

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

SURVEYING THE SKYLINE



KS2

Recommended for

KS2 (History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Explore some of the key features of Clifford's Tower and the view from its roof to learn about the building and its environment using physical evidence.
- Understand how Clifford's Tower has changed over time.
- Consider how and why the area around Clifford's Tower has developed over time.

Time to complete

Approx. 20 minutes



A photograph of York taken from the wall-walk at Clifford's Tower.

SUMMARY

There has been a tower within the York Castle site since the first castle was founded by William the Conqueror in 1068. The different iterations of the castle's central tower have provided a lookout point across York. After Clifford's Tower's construction in the 13th century, guards used the wall walk to survey the surrounding area for threats and defend the castle from attack.

Today, the tower's roof provides a perfect vantage point for students to survey the city skyline and consider how and why it has changed and developed over time. They should use the physical evidence they can see to discover how Clifford's Tower's role within the local landscape has changed since it was first built.

Use the teachers' notes (on pages 38–43) to introduce students to some of the key features they can see across the city of York from the top of Clifford's Tower. Set the challenges in the teachers' notes to help students consider the development of Clifford's Tower and its surrounding environment over time. Photocopy enough checklists (on page 44) for your class. Students should record their progress by ticking off each thing as they find it.

You might also find it helpful to print off the Sources section in this kit (pages 49–57) to use as additional points of reference as you explore the views from Clifford's Tower.


MORE LEARNING IDEAS


Compare Clifford's Tower with other castle keeps located in towns and cities like York. Explore similarities and differences in terms of their design and the layout of settlements around them. Consider the positioning of these buildings and how this contributed to the castles' effectiveness in terms of defence. You might want to compare the artificial mound at Pickering Castle and the natural cliff-top defences at Scarborough Castle for example.

Please be aware of other visitors as you do the activities. Supervise students at all times and take care going up and down stairs and moving around the roof area.

SURVEYING THE SKYLINE

TEACHERS' NOTES

FEATURE	DID YOU KNOW?	CHALLENGE
<p>I. River Ouse and River Foss</p> 	<p>William the Conqueror was responsible for building the first castle at York in the 1060s. This was attacked and destroyed twice in 1068 and 1069 during rebellions against William's rule. After putting down the rebellions, William immediately rebuilt his castles as enduring symbols of his authority in the north of England.</p> <p>By the early 1070s, William had created two castles at York; one on either side of the river Ouse. The castle on the western bank was made up of a motte and bailey (an exterior enclosure) while the castle on the eastern bank had a motte and two baileys linked by a gate.</p> <p>Much of the area beyond the river Foss, now a built-up part of the city, was a large pool of water called the King's Fishpond or King's Pool. This was created by damming the river Foss, probably during the 12th century. The king often used the fish caught in the pool as gifts for local dignitaries. Fish from the King's Pool was served at the wedding banquet of Henry III's eldest daughter in 1251.</p>	<p>Q. Why was it so important to William that he build a castle at York?</p> <p>A. William wanted to build and maintain a castle at York to establish his authority in the north of England. York had a large population that needed to be controlled and was the seat of the Archbishop of York who was a very powerful figure.</p> <p>Q. Why do you think William I decided to build his castle between two rivers?</p> <p>A. Castles were normally built in areas that were strategically important with natural defences in the landscapes around them. Rivers provided ideal natural defences for fortresses like York Castle. Crossings like the river Foss and the river Ouse were controlled by the nearby castle, which could collect tolls and manage the movement of people and goods in the area.</p> <p>Q. How many bridges can you spot crossing the river Ouse and the river Foss today? Do you think these existed during William I's lifetime?</p> <p>A. Today, there are three bridges across the river Ouse and two across the river Foss in York City Centre. It's unlikely that there was more than one in the Norman period.</p>

		<p>Q. Why was it important for York Castle to have sources of food, like the King's Pool nearby?</p> <p>A. The inhabitants of castles relied on the land around them for food so this was an important factor in castle construction. The land around York was used for farming and the rivers for fish. The creation of the King's Pool in York was a way to secure a reliable food source for the castle.</p>
<p>2. York Skyline</p> 	<p>Clifford's Tower sits on a high artificial mound that was originally created by the Normans in the 1060s. This height, and the height of the tower itself, combines to ensure that anyone at the top of the tower can survey the surrounding area. Clifford's Tower sat at the centre of a large and powerful fortress, surrounded by an outer curtain wall with towers and gatehouses. Clifford's Tower was one of the tallest structures in York in the Norman period and during the Middle Ages. The tallest building in York is the Minster, built between c.1230 and 1472. The central tower is 72 metres (235 feet) tall.</p>	<p>Q. What are the tallest buildings you can see in the York skyline? Is there anything that these buildings have in common?</p> <p>A. The majority of the tall buildings in York are churches, like St Mary Castlegate and York Minster. York Minster is the tallest building in York. Even today, no building in the city is allowed to be built taller than the Minster.</p>

3. St Mary Castlegate



In the 11th and 12th centuries, there was an outer bailey to the north-east of Clifford's Tower. The outer bailey gate was on the line of Castlegate, near where you can see St Mary Castlegate Church today.

St Mary Castlegate was originally a Saxon church, though only a small amount of its original stonework survives. The majority of the building is medieval with mostly 13th century elements and 14th and 15th century alterations. It has the tallest steeple in York at 47 metres.

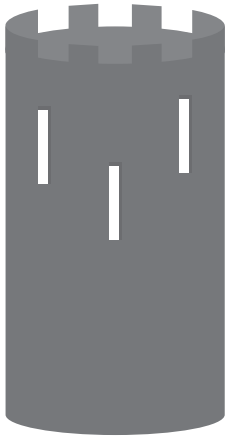
Q. How many churches can you see within York's skyline?

Why do you think there are so many churches still visible in the York cityscape today?

A. Religion was a very important part of daily life in the past and the majority of people attended church services regularly in the Middle Ages. This included the residents of York Castle and there was a chapel inside the tower for the king and important visitors to use. At this time, there was also a synagogue (a Jewish place of worship) on Coney Street that is no longer visible.

Today, churches are both working religious buildings and often historic monuments. Some, like St Mary Castlegate, have been repurposed to become heritage centres, arts venues or even indoor markets. People of other faiths also continue to worship in the city. Although there is no longer a permanent synagogue in York, the York Liberal Synagogue (congregation) continues to meet regularly. There is also a modern mosque on Bull Lane that you may be able to spot to the west of Clifford's Tower in the Layerthorpe area.

4. Arrow Loops



The wall-walk at Clifford's Tower was used by the tower's guards to look out for potential threats (like incoming attacks) and protect the castle. This function was fairly constant throughout the Middle Ages and during the tower's use during the English Civil War in the 17th century. The outer wall had lots of arrow loops used by archers to shoot at attackers. You can still see the bases of some of these openings.

In the 17th century, a platform was added to the roof of Clifford's Tower so that cannon could be positioned here.

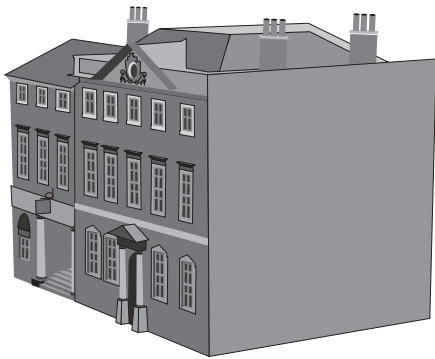
Look closely at the edges of the wall-walk – can you spot where some stones jut out of the walls?

This gives us an idea of the original height of the wall-walk (about 60cm higher than today). It's believed that the parapet wall would have been at least a metre taller than survives today.

Q. Can you spot the remains of any damaged arrow loops at the top of the Tower?

A big fire caused by a cannon in 1684 largely destroyed the interior of Clifford's Tower, reducing it to the shell you see today. The arrow loops at the top of the tower were possibly damaged at this time making them very difficult to see.

5. Fairfax House



By the 18th century, York was no longer under the threat of attack and had become a cultural centre for middle class and upper class visitors. Lord Fairfax rebuilt Fairfax House in 1759 to create a luxury townhouse full of rich ornamentation and neoclassical architectural features, which were fashionable at the time. Castlegate was one of the principal streets in York during the 18th century and the house provided an ideal place for a city residence. The Fairfaxes stayed here during the busy winter season of social events and the summer racing season.

Q. What does the development of luxury buildings like Fairfax House suggest about how York had changed since the Middle Ages?

A. By the 18th century, York was becoming an important cultural centre for the northern gentry. The development of the Assembly Rooms, the races and the Theatre Royal all helped to make York a natural place for the gentry to meet and entertain each other during the winter social season, rather than travel 200 miles to London.

6. Eye of York

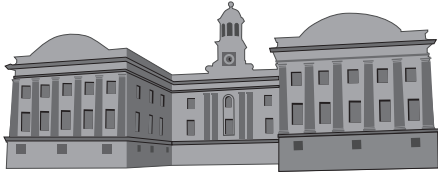


The area of grass you can see in front of the 18th century court and prison buildings (now the York Castle Museum and York Crown Court) was originally known as the 'Eye of the Ridings'. There were three Ridings (derived from a Viking term equivalent to third-ing) making up the county of Yorkshire. The Eye was where county elections were held until 1831. It remained an important location for local politics and the North Riding elections. Results were declared here until 1882. Today this spot is known as the 'Eye of York'.

Q. Why do you think this location was so important for local government? What was special about the Eye of York that meant it was used for important events like local elections?

A. The castle site continued to be an important political location after the medieval castle was replaced by the prison and court buildings in the 18th century. The site remained important because of its strong links to local government, law and order.

7. Prison Buildings

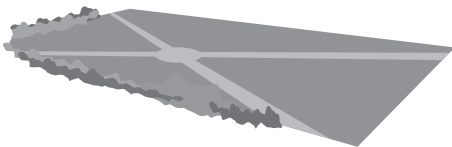


The prison buildings opposite Clifford's Tower were developed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Assize Courts, to the west of the Eye of York, were built between 1773 and 1777. They were designed by one of Yorkshire's leading architects of the time, John Carr, who was also the city's Lord Mayor. To the south is the Debtors' Prison, originally built as the county gaol and completed by 1705. The Debtors' Prison and the Female Prison, built to reflect the Assize Courts in the 1780s, now form part of the York Castle Museum.

Q. What can you tell about 18th century architecture by looking at the court and prison buildings opposite Clifford's Tower? Are there any common features between the buildings that you can spot? How do these compare with the design of Clifford's Tower?

A. The use of triangular pediments and columns are key features of neoclassical design, which was popular in the 18th century. Symmetry was also important to architectural design during this period. Although the four-leafed clover shape of Clifford's Tower is symmetrical, the tower does not have many decorative features as it was mainly built for defence.

8. Tower Gardens

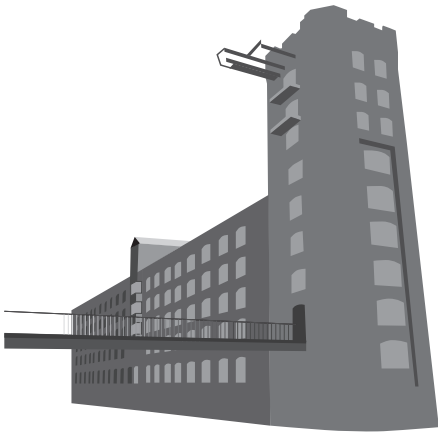


The Tower Gardens, just across the road from Clifford's Tower, were the first public gardens in York. In 1800, the Corporation of York applied to Parliament for permission to tear down parts of the city's walls. The walls had not been needed for defence for over a century and in many places they were in poor condition. The narrow gateways (bars) were inconvenient for busy traffic (horses and carts) and the walls were preventing the city from expanding. Removing sections of the city's walls made way for new developments like public green spaces, which were increasingly important to the Victorians. The Tower Gardens were laid out in their current form in 1880–81 at the same time as the Skeldergate Bridge was being built.

Q. Why do you think the Victorians wanted to create public gardens in York?

A. People became concerned about overcrowding and poor living conditions for the poor during the Victorian period. Parks in urban places like York were created to provide open spaces for the public to enjoy. They often featured facilities like bandstands and tea houses. During the 19th century, Sunday was usually the only day in the week when people weren't expected to work because it was considered a holy day. They would take this opportunity to enjoy local spaces like the Town Gardens. There was also a strong tradition of local holidays when all the factories in a town would close down for a short period, allowing workers to go on short holidays. Bank holidays were introduced in the late 19th century and increasingly offered people more opportunities to visit attractions in cities like York.

9. Industrial Buildings



York became a well-connected cultural centre during the 19th century due to the growth of rail travel. Despite this, it never expanded to become a major industrial city like Leeds, Wakefield or Bradford. The development of the railways meant that hubs like York needed factories to build and maintain engines and carriages. A new railway works was built in York in the 1880s by the North Eastern Railway.

It was also during the 19th century that sweet production came to York. Joseph Terry, Joseph Rowntree and Mary Craven all produced chocolate and sweets in York. Raw ingredients like cocoa beans, sugar and fruit rinds were brought into the city by river and later by rail. Before the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834 and the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865, most sugar consumed in Britain was produced by enslaved people on plantations in the United States and the Caribbean. Even in the early 1900s, people were urging sweet producers like Cadbury's to stop buying cocoa beans from what was Portuguese West Africa (now Angola) because of the continued use of slave labour on plantations there.

The sweets produced in York with these raw ingredients could be transported easily to other parts of England and beyond. Like the railways, the confectionary industry employed lots of people in York. Unlike the railways, the confectionary factories were a major employer of local women.

There are still some factories in and around York producing chocolate and sweets today.

Q. Where do you think the railway buildings in York were located?

The railway buildings were always kept to the northern side of the city. The small repair shop on Queen Street, next to York Station, that opened in 1839 grew into a much larger operation during the 19th century. Work continued on engines in York until around 1905. The city is still a major rail hub today for travellers journeying between London, the north of England and Scotland.

Q. How many industrial buildings can you spot around York today?

A. Today, some of the confectionary warehouses and factory buildings have been repurposed as homes or offices. One of these is Rowntree Wharf on the river Foss.