



**KIDS
DISCOVER**

Knights & Castles



**PLEASE PASS
THE MICE**

**Jesting
Jousting
Juggling**

CHAIN MAIL

**DEADLY
TASTE
TESTS**

**HOT
AND HEAVY
CLOTHES**



**Design your own
COAT of ARMS**

In Days of Old

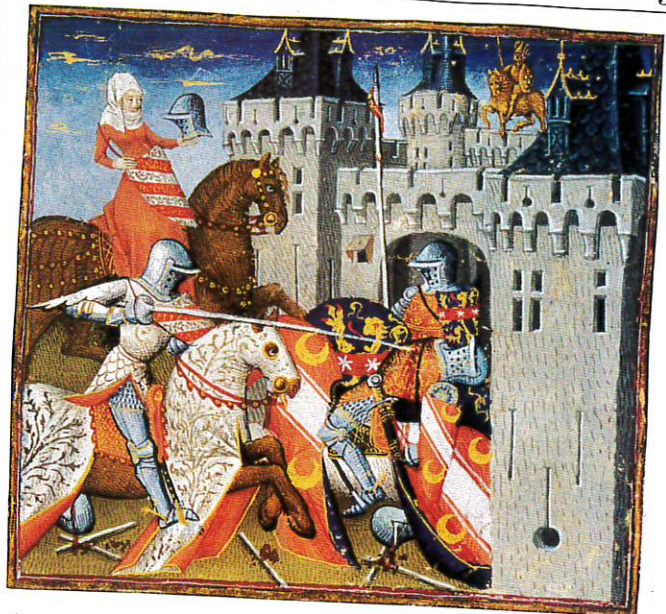
Picture this. Across an open field, two men on horseback charge at each other. The blazing sun makes their steel armor glisten. The aim of one is to protect the castle on the hill. The other hopes to take the castle. All around them, men are fighting. Their swords clash and clang as they touch. At last, the razor-sharp point of one sword pierces the armor of the other knight. Badly wounded, that man topples from his horse to the ground. The victor turns away and charges at another warrior. The battle goes on.

Let's leave behind cars and televisions, computers and shopping malls, and travel back in time almost a thousand years to Europe in the Middle Ages. During that time, knights—fighting men on horseback—protected the castles of the wealthy. Our first stop is the castle on the hill.

▼ CAERPHILLY CASTLE,
WALES



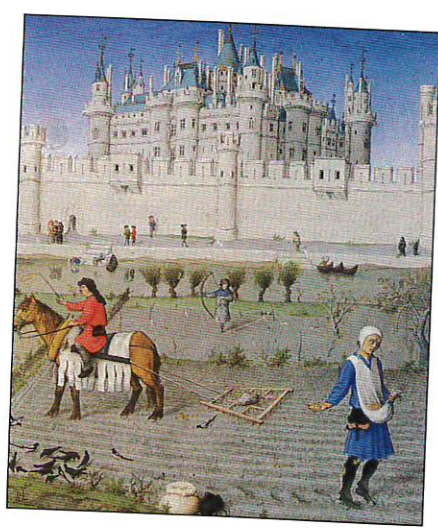
THE MIDDLE AGES
 (from roughly
 A.D. 476 to 1450)
 were important
 years for castle
 building in
 Europe, especially
 from the 11th to
 the 16th century.
 Although the age
 of knights and
 castles ended long
 ago, thousands of
 castles remain
 scattered through-
 out western
 Europe in Eng-
 land, France,
 Spain, Italy, Ger-
 many, and Wales.



▲ IN THE MIDDLE
 Ages, whoever
 owned the land
 ruled it. Some
 knights, who were
 nobles or even
 kings, controlled a
 great deal of land.
 Others of lesser
 standing risked
 their lives for the
 lords they served.
 In return, these
 knights received
 food and shelter
 and had a
 respected place in
 society. In peace-
 time, they traveled
 with the lord and
 lady of the castle,
 protecting them
 from robbers and
 other dangers.

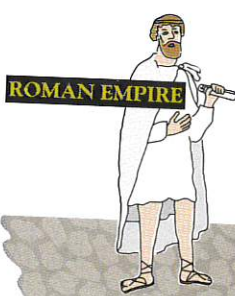
▼ POOR PEASANTS
 farmed the land
 owned by the
 highest class of
 society, called
 nobles. In times of
 trouble, peasants

and their animals
 huddled within the
 castle walls,
 where they were
 protected by the
 knights.

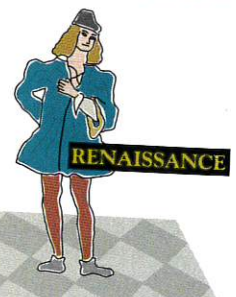


▼ BODIAM CASTLE, ENGLAND

▼ EILEAN DONON CASTLE, SCOTLAND



MIDDLE AGES



▲ THE MIDDLE AGES
 refers to the time
 after the end of
 the Roman Empire
 and before the
 Renaissance, a

period when new
 ways of thinking
 about the world
 sprang up in west-
 ern Europe. Schol-
 ars used to think

of the Middle Ages
 as a period when
 little happened.
 Now they see it as
 a time of growth
 and change.

Building a Castle to Last

Where is the perfect place to build a castle? Castles were homes to lords and ladies and their families. But a castle was also a stronghold, or fort. If the castle was attacked, it served as the base for the fighting men who lived there. Knights rode out from their castles to do battle and hurried



OFTEN, CASTLES were surrounded by two rings of stone walls. If attackers got through the first wall, they still had another wall to stop them. Some-

times, the outer wall was lower than the inner wall so that archers on the inner wall could shoot at the enemy over the heads of defenders on the outer wall.

◀ A GOOD PLACE for a castle was on top of a rocky cliff. If no high spot could be found, castle builders sometimes made their own hills by piling up rocks and dirt.

THIS BIG DITCH surrounding the castle is called a moat. Some moats were filled with water. Others were filled with sticks standing upright in the ground.

Attackers had to pull up the stakes or go around them. Stakes slowed the enemy down, making them easy targets for defenders' arrows.

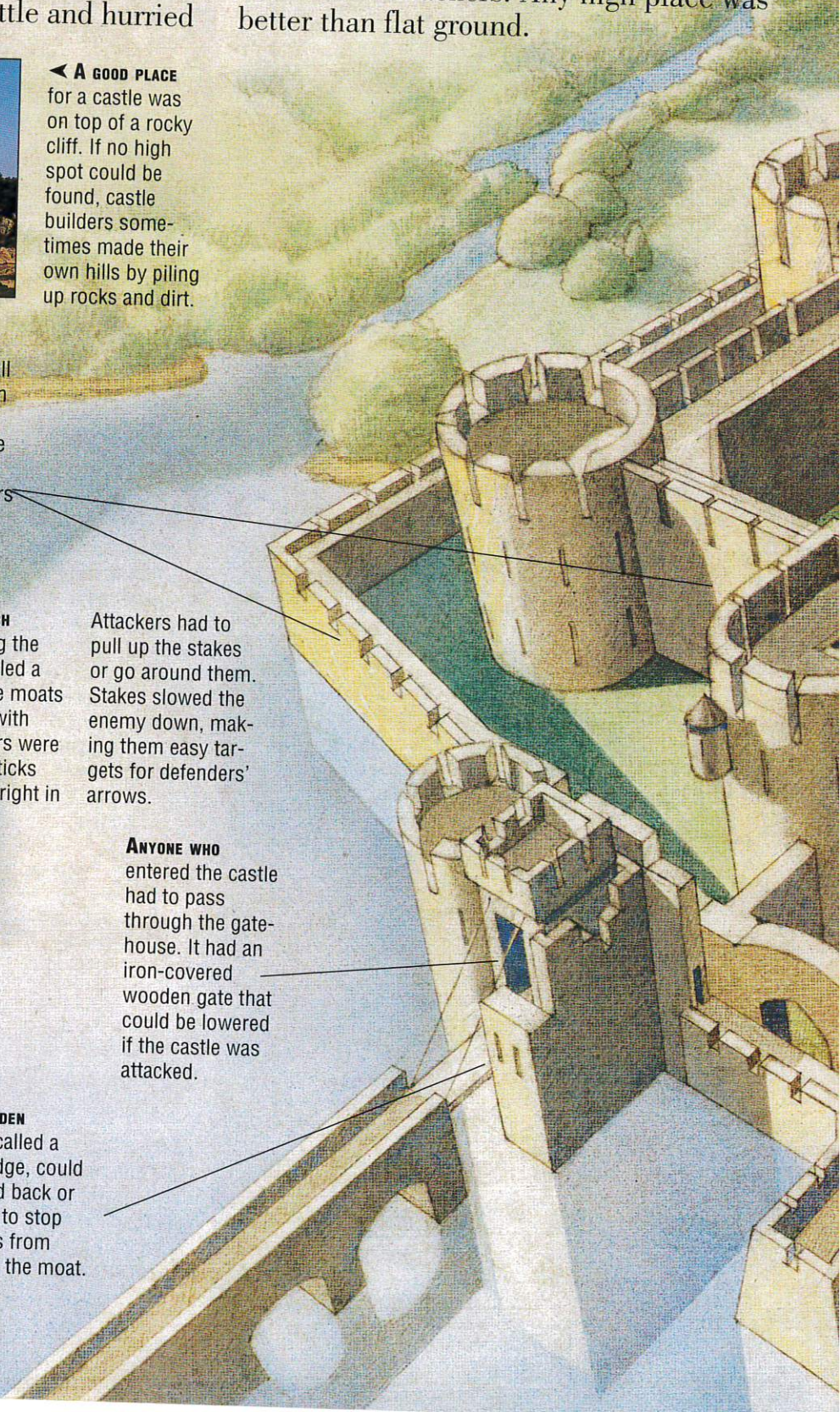
ANYONE WHO entered the castle had to pass through the gatehouse. It had an iron-covered wooden gate that could be lowered if the castle was attacked.

INSTEAD OF MAKING a fake hill, this castle owner created a huge lake by damming a nearby stream. The lake stopped enemy soldiers from digging a tunnel under the castle walls, one common plan of attack.

THIS WOODEN bridge, called a drawbridge, could be pulled back or lifted up to stop attackers from crossing the moat.

back to their castles in times of trouble.

So, where to build a castle? Simple: in a place that is easy to defend. From a high hill, those inside the castle could see their enemies coming from far away and could get ready for battle. Land near a river or lake was a good choice, too. The water was a barrier to attackers. Any high place was better than flat ground.



THIS BUILDING IS called the great tower, or castle keep. In early castles, it was the main living quarters. It was also

the military headquarters in wartime. The basement might be used as a storehouse for food, fuel, and weapons or serve

as a dungeon for prisoners of war. Soldiers lived on the first floor. The upper floors were used for eating and sleeping by family, visitors, and servants.



FROM THESE watchtowers, defenders kept track of the enemy's movements, and archers sent a shower of arrows down on attackers.

THESE NARROW slits of windows are just large enough to let in air and light but small enough to keep out arrows and other missiles.

THINK PIECE!

Where do you think the best place would be to build a castle in your city or town?

Inside the Great Hall

As a place to live, a castle was much better than the tiny huts of the peasants or crowded houses of village merchants and artisans. But it was not perfect. Castles were cold, damp, and drafty. Some rooms had fireplaces, but not all did. Carpets covered walls—not floors—and helped keep out the cold. Everyone sat on hard wooden benches, except the very richest lords and ladies, who sat on chairs.

The busiest place in the castle was the great hall. Here lords and ladies conducted business, ate most of their meals, and relaxed with friends, family, and visitors. On special occasions, the room became a banquet hall for entertaining guests.

Today is one such special day. Let's see if we can find a seat at one of the tables.



EATING IN THE Middle Ages was a pretty messy business. For plates, people used flat pieces of stale bread called trenchers. Two or more people

shared a drinking cup and bowl. They speared their food with the point of their knife or used their fingers to pick out a tasty bit of meat from the sauce.

Spoons were in use, but forks were not yet widely used.

◀ **WHILE GUESTS** ate, dogs sniffed under the tables, gobbling up every scrap of food that dropped to the floor.



▲ **AS THEY ATE,** lords and ladies listened to music and watched the antics of jugglers, acrobats, and jesters.

◀ **KINGS AND QUEENS** were served first, followed by lords, ladies, and lesser nobles. Ordinary people were served last.

▼ **THE HOT AND** steamy kitchen where the cooks worked was in the castle courtyard or down a passageway from the great hall. This lessened the

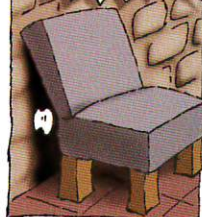
chance of fire. Boiling and roasting on a spit were common ways of cooking meat. The main meal of the day was eaten at ten or eleven in the morning.



► **THE FOOL, OR** jester, tried hard to make everyone laugh. He wore a funny costume and a pointed cap that often had bells on the tips.



COME AND GET IT!!



◀ **A PERSON CALLED** a taster had a very dangerous job. He tasted the food before it was served to the royal family to make sure it hadn't been poisoned.

► **LORDS AND LADIES** slept in comfortable beds and laid their heads on feather pillows. Everyone else slept on straw mattresses, benches, or the cold stone floor.



◀ **IN A VERY FINE** castle, the walls of the great hall were covered by weavings called tapestries. The tapestries kept some cold air from coming through cracks in the stone walls.



Becoming a Knight

"I dub you knight." Once these words were spoken and a young man felt the tap of a sword on his neck, he knew his years of training were over. He was now a knight.

Not every boy could become a knight. A



THINK PIECE!

What are most boys and girls today learning to do at age 7? at age 16? at age 21?

knight's family had to be rich enough to buy the armor, weapons, and war horse needed for this work. For this reason, knights came from the highest classes of society. They were sons of nobles, and the honor of being a knight passed from one knight to his sons.

A PAGE

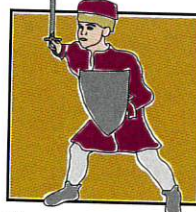
TRAINING TO become a knight began at age 7, when a young boy was sent to live at the castle of a great lord. Often, the castle belonged to an uncle or another relative.



AT THE CASTLE, the boy learned good manners and such skills as singing, dancing, and playing chess.



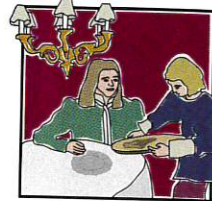
PLAYING GAMES LIKE tag and wrestling built up his strength.



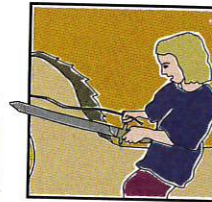
HE LEARNED HOW TO hold and use a sword and shield.

The young page had chores to do, too. After seven or eight years as a page, the young man became a squire.

A SQUIRE



BY THEN, HE WAS about 14 years old. As a squire, he acted as the personal servant to a knight. He set the table and served the meals.



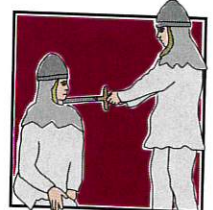
HE LEARNED TO RIDE a horse and use a sword and lance. A squire might build up his strength by carrying a sword twice as heavy as the one he would use in battle. He followed his master into battle and helped care for any wound his master got. A squire's training lasted about six or seven years.

A dubbing ceremony marked the special day when training ended.



ON THE NIGHT before the ceremony, the squire bathed and put on special clothing. Then he prayed and fasted alone in a church with his weapons nearby.

A KNIGHT



THE NEXT DAY, THE knight received a sword and other weapons from the knight who had trained him. His sword was blessed and he promised to follow the special code of conduct of a knight. Then he knelt down and an older knight "dubbed" him by tapping him on the side of his neck with the flat side of the sword.

WHEN A KNIGHT went into battle, just about every part of his body was covered with pieces of metal. A good suit of armor lasted almost forever. Dents and scratches could always be hammered out. Armor weighed as much as 55 pounds, but the extra weight was spread evenly over the body. A knight in good shape could run or mount a horse by himself in his armor.

THIS HELMET HAD narrow slits for the eyes and moveable plates that could let in more air.

THE CHIN PLATE protected the lower half of the face.

THIS ROUND METAL plate stopped a sword or dagger from piercing the armor at the armpit.

METAL GLOVES called gauntlets covered the hands. Inside the gauntlet, the knight wore leather gloves, which helped him hold onto his weapons.

INSIDE THESE plates, it could get very hot and uncomfortable. Outside, the smooth metal surface reduced the impact of blows.

SEPARATE METAL plates protected the upper and lower arms, elbows, and shoulders.

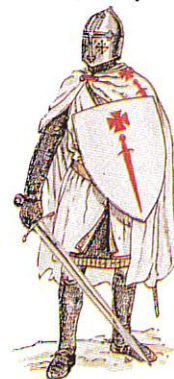
METAL PLATES also protected the upper legs and kneecaps. Square- or pointed-toe metal shoes covered the feet.

SPURS WERE attached to the shoes. The knight used them to make his horse go faster.

WITH THIS sharp pointed sword, the knight had the best chance of finding spaces between the metal plates to wound his enemy.



NORMAN KNIGHT (1066)



TEUTONIC KNIGHT (1270)



ITALIAN KNIGHT (1400)

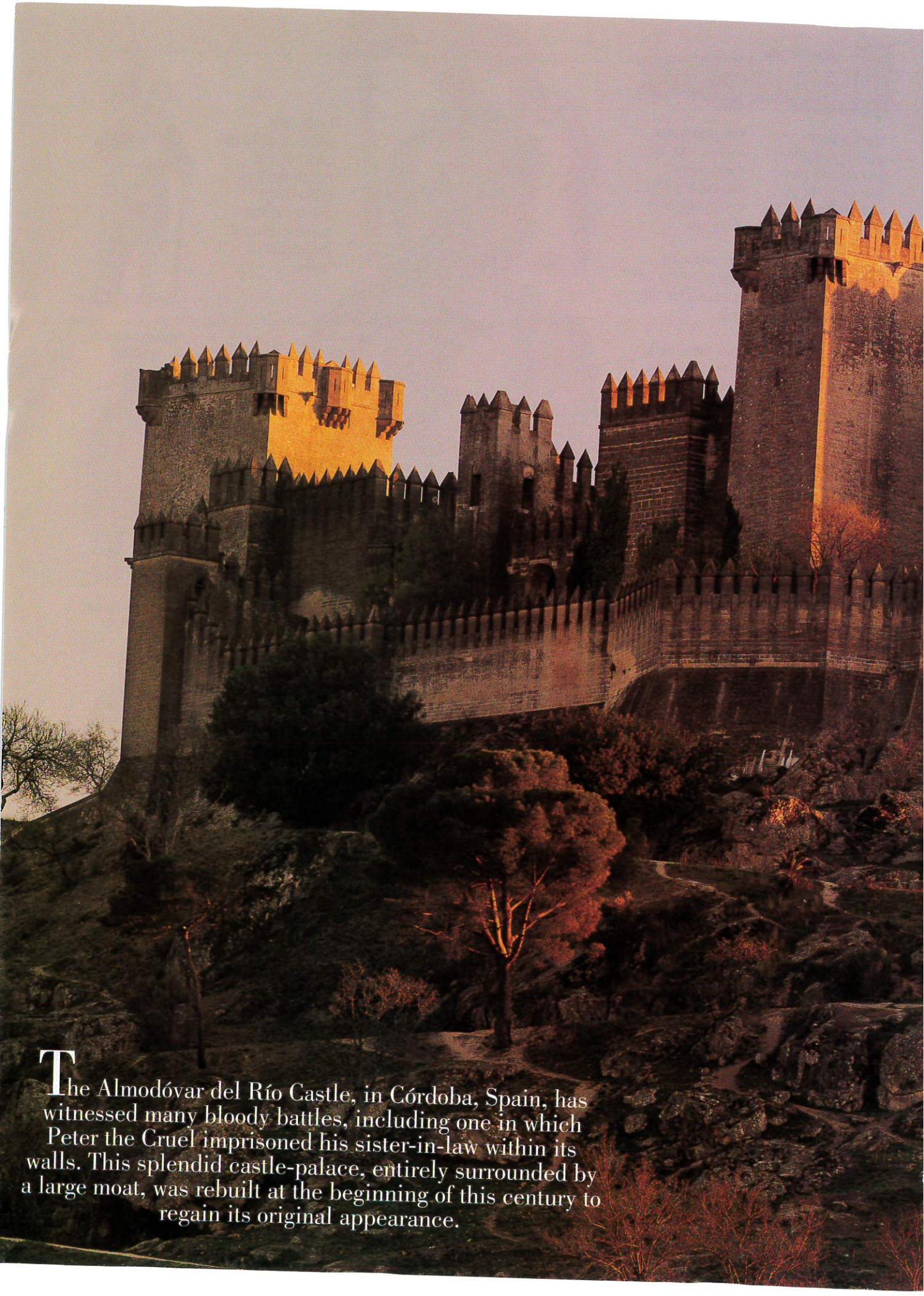


GERMAN KNIGHT (1470)

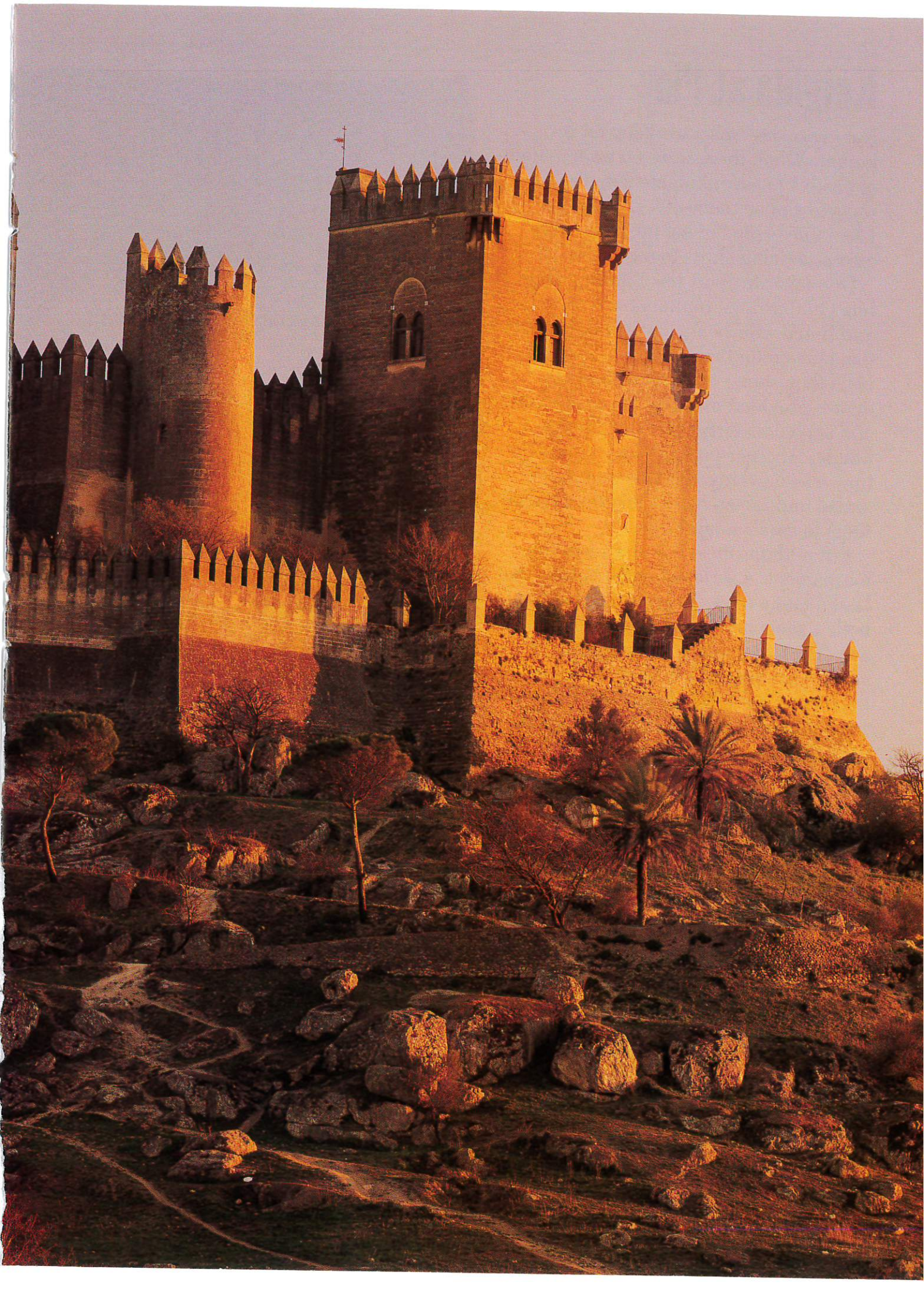


EARLY KNIGHTS WORE interlaced metal rings, called chain mail, over their leather garments for protection. One problem with mail is that the openings in it could easily be pierced by the point of a sword. Later, chain mail was replaced by plate armor, which offered greater safety.





The Almodóvar del Río Castle, in Córdoba, Spain, has witnessed many bloody battles, including one in which Peter the Cruel imprisoned his sister-in-law within its walls. This splendid castle-palace, entirely surrounded by a large moat, was rebuilt at the beginning of this century to regain its original appearance.

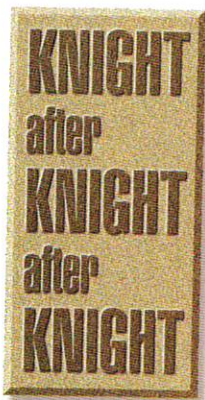


Knights at Play

Not every day was a workday for a knight. When there were no wars to fight or castles to save, knights found many ways to amuse themselves. But even when they were having fun, they were also practicing skills to use in battle.

One favorite sport was hunting. With bows and arrows, hunters tracked wolves and fierce wild boars through the forests that surrounded most castles. The animals they shot—from small birds to deer—provided meat for the castle table and served as target practice for the knight. Another popular way to pass the time was hawking. Knights and ladies tamed and raised hawks and then taught them to catch small birds.

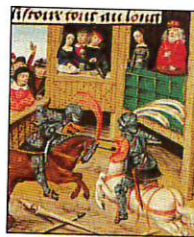
But perhaps most fun of all was the tournament, a series of mock battles that lasted many days. The tournament was both a game and a way of practicing for war. The events gave the knight a chance to show off his skills before a huge crowd of fellow knights and fine lords and ladies. Let's join the knights as they amuse themselves.



► **IN THE EARLIEST** tournaments, knights divided into two teams to fight each other. These mock battles lasted



several days and took place all over the surrounding countryside.



▲ **BY THE 1200s**, knights were no longer fighting in teams. Instead, two men charged at each other in an enclosed field. This type of contest was called a joust. As two men joust, the king and royal guests looked on.



▲ **THE TWO** contestants charged each other with short lances or blunt swords. Despite these special weapons, knights were sometimes wounded or killed. Falls from horses were a common cause of injury.



▲ **KNIGHTS FOUGHT** in tournaments in honor of their ladies. Ladies showed their support for their favorite knight by giving him an article of clothing, such as a scarf or a glove, to wear as he competed.



HUNTING DOGS often wore special collars to protect them from being bitten on the neck by a boar. Knights hunted wild boars on horseback, killing them with long, sharp spears.

HUNTING WAS A sport only for the rich. In such countries as England, France, and northern Italy, where land was scarce, wealthy landholders set aside areas of their land as hunting grounds. Anyone caught hunting there without permission could be harshly punished.

The Code of Chivalry

► KNIGHTHOOD

was not just about wars and fighting. When a squire became a knight, he promised to follow a certain code of conduct, called the code of chivalry. He pledged to defend the Christian faith and his king. He was to behave politely to ladies and to protect them at all costs. He was also expected to help the weak and the poor. If defeated in battle and captured, he was not supposed to run away.



▲ JOAN OF ARC

was unique in an age when most military leaders were men. Her spirited defense of the city of Orléans at the head of the French army raised the morale of the soldiers, who went on to defeat the English there in 1429.



▼ **THOUGH THE** code of chivalry was popular in stories and poems of the day, few knights followed it closely. Most knights behaved well to lords and ladies and others like themselves but treated poor people harshly. Edward the Black Prince, known as the Flower of Earthly Chivalry for his kindness to the king of France, nonetheless allowed 300 men, women, and children to be killed in one French town he captured.



► **BOTH LADIES AND** men were avid hunters. They also enjoyed the sport of hawking, and greatly prized their hawks. A hawk belonging to King John of England dined on doves, chicken, and

pork—as well as on mice, rats, and rabbits.



◀ **LIKE MOST** sports today, hawking had its own special gear. The hawk's owner wore thick padded gloves to protect his hands from the bird's sharp claws. As the bird perched on its owner's hand, leather straps kept it from flying away. Bells on the hawk's leg made it easier to find. If the bird became wild or frightened, a hood was placed over its head to calm it.

THINK PIECE!

Every age has its ideas about how people should behave. What are some of the rules you follow for good behavior? How are they different from the code of chivalry?

The Castle Under Attack

For knights, all the years spent practicing with swords and running at each other with lances was for a good reason. It helped prepare the knight to defend the lord and lady he served and the castle that was their home. Sometimes protecting them meant charging onto an open battlefield for bloody combat. Just as often, the knight's job was to keep enemies from breaking down the castle walls, streaming across the moat, and forcing their way into the castle.

Attackers always tried first to take a

castle by force, but if this failed, they had a second plan of attack called a siege. During a siege, the attackers surrounded the castle to keep anyone from leaving or from coming in. Then they waited, hoping those inside would soon run out of food and other supplies and give up.

▼ **THE HEAVY** arrows fired from the crossbow could sail straight through a suit of armor. However, it took time to reload a cross-

bow, and a good archer using the lighter longbow could fire 12 arrows in the same amount of time.

► **MISSILES WERE** dropped through these slots over the arch. Attackers had better watch their heads!

► **DRAWBRIDGES** could be raised to prevent attackers from getting across the moat to the castle.



▼ THE GATE AT

Bodiam Castle had "murder holes" in the roof of the gate so that the castle's defenders could pour boiling water or hot sand down on the heads of attackers. Such holes could also be used to pour cold water on fires burning in the courtyard.

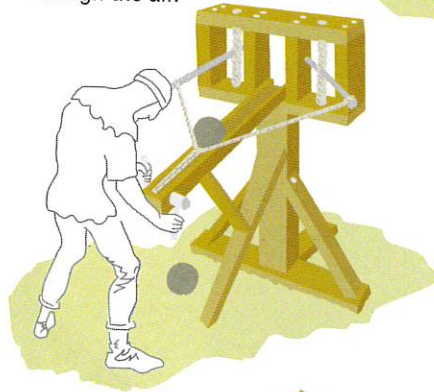
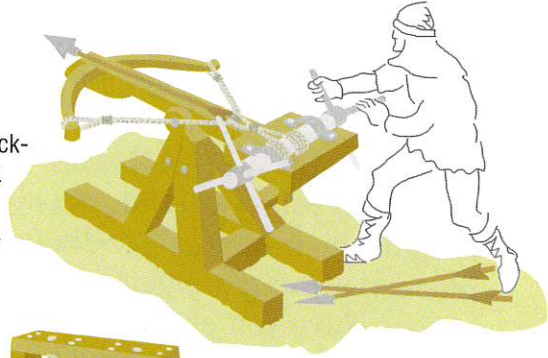
▼ A SIEGE COULD last weeks or months. During a siege, women of the castle helped the defenders resist the attacks of crossbows and axes. Soon after a siege started, attackers usually set fire to the crops and animals on nearby farms. Then the castle's only hope was a well-stocked storehouse and a well in the great tower, which provided water. As a siege dragged on, people inside began to starve. Weakened by hunger, some fell ill. When all food was gone, some gave up, but others ate mice, rats, and grass rather than surrender.

▼ GREAT STRENGTH was required to fire a longbow, so archers needed to practice a lot to keep in shape. Arrows from a longbow were often shot upward and could soar about 1,000 feet.

Heavy Hitters

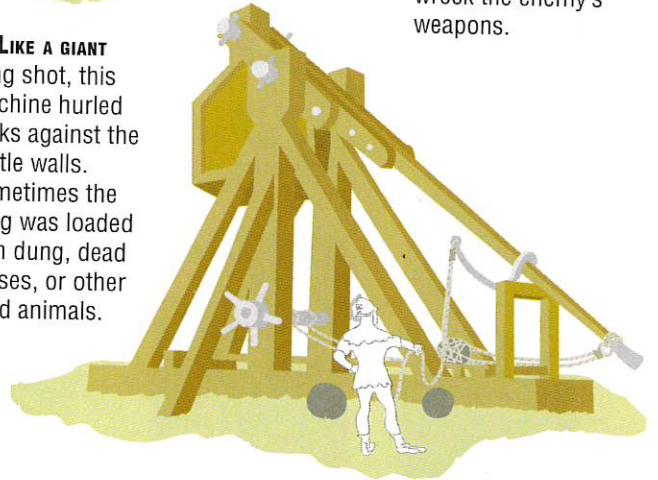
Sometimes called siege engines, these three machines could throw projectiles weighing up to 300 pounds. They were used to break down castle walls.

► **THE BALLISTA** worked like an enormous bow and arrow. Attackers drew back a giant bow and then released it, sending a large spear flying through the air.



◀ **ROCKS COULD BE** sent crashing into castle walls when the arm of this catapult was forced up against the bar. From inside the castle walls, defenders used these to wreck the enemy's weapons.

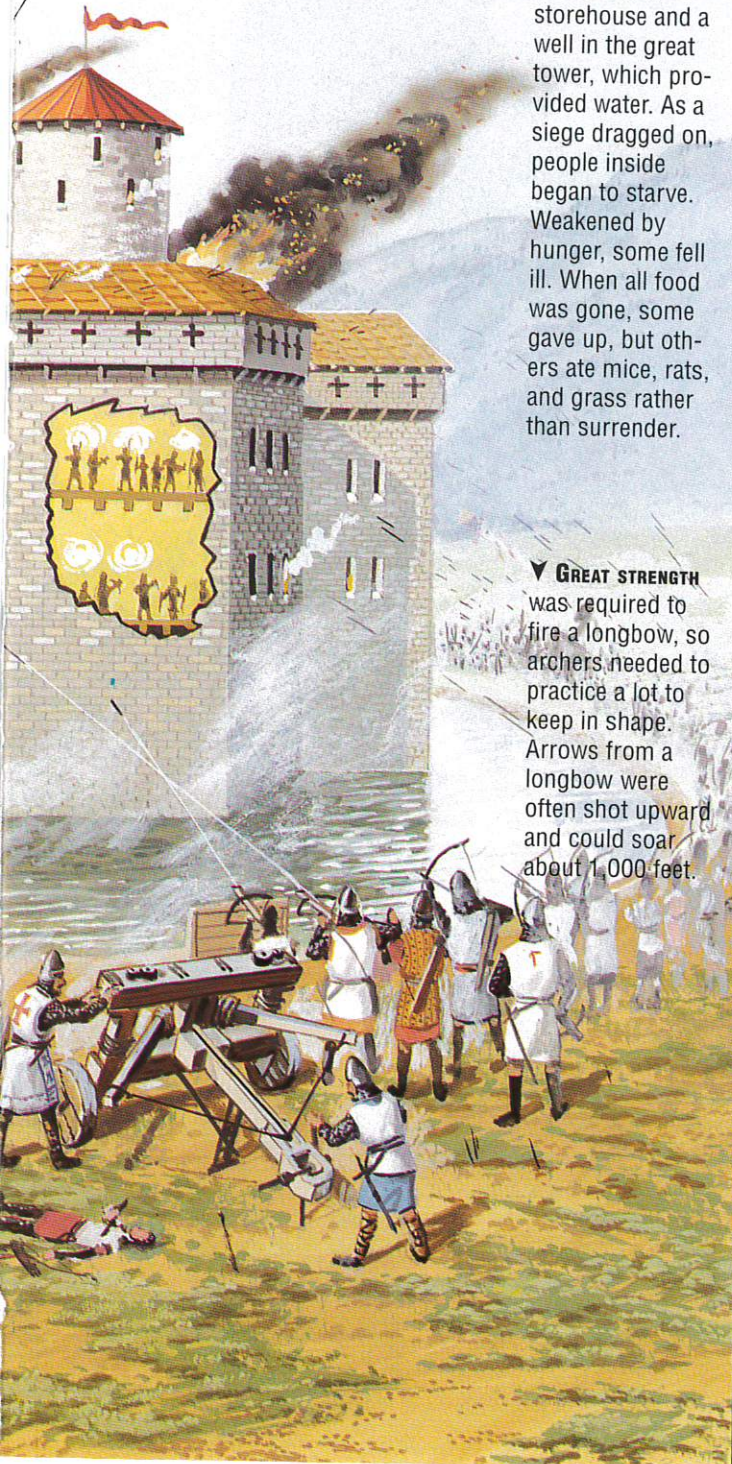
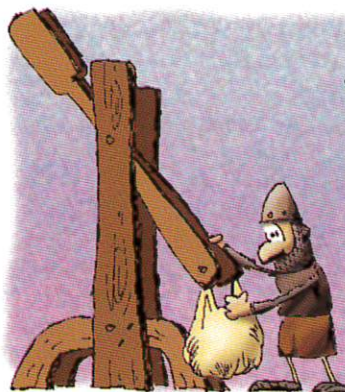
► **LIKE A GIANT** sling shot, this machine hurled rocks against the castle walls. Sometimes the sling was loaded with dung, dead horses, or other dead animals.



▶ CHECK IT OUT!

This device has a nasty surprise inside. What do you think it is?

(answer on back cover)



Gone But Not Forgotten

New weapons and ways of fighting finally ended the military careers of knights. By the 1300s, horses had become less important to warfare. Armies of foot soldiers used new weapons to pierce a knight's armor. Kings and nobles hired ordinary people from the countryside to fight their wars and guard their castle.

But knights and castles are not forgotten. Have you ever read a story about a knight who killed a fiery dragon or rescued a young woman from a lonely tower? Have you ever seen a painting of a magical castle or heard the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the

Round Table who lived in a place called Camelot? There are board games, card games, and even video games with knights as the main players. And no matter how small your home or apartment, it is still your "castle."



▲ **THESE FOOT** soldiers are using steel-tipped arrows.



▲ **A KNIGHT'S** wooden lance and his metal armor were no match for the foot soldier's gun. And castles were no match for cannons and explosives.



(castles), kings, and queens. People in Europe began playing chess in the Middle Ages. The game came from Persia.

► **KNIGHTS STILL DO** battle today—on the chess board, along with rooks

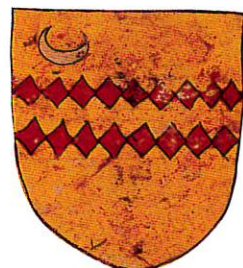




► **THE MOVIE**
Star Wars features futuristic Jedi knights who hop from planet to planet, carrying on the time-honored tradition of dueling (with “light sabres”) and acting chivalrously. Darth Vader represents the dark side of knighthood.



► **WITH THE HELMET**
 closed tight and the body covered in steel plates, it was hard to tell one knight from another. Friends could be mistaken for foes and killed. For this reason, knights began wearing personal symbols on their shields. Over time, these symbols, called coats of arms, became associated with noble families, who proudly put them not only on shields but on everything, from flags to clothing and jewelry. They also appeared carved above castle gates and elsewhere in architecture.



► **DURING THE**
 Middle Ages, stories and poems about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table became popular. The real King Arthur probably lived more than six hundred years earlier. Little was known about him so writers could let their imaginations run wild. Legends created during the Middle Ages made Arthur a great hero, who followed the code of chivalry (see page 13).



▼ **DON QUIXOTE**, A novel written by Cervantes in the 17th century, tells of an old man who believes he’s a knight—long after the age of knighthood has ended. Don Quixote jousts with windmills and gallantly protects his peasant “lady.”



▼ **CASTLES WERE**
 also built in Japan, but at a later time than in Europe. In the 1500s and 1600s, powerful Japanese nobles

called warlords were fighting each other. Their castles became their shelters and the headquarters for their armies.



▲ **LIKE THE**
 Western knight, the Japanese samurai warrior protected one lord and his castle. The samurai fought on horseback and on foot. His armor was made of plates of iron laced together and painted with a thin layer of varnish to keep it from rusting in Japan’s wet weather.

