

Talking Gothic



Style and Structure at Rosslyn Chapel



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Student Name:

Activity 1: What is Gothic?

In this lesson, we're going to discuss what Gothic means. By looking at pictures of sites from around Scotland, we will try to figure out what they all have in common that makes them Gothic. Your teacher will put photographs of 4 sites on the board: Dunkeld Cathedral, Glasgow Cathedral, St. Andrews Cathedral, and University of Glasgow.

As you look at these photographs, ask yourself the following question and write down your ideas:

What do these 4 sites have in common?

What exactly is *Gothic*?

Gothic architecture comes from the late medieval period, and was popular all over Europe. As a style, it developed from the Romanesque period, and was followed by the Renaissance. When Gothic architecture was in fashion, it was called the "Modern Style," and was considered daring and fantastical. Only after the style lost its popularity was it coined Gothic. The majority of Gothic buildings that exist today are churches or other ecclesiastic structures.

In the 19th Century, Europe saw a revival of the Gothic style. Referred to as the Gothic Revival, or High Victorian Gothic in Britain, this period promoted the Gothic style as the preferred style for religious, civic, and other institutional buildings and structures. With this more universal appeal to the decorative Gothic style, the Gothic Revival period is visible today in churches, parliament buildings, and residential housing.

The Gothic Revival continued into the 20th-century, when many universities were built in the Gothic style.

There are several defining characteristics of Gothic architecture of all periods. Once you know these characteristics, you will be able to identify a Gothic building immediately, just by looking at it. So what are they?

Define the following Gothic characteristics:

1. **Height**
2. **Flying Buttresses**
3. **Pointed Arches**
4. **Vaulted Ceilings**
5. **Gargoyles**
6. **Decorative and Ornate**

Can you identify Gothic?

Now look at a new set of examples. Some of these sites are Gothic, but others are not. They are: Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany; Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA; the Geisal Library in San Diego, California, USA; and the Queen's House in Greenwich, England.

Based on your earlier investigation, determine which buildings are Gothic and which are not. Circle the key areas or features that prove that it is a Gothic site – you need to defend this to the class!

Take-home Assignment:

Now that you can successfully identify Gothic buildings, can you think of any that are in your town or nearby towns? As you learned earlier, the Gothic Revival took place in the 19th Century, and this style became the preferred style for religious, civic, and other buildings at the time. This means that many buildings built during this time are in the Gothic style.

Take photographs of any buildings in your town or nearby towns that are Gothic. If you do not live in an area with Gothic buildings, find photographs on the Internet. Ask your teacher about how to post these photographs to share and discuss with the class!

Activity 2: Bringing Gothic to Us

In this step, we will visit Rosslyn Chapel, a famous 15th-century Gothic chapel in Roslin, Scotland. We will learn how to document a site by looking at its characteristics and symbols.

Characteristics: We learned about 6 characteristics on page 3 of this handout. Refer to this list as you document different characteristics at Rosslyn.

Symbols: Symbols are different than characteristics – symbols are objects that represent an idea or belief. Rosslyn Chapel has many symbols about religion, nature, and mythology.

Your teacher will give you a **Documentation Worksheet**. Look through the entire worksheet before you begin to walk through Rosslyn Chapel individually or as part of a tour. Remember to take notes as you explore the site!

As you walk through the chapel, list 4 Gothic characteristics and 4 symbols that you see. Read your Documentation Worksheet thoroughly for instructions. If you have any questions, ask your teacher promptly.

If you need additional time, you can take a virtual tour of Rosslyn Chapel on CyArk's website (www.cyark.org)!

Thinking Beyond (take-home writing assignment):

In the Gothic style, much emphasis was placed on ornate decorations and carvings. This practice can be very expensive, so we do not see this as often today. How do people decorate their homes and churches today? What materials are used to do so? Who pays to build a church? In answering these questions, think about patronage, gifted features (like stained glass windows, carved seats, etc), and other signage within a church that indicates that someone has contributed money and resources to the establishment.

Activity 3: Important Characteristics

Explore CyArk's website: <http://archive.cyark.org/>. Find Rosslyn Chapel's webpage on CyArk's archive, and look through the multimedia section. You should be able to recognise many characteristics from your visit to Rosslyn Chapel.

What kinds of multimedia do you see? Define each.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Which examples of multimedia come from laser scan data? Please list.

In your group, agree upon one characteristic which **BEST** characterises Rosslyn Chapel. Refer to your **Documentation Worksheet Part 1** for the 4 Gothic characteristics you observed at Rosslyn Chapel.

Remember that you have 6 options for characteristics to begin with: (1) Height, (2) Flying Buttresses, (3) Pointed Arches, (4) Vaulted Ceilings, (5) Gargoyles, and (6) Decorative and Ornate. If there is another characteristic you want to choose outside of this list, feel free to do so!

If you had to pick 1 characteristic to summarize the style and character of Rosslyn Chapel, what would it be?

This should be something unique to Rosslyn Chapel or to the Gothic style. Make it something that you really like.

Feel free to choose one of the 6 characteristics listed above, or pick something entirely new.

Once you have agreed upon 1 characteristic which best characterises Rosslyn Chapel, answer the following questions as a group:

1. What is the characteristic and where is it located?

2. Why did you choose it?

3. Why is it important to Rosslyn Chapel

4. In your group's opinion, why is this characteristic THE most important one?

In your groups, prepare a 5-minute presentation answering these questions for the class. Try to convince the rest of the class why this characteristic is the best at Rosslyn Chapel. Make sure everyone in your group gets the chance to speak.

Activity 4: Today's Symbols

Pull out your **Documentation Worksheet Part 2**. As you explore CyArk's digital archive, look for any of the symbols that you wrote down on your worksheet. Can you find any of your symbols?

Define symbol:

(Hint: Refer to Documentation Worksheet Part 2)

This step is made in two parts. First, you will pick one symbol that you like and find it elsewhere in your community, and second, you will create an architectural style that is your own design.

Part 1: Looking through CyArk's digital archive, find one symbol that you really liked. This can be a repeated symbol from your Documentation Worksheet.

Why do you like this symbol?

What does it remind you of?

Can you make a guess about its religious or other significance?

Go home this evening and look around your home and neighborhood. Look specifically for this symbol, or something like it. If you can't find your symbol, look closely for other symbols, and write about them.

Where did you see your symbol? If you didn't see your symbol, where did you see other symbols? Take a photograph to show the class.

In a drawing notebook, make a sketch of what the symbol in your community looks like.

Part 2: Imagine that there is an architectural style named after you!
List 6 characteristics that define your individual style.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

What symbols would you use?

What materials would be used?

Would your style interact with nature or the community? Describe what your buildings would be used for.

Include a quick sketch of a building “in your style”:

Activity 5: Five Styles of Architectural Design

In this step, you will research Gothic architecture and 4 other architectural styles. You will research and write about the history, key characteristics, and any relevant examples of each style.

Read the instructions carefully on your **Research Worksheet**. Write down your findings on your worksheet, or if you need more space, you may type your answers.