

Humanities

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Art is but a reflection of the social conditions and attitudes of a given period in time that helps us to better understand the basic fundamentals of society during that time. In short art is a reflection of society and the artist is its mirror. The various art trends that were brought about during the Middle Ages helps to the shed light on the cultural and socio-economic conditions that prevailed during that time.

As an instructor of Humanities and given the task of explaining the social role of arts during the Middle Ages, I would first introduce my students to the various changes that took place with regard to religion, culture, politics and economic conditions of that period. Arts played a major role especially in the urban society leading to a progressive and dynamic growth. With growth, intellectual innovations and spiritual tensions in the Church there emerged new and creative styles in architecture, visual arts, literature and music.

The three relationships of art during the Middle Ages that I would like to discuss with my students would be on architecture, literature and music. On the architectural front, an artistic renaissance emerged and was supported by both religious and secular patrons. Islamic and Byzantine civilizations created an impact resulting in Romanesque architecture that involved magnificent cathedrals with round archways and intricate stone carvings. Following this was the Gothic architecture with its flying buttresses and vaulted ribs such as used in the Notre Dame in Paris.

Secondly, Literacy flourished during the Middle Ages. Latin was the dominant language in which many books were written but were also translated into other languages such as English, German and French. Lyrical poetry played

an important role by celebrating the love between knights and ladies in the court. Epic tales of chivalry, love and heroism were exemplified in wonderful literary works such as ' Beowulf', Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Canterbury Tales. Enlightening literature on Religion on the biographies of saints and their miracles were beautifully drawn and painted on handwritten manuscripts in gold and other brilliant colors.

Thirdly, during the Middle Ages, music was considered to be an integral part of their lives and as it evolved, it increased in complexity with the monophonic Gregorian chant and interesting ballads that involved the complex weaving together of polyphonic musical lines. Music as an art gave expression to Medieval life through courtly lyrics, lively dances, chanting and singing at Mass and through songs of drinking in taverns.

Reference

Middle Ages/Dynamic Culture

[www. history-world. org/dynamic_culture_of_medieval_euro. htm](http://www.history-world.org/dynamic_culture_of_medieval_euro.htm)