

TOPIC PACKS · GRADES 2–4

Castles & Knights

A cross-curricular themed week

Suggested timetable

Day	Subject	Activity
Monday	History	Parts of a castle and how they defend it
Tuesday	Design Tech	Design and label your own castle
Wednesday	English	Diary of a castle servant or knight's apprentice
Thursday	Art	Heraldry — design a coat of arms
Friday	History	A day in the life — siege role-play

Day 1 — Parts of a castle and what they do

<p>Moat</p> <p>A wide ditch around the castle, often filled with water. Stops attackers getting close to the walls.</p>	<p>Drawbridge</p> <p>The bridge over the moat. Could be raised to seal the castle off completely.</p>
<p>Portcullis</p> <p>A heavy iron grating that drops down behind the gate. A second line of defence.</p>	<p>Battlements</p> <p>The toothy top of the walls. Defenders hid behind the high parts and fired arrows from the gaps.</p>
<p>Keep</p> <p>The strongest tower in the middle of the castle. Last line of defence — where everyone retreats if walls fall.</p>	<p>Murder holes</p> <p>Holes in the ceiling above the gate. Defenders dropped boiling water, oil or rocks on attackers below.</p>



Day 2 — Design technology (60 min)

Each child designs and labels their own castle. Must include: moat, drawbridge, walls, at least 2 towers, battlements, keep, gatehouse. Bonus features: secret passage, working portcullis, murder holes. CONSTRAINT TASK: Tell children there's a hill on one side and a river on the other. They must use the geography to their advantage. This forces real design thinking.

Day 3 — English (60 min)

DIARY ENTRY: Write a day-in-the-life diary as either: (a) A 12-year-old castle servant — fetching water, cleaning, helping the cook, watching the knights train. (b) A 12-year-old knight's apprentice (a 'page') — practising swordsmanship, learning to ride, polishing armour, being taught to read. MUST INCLUDE: What you eat, what you wear, three jobs you do, one funny thing that happens, one scary moment, what you dream about that night.

Day 4 — Art: Coat of Arms (60 min)

Heraldry is the art of designing personal symbols. Knights had coats of arms so people could recognise them in armour. Each child designs their own. A coat of arms has: 1. A SHIELD shape divided into sections (quarters or halves are easiest) 2. CHARGES — animals, objects or symbols (a lion = courage, a tree = strength, a star = honour) 3. COLOURS — only certain combinations are 'correct' in heraldry: gold/silver with red/blue/green/black 4. A MOTTO — a short phrase in Latin or English ('Always Brave', 'Truth and Honour') Children design their personal coat of arms representing their family, hobbies, or hopes.

Day 5 — Siege role-play (60 min)

Set up two teams: ATTACKERS and DEFENDERS. Push tables together as the 'castle'. The attackers have a list of siege tactics: • Battering ram (loud chanting + slow movement) • Catapult (paper ball throwing from outside) • Tunnel under (children army-crawl) • Climb the walls (chairs as ladders) Defenders must coordinate response — who's at the gate, who's on the walls, who's preparing oil (paper). Run for 20 minutes. Debrief: What worked? What was the strongest defence? What was the smartest attack?

