

LISTENING COMPREHENSION
TAPESCRIPTS

Text 1

During today's seminar we will be looking at English Gothic architecture and its origins with a specific case study of Wells Cathedral in England. The Gothic style was initially brought over to England from France. This was at a period of time in which England was ruled from France by the Normans, starting with William the Conqueror who first defeated the English army at the Battle of Hastings on October 14th, 1066.

After 1072 when some smaller rebellions in northern England had been defeated, the Normans gained complete control of the English monarchy, which they controlled until 1154. The peace that ensued in England had a large impact on many aspects of daily life. Thousands of French words entered the English language for the first time such as beef, fruit, city and hour. French ideas and styles, like Gothic, also began to flow across The Channel to England too, examples of which can still be seen in the architecture of many listed buildings. A listed building is one that is protected from alteration or demolition because of its historical or stylistic importance. One such building is Wells Cathedral.

Construction on Wells Cathedral began in 1175 at a time when Gothic architecture as a style was in its infancy. As a result it is one of the first entirely Gothic buildings ever constructed. From the first designs to the date it was completed in 1490, Gothic architecture flourished in England. Therefore later additions to the building were still influenced by this Gothic style, rather than by later architectural styles such as Tudor architecture.

Older cathedrals in England would have initially been influenced by Romanesque architecture, alternatively known as Norman architecture in England. As the former name suggests, Romanesque was a building style based on the skills passed on to various areas of Europe by the Romans. When the Western Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th Century, these methods were retained by Rome's former colonies and developed further. One such Roman gift to the Romanesque architects was the round arch, also known as the true arch. The Romans perfected this style by using wedge-shaped stones called *voussoirs* which created pressure that held the structure together at the top.

Cathedrals in England such as the ones in Ely and Canterbury were started before the arrival of Gothic architecture. Even though parts of those two cathedrals which were constructed later are in the Gothic style, other sections predating the arrival of Gothic architecture are Romanesque. The result is known as eclectic because the building is constructed using more than one style.

All of these cathedrals belong to a group known as the medieval cathedrals of England. There are twenty-six different buildings that belong to this group in total; all of which were constructed or added to during a five hundred year period from 1040 to 1540.

The transition from Romanesque to Gothic began in 1144 at the Abbey Church of St-Denis on the edge of Paris. It was here that a Benedictine abbot by the name of Suger had just completed his plan to rebuild the Basilica of St-Denis in a new style through which he believed "the dull mind rises to truth through that which is material."

This refers to one architectural feature in particular: high, rib vault ceilings, which created much more space inside the cathedral and were designed to draw the attention of the people up towards heaven. This design feature also allowed whole walls of the cathedral to be transformed by colourful stained glass.

Work started on Wells Cathedral soon afterwards, greatly inspired by abbot Suger's work. Planned in the crucifix style with the head pointing east and foot pointing west, the cathedral is 126 metres long and the nave is 20 metres high. This is quite low compared to some of the bigger cathedrals elsewhere.

Use of tracery, lancet windows and mullions are all characteristic of English Gothic architecture. Whilst examples of all three of these architectural elements can be found at Wells, the lancet windows have no tracery at all, which was more common in early English Gothic architecture before advances were made in the use of mullions and tracery with glass.

Lancet windows are tall, thin windows with a pointed arch at the top and are so named because they resemble the weapon often carried by a soldier called a lance. Examples of these lancet windows can be seen on the West front of the cathedral, which is the most celebrated for its life-sized sculptures and delicate floral carvings.

Inside the pinnacle-topped gable is a sculpture of 'Christ the Judge'. Immediately below him, sculptures of the 12 Apostles peer out over the small city of Wells. Below the Apostles are nine archangels, which are half-sized sculptures. At one time all of these, along with the decorative carvings, would have been painted and gilded. However today all the paint has worn away and the sculptures are the colour of the oolite sedimentary stone used to construct the cathedral.

It is remarkable to think that more than 800 years ago such magnificent buildings were created, without the use of large cranes and modern technology. It would have taken much longer, but it is possible to see the high level of craftsmanship and attention to detail that is less common in the modern day.

Текст для аудирования. Английский язык. 11 класс. Только для членов жюри.