



# Medieval Castles: Strongholds and Symbols of Power

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

## What Were Medieval Castles?

**Medieval castles** were fortified buildings built across **Europe** between roughly the **9th and 16th centuries**. They were much more than just fancy homes—they were powerful symbols of a noble's wealth and authority. Kings, lords, and important nobles built castles to show everyone how important and mighty they were.

Castles served several key purposes. They were **military strongholds** where soldiers could defend large areas of land. They were also **homes** for noble families and their servants. Many castles contained **treasuries**, kept weapons and supplies, and served as **administrative centres** where nobles made important decisions about their lands and people.

Think of it like a superhero's headquarters—a safe place to live, store valuable things, control the surrounding area, and defend against enemies.

## How Were Castles Defended?

Castle builders were incredibly clever about defence. The **outer walls** were thick and tall—sometimes over **30 feet high**—making them very difficult to climb or break through. Many castles had **multiple walls** surrounding them, so attackers had to break through layer after layer of defence.

Castles had tall **towers** at corners and gates. These towers let defenders see enemies coming from far away and rain arrows down on attackers from above. **Battlements** (notched stone walls on top) protected soldiers while they fought. **Arrow slits** were narrow openings that let archers shoot at enemies outside while staying safe.

Water was an excellent defence too. Many castles were surrounded by **moats**—deep trenches filled with water. Some castles even had **drawbridges** that could be raised to prevent enemies from crossing.

Think of it like a video game castle with multiple defensive layers—you have to get past the moat, climb the outer wall, defeat guards in towers, and fight through inner

gates.

Castles also had strong **gatehouses** with heavy wooden doors reinforced with iron. Guards could trap attackers inside and defeat them. Inside the castle, defenders stored food and water so they could survive long **sieges** when enemies surrounded them and tried to starve them out.

## Why Castles Matter Today

Medieval castles show us how people lived, fought, and ruled during the **Middle Ages**. They remind us of a time when noble families controlled vast territories and had to defend their power through strength and strategy.