

Reading Rose Windows



What is a Rose Window?

A rose window is a stained-glass window with a circular design. They are commonly found in churches, especially medieval churches or cathedrals. The name rose window refers to their design's similarity to a rose or a flower, a series of windows radiating from one central window.

The purpose behind medieval stained glass-windows was to make churches feel like heaven on Earth as well as tell or remind visitors of stories from the Bible or the lives of the saints. For example, many rose windows show the Last Judgement, which is the day Christians believe Jesus will return to Earth. Due to their circular shape, rose windows may also feature windows that represent the zodiacs (astrological signs), the labors of the months, or the seven liberal arts. Just like the stories, the labors of the month or the liberal arts would remind visitors of the things they should be doing to help better themselves- like working or studying!

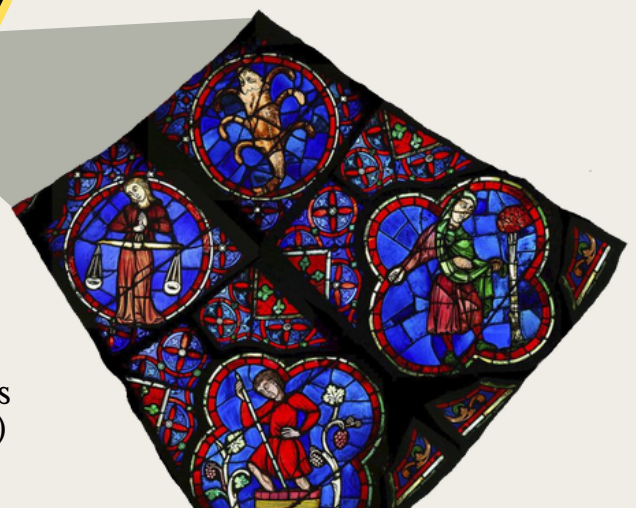


The construction of Glencairn's Great Hall in the 1930s. The tracery for the rose window was built but the window had not been installed yet.

A medieval window in Glencairn's Great Hall has similar images that you might find in a rose window.



This window (below) is at Notre Dame in Paris, France. In the lower half of the window, the two outer rings show astrological signs and the labors of the months. The outer rings in the upper half show the virtues and vices (good and bad traits people can have). At the center is a seated Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus surrounded by prophets. This arrangement of images would remind visitors that Jesus was at the center of their day to day life.



This enlarged photo (left) shows a detail of the west rose window at Notre Dame de Paris. The zodiacs shown are Libra and Scorpio. The labors of the months are trampling grapes (September) and sowing (October).

If you were to make a rose window, what type of images would you fill it with? On the pages below you'll find templates to create your own rose window! Think about how these windows reminded people of how to live. Would you fill it with activities you do through out the year? People that are important to you?

Below is more information about what you might find in a medieval church!

The Labors of the Months

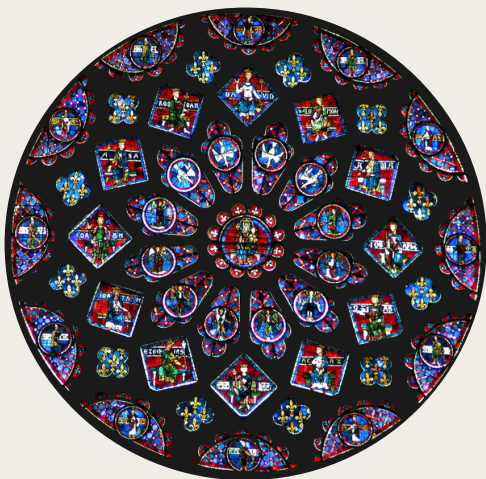
During the Middle Ages, each month was marked by activities. Many of these activities centered around the weather and the food you could eat during different seasons. This was understood as God's design of how we should live. This list below shows the typical labors that people would take part in throughout the year.

- January** - Feasting
- February** - Sitting by the fire
- March** - Pruning trees
- April** - Planting or picking flowers
- May** - Hawking, courtly love
- June** - Hay harvest
- July** - Wheat harvest
- August** - Wheat threshing
- September** - Grape harvest
- October** - Ploughing or sowing
- November** - Gathering acorns for pigs
- December** - Killing pigs, baking

The Seven Liberal Arts

Education has always been valued in society. In the Middle Ages, knowledge of the Christian faith was highly valued. The knowledge outside of Christianity was called "the liberal arts". In art, these were often personified - meaning a person doing something to represent them. The list below tells the seven liberal arts you might find in medieval art.

- Grammar**
- Logic**
- Rhetoric**
- Geometry**
- Arithmetic**
- Astronomy**
- Music**



Chartres Cathedral, France



Reims Cathedral, France

