant, and the number and complexity of the lancet windows in both its clerestory and triforium are even greater. The whole design reflects the builder’s confident use of the High Gothic structural vocabulary: the rectangular bay system, the four part rib vault, and a buttressing system that permitted almost a complete dissolution of heavy masses and thick weight bearing walls. At Amiens, the concept of a self sustaining skeletal architecture reached full maturity. What remained as walls was stretched like a skin between the piers and seems to serve no purpose other than to provide a weather screen for the interior. The French Gothic architects were obsessed with constructing ever taller cathedrals, pushing to ever new heights with ever more slender supports. The nave vaults at Chartres rise to a height of 118 feet. Those at Amiens rise to 144 feet above the floor. Almost every part of the superstructure has its corresponding element below. The overall effect is of effortless strength, a lightness not normally associated with stone architecture. The light flooding in from the clerestory makes the vaults seem insubstantial. The defining effect of light recalls Hagia Sophia, though utterly different. The designers reduced the building’s physical mass by structural ingenuity and daring, and light dematerializes further what remains. If Hagia Sophia is the perfect expression of Byzantine spirituality in architecture, Amiens with its soaring vaults and giant windows admitting divine colored light, is its Gothic counterpart.

Amiens West Facade
Work began on Amiens west facade at the same time as the nave (1220). The portals are funnel-like and gable covered. The exterior walls and towers are deeply pierced seeming to leave few continuous surfaces for decoration. The surfaces that remain are covered with a network of colonnettes, arches, pinnacles, rosettes, and other decorative stonework that visually screens and nearly dissolves the structure’s solid core. Sculpture also extends to the area above the portals, especially the band of statues (called the king’s gallery) running the full width of the facade directly below the rose window. The uneven towers were later additions. The shorter one dates from the 14th century and the taller one to the 15th century.

The most prominent statute on the facade is of Christ (the Beau Dieu or Beautiful God) on the central doorways trumeau. What do we notice about the figure: fully modeled drapery! Statue stands as freely and independent as any Gothic facade statue has, even with the architectural canopy over Christ’s head. Above the canopy is the tympanum depicting Christ as Last Judge. But the Christ of the trumeau is a handsome kindly figure who does not strike terror into sinners. Instead he blesses those who enter the church and tramples a lion and dragon symbolizing the evil forces of the world. This image of Christ gives mankind hope in salvation. The Beautiful God epitomizes the bearded
benevolent image of Christ that replaced the youthful Early Christian Christ and the stern Byzantine Pantokrator as the preferred representation of the savior in later European art. The figures quiet grace and grandeur contrasts sharply with the emotional intensity of the twisting Romanesque prophet carved in relief on the Moissac trumeau.

Reims Cathedral
Construction at Reims began only a few years after the work commenced at Amiens. The Reims builders carried the High Gothic style of the Amiens west facade even further, both architecturally and sculpturally. The two similar facades display significant differences. The kings’ gallery of statues at Reims is above the great rose window rather than below and the figures stand in taller and more ornate frames. In fact the designer stretched every detail of the facade. The openings in the towers and those to the left and right of the rose window are taller, narrower, and more intricately decorated, and more closely resemble the elegant lancets of the clerestory within. A pointed arch also frames the rose window itself and the pinnacles over the portals are taller and more elaborate than those at Amiens. The most striking, however, is the treatment of the tympanums over the doorways, where stain glassed windows replaced the stone relief sculpture of earlier facades. The contrast with Romanesque heavy masonry construction is extreme, but the rapid transformation of the Gothic facade since the 12th century is no less noteworthy.

Statues
At Reims the fully ripened Gothic style also can be seen in sculpture. At first glance, the statues appear to be completely detached from their architectural background. The sculptors shrunk the supporting columns into insignificance so that they in no way restrict the free and easy movements of the full bodied figures. The two jamb statues illustrated portray Saint Elizabeth visiting the Virgin Mary before the birth of Christ. The subject of Mary here gives further evidence of the Virgin's central role in Gothic iconography. The sculptor of this group displays a classicizing bent unlike anything seen since Roman times. The artist probably studied classical statuary in France, though specific pieces have not been identified. The Reims master incorporated Greek contrapposto beyond the stance of Saint Theodore. The right legs bend and the knee presses through the rippling folds of the garments. The arms are gestural and in motion and their faces turn toward each other.

Book Illumination and Luxury Arts
Paris was the intellectual center of Gothic Europe because of its universities, architects, masons, sculptors, and stained glass makers. It was also famous for its publication of fine books. The Gothic period is when book manufacture shifted from monastic scriptoria shut off from the world to urban workshops staffed by lay persons. The owners of these new for profit secular businesses sold their products to the royal family, scholars, and prosperous merchants. Concentrated in Paris, these Gothic shops were the forerunners of modern publishing houses. This is covered in your reading.
**Gothic Outside of France**

The Parisian Gothic style, in the second half of the 13th century became the dominant style throughout Western Europe. European architects did not, however, turn Gothic all at once or in a uniform way. Almost everywhere, patrons and builders modified the “court style” according to local preferences. Because the old Romanesque traditions lingered on in many places, each area, marrying its local Romanesque design to the new style, developed its own brand of Gothic architecture.

**England**

Salisbury Cathedral embodies the essential characteristics of English Gothic architecture. Begun in 1220, the same year work started on Amiens Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral was completed in about 40 years. The two cathedrals are almost exactly contemporary and the differences in them are very instructive. Although Salisbury’s facade has lancet windows and blind arcades with pointed arches, as well as statuary, it presents a striking contrast to French designs. **The English facade is a squat screen in front of the nave wider than the building behind it. The soaring height of the French facades is absent.** The Salisbury facade also does not correspond to the three part division of the interior (nave and two aisles). Different too is the emphasis on the great crossing tower (added 1320 - 1330), which dominates the silhouette. Salisbury’s height is modest compared to Amiens and Reims. Because height is not a decisive factor in the English building, the architect used the flying buttresses sparingly and as a rigid prop, rather than as an integral part of the vaulting system within the church. English builders adopted some of the superficial motifs of French Gothic architecture but did not embrace its structural logic or emphasis on height.

Equally distinctive is the long rectilinear plan with its double transept and flat eastern end (as opposed to an apse). This latter feature had been popular in England since Romanesque times. The interior, although Gothic, in its three story elevation, pointed arches, four part rib vaults, and compound piers, conspicuously departs from the French Gothic Style. The pier colonnettes stop at the springing of the nave arches and do not connect with the vault ribs. Instead, the vault ribs rise from the corbels in the triforium, producing a strong horizontal emphasis. Underscoring this horizontality is the rich color contrast between the light stone of the walls and vaults and the dark marble used for the triforium moldings and corbels, compound pier responds, and other details. While the influence of French Gothic is evident, the Cathedral is distinctly English.

**The Perpendicular Style**

Early on, English architecture was attracted to architectural pattern for its own sake, such as the patterning on the Romanesque piers of Durham Cathedral. Structural logic, expressed in the building fabric, was secondary. The pier, wall, and vault elements, still relatively simple at Salisbury, became increasingly complex and decorative in the 14th century. **Architectural historians usually call the English Gothic architectural style of that period the decorated style.** The choir of Gloucester Cathedral, remodeled a
century after Salisbury, illustrates the transition from the Decorated to the Last English Gothic style, the **Perpendicular style**. The newer style took its name from the pronounced verticality of its decorative details, in contrast to the horizontal emphasis of Salisbury and early English Gothic.

A single enormous window divided into tiers of small windows of like shape and proportion fills the characteristically flat east end of the Gloucester Cathedral. The design has much in common with the screen facade at Salisbury, but the proportions are different. Vertical, as opposed to horizontal, lines dominate. Vertical wall elements lift directly from the floor to the vaulting, unifying the walls with the vaults in the French manner. **The vault ribs, which designers had begun to multiply soon after Salisbury, are at Gloucester a dense thicket of entirely ornamental strands that serve no structural purpose.** The choir, in fact, is not covered by rib vaults at all but by a continuous Romanesque barrel vault with applied Gothic ornament. In the Gloucester choir, the taste for decorative surfaces triumphed over structural honesty.

**Fan Vaults**
The decorative and structure disguising qualities of the Perpendicular style became even more pronounced in its last phases. A primary example is the early 16th century ceiling of the chapel of Henry VII adjoining Westminster Abbey in London. In this chapel, the earlier linear play of ribs became a kind of architectural embroidery. The architect pulled the ribs into a uniquely English **fan vault** shapes with large hanging pendants resembling stalactites. Intricate tracery recalling lace overwhelms the cones hanging from the ceiling. The chapel represents the dissolution of structural Gothic into decorative fancy. The architect released the Gothic style’s original lines from their function and multiplied them into the uninhibited architectural virtuosity and theatrics of the Perpendicular Style.

**Germany**
**Marburg’s Hall Church**
A different type of design, also probably French in origin, but developed especially in Germany, is the **hall church or Hallenkirche**, in which the aisles are the same height as the nave. Hall churches, consequently, have no tribune, triforium, or clerestory. An early German example of this type is the church of **Saint Elizabeth at Marburg built between 1235 and 1283**. It incorporates French inspired rib vaults with pointed arches and tall lancet windows. The facade has two spire capped towers in the French manner but no tracery arcades or portal sculpture. Because the aisles provide much of the bracing for the nave vaults, the exterior of Saint Elizabeth is without a dramatic parade of flying buttresses that typically encircle French Gothic churches. But the German interior, lighted by double rows of tall windows in the aisle walls is more unified and free flowing, less narrow and divided, and more brightly illuminated than the interiors of French and English Gothic churches.
Strasbourg Cathedral
In 1176 a new cathedral was built in the city of Strasbourg that was a city ruled by the successors of Ottonian rulers and is today a French city. The apse, choir, and transepts were in place around 1240. Stylistically, these sections of the new church were Romanesque. But the reliefs of the two south transept portals are fully Gothic and reveal the impact of contemporary French sculpture, especially that of Reims.

The left tympanum illustrates the theme of the death of the Virgin Mary. A comparison of the Strasbourg Mary on her deathbed with the Mary of the Reims Visitation group suggests that the German master had studied the recently installed French jamb statues. The Twelve Apostles gather round the Virgin, forming an arc of mourners well suited to the semicircular frame. At the center Christ receives his mother’s soul; the doll like figure in his left hand. Mary Magdalene, wringing her hands in grief, crouches beside her deathbed. The figures express emotion in varying degrees of intensity. The sculptor organized the group by dramatic pose and gesture but also by the rippling flow of deeply incised drapery that passes among them. The sculptor’s objective was to imbue the sacred figures with human emotions and stir emotional responses in observers. In Gothic France, as already mentioned, art became increasingly humanized and natural. In Gothic Germany, artists carried this humanizing trend even further by emphasizing passionate drama.

Donor Portraits
The sculptor entrusted with the decoration of the west choir of Naumburg Cathedral had a different task. The task was to carve statues of the twelve benefactors of the original 11th century church on the occasion of a new fund raising campaign. The vivid gestures of the Strasbourg tympanum contrast with the quiet solemnity of the Naumburg statues. Two of the statues stand out because of their exceptional quality. They represent the German military governor Ekkehard II of Meissen and his wife Uta. The statues are attached to columns and stand beneath architectural canopies, following the pattern of French portal statuary. Their location indoors accounts for the preservation of much of the original paint. These to figures give us some idea of how the facade and transept sculptures of Gothic cathedrals once looked. The period costumes and individualized features and personalities of Ekkehard and his wife give the impression that they sat for their portraits though they lived many years before the sculptor’s time. Ekkehard looks stout and intense while his wife is beautiful and aloof. The drapery and the body it enfolds are distinct. Uta’s arm is subtly seen underneath her cloak and rendered the fall of the folds with the accuracy that indicates the use of a model. By the mid 13th century, life size images of secular personages had found their way into churches.

Equestrian Statuary
Somewhat earlier than the Naumburg portraits is the equestrian statue known as the Bamberg Rider. For centuries the statue has been mounted against a pier in Bamberg Cathedral beneath an architectural canopy that frames the rider not the horse. There is
debate as to if this was the original location of the statue. **This statue revives imagery of the Carolingian Empire, which was derived from that of ancient Rome.**

The Bamberg Rider seems to be a true portrait. Some think Frederick II, who was benefactor of Bamberg Cathedral, but it may be some other historical personality. The presence of a Holy Roman Emperor in the cathedral would have underscored the unity of church and the state in 13th century Germany.

**Mary Grieves for Christ**

A very different sculpture is a haunting portrayal of the Virgin Mary holding the dead Christ in her lap. **The widespread troubles of the 14th century - war, plague, famine, and social strife - brought on an ever more acute awareness of suffering.** This found its way into religious art. A **fevered and fearful piety sought comfort and reassurance in the reflection that Christ and the Virgin Mother shared in humanity’s woes.** To represent this, **artists emphasized the traits of human suffering in powerful, expressive exaggeration.** The carved and painted wood group here is called a **Pieta, “pity” or “compassion” in Italian.** The sculptor portrayed Christ as a stunted and distorted human wreck, stiffened in death and covered with streams of blood gushing from a huge wound. The Virgin Mother, who cradles him like a child in her lap, is the very image of anguish, her oversized face twisted in an expression of unbearable grief. **This statue contrasts with the serenity of earlier Romanesque depictions of Mary.** It also contrasts greatly with the Byzantine depictions of Mary as aloof and iconic as the Theotokos. Here the artist forcibly confronts the devout with an appalling icon of agony, death and sorrow that humanizes, almost to the point of heresy, the sacred personages. The work cries out to the horrified believer, “What is your suffering compared to this?”

**The humanizing of religious themes and religious images accelerated steadily from the 12th century.** By the 14th century, art addressed the private person in a direct appeal to the emotions. **The expression of feeling accompanied the representation of the human body in motion.** As the figures of the church portals began to twist on the columns, then move within their niches, and then stand independently, their details became more outwardly related to the human audience as expressions of recognizable human emotions.

**Italy**

Nowhere is the regional diversity of Gothic architecture more evident than in Italy. Italian architects stood apart from the development north of the Alps. Many Italian Romanesque churches resemble Early Christian Basilicas than contemporary buildings in France, Germany, or England. Few Italian architects accepted the northern Gothic style. Some architectural historians even have questioned whether it is proper to speak of Late Medieval Italian buildings as Gothic structures.
Orvieto Cathedral
The west facade of Orvieto Cathedral is typical of late medieval architecture of Italy. Designed in the early 14th century by Lorenzo Maitani, the facade has some elements of the French Gothic architectural vocabulary; the pointed gables over the three doorways, the rose window in the upper zone framed by statues in niches, and in the four large pinnacles that divide the facade into three bays. The outer pinnacles serve as miniature substitutes for the big Northern European west front towers. Maitani’s facade is, however, merely a Gothic overlay masking a marble revetted basilican structure. The Orvieto facade resembles a great alter screen, its single plane covered with carefully placed carved and painted ornament. In principle Orvieto belongs with Pisa cathedral rather than Amiens or Reims Cathedrals. Inside Orvieto has a timber roofed nave with a two story elevation (columnar arcade and clerestory) in the Early Christian manner. The triumphal arch framing, the apse, and the nave’s arcade arches are round as opposed to pointed.

Doge’s Palace, Venice
Venice was one of the wealthiest cities of late medieval Italy and all of Europe. It was renowned for its streets of water. Situated on a lagoon Venice was secure from land attack and could rely on a powerful navy for protection against invasion from the sea. Venice was a tight corporation of ruling families who for centuries provided stable rule and fostered economic growth. The Venetian republic’s seat of government was the Doge’s (Duke’s) Palace. Begun around 1340-1345 and significantly remodeled after 1424, it was the most ornate public building in medieval Italy. In a stately march, the first level’s short and heavy columns support rather severe pointed arches that look strong enough to carry the weight of the upper structure. Their rhythm is doubled in the upper arcades, where more slender columns carry ogee arches, which terminate in flame like tips between medallions pierced with quatrefoils. Each story is taller than the one beneath it, the topmost as high as the two lower arcades combined. Yet the building does not look top heavy. This is due in part to the complete absence of articulation in the top story and in part to the walls delicate patterning, in cream and rose colored marbles, which make them appear paper thin. The Doge’s Palace is a monumental representative of a variant of Late Gothic architecture, colorful, decorative, light, and airy in appearance, and not overloaded. The Venetian Gothic was ideally suited to Venice, which floats between water and air.

Milan’s Cathedral
When Milan’s citizens decided to build their own cathedral in 1386, the invited experts from France, Germany, England, and Italy. The masters argued among themselves and with the city council, and no single architect was Domenico. The result was “architecture by committee.” The building’s proportions, particularly the nave’s became Italian (that is wide in relation to height), and the surface decorations and details remained Gothic. Clearly derived from France are the cathedral’s multitude of pinnacles and the elaborate tracery on the facade, flank, and transept. But even before the building was half finished, the new classical style of the Italian Renaissance had been well launched, and the Gothic
design had become outdated. Thus Milan’s Cathedral’s elaborate facade represents a confused mixture of Late Gothic and classicizing Renaissance elements. With its pediment-capped rectilinear portal amid Gothic pinnacles, the cathedral stands as a symbol of the waning of the Gothic style.

Conclusion
The story of Gothic art and architecture begins in France around 1140. At Saint Denis, Paris, Chartres, and elsewhere, French architects pioneered a new building style. Using rib vaults with pointed arches, flying buttresses, and stained glass windows, French builders constructed towering cathedrals with statue lined portals and interiors flooded with mystical multicolored light. Contemporaries regarded the new Gothic churches as images of the City of God on earth.

The French architectural style spread quickly throughout Europe, along with it the Parisian court style of book illumination and free standing sculpture. Regional diversity in the Gothic style was the norm, as it was in the Romanesque period. In England, architects embraced many of the characteristics of contemporary French architecture but not its structural logic or emphasis on height. Italian builders adhered so tenaciously to the Early Christian basilican tradition that some scholars do not consider Italian architecture of the period Gothic at all. But the Italians were pioneers in other fields, especially painting, and it was Italy, not France, that was shortly to become the birthplace of the new age known as the Renaissance.