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Life in Medieval Times
The Castle

by Margit E. McGuire, Ph.D.

Professor of Teacher Education, Seattle University

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Teacher Reviewers

I'd like to thank the following teachers who have reviewed this unit and contributed their suggestions and ideas.

Judy Basham
Flagstaff Unified School District
Flagstaff, Arizona

Kay Law
Shoreline School District
Shoreline, Washington

Peter Spinelli
Palm Beach County School
Lakeworth, Florida

Rene Neff
South Whidbey School District
Langley, Washington

–Margit E. McGuire

Storypath Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel for the Storypath program reviewed and responded to every stage of this project's development. We sincerely thank the following Storypath advisors for their comments and recommendations:

Mark Basehart
Sweet Home Central School District
Amherst, New York

Ron Eydenberg
Revere Public Schools
Revere, Massachusetts

Marilyn Lindquist
Bloomington Public Schools
Bloomington, Minnesota

Maria Cabrera
Region II School District
Chicago, Illinois

Ginny Gollnick
Oneida Nation Elementary School
Oneida, Wisconsin

Paul J. Sanborn
Haverford Township School District
Havertown, Pennsylvania

Ann L. Coyne
Bay Village City School District
Westlake, Ohio

Su Hickenbottom
Snohomish School District
Snohomish, Washington

Jacqueline Shulik
Howard County Public School District
Ellicott, Maryland

Renko Dempster
Seattle School District
Seattle, Washington

Jane Humphreys
Cypress-Fairbanks School District
Houston, Texas

Karen Wyler
Fayette County School District
Peach Tree City, Georgia

Ballad Consultant: Special thanks to Carol Scott-Kassner, Ph.D., music educator par excellence, for her advice and suggestions on medieval ballads.

Program Consultants: Katherine L. Schlick Noe, Ph.D., Professor and Director of Literacy, Seattle University; H. "Sonny" Carreno, B.A. Education, Licensed Instructor, English as a Second/New Language (Texas, Wisconsin, Indiana)

Program Management: Morrison BookWorks LLC

Program Design: Herman Adler Design

STP620

978-1-56004-609-7

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Published by Storypath
10200 Jefferson Boulevard
P.O. Box 802
Culver City, California, 90232-0802
1-800-421-4246
www.teachstorypath.com

ABOUT STORYPATH

THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

Storypath offers both a structure for organizing the social studies curriculum and an instructional strategy for teaching. The structure is a familiar one: the story. The strategy is grounded in a belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning, and places students' own efforts to understand at the center of the educational enterprise. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that students feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about children and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Children know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When children build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving is a natural and powerful human endeavor. When children are engaged in problem-solving, they take ownership for their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for children to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of major concepts.

AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Questioning, by both teacher and students, is a key component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse it creates, the teacher guides students in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended and key connections are made.

THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for understanding the social science content. This story may be based on actual historical events, as developed in *Struggle for Independence*. Or the story might instead be based on typical community or business structures, as developed in *Families in Their Neighborhoods* or in *Understanding the Marketplace*. From all of these structures, students develop a meaningful context for developing understanding of the topic.

Typical structure of a Storypath unit

CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a frieze or mural of the place.

CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading, writing, and research to stimulate them to think more deeply about the people and the place they have created.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

PLANNING THE UNIT

LIFE IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

MAKE KEY DECISIONS

Make Space for the Storypath. A two- or three-dimensional castle serves as the setting for this Storypath. You will need a space for the castle—a wall space, a table, or counter space that is easily accessible. You will also need wall space to display various lists, students' characters, artifacts, and other materials that students create.

Assign Characters. You will want to decide on the roles for your students in this particular Storypath, matching particular interests and skills to the various roles. During medieval times, people were born into their station in life, and this is a good explanation to give to students when assigning them character roles. See Episode 2 for more details.

Organize Students. In Episode 1, students first work in pairs to design a castle. Then organize students into eight groups, as described on pages 16–18. Each group will be responsible for constructing part of the castle model. In Episode 2, students work in groups of two to four, with each group consisting of students who have been assigned similar roles. This grouping continues through Episodes 3, 4, and 5 as students prepare presentations on daily life in the castle and respond to a critical challenge facing the castle. In Episode 6, you may want students to stay in their role groups to prepare the celebration, although some tasks can be worked on individually.

CUSTOMIZE THE UNIT

Adapt the Unit. There will likely be many times in this unit when you will want to modify the curriculum to suit your own needs and follow the logical progression of the story. Alternative activities or special arrangements are suggested at various points during the unit to assist you in adapting the unit to meet your unique needs.

Frequently, students will provide an unanticipated twist to the Storypath, or important learning opportunities will arise. The Storypath allows for the accommodation of these special circumstances.

There are times when students will role-play the characters in the medieval story to understand a particular viewpoint. At other times, students will reflect on the events of this unit out of role so that situations can be examined and understood from the students' own perspectives. These are opportune times to help students connect their own experiences and understanding to people and events in the past.

Gather Resources. The Content Slide Sets provide a foundation of information, but you will want other resources to supplement the Content Slide Sets throughout the Storypath. In Episode 3 you will want students to develop their research skills by locating information from other resources, thus a range of resources should be available for student use. Use the list of Additional Resources found on page 70 as a starting point for gathering a variety of resources.

Develop an Understanding of Medieval Times. To take full advantage of the Storypath strategy, you most likely will want to increase your own understanding of medieval times so that you can ask guiding questions that deepen students' understanding, clarify their misconceptions, or add new information. This Storypath is loosely based on the life and times of Simon de Montfort and background information about him is included on page 71.

Connect to Other Storypaths. Complementary units include *Exploring World Cultures: The Museum* and *Life In Ancient Egypt*. For more Storypath topics go to www.teachstorypath.com.

INVOLVE OTHERS

Involve Families. Parents and other family members can serve as excellent resources for you and your students. It is possible that family members have special knowledge about medieval times or have traveled to England and have photos of castles that they could share. Castles appear in other parts of the world, so if families have photos of other types of castles, this would be a good follow-up to the unit and would extend students' learning.

Use Experts. There are often medieval societies in communities whose members recreate the arts, crafts, entertainment, food, and sports of that time. Your local college may employ a historian who specializes in this time period. Invite these experts to your celebration at the end of the story to share their expertise.

Involve the Community. Some communities have museums that display artifacts from the medieval period. Visits to museums can enrich students' experiences. These activities should be carefully timed, however, and should happen only when students are truly interested in what the museum has on display. A visit or guest speaker at the conclusion of the unit allows students to knowledgeably compare and contrast their own understanding with the new information.

Create a Learning Community. An open and supportive atmosphere is essential for students to engage in the discourse that is basic to the learning process of the Storypath approach. Students should understand the value of reflective discussions and the importance of collaborative work to deepen their understanding of complex ideas. Consequently, students should be expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to one another's ideas.

4

EPISODE

CRITICAL INCIDENT A CHALLENGE TO THE KING

INTRODUCING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

page 31

Students listen to a letter from the lord and role-play their reaction.

Materials Teaching Master 8, *A Letter from the Lord*, TH p. 54
Portfolio 8, *Listening for Information: A Crisis Brewing*, p. 12
Content Slide Set 7

Grouping Whole class for discussion, small group for response activity

Schedule 40 minutes

RESPONDING TO THE LETTER

page 32

The class considers how to respond to the letter and then formulates a plan.

Materials Portfolio 9, *Developing a Plan*, p. 13
Art materials based on students' plan

Grouping Students first discuss the problem as a class and then, in groups, organize their ideas and role-play a response

Schedule Approximately 1 hour, depending on how long it takes students to develop a plan and role-play various responses

CONCLUDING EPISODE 4

page 33

Students write ballads and reflect on their response to the incident and on the governance of kings.

Materials Portfolio 11, *Defining A Ballad*, p. 16
Portfolio 12, *Prewriting: The Ballad*, p. 17
Portfolio 13, *Writing: The Ballad*, p. 18

Grouping Individual, pairs, or small groups for writing; whole class for sharing and discussion

Schedule Approximately 1 hour

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **History** *Identify examples of change and cause and effect relationships involved in challenges to the king's power during medieval times.*
- **Social Skills** *Work with others to decide on an appropriate course of action to change the king's mind about sharing power.*
- **Critical Thinking** *Define the problem regarding the king's letter, consider possible responses, and decide on a course of action.*
- **Civic Competence** *Identify examples of freedoms, rights, and responsibilities of people in medieval times.*
- **Literacy** *Listen and respond to a letter from the lord.*
- **Literacy** *Write ballad stanzas in response to castle events.*

Name _____ Date _____

A LETTER FROM THE LORD

My dearest wife,

I write this letter with a heavy heart. As you know, I went to the king's court because I am concerned about our country. I tried to talk with him about my ideas for governing the country. The king seeks advice from the barons—the rich men of the kingdom. I have told the king that more people need to be involved in governance. I told him that the knights should have a say in the governance of the kingdom. The king would not listen.

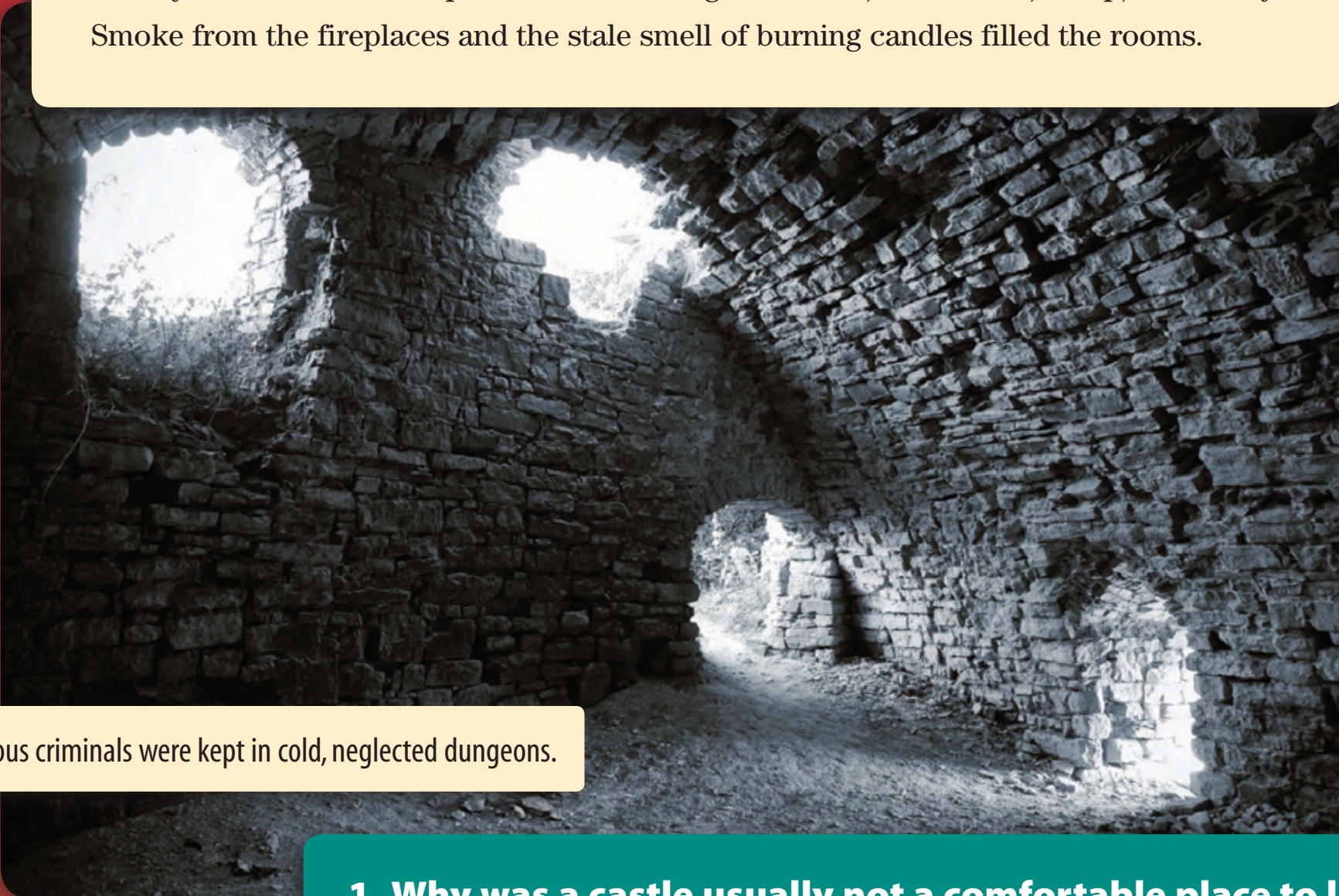
I am saddened by his response. I believe that the king has a responsibility to others besides the rich barons. Most of the barons support the king, but a few were interested in what I had to say. As you know, the people believe that the king is given his power from God and that I shouldn't challenge that power. To disobey the king is to go against God. The king expects loyalty. This I cannot give when I believe he is wrong. I believe others should have a voice in the affairs of the country. I suggested that two knights from every community come to court to help govern the country. Unfortunately, my ideas fell on deaf ears. The king does not listen; he does not want to give up any power. The king is very angry with me and has threatened to put me in jail in the Tower of London. I will soon be home, and I seek your wise counsel as to what to do next.

Your loving husband,



What was the inside of a castle like?

Though the castle served mainly as a fortress, it was also a home. The castle was usually not a comfortable place to live. During the winter, it was cold, damp, and drafty. Smoke from the fireplaces and the stale smell of burning candles filled the rooms.



Dangerous criminals were kept in cold, neglected dungeons.

1. Why was a castle usually not a comfortable place to live?
(main idea/supporting details, scanning)



Daily Schedule

Daybreak

Castle residents eat a simple breakfast after praying in the chapel.

10 A.M.

The main meal of the day, lasting two or three hours, is served in the great hall.

Afternoon

Castle residents work on various chores.

Sunset

A light meal is eaten.

Bedtime

The noble family retires to its private chambers, while most of the other castle residents sleep on straw mattresses in the great hall.

Beautiful tapestries draped on the walls made the castle more cheerful, but more important, they cut down on the cold drafts. Fragrant reeds and rushes strewn on the floors helped freshen the stale air.



SET 4

SLIDE 3



During the spring and summer, fresh-cut flowers perfumed various rooms of the castle and brightened up the gloomy atmosphere. Such decorative touches made the castle more homey.

The great hall was the center of castle life. People ate, worked, and slept there.



Questions:

1. Why was a castle usually not a comfortable place to live? (*main idea/supporting details, scanning*)
2. Do you think people in medieval times had a healthy diet? Why or why not? (*making inferences*)

What was the inside of a castle like?

Though the castle served mainly as a fortress, it was also a home. The castle was usually not a comfortable place to live. During the winter, it was cold, damp, and drafty. Smoke from the fireplaces and the stale smell of burning candles filled the rooms. Beautiful tapestries draped on the walls made the castle more cheerful, but more important, they cut down on the cold drafts. Fragrant reeds and rushes strewn on the floors helped freshen the stale air. During the spring and summer, fresh-cut flowers perfumed various rooms of the castle and brightened up the gloomy atmosphere. Such decorative touches made the castle more homey.

▶ Slides
1-3



▶ Slide 1

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The great hall was the center of castle life. People ate, worked, and slept there.

Photo Credit: Mark Kobayashi-Hillary, used under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license



DEVELOPING A PLAN

1. What should Lord Ramsey do?

2. Why is your plan for Lord Ramsey a good one?

3. What risks will Lord Ramsey take?

4. How might this plan affect you?

Assessment: Responses demonstrate an understanding of the problem and are realistic in the context of medieval times and people's roles in the society.



THE MEDIEVAL BALLAD

DEFINING A BALLAD

In medieval times, singing poets, called minstrels, sang ballads in castles and villages. The ballads told about events of the time. The most common ballad themes were war and love. As the ballad would be sung over time, other verses would be added and words changed. Some ballads we know today were sung long ago. Their words have changed over time.

This ballad, originally called “Shule Aroon,” was sung in Ireland more than three hundred years ago. It has been passed along and changed over time. These stanzas were popular in the United States during the Revolutionary War.

*There I sat on Buttermilk Hill,
Who could blame me, cry my fill?
And ev'ry tear would turn a mill;
Johnny has gone for a soldier.*

*Me oh my, I loved him so,
Broke my heart to see him go.
And only time will heal my woe;
Johnny has gone for a soldier.*

*I'll sell my flax, I'll sell my wheel,
Buy my love a sword of steel,
So it in battle he may wield;
Johnny has gone for a soldier.*

1. Underline the words that rhyme in the ballad.
2. Who are the main characters?

3. What happened?

4. Circle words in the ballad that describe feelings.

THE MEDIEVAL BALLAD

PREWRITING: THE BALLAD

Write a ballad telling about the events that have happened in this episode. Write at least two four-line stanzas.

Organize Your Ideas

To write your ballad, focus on one main idea for each stanza.

Ideas and content

- What situation will you describe? Find a focus for the situation. Remember, you don't have to tell everything.
 - Who are the characters you will include?
 - Write your ideas on a separate sheet of paper.
-

Word choice

- What words can you use to describe strong feelings?
 - What striking words and phrases can you use to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind?
 - What lively verbs can you use to create interest and suspense? What specific nouns can you use that relate to medieval times?
 - Brainstorm some words. Look at the word bank for ideas.
-

Voice

- Write from your character's point of view.
- Your ballad should be engaging and reflect a strong reaction to the situation.
- Help the listener feel a strong connection to the ballad, sensing the danger of the situation.

On a separate sheet of paper, draft and edit your ballad. Use the criteria above for editing.



DATE _____

THE MEDIEVAL BALLAD

WRITING: THE BALLAD

Title: _____

Stanza

Stanza

Assessment: The ballad has two stanzas with rhyming lines. A focused situation from the episode is described and includes the characters involved. Strong feeling words are used. Vivid pictures are created in the reader's mind by using striking words and phrases. Lively verbs create interest and specific nouns add depth of understanding to the topic. The ballad is from the character's point of view and engages the listener.