

PROTECTING THE CASTLE

Student Handout

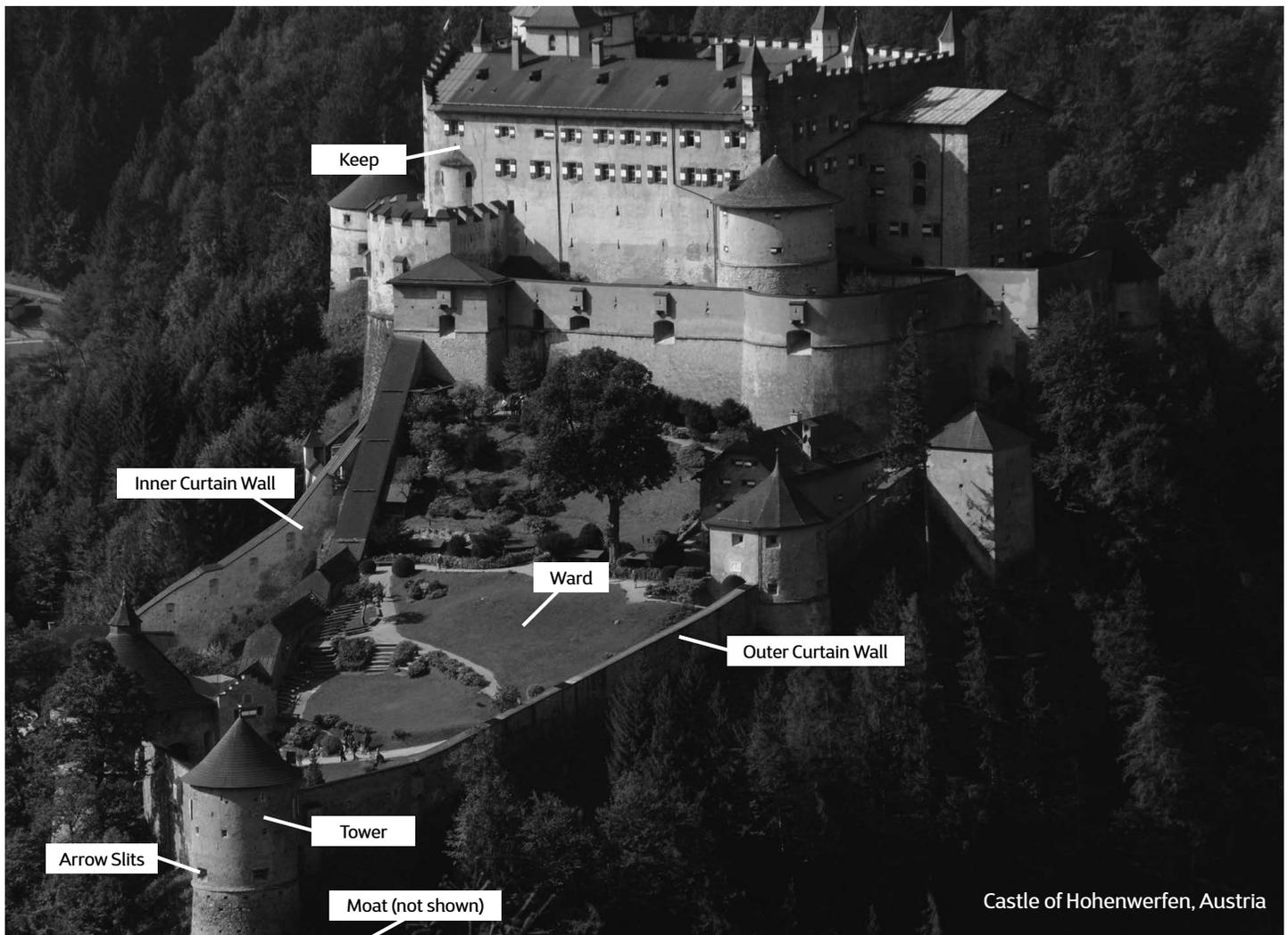
A castle was built as a sign of stature and to protect against attack. The diagram below shows many of the castle features that you have learned about during your study of the Medieval era.

Assignment

You are selected to help a medieval architect plan the building of a new castle and **you want to add a new feature to the castle**. This feature must prevent an attack and help the castle defend against enemies. Create a sales pitch that will convince the architect that your feature is important and would be a benefit to the castle and the nobility who will live there.

Be sure to include:

1. The name of your new castle feature.
2. What problem does it solve? / What type of attack would your feature protect against?
3. What would it be made of?
4. Why is this feature important?
5. How would this feature benefit the nobility living in the castle?



LIFE AT THE CASTLE

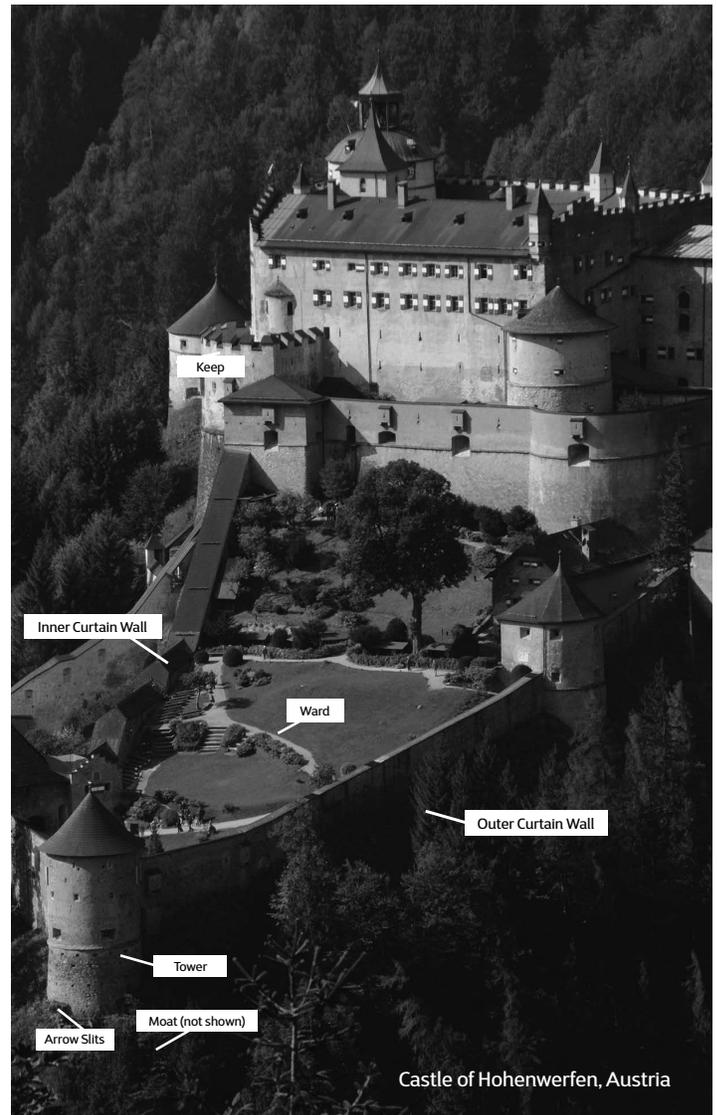
Student & Teacher Source

Castles belonged to the wealthy, important, and powerful people of the land – kings, queens, nobles, and knights. Castles were designed to be difficult to attack and easy to defend. Castles protected owners from rivals and invaders; however, castles were also used to protect the local citizens.

Early castles were built in the 9th and 10th centuries and were constructed of earth and wood; usually constructed on higher ground. Castles from the 11th century and later were always built of rocks and stones on high ground and often surrounded by water such as a lake of wide, deep water called a moat. Stone castles had massive walls that were between 15 and 20 feet thick.

Here are the five key castle structures and how they help castle defense:

1. **Buttresses** are the extra thick part of the outer walls that assist in strengthening the structure.
2. **Towers and keeps** were tall and square and enabled long distance surveillance. Originally the corners were square, but later designs were rounded or cylindrical. Squared corners were more vulnerable to damage by projectiles like boulders from catapults.
3. **Spiral staircases** inside castles were specifically designed to inhibit right-handed invaders by forcing the attacker's balance to the left side while stonework defeated his ability to swing his sword properly.
4. **Narrow slit windows** were slim on the inside, but flared wider on the outside. This made it difficult for the enemy to hit the defenders, but enabled those inside with a wider range of motion for attacking the enemy.
5. The fore building was the **gateway** into the castle. It was usually positioned forward from the castle, on higher ground or upstairs from ground level making it more difficult to gain entry. Gateways were protected with a massive iron gate, a heavy wooden door or both.



Castle of Hohenwerfen, Austria