

# Medieval Cathedrals: Stained Glass and the Art of Architecture

In the middle ages, European cathedrals were built for religious purposes, but they were also used to teach. Most of the people at that time could not read, so carvings in stone, statues, painting and stained glass were not only used to decorate these incredible structures but also to instruct. And stained glass windows in particular were used to tell stories.

In this activity, you and your child will create a rose window - often a circular, stained glass window - usually found above the front of a cathedral door. The "green" twist to this project is that you can re-use old plastic page protectors if you have any laying around. When you're finished, you'll have made a beautiful work of cultural and artistic history to display in your home.



## What You Need:

- White craft glue (quite a bit is needed if several colors are desired - keep the glue bottle, it's great for squeezing your outline color)
- Food coloring
- Page protectors
- Page from a coloring book, should be somewhat simple, with nice outlines (this will be our pattern)
- Tooth picks
- Hobby paintbrushes
- Throw-away containers (empty used margarine cups, paper cups, etc. - another green twist!), one for each color you want to make
- Paper towels
- Water for washing brushes
- Newspaper to protect your work surface

## What to Do:

1. If you like, for some inspiration you and your child can look through a book with pictures of some Medieval Cathedrals and find some great images of stained glass windows. This is a great way for her to learn a little history along the way!
2. Make sure your work surface is amply protected. Mix your paints. Help your child put 1/4 cup of craft glue in one of the used containers. Add food coloring until you get the color you like (this may be a good part for a parent to do because food coloring can be dangerous!) Keep in mind that the darker the color, the less the sun will come through your final product. You can make as many different colors as you like.
3. Have your child put the coloring book page into the plastic sheet protector.
4. Use a squeeze bottle to outline the design on top of the page protector. Have your child choose a color paint to outline the design in and put it in the squeeze bottle. Shake it well, then tap it up-side down on the table a few times. This will help get air bubbles to rise up so they won't splatter your paint. Your child can choose any color she likes for the outline, but darker colors work best. This part is great for developing those fine motor skills!
5. Have your child outline the design with the paint. Put on a good, thick coating. Let it dry for a couple of hours (you can guesstimate based on the drying time on the bottle).
6. Once the outlined image is dry, your child can begin to color in the image with the other paints. Fill in the lines like you would if you were decorating a cookie with royal icing. The paint should be a heavy coating, but not thick enough to create wet "bubbles." These sometimes happen when the

paint is put on so thick that the outer layer dries, but the inner layer stays wet.

7. If you want to blend two colors into each other, paint them side by side, then use a tooth pick to blend the line where the colors meet by making small, zigzagging and circular motions along the line. Continue doing this until the line blurs and the colors along the line meld together into one. If you want to gradually lighten a part of the picture, add a tiny dot of white to the part you want lightest, and begin using the same zigzagging and circular motions, drawing the white color out and away from the point of origin until it blends well. These are all different kinds of shading techniques!
8. Set the picture aside to dry. Give it plenty of time, more than the directions on the glue bottle require. Over night or even a whole day is a good amount of time.
9. When dry, the picture will peel right off the transparent background. It will stick to windows, mirrors, or any glass surface. You'll be able to remove them and reposition them however you like. If you want, you can even leave them on the page protector (depending on whether or not you like the color) to create a border effect and then hang the whole thing on a window in your home! But make sure to remove the coloring page first.

### **Did You Know?**

Most everything in the cathedral, both structurally and ornamentally, was used to tell Bible stories. The doors were often carved, as well as the walls of the outside of the building, and the pillars sometimes had carved stories wrapping all the way around from floor to ceiling. Painted or colored glass was used in windows to also tell stories.

Note: If you have trouble removing or moving your "stained glass clings" because it is too hot or too cold, here's what you can do. If it's too cold and you are concerned about cracking your cling, use a hair dryer to warm it slightly and it will come right off without any damage. In hot weather you may want to "ice" your cling for a few seconds with frozen vegetables or an ice pack, before lifting it up as it can stretch and deform when too warm.

Hang your new works of art in a window and enjoy your creation!

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