So, the Middle Ages in European culture span from the 5th to the 15th century. The exact start and end dates aren't set in stone, but people usually mark the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD as the beginning, while the end is associated with the emergence of humanist and Renaissance ideas in the early 15th century.

Most of the art born in the Middle Ages, including music, was closely tied to Christian philosophy and the rituals of church liturgy. This is why many of the works from this time are anonymous. The mindset was more about creating to honor God, rather than for the recognition of the artist. Another interesting tidbit is how music was seen in the Middle Ages - as a science, part of the group of mathematical disciplines.

Typical features of medieval music include monophony, meaning a melody originally had only one voice, no accompaniment. Think of an entire choir singing in unison - that's what we call Gregorian chant. Polyphony, or having two, then three, and four voices in compositions, started to show up from the 9th century. When a piece has several voices playing together, we call that texture polyphony. Back in the Middle Ages, they didn't have musical notes as we know them today. Instead, they wrote neumes, initially without the staff, but this notation got more and more refined over time. The Middle Ages also gave us solmization, or the famous do, re, mi..., thanks to the theorist Guido of Arezzo. The hymn to John the Baptist, where the first syllables of each word were used by Guido to invent a new singing method – solmization.

Music of the Middle Ages was primarily vocal music, performed by the human voice. This was because there was a ban on using instruments in the church (organs were allowed from the 7th century). Also, only men could sing, so the most common ensemble was a male choir a cappella (without instrumental accompaniment). Most of the vocal music created in the Middle Ages was in Latin, the universal language at the time.

In addition to religious and church music, secular music was also created, more for entertainment. It was often made by regular folks and used for fun, dancing, family or court festivities. Professional poets and singers were usually on the move, and they were known by different names depending on where they created. They could be troubadours or Meistersingers. This type of music could be vocal or instrumental, with instruments like the lute, fidel (a kind of primitive violin), flutes or other pipes like shawms, horns, hurdy-gurdies, drums. Medieval songs told stories about everyday life, human labor, romances, great battles, rulers, and brave knights.