

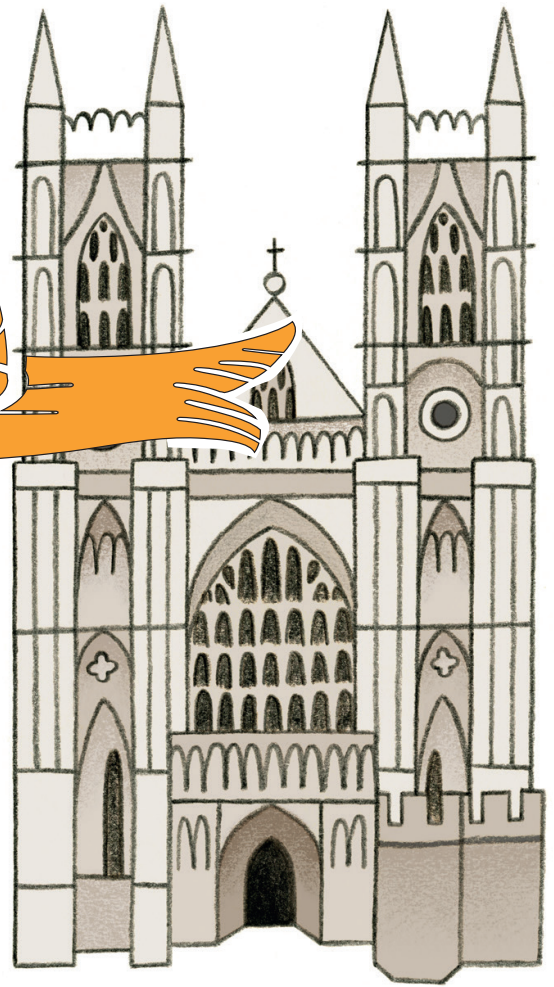


Westminster Abbey

Art and Architecture

There has been a place of Christian worship here for over 1,000 years and the church on this site has changed over time.

Today's Abbey is a mixture of Norman, medieval and Tudor architecture. It's also filled with beautiful art designed to glorify God, including paintings, statues and stained-glass windows.

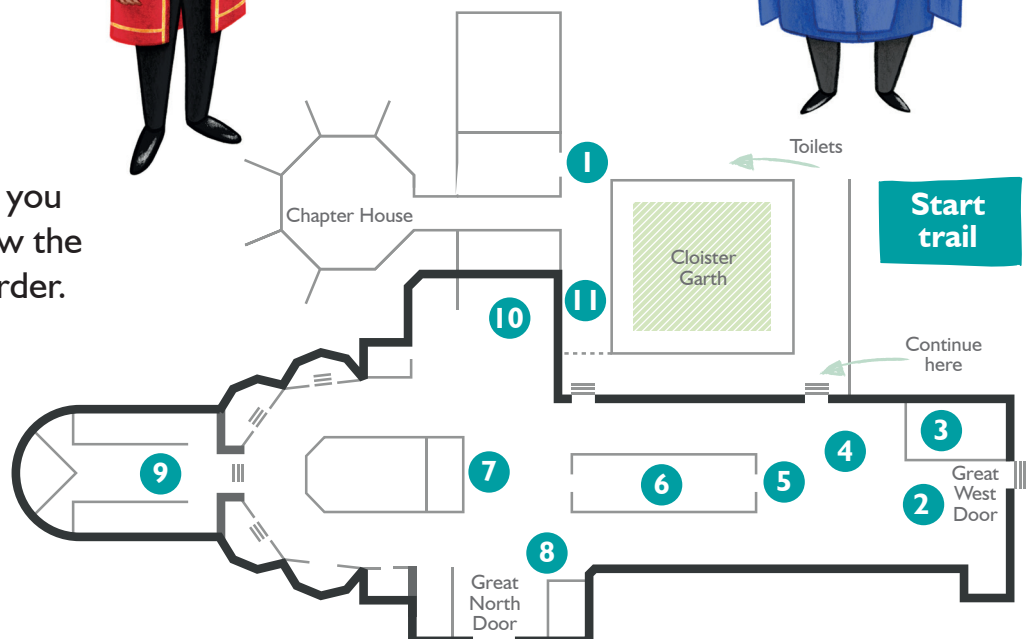


Top tip! If you have any questions, feel free to ask an Abbey Marshal or Abbey Guide in a red or blue gown.



Site Map

This map will help guide you around the Abbey. Follow the blue dots in numerical order.





1 The Pyx Chamber and the dark cloister

This is the oldest part of the Abbey and all that remains of the 11th century stone church that originally stood here. It was built in the Romanesque style by St Edward the Confessor.



Architecture is the design of buildings. **Architectural style** is when buildings share the same features, often because they were built at the same time.

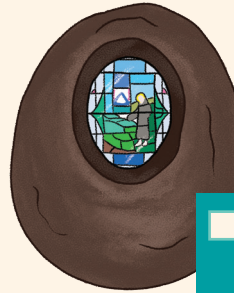
Look around you. Can you spot some of these Romanesque features? Tick off each one as you find it.



Round arches



Thick columns



Small, narrow windows

2 The nave

Enter the Abbey and walk to the Great West Door.



In the 13th century, King Henry III pulled down Edward's Abbey. He rebuilt it in the Gothic style. Henry's building is over 780 years old.

Look at the criss-crossed beams within the ceiling. This is called ribbed vaulting. It supports the thinner, taller walls which are a feature of Gothic buildings, as well as being decorative.

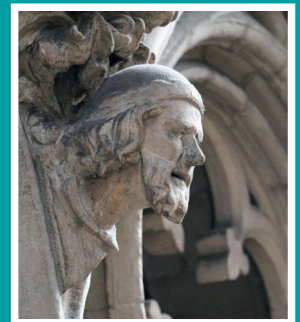


Look up and all around you.
Discuss: What do you see?

This Gothic Abbey was designed to be tall and filled with natural light. The ceiling is very high and pointed to encourage people to look upwards and think about Heaven.

Can you make the same pointed arch shape with your arms?

A corbel is a feature designed to carry weight. They are sometimes carved to look like the heads of people, animals and imaginary beasts.



Can you spot any small faces hidden up between the vaulting?





3 King Richard II portrait



This is the earliest known portrait of an English king. It was painted over 600 years ago.

Look closely. How has the artist made Richard II look important? *Clue: Think about what he is wearing and what colours have been used.*

4 Icons

Churches are often decorated with beautiful art created as an expression of Christian faith. Each candle station has an icon above it. An icon is a painting of a religious figure used in worship.



Colours are used in Christian art to remind people of important ideas. Blue represents Heaven. Gold represents God. They are used only for the most holy or important people.

Can you see how these colours have been used in the icon?

Think of something important to you. What colour would you use to represent it and why?



Worship means to show how much something is worth to you.

5 The quire screen

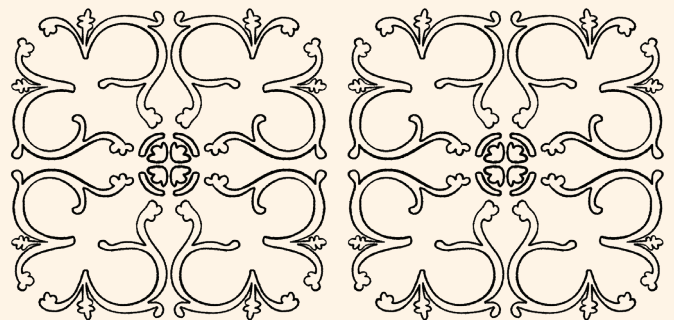
Hundreds of people, including architects, painters, stonemasons and sculptors, were involved in the creation of the Abbey.



Look at the beautiful quire screen. Can you spot any repeating patterns?

On the walls, you might see patterned tiles that are a bit different from the others. Sometimes the stonemasons carving these would add a small detail to leave their mark on the Abbey!

Add your own special mark to one of the panels below.



As you walk through the golden quire screen, look up. In the past all of the Abbey would have been covered in bright colours like this.



6 The quire

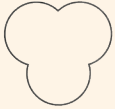
Stop in the quire. As well as colours, the Abbey is full of shapes with special meanings.

Can you match the shape to the meaning?



Circle

The Trinity - one God worshipped as three distinct persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).



Trefoil

The four Gospels - books in the Bible about the life of Jesus.



Quatrefoil

God is eternal and has no beginning and no end.



Can you find these shapes around you? See how many other examples you can find as you move around the Abbey.

7 The High Altar

Walk to the High Altar.

Look at the delicate mosaic floor. This is called the Cosmati Pavement and it's over 750 years old. It's made of thousands of pieces of coloured stone cut into different sizes and placed in intricate designs.



Look carefully at all the different shapes and how they fit together. Write down or draw some of the shapes you can see.

This pavement is where coronations take place.

You are standing in the centre of the Abbey. What shape was it built in?

Clue: Look up!

Discuss: Why do you think this was?





8 Rose windows

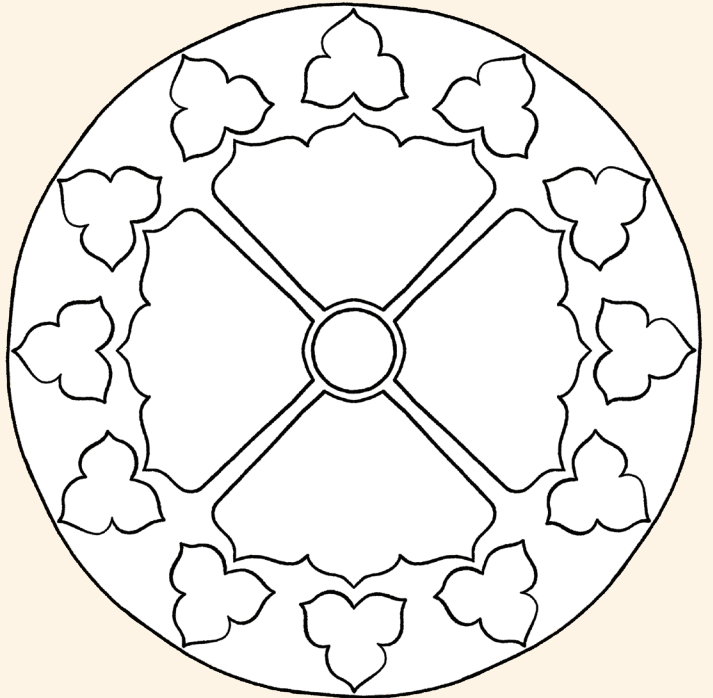
Look around and choose your favourite stained-glass window. In the past most people couldn't read, so colourful windows became important. They reminded people of stories in the Bible.

Can you think of any other reasons why coloured glass may have been used?

The large, round windows are called rose windows. They are another feature of Gothic churches, designed to let in lots of light.



Design your own rose window.



9 The Lady Chapel

This chapel was built by King Henry VII over 500 years ago as a special place for his Tudor family to be buried. The architectural style is Late (or Perpendicular) Gothic.

How is this space different to the rest of the Abbey? Write down two or three words.

Are there more windows than walls, or more walls than windows? This feature is sometimes called 'dissolving walls'.

Discuss: Why do you think it has this name?

Don't forget to look up!
The beautiful fan-vaulted ceiling was designed to look like Heaven.



In 1545, the Lady Chapel was described as 'the wonder of the entire world'.





10 Poets' Corner

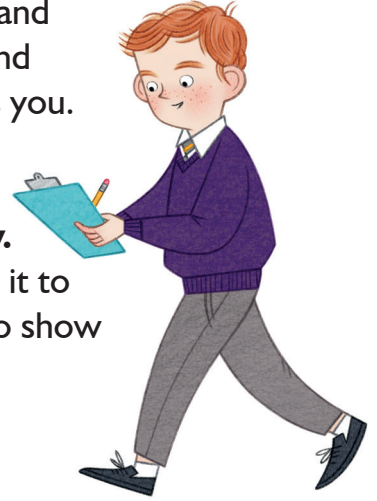


These two large wall paintings are over 700 years old. In the past the Abbey walls would have been covered in paintings like this. These have survived because, for hundreds of years, they were hidden behind statues.

There are lots of statues in Poets' Corner. Many are memorials, remembering the lives and works of writers and poets. Look around and find one that interests you.

Imagine you have a statue at the Abbey.

How would you want it to look? Create a pose to show your classmates!



11 The cloisters

Return to the cloisters. If you can, please visit the chapter house before you leave.

If you have time at the end of your visit, why not sit for a while on one of the old stone benches and do some sketching? The cloisters are full of architectural shapes and features.

You might spot buttresses and flying buttresses, which help support the weight of the tall Gothic building.

Use this space to make notes and sketches.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Westminster Abbey today!