

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

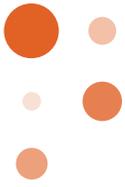
- Professor Esolen postulates that, “Far from the Dark Ages to which it is popularly called, The Middle Ages might better be described as the Brilliant Ages, a startling epoch of progress from science to art, from philosophy to medicine.” Do you agree with Professor Esolen? Why or why not? Why do you think that this vibrant and industrious period of human history is so often mischaracterized? Why do you think that people of the Modern Age tend to focus so narrowly and exclusively on the grim aspects of this historical period?
- We learn from Professor Esolen that, “A young Thomas Aquinas, born in southern Italy at the beginning of the 13th century, would travel to Cologne to study philosophy under the philosopher-biologist Albert the Great, then to Paris where he taught theology and philosophy, then to Rome, and back to France...” What does Thomas Aquinas’ sojourns demonstrate about the people of Europe at the time? How did the development of such scholars elevate humanity during the Middle Ages?
- Professor Esolen makes a compelling point by asking, “If the Middle Ages were dark and ignorant, how come ordinary people – masons, carpenters, painters, sculptors, glazers – erected the most beautiful and majestic buildings to grace the earth, the Gothic cathedrals? ...we [in the Modern Age] have nothing to match their complexity and beauty.” How would you answer his question? What does the creation of such beauty, especially involving the framing and of light and color, reflect about the culture of the time? Do you think a dark and depressed people would put so much effort into such endeavors? Why or why not?
- Professor Esolen explains that, “Free associations of men united for the common good: friars, guildsmen, members of lay orders devoted to good works; people who established schools, orphanages, and hospitals.” How does this reality contrast what we in the Modern Age normally associate with people from that time? Considering how many innovations and benefits that we in the Modern Age enjoy as a result of the people from the Middle Ages, why do you think that the people from that time are so generally undervalued and unappreciated?
- Professor Esolen ends the video by stating, “...in one crucial way, we are less civilized than those who enhanced human existence over a thousand years ago: we dismiss the achievements of our ancestors, and fall short of them; they honored their ancestors, and surpassed them.” What do you think he means by this? What are some examples that support your answer? Where do you think that people of the Modern Age fall shortest in terms of Professor Esolen’s criticism? What do you think are some examples that prove people of the Modern Age do actually honor and surpass their ancestors?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Stained Glass

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Early Stained Glass” and “Stained Glass in Medieval Europe,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Who was Theophilus, and why was he important? Why were the Cistercian churches built the way they were?
- What science knowledge and specific skillsets were needed (and combined) to make stained glass pieces in the Middle Ages?
- How does the process of studying the art, science, writing, and community organizations of the Middle Ages help us in the Modern Age better understand the people and conditions of that time?



QUIZ

HOW DARK WERE THE DARK AGES?

- 1. What happened between the years 1000 and 1348 that is an example of how misunderstood the Middle Ages are?**
 - a. The Black Death.
 - b. Global warming brought grapes to England.
 - c. Global cooling doubled the population of Europe.
 - d. They invented purple paint.

- 2. The people of the Middle Ages believed the earth was not flat because:**
 - a. Religion said it was round.
 - b. They saw boats slowly disappear on the horizon.
 - c. They saw the round earth during an eclipse.
 - d. All of the above.

- 3. A better name for the Dark Ages is _____.**
 - a. The Happy Ages
 - b. The Exciting Ages
 - c. The Brilliant Ages
 - d. The Black Ages

- 4. _____ was invented during the Middle Ages.**
 - a. Electricity
 - b. Indoor plumbing
 - c. The university
 - d. The telephone

- 5. People during the Middle Ages were able to build magnificent Gothic cathedrals without the use of power tools.**
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://louisville-catholic.net/StainedGlass/HomiliesinGlass/EarlyStainedGlass/tabid/414/Default.aspx>



Early Stained Glass

The beginnings of stained glass production are a bit of a mystery. Bits of colored glass are known to have been used by the ancient Romans. In the Christian Era, records exist of some form of colored glass being used in the Church of St. Martin in Tours, France in the 6th century, and pieces found in Ravenna, Italy may also date from the same period. Fragments depicting the face of Christ have been found in Germany and France that are as old as the 9th century. The Romanesque-style Cathedral of Augsburg houses the oldest extant stained glass windows, five small frames depicting Old Testament figures, made circa 1050. A German monk named Theophilus wrote a detailed description of the techniques of making stained glass in the 1100s.

Developments by glaziers, jewelers, goldsmiths, cloisonne enamellers and mosaic producers were combined to produce what was, at that time and for several centuries afterward, a uniquely Christian art form. After a design was conceived, brilliantly colored glass was blown and then cut into the desired shapes, which were then fitted into lead strips within an iron framework. It was discovered early on that small amounts of lead and pigment could be smeared and then fired onto the colored glass to provide some details (such as fingers or facial features) that would have been difficult to produce otherwise.

The earliest stained glass windows were housed in the bulky Romanesque churches of the time. Due to the small size and sparse number of windows in these ancient churches, the art of "painting with light" would not become a widespread and significant movement until the development of a new architecture which allowed for more windows.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian preacher and a Doctor of the Church, was among those who helped change the outlook on Catholic monastic life and worship spaces. This reformer of the Benedictine Order encouraged his monks to "seek to approach God... by successive illuminations of the spirit. The soul shall seek the light by following the light." His Cistercians built the first churches with larger windows to allow for more light, which, according to Bernard, was "peculiarly conducive to meditation." The presence of natural light stimulated the worshippers' sense of the presence of God, the source of spiritual light. Architects in various areas soon tried to devise ways to brighten church interiors. During this same period, the social and monetary economies were changing in Europe, making large sums of money available to build grand edifices for the glory of God.

Early in the 12th century, French architects from the region around Paris began building cathedrals with towering, seemingly infinite interior expanses which were flooded with radiant natural light. Their system used ribbed vaults and pointed arches, supported by a strong exoskeleton of piers and columns which carried the stresses from the weight above to the ground below. External braces called buttresses were either attached to the walls directly (as in the buttresses here at St. Martin's), or were "flying" by way of an arch to the wall (as first used at Notre Dame de Paris, ca. 1170). These appendages applied a counter-thrust which enabled the construction of tall, thin, non-loadbearing walls. With these innovations, the stout piers and thick walls of the Romanesque architectural style could be eliminated.

This French style spread west to Germany and north to Scandinavia, greatly influencing the art and architecture of those lands. The Norman Conquest also took the style to England, where

glaziers began producing their art around 1150. Due to the Moorish occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, the new ways would get a late start in Spain. It was also slow to catch on in Italy. In fact, it was an Italian critic who gave his harsh opinion that this new architecture of Western Europe was "pagan," and he theorized that the characteristic pointed arch was invented by nature-worshipping barbarian tribes, who supposedly bound the upper branches of trees together to create arches. Recalling the pagan Ostrogoth and Visigoth tribes (the latter of which had sacked Rome in 410 A.D.), the critic gave this style of architecture the name by which it is still known: **Gothic**.

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/glas/hd_glas.htm

Stained Glass in Medieval Europe

Stained-glass windows have been admired for their utility and beauty since [ancient Rome](#), when pieces of colored glass were assembled into patterned window frames. In Europe, the art of stained glass reached its height between 1150 and 1500, when magnificent windows were created for [great cathedrals](#).

Most of what is known about medieval stained-glass making comes from a twelfth-century German monk who called himself Theophilus. An artist and metalworker himself, Theophilus described in his text, *On Diverse Arts*, how he carefully studied glaziers and glass painters at work in order to provide detailed directions for creating windows of "inestimable beauty."

The basic ingredients for making glass are sand and wood ash (potash). The mixture is melted into liquid which, when cooled, becomes glass. To color the glass, certain powdered metals are added to the mixture while the glass is still molten. Molten glass can be blown into a sausage shape, then slit on the side before being flattened into a sheet; it can also be spun with a pontil iron into a round sheet (crown). A window's pictorial image is created by arranging the different pieces of colored glass over the design drawn on a piece of board. If fine details such as shadows or outlines are required, the artist paints them on the glass with black paint.

To assemble the window, pieces of colored and painted glass are laid out on the design board, with the edges of each piece fitted into H-shaped strips of lead (comes). These comes are soldered to one another so that the panel is secure. When a panel is completed, putty is inserted between the glass and the lead comes for waterproofing. The entire composition is then stabilized with an iron frame (armature) and mounted in the window.