

## **Architecture** **Notre Dame de Paris and Gothic Architecture**

Victor Hugo, a French author, wrote the famous book *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. This book tells the story of Quasimodo, a **hunchback**<sup>1</sup> who lived in the bell tower of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Completed in 1345, Notre Dame means “our lady” in French. It is one of the most famous Catholic cathedrals in the world. Victor Hugo’s book helped make the cathedral famous worldwide. He called cathedrals “books in stone.” He thought that these buildings had much to teach and many stories to tell.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Notre Dame has been called “The World Ambassador of Gothic Cathedrals.” Every year thousands of people visit the cathedral. The cathedral is located along the banks of the Seine River that runs through Paris.

Gothic architecture is light and airy. The buildings show the **creativity**<sup>2</sup> of humans. Architects wanted to build cathedrals where citizens could celebrate God. The cathedrals are extremely impressive. It is almost impossible not to be in **awe**<sup>3</sup> of these buildings. They were meant to tell people about the possibility of heaven. Most cathedrals are built in the shape of the cross, a symbol of Christianity.

The most recognizable features of Gothic architecture are **flying buttresses**<sup>4</sup> and huge archways. Architects wanted to let as much sunlight stream into the cathedral as possible. That way beautiful stained-glass windows could line the sides of the cathedral. However, the architects wanted to build high walls as well. They needed to figure out how to support high walls with very little stone. Arches and vaulting were one answer. An arch is a very strong

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<sup>1</sup> **hunchback** – a person with a back that is severely curved

<sup>2</sup> **creativity** – the ability to make new things or have new ideas

<sup>3</sup> **awe** – a feeling of wonder and respect

<sup>4</sup> **flying buttresses** – structures that support the building

shape that can support a lot of weight, and vaulting means to construct arched ceilings. Flying buttresses were the other solution. They are arches that stick out on the outside of the church to help support the weight of the thick stone roofs and the ceilings inside.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of these is NOT a feature of Gothic architecture mentioned in the passage?
  - a. vaulting
  - b. flying buttresses
  - c. marble columns
  - d. arches
  
2. Why does the author describe the book *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*?
  - a. It is where the name of the cathedral comes from.
  - b. The author of the book also was the architect of the cathedral.
  - c. The hunchback still lives in the cathedral today.
  - d. It helped make the cathedral of Notre Dame world famous.
  
3. Based on the passage, which of these had the greatest influence on how the cathedral of Notre Dame was designed?
  - a. the Christian religion
  - b. medieval French art
  - c. Greek mythology
  - d. English literature
  
4. Read the following sentences: “The cathedrals are extremely impressive. It is almost impossible not to be in awe of these buildings.”

The word **impressive** means

  - a. causing sadness
  - b. dark and mysterious
  - c. disappointing
  - d. inspiring or awesome
  
5. What is the author’s main purpose for writing this passage?
  - a. To teach people about Victor Hugo
  - b. To teach people about Gothic architecture
  - c. To explain Christianity
  - d. To explain what a flying buttress is

6. What are the two most recognizable features of Gothic architecture?

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7. Based on the passage, describe how Gothic architecture shows the creativity of humans.

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

It can be difficult to support tall cathedral walls \_\_\_\_\_ architects use arches and flying buttresses to support the walls.

- a. so
- b. because
- c. instead
- d. but

9. Read the following sentence.

**Gothic architects created arches and flying buttresses to support very tall church walls.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? Gothic architects
- 2. What did Gothic architects do? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** creativity: the ability to make new things or have new ideas.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Guide and Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 820

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive - the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The author introduces the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, France, and then discusses Gothic architecture in more detail.

1. Which of these is NOT a feature of Gothic architecture mentioned in the passage?
  - a. vaulting
  - b. flying buttresses
  - c. marble columns**
  - d. arches
  
2. Why does the author describe the book *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*?
  - a. It is where the name of the cathedral comes from.
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5. What is the author's main purpose for writing this passage?
- a. To teach people about Victor Hugo
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  - c. To explain Christianity
  - d. To explain what a flying buttress is

6. What are the two most recognizable features of Gothic architecture?

**Suggested answer:** The flying buttresses and huge archways.

7. Based on the passage, describe how Gothic architecture shows the creativity of humans.

**Suggested answer:** Answers will vary. Students can say that the architects figured out how to build with flying buttresses, arches, and vaulting so they could have very high ceilings. Students can also say that they built cathedrals in the shape of a cross so that the whole building would be a symbol of Christianity.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

It can be difficult to support tall cathedral walls \_\_\_\_\_ architects use arches and flying buttresses to support the walls.

- a. so**
- b. because
- c. instead
- d. but

9. Read the following sentence.

**Gothic architects created arches and flying buttresses to support very tall church walls.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? Gothic architects
- 2. What did Gothic architects do? **created arches and flying buttresses**
- 3. Why? **to support very tall church walls**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** creativity: the ability to make new things or have new ideas.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.