

# Information and descriptions of Gargoyles & Grotesques

The word gargoyle is derived from the French word gargouille, meaning throat. The English words gargle, gurgle and gargoyle are derived from gargouille.

Originally a gargoyle was a water spout, mounted on the eave and directing water away from a building so that the water would not erode the mortar. If a stone carving carries no water and has a face or resembles a creature, these are technically called a *grotesque*.

Over the passage of time the word gargoyle became the term used to describe any and all the fantastic creatures on a cathedral or other building.

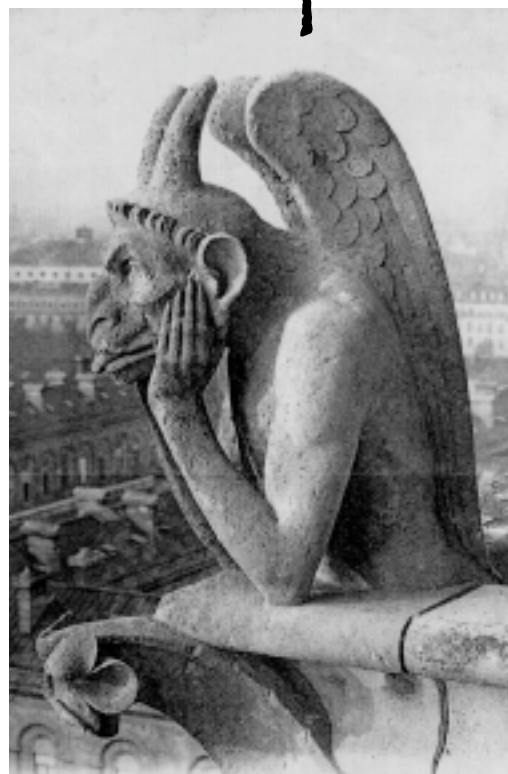
Folklore held that gargoyles are good luck and frightened away evil spirits while serving its practical function of carrying rain water away. "One can think of wyverns a two legged winged dragon of medieval legend as sort of 'holy pit bulls,' whose job is to dispel the evil forces, lightning, plague, war, and other calamities that may threaten the cathedral and the city," explains Michael D. Lampen, archivist at Grace Cathedral, speaking of the grotesques of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

They are often a fantastic display of inhuman birds, impossible animals, and half human mammals that are crouching, grimacing, and ready to spring into space and pounce upon the world!

After the introduction of the lead drain in the 16th century, gargoyles primarily serve a decorative purpose.



*A gargoyle or grotesque can resemble anything a dragon, griffin or most any kind of creature or human like as this grotesque illustrates!*



*The most famous of the Notre Dame Cathedral gargoyles is the Spitting Gargoyle actually a grotesque. With head in hands, this thoughtful beast faces the Eiffel Tower*



*This guy on a church in the South of France is a true gargoyle. One can see how the water would leave the building and travel along the gargoyle and out the mouth.*

## the Stone Griffin

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