Five Classic Type Faces

Introduction: Five Classic Typefaces

Students taking the course covered in this section are introduced to five classic typefaces, each representing a distinct stage in the evolution of type design. Although many were designed centuries ago, these typefaces remain among the most popular and widely used today. Below are listed the names of the five typefaces along with their historical classification and approximate date of design.

Garamond: French	Old Style	1617
Baskerville: English	Transitional	1757
Bodoni: Italian	Modern	1780
Century: American	Egyptian	1894
Helvetica: Swiss	Contemporary	1957

There is no better way to train the eye to typographic subtleties than by studying the changing forms in typeface design over the centuries and understanding how seemingly minor changes in type design can affect both the character of the typeface and its appearance on the page.

Garamond is an Old Style typeface.

Claude Garamond, who died in 1561, was originally credited with the design of this elegant French typeface; however, it has recently been discovered that this typeface was designed by Jean Jannon in 1615. Many of the present day versions of this typeface are based on Jannon's design, although they are called Garamond.

This is a typical Old Style typeface, having little contrast between the thicks and thins, heavily bracketed serifs, and oblique stress. The letterforms are open and round, making the face extremely readable. The capital letters are shorter than the ascenders of the lowercase letters.

Claude Garamond,
French (1480-1561)

Click on image
for type specimen

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUV
WXYZ&
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
1234567890

Garamond

Baskerville

Bodoni

Century Expanded

Helvetica

Claude Garamond,
French (1480-1561)

Baskerville, an elegant, well-designed, typeface created by the Englishman John Baskerville in 1757, is an excellent example of a Transitional typeface.

Transitional typefaces are so called because they form a bridge between the Old Style typefaces, such as Garamond, and the Modern faces, such as Bodoni.

Compared to Old Style, Baskerville shows greater contrast between the thick and thins, serifs are less heavily bracketed, and the stress is almost vertical. The letters are very wide for their x-height, are closely fitted, and are of excellent proportions—making Baskerville a most pleasant and readable typeface.

John Baskerville, English (1706-1775)

Click on image for type specimen

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUV
WXYZ&
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
fi fl .,''-:;!?

Garamond

Baskerville

Bodoni

Century Expanded

Helvetica

John Baskerville,
English (1706-1775)

B odoni, referred to as a Modern typeface, was designed by the noted Italian typographer Giambattista Bodoni. At the end of the eighteenth century, a fashion grew for typefaces with a stronger contrast between thicks and thins, unbracketed serifs, and a strong vertical stress.

With the introduction of Modern faces, typefaces such as Baskerville were classified as Transitional, as they form a bridge between the Old Style typefaces and the Modern.

Because of the strong vertical stress, accentuated by heavy thicks and hairline thins, the horizontal flow necessary for comfortable reading is impaired. To compensate for this effect, Bodoni should be well leaded.

Giambattista Bodoni
Italian (1740-1813)

Click on image
for type specimen

ABCDEFGHIJK
LMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZ&
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
fi fl . , ' ' - : ; ! ?

Garamond

Baskerville

Bodoni

Century Expanded

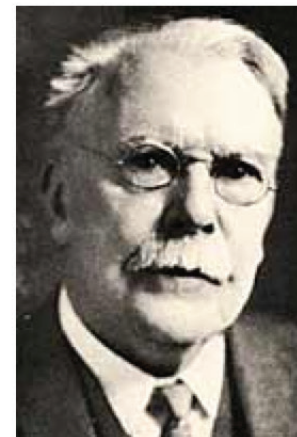Helvetica

Giambattista Bodoni
Italian (1740-1813)

Century, the first major American typeface, was designed in 1894 by Linn Boyd Benton for Theodore Lowe DeVinne, the printer of the *Century* magazine.

After Bodoni, type designers began to search for new forms of typographic expression. Around 1815 a type style appeared that was characterized by thick slab serifs and thick main strokes with little contrast between thicks and thins. This style was called Egyptian.

Century Expanded is an excellent example of a refined Egyptian, or slab serif, typeface. The large x-height and simple forms combine to make the typeface very legible and especially popular for children's books.
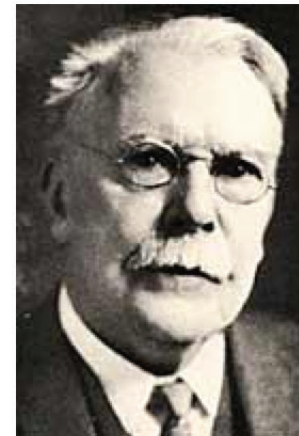
Linn Boyd Benton
American
(1844-1932)

Click on image
for type specimen

ABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQRST
UVWXYZ&
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
fi fl .,'' -:;!?

Linn Boyd Benton
American
(1844-1932)

Helvetica is contemporary typeface of Swiss origin. Although typefaces without serifs were available in the nineteenth century, it was not until the twentieth century that they became widely used. In 1957 the Haas foundry introduced Haas Grotesk, designed by Max Miedinger (with Eduard Hoffmann), later to become known internationally as Helvetica.

Helvetica, and sans serif types in general, have relatively little stress and the weight of the strokes are optically equal. Helvetica's large x-height, slightly condensed letters, and clean design makes it a very readable typeface.

Because there are no serifs to aid the horizontal flow, sans serif faces should always be leaded.

Garamond

Baskerville

Bodoni

Century Expanded

Helvetica

Max Miedinger
Swiss (1910-1980)

Click on image
for type specimen

ABCDEFGHIJK
LMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZ&
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
.,'‘-:;!?

Max Miedinger
Swiss (1910-1980)