

Gargoyles and Grotesques

Objectives

- To recognise the significance of gargoyles and grotesques as architectural features on Shaftesbury Abbey.
- To use artefacts as a source from which to learn about medieval beliefs.
- To recognise the practical purpose of a gargoyle.
- To distinguish between a gargoyle and a grotesque and recognise comical, mythical and fantastical features.

Activities

- To observe and handle artefacts from the Shaftesbury Abbey Museum.
- To design a grotesque or gargoyle face using their observations.
- To use clay to create the gargoyle/grotesque face.

Importance of Gargoyles and Grotesques

Gargoyles had a practical purpose in buildings as waterspouts (often an open mouth) helping rainwater to flow away from the abbey walls. This prevented walls being worn away. They were carved from a block of stone by skilled masons. Often they were designed as different kinds of creatures, including animals, dragons and other imaginary creatures. Sometimes they looked angry, to scare away bad spirits and 'protect' the building. Sometimes they had comical features reflecting the humour of the mason himself.

Grotesques were purely decorative adornment to the building itself.



Grotesques



Gargoyles