NOTES for (EARLY & LATE) MEDIEVAL

Image list – recognize the listed info; know bold info; know the PERIOD/STYLE for all; whenever you can, connect each image with a feeling and an IDEA

for example:
7.13 Gothic → DEMATERIALIZED human form → Medieval attitudes about the body.

6.1, 6.24 Style: Romanesque (the fact that the artist is Gislebertus will not be on the exam.)
6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 idea: Culture of the Book
6.17, 6.21 What makes this Romanesque? (round arches)
6.22, name of building; Romanesque
6.12 name of work; depicts events in 1066

7.5-7.8, 7.10-7.14 recognize these features in Gothic buildings

inspiring words from Pope Innocent III, On the Misery of the Human Condition, c. 1200

[MEDIEVAL/GOTHIC]

... man was formed of dust, slime, and ashes: what is even more vile, of the filthiest seed. He was conceived from the itch of the flesh, in the heat of passion and the stench of lust, and worse yet, with the stain of sin. He was born to toil, dread, and trouble; and more wretched still, was born only to die. He commits depraved acts by which he offends God, his neighbor, and himself; shameful acts by which he defiles his name, his person, and his conscience; and vain acts by which he ignores all things important, useful, and necessary. He will become fuel for those fires which are forever hot and burn forever bright; food for the worm which forever nibles and digests; a mass of rottenness which will forever stink and reek.

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[MEDIEVAL/ARS NOVA] a comment about motets from a 14th century music theorist:

This sort of song should not be performed before ordinary people because they do not notice its fine points nor enjoy listening to it, but before learned people and those on the lookout for subtleties in the arts.

Historicism – the awareness of history in the fact of creating or interpreting a work of art; in the European and American context, an awareness and positive valuation of innovation; the idea of an avant-garde (advanced guard). The Ars Nova is perhaps the first example of this historical self-consciousness.

Romanesque – Term coined around 1825. The medieval artistic style of c. 900-1200. In architecture the Romanesque is typified by the use of the round arch and conspicuously heavy construction. In painting and sculpture forms are often expressively distorted to convey religious emotion. Note that Roman realism is not part of the Romanesque style.

Dematerialization – depiction of the human form in the way that is not realistic, not naturalistic, and not idealistic, with a de-emphasis of the body usually in conjunction with an emphasis on spiritual connotations and interpretations. The denial of the flesh in artistic representation. This has origins in Early Christian and Byzantine art and continues to develop through the late Medieval period.
In the following excerpt, an Ars Nova theorist explains the way Ars Antiqua composers and theorists thought about the number 3, and then he justifies the new music that uses duple subdivisions. This is an excellent example of medieval thought — arguing through analogy and not observation; and arguing from past authority (the opening is quite similar to writings by St. Augustine, circa 400). This is not on the exam.

As was shown in the beginning, a note must come into being together with some quantity of motion, because a note belongs by nature to the class of successive things — that is, it exists while it is being produced, but when it has been produced, it does not. Now succession must be accompanied by motion, and time links motions inseparably together; it is necessary, therefore, to measure a note by time. Time is the measure of motion; here, however, time is in particular the measure of a sustained note together with the continuous motion accompanying it. Time [tempus] refers also to a single unit of this sort of measurement.

In this last sense, time is sometimes greater, sometimes less [in other words, sometimes triple, sometimes duple]; the greater corresponds to a longer motion, the lesser to a shorter one, other things being equal, and both being measured on the same scale. Our predecessors recognized only that time which had perfection, holding that time to be perfect which could be divided by three, because they believed that all perfection was to be found in threeness. Accordingly, they made tempus perfectum [a three-beat measure] the basic unit of every sort of musical composition, considering that what was imperfect had no place in art.

That all perfection does in fact lie in the ternary number is clear from a hundred comparisons. In God, who is perfection itself, there is singleness in substance, but threeness in persons; He is three in one and one in three. There is, therefore, an extraordinary congruity between one and three. Moreover: in the sun and stars there are the heat, the rays and the radiance they all give off; in the elements there are agents, things acted upon, and matter; in individuals generation, corruption, and substance; in finite time-spans beginning, middle, and end; in every curable disease onset, crisis, and decline. Three is the first odd number, and the first prime number. It is not two lines but three that can enclose a surface. The triangle is the first regular polygon, the tetrahedron the first regular solid. Every solid body has three dimensions, or it could not support itself.

Since, therefore, the ternary number is to be found everywhere, there is no reason to wonder any further whether it is in fact perfect. The binary number must, by comparison, be called imperfect, even though it may thus fall into ill-repute. But unity, since it is continuous, is divisible not only into three parts, but into many more, ad infinitum.

This last sentence justifies the new practice of dividing by 2 and 4.

For the exam, know the period and author of these sentiments:
[Man] will become fuel for those fires which are forever hot and burn forever bright; food for the worm which forever nibbles and digests; a mass of rottenness which will forever stink and reek. -- Pope Innocent III, (written c. 1200), Early Medieval (from this handout)
The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material . . . -- Abbot Suger (lived c.1085-1151) (see page 167) Gothic (Late Medieval)

TEXTBOOK CD
Track 4, Hildegard of Bingen; see p. 153 for translation. A wonderful text; this musical selection does not capture what is distinctive about her musical compositions.
Track 5, Bernart de Ventadorn, Quan vei la lauzeta mover; reconstruction of the troubadour tradition, p. 179. Upon hearing this, be able to identify it as representative of the troubadour tradition.

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