

Artist	Charles Barry
Title	Palace of Westminster
Date	1840-76
Medium	Brick, stone, glass
Scale	4 storeys
Scope	Public Architecture
Style	Perpendicular Gothic Revival
Patron	Royal Commission
Location	London
Function	Seat of government - Lords and MPs



Composition	Balanced and symmetrical suggesting order (both visually and in the government). Tall Towers placed either end of the main building. Central tower breaks the horizontal emphasis on the building. Inside the building, there are three areas for the monarch, house of lords and house of commons.
Architectural Features	Lancet windows placed regularly across the façade. Tracery in the form of quatrefoils which emphasise the Gothic style. Bay windows placed at intervals - add rhythm to the façade. Turreted towers with pinnacles are placed evenly across the façade - the adds height. Pilaster buttresses with blind niches rise vertically & add height. The blind niches mirror the lancet windows in form. Pinnacles with crockets rise from the pilaster buttresses. Christian iconography is found in figures such as angles who support crowns & Britain's coat-of-arms.

Influence from cultural/social factors:

1834 the original Palace of Westminster burnt down - this dated back to the 11th Century

Royal Commission (under William IV) formed to find an architect. They wanted the design to be either in Gothic or Elizabethan style - both are synonymous with Britain's history, values and traditions.

Barry, the architect, employed Augustus Pugin to decorate the interiors. Barry chose Gothic for his design as there was a huge resurgence in Britain at that time. This is known as Gothic Revival.

The style of Perpendicular Gothic Revival highlights the emphasis on elongated vertical lines, which are shown throughout the building's exterior.

Construction began in 1840 and completed during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Stylistic comment and artistic influence:

With new advancements in technology and industry, Barry and others they felt that Britain were losing their heritage. By building in a Gothic Revival style, allowed Barry to reintroduce aspects of the past into modern London.

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

Exterior made from limestone, sourced specifically by the architect and geologists. Yellow colour is contrasted by the dark grey cast iron and slate roof of the main building and tower roofs. Decoration easily carved into this stone and allows for all the detail on the building. Concrete foundation.

Critical text quote:

"A dream in stone" - Tsar Nicholas I of Russia

Influence from political factors: The original Houses of Parliament had been destroyed by fire. A replacement building was constructed onsite. The commissioners demanded that the new structure be in either a Gothic or Elizabethan style. The Gothic style was chosen as this was at the time of the Gothic Revival when writers such as John Ruskin feared that Britain was losing its identity during this modern era and wanted to look back to architectural styles from the past which would inspire people and contrast with the modern factories and industrial buildings which now appeared across Britain.

Influence from technological factors:

Central tower provided ventilation. The whole building is placed on a concrete foundation. The roof is iron. These new features are all hidden beneath traditional stone carving.