Characteristics of Gothic Architecture
Architectural Style

• Followed Romanesque movement
  – Europe in 1100s to end of 16th Century
• Architectural challenge
  – How to make buildings bigger, taller, and support more weight

Westminster Abbey, London, England
Gothic vs Romanesque

- Gothic buildings designed to be more heavenly
  - Large open spaces, difference in vaulting and arches
- Less gloomy than Romanesque buildings
  - Larger windows
  - Stained glass
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

• Grand tall designs with increased height of towers
  – New design elements allowed for redistribution of weight so towers would not crush themselves

Canterbury Cathedral, Kent, England
Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire, England
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

- Flying buttresses
  - Designed to redistribute weight away from walls to the ground
  - Also decorative

St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic
Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

- Pointed arches
  - Much more supportive than rounded arches, gave the illusion of pointing towards heaven

Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire, England
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

- Vaulted Ceilings
  - Distributed weight of floors and weight above
  - Gave increased impression of height and magnificence

Malbork Castle, Poland
Westminster Abbey, London, England
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

- Light and airy interiors
  - Taller ceilings with larger windows, than prior buildings
  - Could support slate roofs to keep interiors dryer

Cologne Cathedral, Cologne, Germany
Cologne Cathedral, Cologne, Germany
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

• Gargoyles
  – Used as rain spouts
  – Also meant to play into superstitions of time and scare people into seeking refuge inside churches
  • Especially lower classes
Characteristics of Gothic Architecture

• Emphasis on Decoration and Ornamentation
  – Heightened emphasis in buildings looking good, not just being functional

Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, England