



Knights and Castles: Castle Design and Defence

A single lesson, cross-curriculum Curiosity Pack for Year 5

At a Glance

Topic: Castle Design and Defence

Age Level: Year 5

Session Length: 45–60 minutes

Wonder Seekers will:

- explore how castles were designed
- investigate how castle features protected people
- compare different castle defence features
- examine how builders solved problems
- use design thinking and creativity
- create a castle defence project

Lesson Overview

This Curiosity Pack introduces Wonder Seekers to the design and defence systems used in medieval castles.

Learners investigate how castles changed over time, how builders used different materials and designs, and how features such as walls, towers, gates, moats, and drawbridges helped keep people safe.

The lesson combines history, design, mathematics, creativity, and inquiry learning through observation, investigation, and project creation.

This learning experience supports:

- observation and questioning
- historical understanding
- design thinking
- problem-solving
- visual communication
- creative expression

The lesson is designed using inclusive learning principles, supporting diverse learning needs through:

- self-paced learning
- visual supports



- flexible activity choices
- hands-on exploration
- multiple ways to show learning

Session Length

Total learning time: 45–60 minutes

Wonder Seekers may:

- ✓ complete the lesson in one session
- ✓ pause and return later
- ✓ spend longer on favourite activities
- ✓ simplify or extend the task

Learning Focus

This Curiosity Pack explores:

- castles
- castle design
- defence systems
- medieval problem-solving
- historical investigation
- creative communication

Learners will:

- ✓ investigate how castles were designed
- ✓ identify features that helped protect people
- ✓ compare different castle defence structures
- ✓ organise ideas visually
- ✓ communicate discoveries through drawing, building, writing, or discussion
- ✓ create a castle defence project inspired by their investigation

Success Looks Like

Success may look different for each Wonder Seeker.

Examples may include:

- ✓ identifying castle defence features
- ✓ explaining how a castle feature protected people
- ✓ comparing different castle designs
- ✓ creating a labelled castle diagram
- ✓ building a castle model
- ✓ creating a castle fact page or poster



✓ sharing discoveries in a way that works for them

Exploring, noticing, testing, and creating are all part of success.

Materials

You may want:

- paper or workbook
- pencils and coloured pencils
- pictures of castles
- books or websites about castles
- ruler
- scissors
- glue or tape
- cardboard or craft paper

Optional:

- LEGO or blocks
- modelling clay or playdough
- recycled materials
- tablet or computer
- printer
- building materials

Suggested Learning Resources

BBC Bitesize – Castles and Knights

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zqtmnbk>

Pictures, videos, and explanations about castles, knights, and medieval life. Learners can explore castle features and discover why castles were built.

DK Find Out – Castles

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/castles/>

Diagrams, photographs, and facts showing how castles were designed, built, and defended.

English Heritage – Castles for Kids

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/kids/>


Information about real castles, castle builders, and medieval life. Learners can investigate how different castle features worked together to protect people.


Britannica Kids – Middle Ages

<https://kids.britannica.com>

Online Safety Reminder

When exploring online, remember:

 Ask an adult first

 Use trusted learning websites

 Keep personal information private

 Tell an adult if something feels wrong

Stay curious and stay safe.



Articles and images explaining castles, rulers, kingdoms, and life during the Middle Ages.

Horrible Histories – Medieval Life

<https://www.youtube.com/@HorribleHistories>

Short educational videos that help learners understand castles, knights, defence systems, and daily life in medieval times.

National Geographic Kids – History & Civilisations

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

Pictures and articles about historical places, people, and civilisations. Learners can compare medieval communities with other societies.

PBS Kids Design Squad – Building & Engineering

<https://pbskids.org/designsquad>

Activities that explore building, design, structures, and problem-solving. Useful when designing or building a castle model.

Toy Theatre – Maths Tools & Geometry Activities

<https://toytheater.com>

Interactive tools for shapes, measurement, symmetry, and design. Helpful for planning castle layouts and investigating how builders used shapes and space.

Tate Kids – Art and Design Ideas

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids>

Creative activities and design ideas that can support drawing, designing, and presenting a Castle Defence Project.

Universal Design for Learning Supports

This Curiosity Pack supports different ways of learning by providing flexible choices for engagement, learning, and expression.

Multiple ways to engage

Learners can:

- choose which castle feature to investigate (walls, towers, moats, gates, drawbridges, or arrow slits)
- move between investigating, drawing, building, designing, and discussing
- take movement or sensory breaks during the lesson
- work independently or with support
- use hands-on materials to explore castle designs
- focus on the castle features that interest them most

Multiple ways to learn

Learners can:

- read facts about castles and castle defence
- watch short videos about medieval castles



- explore photographs, diagrams, and maps
- examine labelled castle drawings
- compare different castle designs
- investigate how builders solved problems
- build or sketch ideas to support understanding

Multiple ways to show learning

Learners can:

- draw and label a castle
- write notes or a fact page
- create a poster or diagram
- build a castle model
- explain discoveries verbally
- create a digital design
- make a comparison chart
- complete a Castle Defence Project





Knights and Castles: Castle Design and Defence






Wonder Guide

Welcome Wonder Seeker!

Wonder Seekers explore the world by asking questions and noticing how things work.

Long ago, people built castles to protect their kingdoms. Builders had to think carefully about how to keep people safe during attacks. Every part of a castle had a purpose.






Castles were designed to:

-  protect people
-  defend land
-  watch for danger
-  control who could enter
-  protect food and supplies

Historians learn about castles by studying buildings, plans, objects, and historical records.







Looking closely at castle designs can help Wonder Seekers understand how people solved problems in medieval times.

During this Wonder Journey, Wonder Seekers may:

-  explore castle features
-  investigate castle defences
-  compare designs and structures
-  notice patterns and differences
-  create a Castle Defence Project



Ideas may be shown in many ways:

-  drawing
-  writing notes
-  building a model
-  making or crafting
-  creating digitally
-  explaining ideas aloud









Activities may be completed in order or Wonder Seekers may begin with the part that feels most interesting. Taking breaks, testing ideas, noticing changes, and making discoveries are all part of the Wonder Journey.

Wonder Investigation

Wonder Seekers sometimes notice that castles did not all look the same.

Builders changed castle designs over time to make them stronger, safer, and better able to protect the people living inside. As new weapons were invented and new challenges appeared, builders developed new ideas to solve problems. Some castles were small and simple, while others became large stone fortresses with many layers of defence.

Different castles may include:

-  towers
-  thick stone walls
-  drawbridges
-  moats
-  gates
-  watchtowers
-  arrow slits
-  courtyards

Each feature was designed for a purpose.

These features helped solve different problems.

Some features helped people see danger from far away.


Some helped stop enemies entering.

Some protected people, animals, food, and supplies.

Some helped guards defend the castle during an attack.

Looking closely at castle designs can help Wonder Seekers understand how people used planning, engineering, and problem-solving to keep communities safe.

Castle design and defence can be explored in many ways.


-  Some Wonder Seekers investigate by:
 - looking at pictures of different castles
 - examining castle diagrams or plans



- watching short videos about castle construction
- reading facts with help
- comparing castle features
- talking about how castles protected people
- remembering things learned before
- exploring models of castles

Different castle features may be noticed, such as:

- where towers are placed
- how thick walls are built
- how moats create barriers
- where gates are located
- how drawbridges work
- where guards may have stood
- how people moved around inside the castle
- how builders used stone and other materials

 When Wonder Seekers investigate, they sometimes keep track of what they notice.

Ideas may be recorded by:

- drawing and labelling a castle
- making a list of castle features
- creating a comparison chart
- sketching a castle plan
- building a simple model
- creating picture or word cards
- writing notes about how different features work

 Some Wonder Seekers notice:

- which features appear most often
- how walls protect people
- how towers improve visibility
- how moats create barriers
- how gates control entry
- how different parts work together
- how builders solved problems
- how castle designs changed over time

Looking closely at castle features can help Wonder Seekers understand how design helps keep people safe and how people in the past used creativity, planning, and engineering to solve challenges.



Castle Defence Investigation









Wonder Seekers may choose **one castle feature** to investigate closely.


Builders carefully designed every part of a castle to solve a problem. Some features helped people see danger, some stopped enemies from entering, and others helped protect people inside the castle walls.

Looking closely at one feature can help Wonder Seekers understand how castles worked and why builders made certain design choices.


Possible features:

-  walls
-  towers
-  moats
-  drawbridges
-  gates
-  arrow slits

Before investigating, Wonder Seekers may spend time looking closely at pictures, diagrams, videos, books, or castle models.

 Some Wonder Seekers notice:

- where the feature is located
- what materials were used
- how large or small it is
- how it connects to other parts of the castle
- how it may have helped protect people
- how builders may have designed it

 Wonder Seekers may investigate:


- What is the feature?
- What does it look like?
- What problem does it solve?
- How does it protect people?
- Why was it useful?
- How might people have used it?
- What materials may have been used to build it?
- Would castles work as well without it?
- How does it work with other castle features?

 Wonder Seekers may ask:

- Which feature seems most important?
- Which feature would be hardest to build?
- Which feature would cost the most to build?
- Which feature would help protect the most people?



- Which feature would you choose for your own castle?
- How would you improve the design?
- Would the feature still be useful today?

 When Wonder Seekers investigate, they sometimes keep track of what they discover.

Ideas may be recorded by:

- drawing and labelling the feature
- writing notes
- creating a fact page
- making a comparison chart
- building a model
- recording ideas digitally
- creating a diagram showing how the feature works
- making a list of advantages and disadvantages
- explaining discoveries to another person

Some Wonder Seekers discover that castle features worked best when they were used together. Looking closely at one feature can help Wonder Seekers understand how medieval builders used planning, design, and problem-solving to create strong and effective castles.

Wonder Studio

Wonder Seekers now bring their discoveries together.

Builders, designers, engineers, and historians often use drawings, plans, models, diagrams, and displays to communicate ideas. These tools help people explain how something works, share information with others, and solve problems.

In this activity, Wonder Seekers create something that shows what they discovered about castle design and defence.

Wonder Seekers may begin by thinking about the castle feature they investigated and the discoveries they made during the investigation.


Some Wonder Seekers choose to show how a castle feature protected people.


Some choose to explain how builders solved problems.


Some choose to design their own castle using ideas from real castles.

There are many ways to create.

You may create:

 a poster

 a fact page

 a model

 a castle design


 a crafted display

 a digital creation



 Before creating, Wonder Seekers may think about:

- Which castle feature did you investigate?
- Why was it important?
- How did it help protect people?
- What problem did it solve?
- How did builders design it?
- What materials may have been used?
- What would you include in your own castle?
- How would you improve the design?

 Some Wonder Seekers begin by making a plan.

A plan may include:

- sketches
- labels
- notes
- measurements
- materials needed
- ideas to investigate further

You may include:


 a castle name

 defence features


 design ideas


 labels and diagrams

 interesting facts

 notes from your investigation

 a model or drawing


 a castle layout or plan


 explanations of how features work


As you create, you may notice new ideas. Some Wonder Seekers change their designs, add new features, or improve their plans as they work. Testing ideas, making changes, and solving problems are all part of the design process.


When your project is finished, you may choose to share it by:

 explaining your ideas

 presenting your project

 taking photos

 writing about your discoveries

 showing it to family or friends



There is no single correct way to create.

Different Wonder Seekers may choose different ways to share their discoveries.


Explaining, drawing, building, designing, problem-solving, and creating are all part of the Wonder Journey.


Reflection

How did this Curiosity Pack feel?

 Loved it

 Interesting

 Okay

 Challenging

Wonder Seekers may think about:

- Which castle feature was most interesting?
- What helped castles stay safe?
- What surprised you?
- Which castle would you like to learn more about?

You may reflect by:

- talking
- drawing
- writing
- building
- recording a short explanation

