

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF



Recommended for

KSI-2
(History, Art)

Learning objectives

- Inspect and sketch/ photograph key features of the castle to identify their purpose.
- Deduce whether this castle was mainly built for defence or show.

Time to complete

Approx. 45 minutes



We recommend you watch our YouTube video 'A Mini Guide to Medieval Castles' (1 min 55 sec) with your class: <https://youtu.be/RXXDThkj3Ew>

SUMMARY

Watch 'A Mini Guide to Medieval Castles' on our YouTube channel as an introduction to the castles topic: <https://youtu.be/RXXDThkj3Ew> (1 min 55 sec)

Explain to students that there were two main reasons to build a castle in medieval Britain:

- 'Show down' – to provide a place of protection.
- 'Show off' – to show your importance and wealth.

Discuss: How might they find out the purpose of a castle? Answers include: by looking closely at the buildings, by comparing it with other castles and by exploring other sources (images, objects, text).

MAIN ACTIVITY

During your visit, challenge students (in pairs) to deduce whether this castle was mainly built for 'show down' or 'show off' reasons. **Please remember a maximum of 30 students are allowed inside the castle at any one time.**

Supervise students as they explore the castle for 10–15 minutes, armed with their features checklist (on page 31–32). Next to each feature on the list, they must put a mark in either the 'yes' box if they find that feature at Stokesay, or in the 'no' box if they don't. For each feature they find, they should draw a sketch or take a photo as supporting evidence.

We have provided answers on the next page.

Recall everyone after the allotted time and, as a whole group, discuss their findings, especially what evidence they used. Finally, each pair must decide if the castle is 'show down' or 'show off'.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could design their own medieval fortified manor house.

TEACHER ANSWER SHEET

SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF

- Motte – No, this is a clue that the castle wasn't built in a particularly defensive position.
- Moat – Yes.
- Crenellations – Yes, although most of the big wall that used to surround the castle has been destroyed. This was crenellated.
- Stone curtain wall – Yes.
- Stone gatehouse – No, there is a wooden gatehouse but it is more decorative than defensive.
- Arrow loops – Yes, but not used consistently, which suggests they might be more for show.
- Big windows – Yes, these make the castle walls weaker and more vulnerable to attack; they are a sign of the owner's wealth.
- Murder holes – No.
- Portcullis – No, but we can't be sure whether the original 13th/14th-century gatehouse had one before the new gatehouse was built.
- Stone towers – Yes, there are two towers, but neither is especially defensive.
- Hall – Yes.
- Stone keep – No.

Students should have ticked five grey boxes and seven white boxes, which confirms that the castle is mainly a 'show off' castle.

On closer inspection, you will notice that, while Stokesay Castle does have five 'show down' features, these are not used consistently around the site (e.g. crenellations and arrow loops), which further supports the conclusion that it was not built for defence.

Explain to students that although we call it a castle, it's technically a fortified manor house.

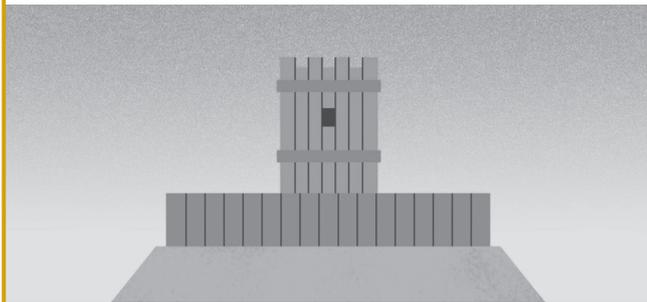
SHOW DOWN VS SHOW OFF CHECKLIST



Explore the Castle and **look** for these things. **Tick** the 'yes' box if you find it and the 'no' box if you don't. **Sketch** each thing you find (or take a photo of it) as evidence.

MOTTE

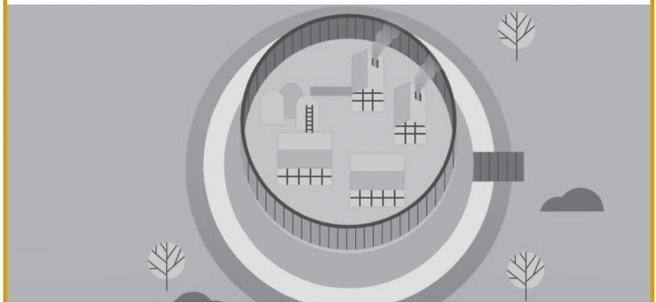
YES NO



An earth mound or high ground.

MOAT

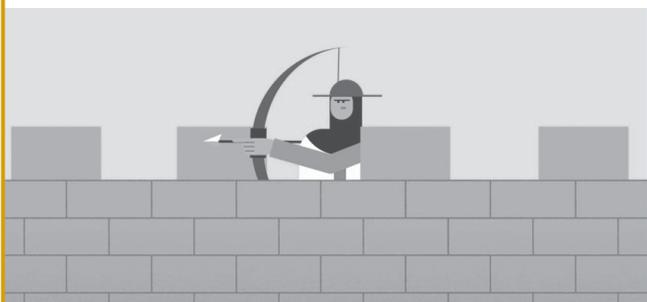
YES NO



A surrounding ditch (dry or filled with water).

CRENELLATIONS

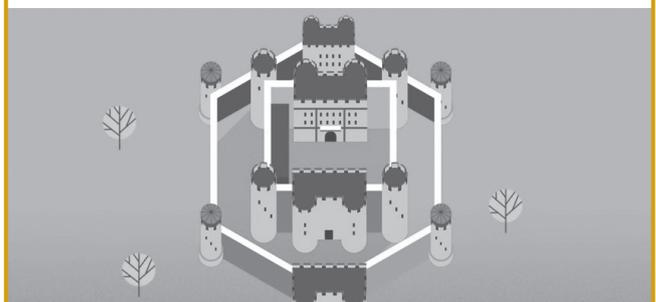
YES NO



A repeating pattern of rectangles on wall tops and towers.

STONE CURTAIN WALL

YES NO



An outer wall to protect the buildings inside.

STONE GATEHOUSE

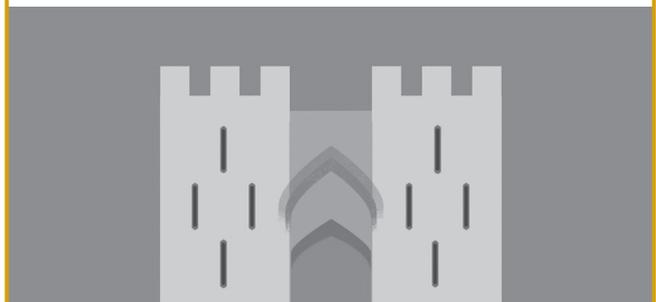
YES NO



A highly defended, main entrance to the castle.

ARROW LOOPS

YES NO



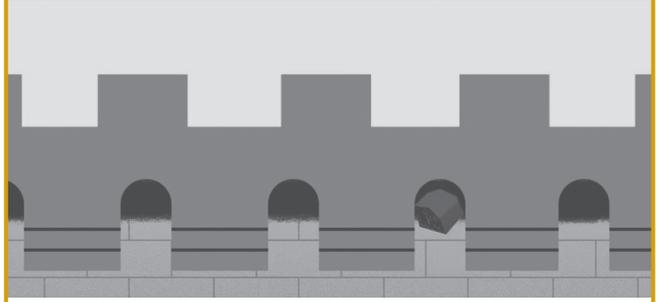
Narrow slits to fire arrows through.

BIG WINDOWS



Large enough to let lots of light into the rooms.

MURDER HOLES



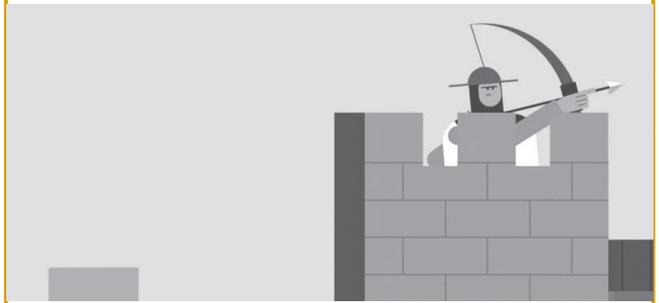
Holes overhead used to drop things on attackers.

PORTCULLIS



A strong wooden gate that can be dropped and raised from above.

STONE TOWERS



Used to look out for the enemy and fire down on them.

HALL



A grand space for receiving/entertaining guests and having feasts.

STONE KEEP



A strong tower in the centre of the castle used as a last defence.

Add up the number of grey boxes and white boxes you have ticked.

TOTAL

Grey boxes ticked White boxes ticked

If you have more grey boxes, the castle is mainly a 'show down' castle.

If you have more white boxes, the castle is mainly a 'show off' castle.