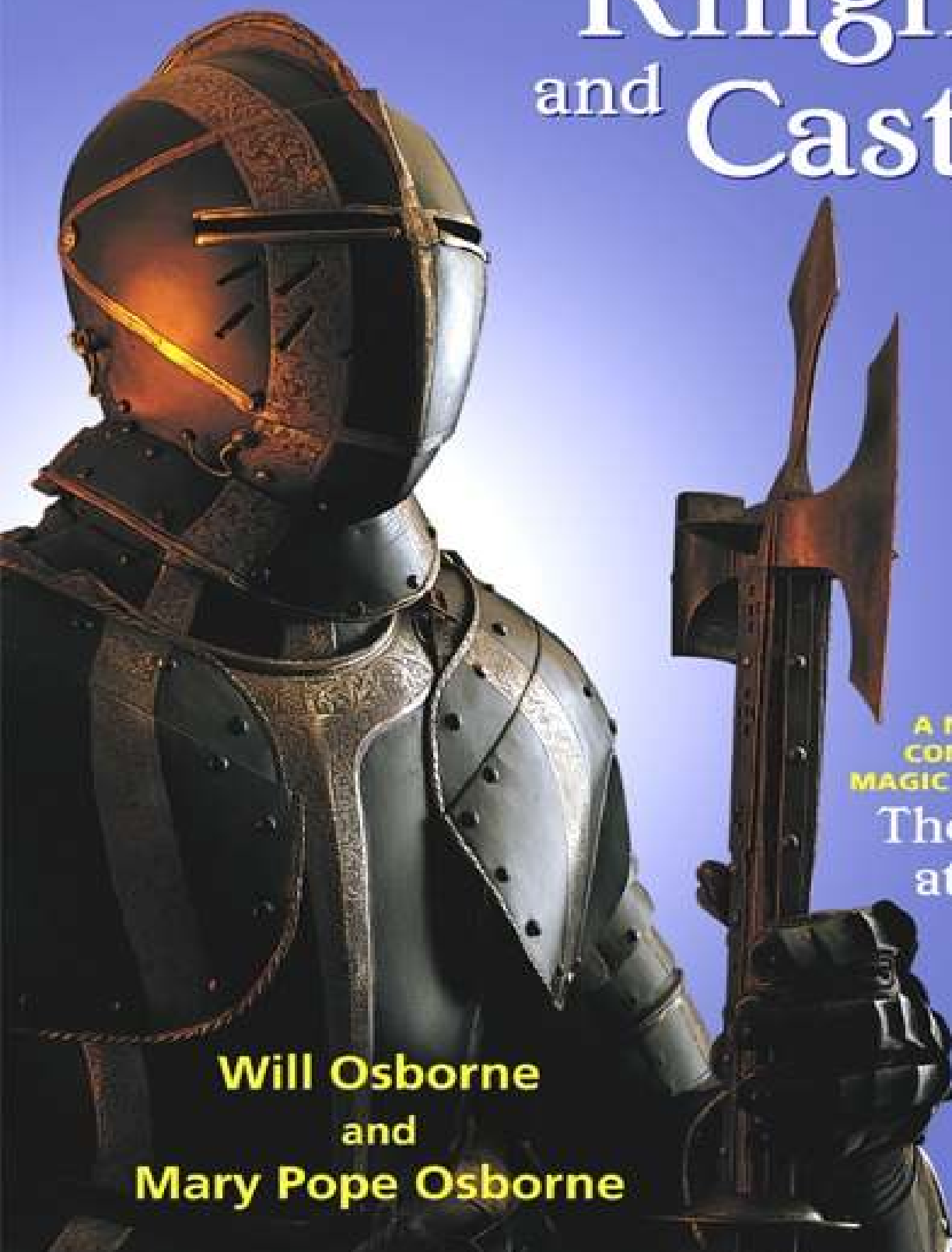


MAGIC TREE HOUSE™



**FACT TRACKER**

# Knights and Castles



A NONFICTION  
COMPANION TO  
MAGIC TREE HOUSE #2:

The Knight  
at Dawn

**Will Osborne  
and  
Mary Pope Osborne**

A Note from  
Mary Pope Osborne About the

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When I write Magic Tree House® adventures, I love including facts about the times and places Jack and Annie visit. But when readers finish these adventures, I want them to learn even more. So that's why my husband, Will, and my sister, Natalie Pope Boyce, and I write a series of nonfiction books that are companions to the fiction titles in the Magic Tree House series. We call these books Fact Trackers because we love to track the facts! Whether we're researching dinosaurs, pyramids, Pilgrims, sea monsters, or cobras, we're always amazed at how wondrous and surprising the real world is. We want you to experience the same wonder we do—so get out your pencils and notebooks and hit the trail with us. You can be a Magic Tree House® Fact Tracker, too!

*Mary Pope Osborne*

**Here's what kids, parents,  
and teachers have to say about the  
Magic Tree House® Fact Trackers:**

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“They are so good. I can't wait for the next one. All I can say for now is prepare to be amazed!”

—Alexander L

“I have read every Magic Tree House book there is. The [Fact Trackers] are a thrilling way to get more information about the special events in the story.”

—John L

“These are fascinating nonfiction books that enhance the magical time-traveling adventures of Jack and Annie. I love these books, especially *American Revolution*. I was learning so much and I didn't even know it!”

—Tori Beth

“[They] are an excellent ‘behind-the-scenes’ look at what the [Magic Tree House fiction] has started in your imagination! You can't buy one without the other; they are such a complement to one another.”

—Erika N., mo

“Magic Tree House [Fact Trackers] took my children on a journey from Frog Creek, Pennsylvania, to so many significant historical events! The detailed manuals are a remarkable addition to the classic fiction Magic Tree House books we adore!”

—Jenny S., mo

“[They] are very useful tools in my classroom, as they allow for students to be part of the planning process. Together, we find facts in the [Fact Trackers] to extend the learning introduced in the fictional companions. Researching and planning classroom activities, such as our class Olympics based on facts found in *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*, help create a genuine love for learning!”

—Paula H., teach

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**Magic Tree House®  
Fact Tracker**

**KNIGHTS  
AND CASTLES**

A nonfiction companion to  
Magic Tree House® #2:  
*The Knight at Dawn*

by Will Osborne  
and Mary Pope Osborne

illustrated by Sal Murdocca



A STEPPING STONE BOOK™  
Random House  New York

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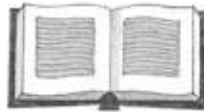
*About the Authors*

Dear Readers,

Our adventures in the magic tree house always make us want to know more about the places we visit.

When we got back from the time of knights and castles in The Knight at Dawn, we wanted to know more about dungeons. We wanted to know more about armor. We wanted to know more about what goes on inside a castle.

To find out, we had to be fact trackers! We went to the library. We found pictures of famous castles in the encyclopedia. We checked out books about the Middle Ages. The librarian helped us track facts about





knights on the Internet. We even found a DVD about building a castle!

Now we want to share the facts with you. So get your notebook, get your backpack, and get ready to gallop across the drawbridge into the time of knights and castles.

Jack  
Annie



# The Middle Ages

Imagine that it takes twenty years to build your house. You need thousands of workers to build it. You need hundreds of servants to run it. You need a small army of armored men to protect it.



Welcome to the time of knights and castles.

We often read about make-believe castles in fairy tales and legends.

The real castles that are most like the ones in fairy tales were built in Europe during the *Middle Ages*.

The Middle Ages began about 450 A.D. They lasted for over 1,000 years. This period

history is called the Middle Ages because it was between ancient times and modern times. is sometimes also called the *medieval era*. *Medieval* is Latin for “middle age.”



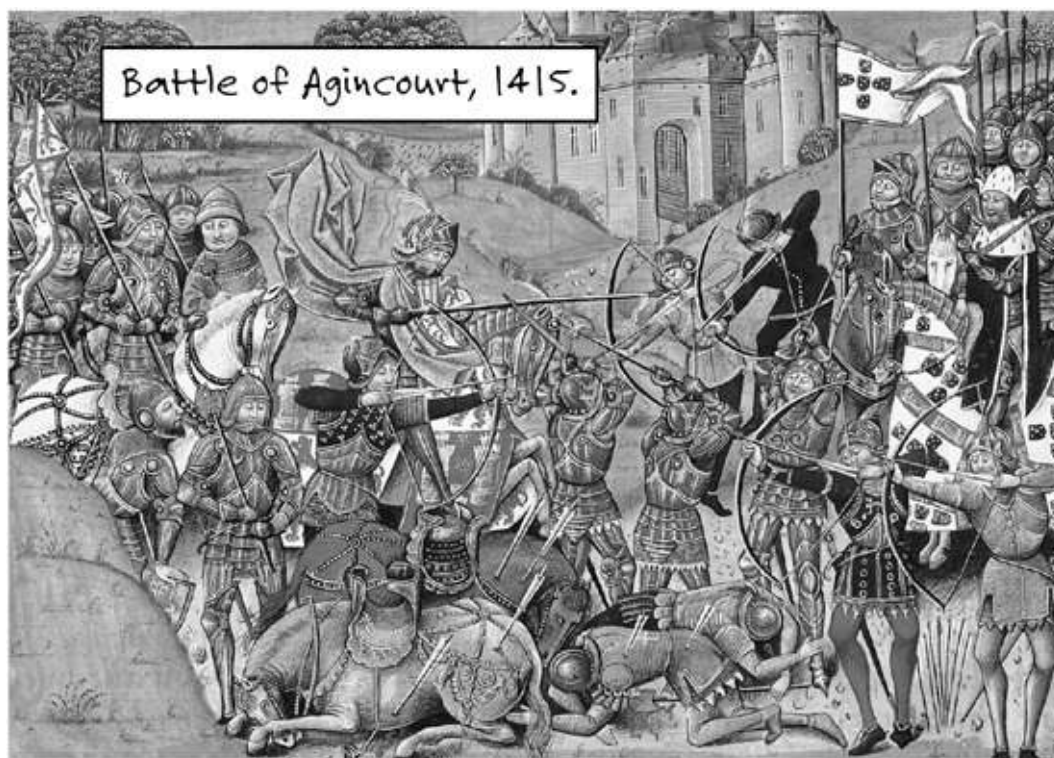
**Eyeglasses were invented in the Middle Ages!**

The Middle Ages were a time of great change in Europe. More people learned to read and write. The first universities were built. New kinds of painting and poetry were created.



**A university is a school of higher learning.**

The Middle Ages were also a time of war and fighting. People fought with each other about religion. They fought about who should marry who. Mostly, they fought about land.



The British Library: Neg. No. 17240 Photo. Shelfmark/Man

During the Middle Ages, nearly all the land in Europe belonged to kings. Each king's land was called his *kingdom*.

Most kingdoms were too big for a king to defend without help. So a king often turned over pieces of his kingdom to men he trusted. These men were called *barons*. The pieces of land

were called *fiefs* (FEEFS), or *manors*.

A baron didn't own his manor. But he ruled over all the people who lived and worked there. And he could build a castle on the manor for himself and his family.



Some manors were very large. They could include several villages and many farms.

In return, a baron *swore allegiance* to the king. That meant he was willing to die to protect the king and the kingdom.

The baron also promised to send soldiers to fight for the kingdom if it were attacked. These soldiers were called *knights*.

Knights swore allegiance to the king *and* the baron. In return, knights were often given their own manors to rule over.



Not all knights got their own manors. Some lived in a lord's castle.

Most of the people who actually worked on the land were called *serfs* (SURFS). Serfs didn't rule over anyone. They had almost no rights at all.

Serfs were allowed to farm a tiny bit of land. They were allowed to keep some of what they grew to feed their families. They had to give the rest to the lord who ruled over them.



Anyone who ruled over land and the people on it was called a lord.

In return, most serfs also worked in their lord's fields. Some worked in his household. Some even helped build the lord's castle.

This system of trading the use of land for loyalty and work during the Middle Ages is called the *feudal* (FYOO-dul) *system*.

# Feudal System

---

King

Barons

Knights

Serfs

## Lords and Ladies

In the Middle Ages, most rich people were *nobles*. Nobles came from families that had been wealthy for a long time.

Noble women were called *ladies*. They could also have titles, such as baroness, duchess, or countess.



Noble men sometimes had titles such as baron, duke, or count.



The feudal system helped keep order during the Middle Ages. But it wasn't very fair.



A person almost always had to be born into the nobility. Even people who worked very hard and became rich could not normally become nobles.

Today in Europe, America, and many other places around the world, people are free to try to be almost anything they want.





## The Age of Castles

Castles were an important part of the feudal system. They were built to protect lords and their land from enemy attackers.



Nobody knows exactly when the first castle was built. But the busiest time for castle building in Europe began about 1050 and lasted until the end of the Middle Ages.





The word castle comes from the Latin word castellum, which means “fortress.”

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So many castles were built during this period that historians sometimes call it “The Age of Castles.” By the end of the Age of Castles, there were over 12,000 castles in Europe.

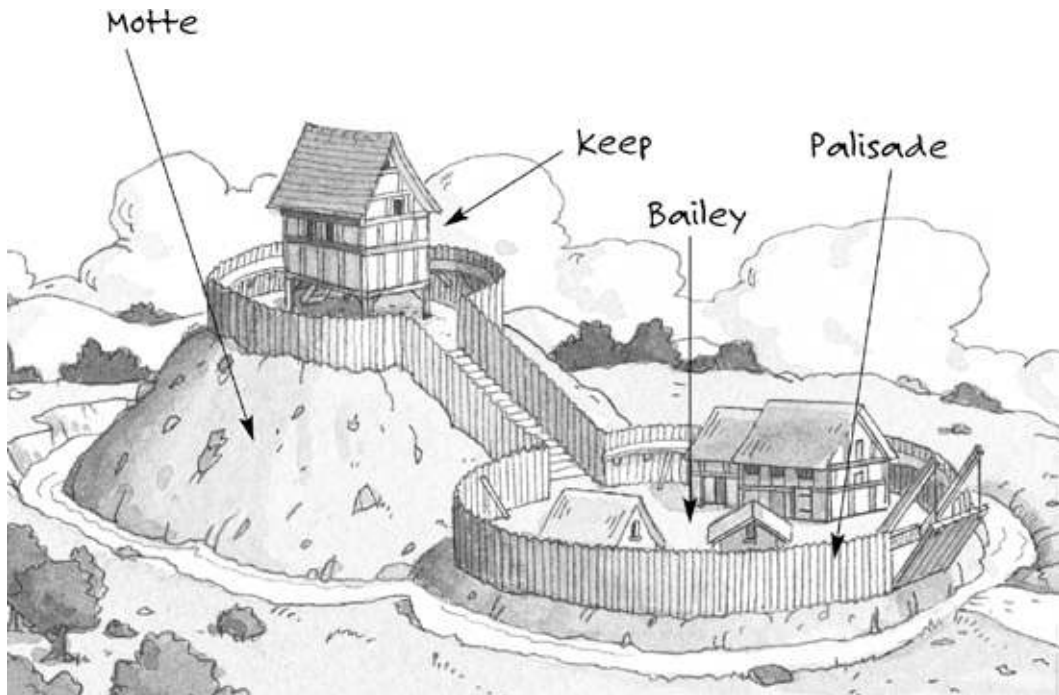


A historian is someone who studies and writes about history.

## The First Castles

The first castles looked more like forts in the Old West than castles in fairy tales. They were built out of wood.

These castles were usually built on a mound of earth called a *motte* (MAHT). They had a tower called a *keep*, a yard called a *bailey*, and a tall fence called a *palisade* (PAL-uh-sade).



This kind of castle is called a motte and bailey castle.



Wooden castles could be built very quickly. Some were built in less than a week! But wooden castles didn't always protect a lord from his enemies.

Enemy armies could break through wooden fences. They could burn down wooden buildings.

Stone was a much better defense against attack. So by the 1100s, most castles were being built out of stone.

## Building a Stone Castle

Building a stone castle was a lot more work than building a wooden one.

Tons of stone had to be dug out of the ground. There were no bulldozers. All the digging had to be done by hand.

The heavy stones had to be pulled on wagons or carried by boat to where the castle was being built. Loading and unloading the boats and wagons was a huge job.

The actual stonework on the castle was done by men called *masons*.



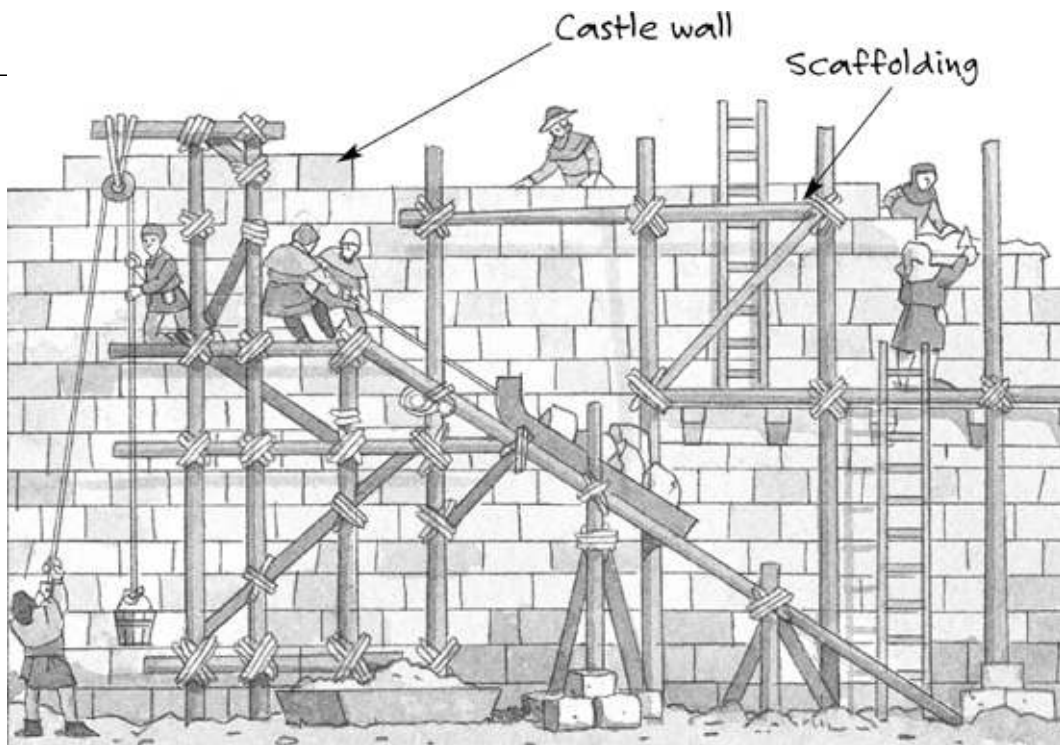
A *master mason* worked with the lord to plan the castle. He also made sure all the other castle builders did a good job.

*Freemasons* and *rough masons* carved the stones and cut them into blocks.

Each mason had a special mark that he often carved into the stones he cut. Carving this special mark was like signing a painting.



*Carpenters* did all the woodwork for the castle. As the stone walls got higher and higher, the carpenters built *scaffolding* (SKA-ful-ding) so the stoneworkers could reach the top.



Nails and tools were made by *blacksmiths*. Blacksmiths also fixed broken tools. They stayed busy because tools broke a lot.



The master masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths who worked on a castle were all *master craftsmen*. They had spent many years learning to do their jobs well.

Master craftsmen often had *apprentices* (uh-PREN-tuh-siz). Apprentices were assistants who were learning to become master craftsmen.

The master craftsmen and their apprentices needed lots of help. Most of their helpers were poor people who lived near the castle site.

# Castle Builders' Jobs

Masons

Carpenters

Blacksmiths

Apprentices

Building a stone castle sometimes took more than twenty years. By the time a castle was finally finished, over a thousand people might have worked on it.

## How to Become a Master Craftsman

1. Become an *apprentice* to a master craftsman. Run errands and work without pay. Learn skills.



2. After about seven years, become a *journeyman* (JUR-nee-mun). Practice your skills. Work for low pay.



3. Make something that shows off your skills (it's called your *masterpiece*). Present your masterpiece to a *guild*. (A guild is a group of master craftsmen who share the same skills.)



4. Congratulations!

Your work has passed the guild's test!

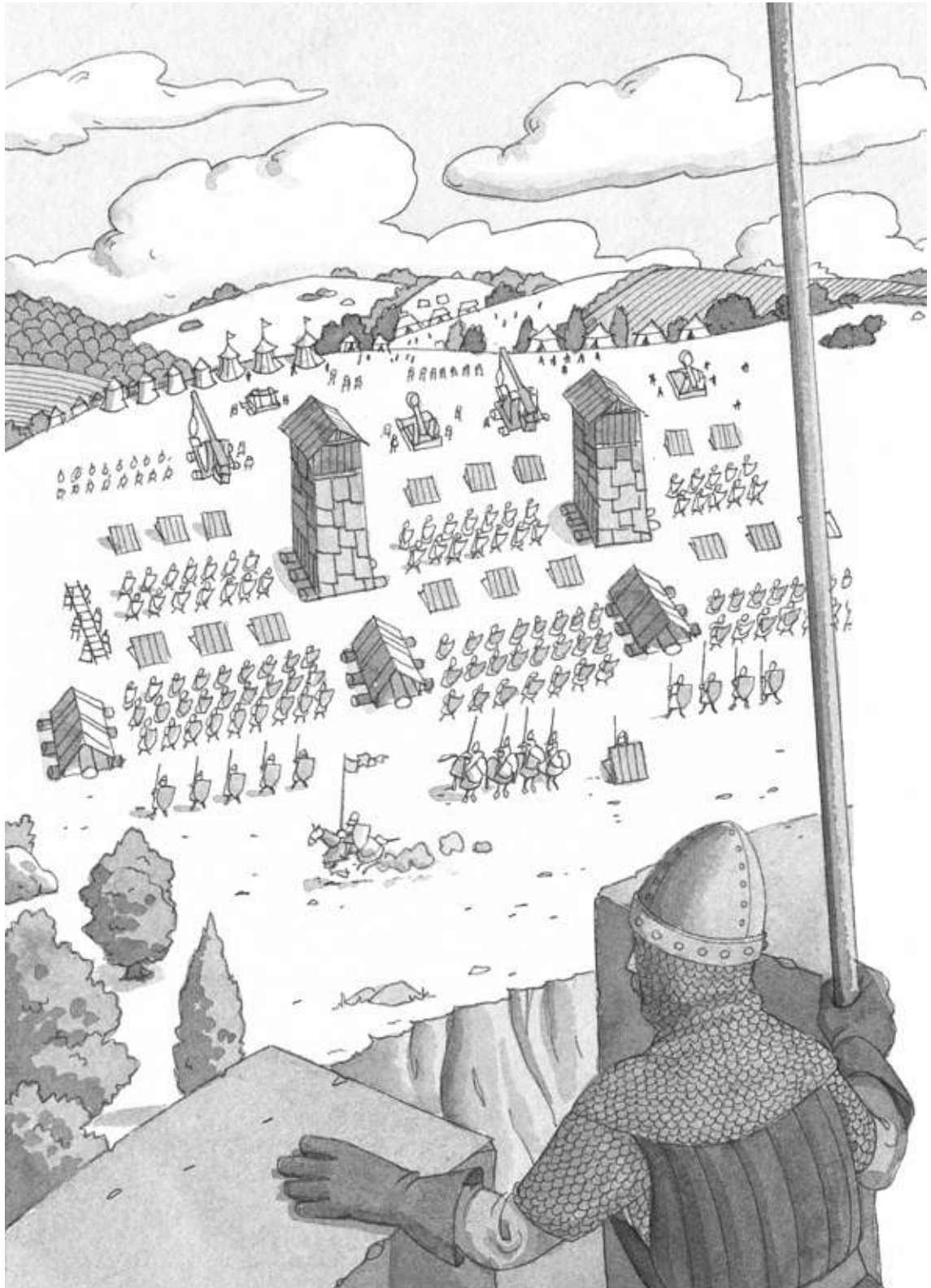
You can now be a member of the guild and train apprentices of your own!





## Protecting the Castle

It took a lot longer to build a stone castle than a wooden one. It also cost much more.



Most lords thought stone castles were worth the extra time and money. When a stone castle was complete, it was *very* hard for an enemy to get inside.

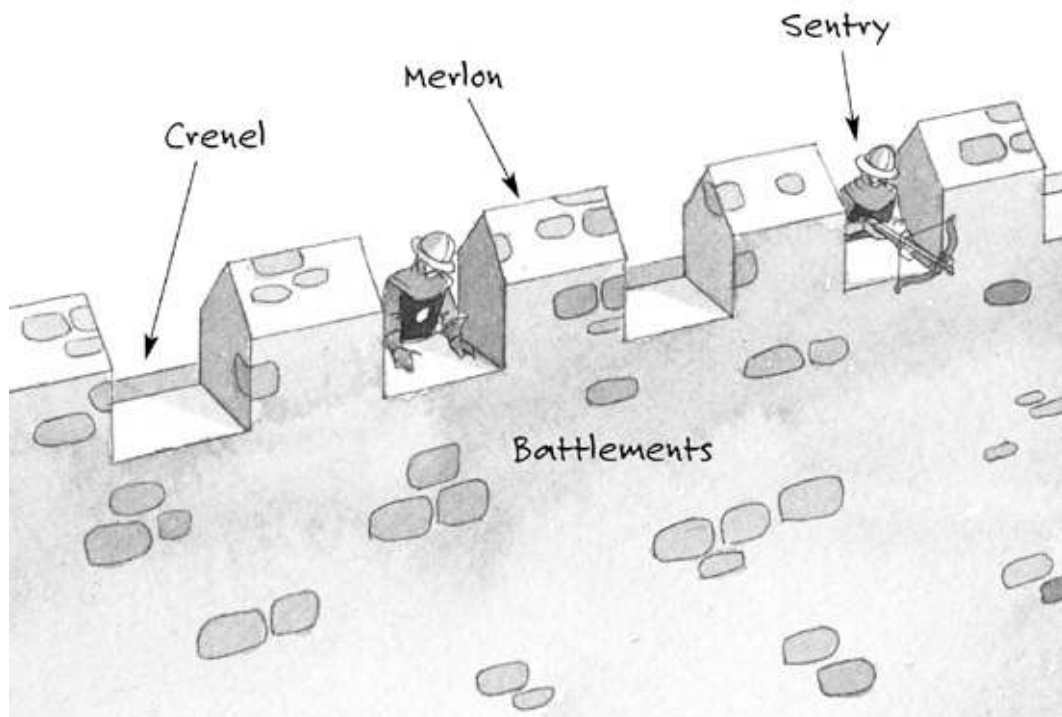
Stone castles often had towers that reached high above the walls. There were watchmen in the towers. When the watchmen saw an enemy coming, they blew horns to sound an alarm.

*Sentries* (SEN-treez) with bows and arrows stood guard along the tops of all the castle walls. The sentries were protected by stone *battlements* (BAT- ul-munts). Battlements had gaps called *crenels* (KREN-ulz) and solid places called *merlons* (MUR-lunz).

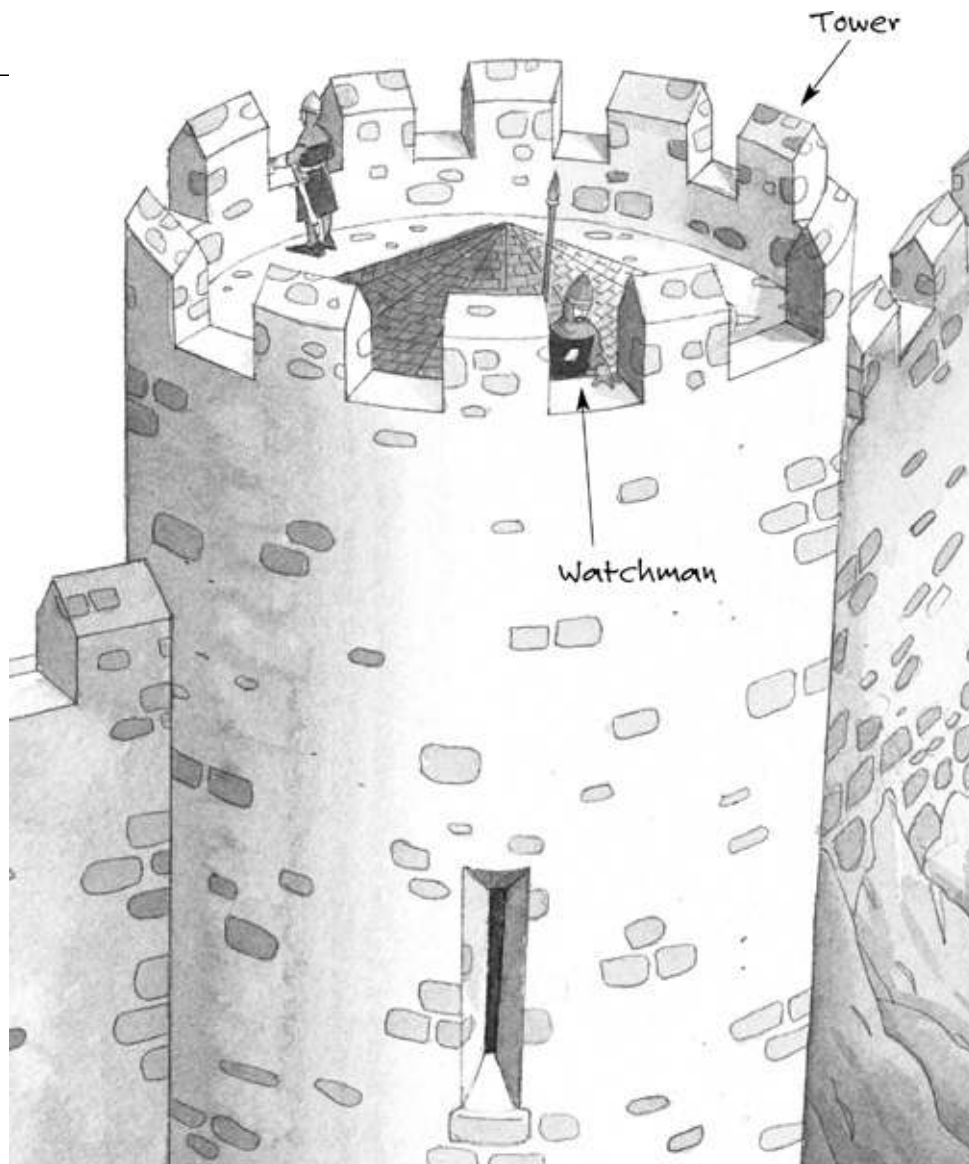


A sentry is a soldier who keeps watch for enemies.

When the sentries heard the watchmen's alarm, they could shoot arrows at the enemy through the crenels. If the enemy shot back, the sentries could duck behind the merlons.



If the enemy got past the tower watchmen, they still had a long way to go to get inside the castle.



First they had to go through the *barbican* (BAR-bih-kon). The barbican was a walled passage that led to the castle gate. There were big doors on each end. If the enemy tried to sneak into the castle, guards could close the doors. The enemy would be trapped!

If the enemy got through the barbican, they then had to cross the *moat* (MOTE). The moat was a deep, wide ditch that ran all the way around the outside of the castle walls. The moat was usually filled with water.



**Yikes! Some moats may even have had crocodiles!**



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