

Castles

UNIT 2: THE MIDDLE AGES



Before Castles

- ▶ People have always built places to go when they are under attack.
- ▶ The most common is the hill fort.
- ▶ There is evidence of hill forts being built since the Neolithic period 5000 BCE.
- ▶ They were fairly quick and easy to build with enough people.
- ▶ These were a series of ditches, built up earth, wooden palisade walls, and structures within.



Gate

Wooden
Palisades

Ditches

Popular
with the
Normans in
the 11th
century
CE.

MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE



Castles

- ▶ Why change to the harder to build stone castle?
 - ▶ Demonstrated wealth and power,
 - ▶ Provided a much safer space,
 - ▶ Defended strategic places such as river crossings or port towns
 - ▶ Could act as a home for a powerful lord.



Features of a Castle

- ▶ Moat - a perimeter ditch with or without water
- ▶ Barbican - a fortification to protect a gate
- ▶ Gatehouse - the main castle entrance
- ▶ Curtain Walls & Towers - the perimeter defensive wall
- ▶ Bailey or Inner Ward (courtyard) - the area within a curtain wall.
- ▶ Keep (aka Donjon or Great Tower) - the largest tower and best stronghold of the castle

Features of a Castle- Moat

- ▶ Moats made getting to the wall much more difficult.
- ▶ Made ladders ineffective.
- ▶ Only needed about half a metre of water to be effective.
- ▶ The goal to slow, not to drown.
- ▶ Sometimes had sharpened stakes inside.
- ▶ Could be very difficult to dig in certain environments.
- ▶ May have a drawbridge.





A dry moat like this
will have been filled
with spikes and other obstacles
to slow down the attacking soldiers

Features of a Castle- Barbican/Gatehouse

- ▶ Barbicans were designed to protect potential weak points such as gates.
- ▶ There were usually big towers next to barbicans to provide covering fire from archers.
- ▶ A gatehouse is just a larger barbican that guards the main gate.
- ▶ Drawbridges were usually located here.
- ▶ Might include “murder holes” to drop stones on attackers at the gate.





Features of a Castle- Walls

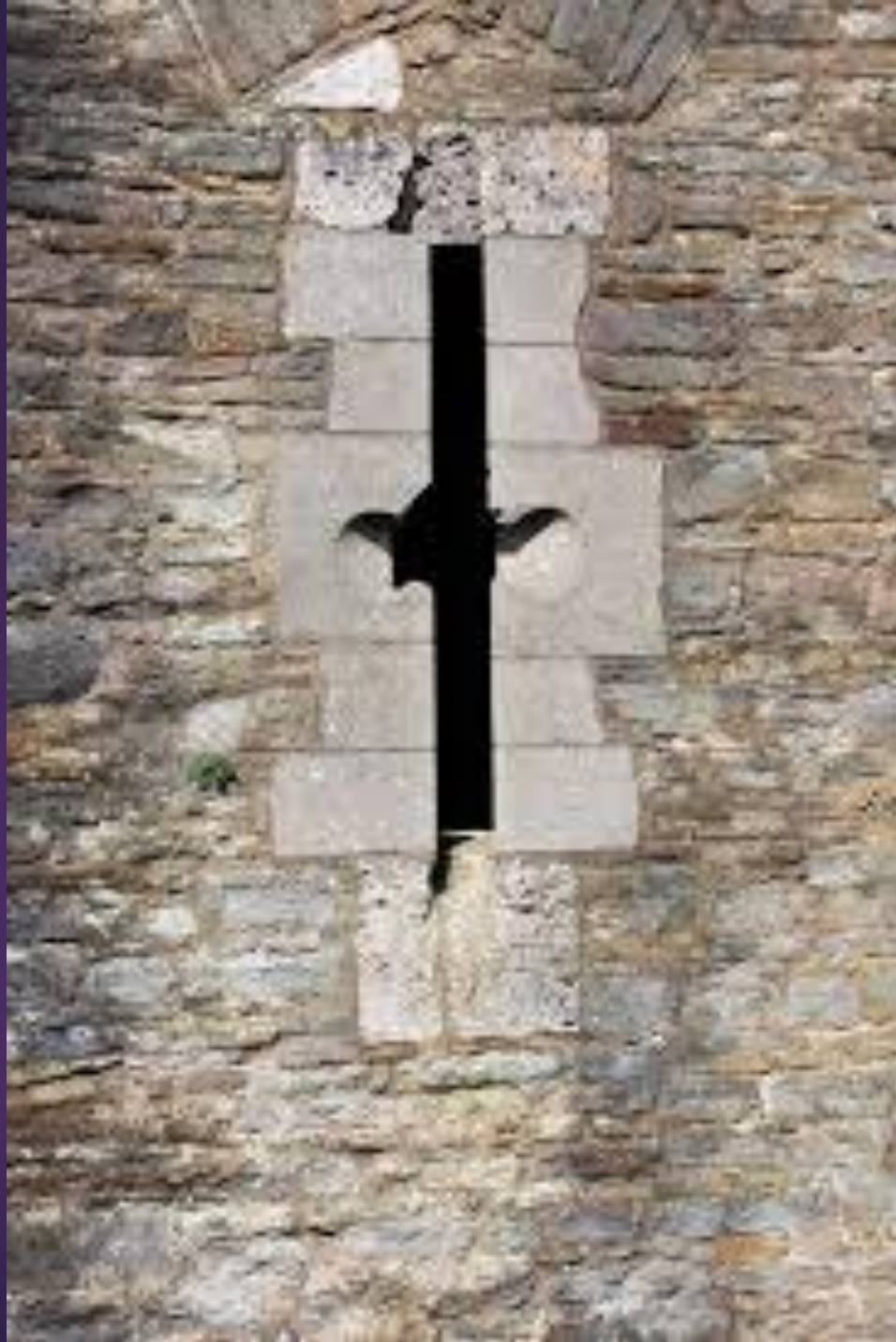
- ▶ Walls have always been used to keep invaders out.
- ▶ These large stone walls can be anywhere from 10 to 30 feet high.
- ▶ The tops feature crenelations that let soldiers on top have cover while still having spots to shoot out of.
- ▶ Castles can have several rings of walls, each usually getting taller than the last.



Features of a Castle- Towers

- ▶ Towers allowed guards to better see incoming invaders and allowed elevated firing positions.
- ▶ Square towers were easier to build but round towers better deflected shots from artillery.
- ▶ Many towers had arrow slits in them to allow archers to fire from within the tower in general safety.



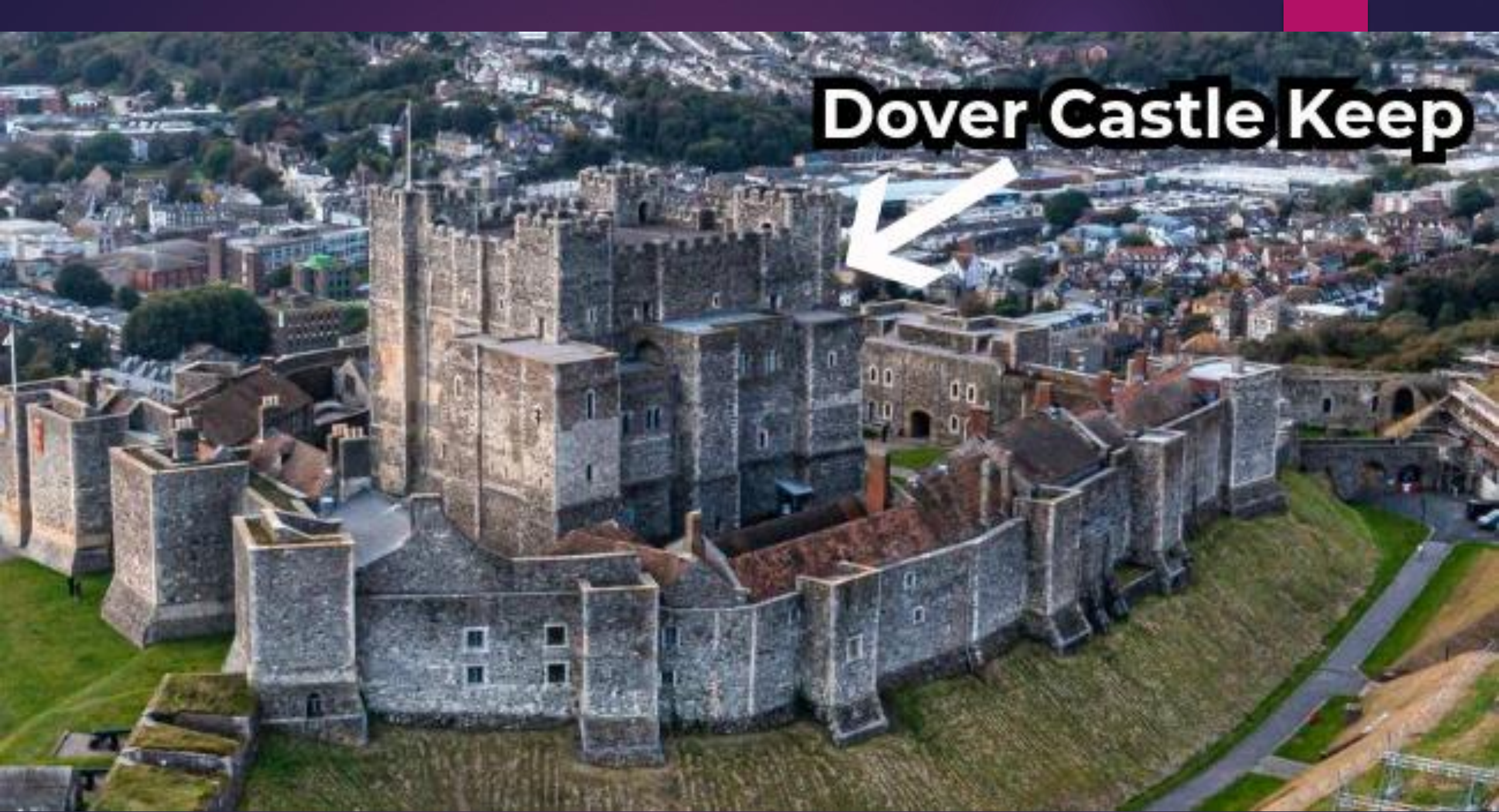


Features of a Castle- Keep

- ▶ Keeps were very large towers that were the last line of defence in a castle.
- ▶ This is where a lord or king would live.
- ▶ Often more than 100 feet tall.
- ▶ Very strong construction.
- ▶ Could be one or several towers.
- ▶ Usually had defences built on each level of the keep.

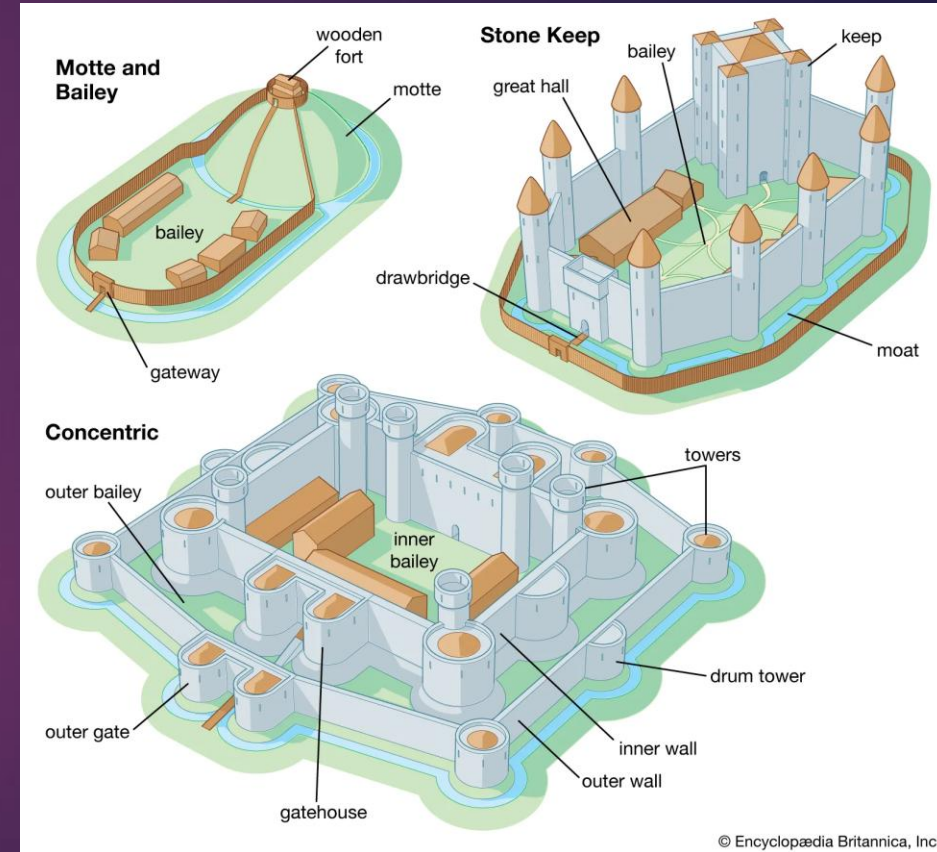


Dover Castle Keep



Features of a Castle- Bailey/Inner Ward

- ▶ This is the space protected by walls.
- ▶ Important buildings are built in the walls or built into the walls with a slanted thatched roof.
- ▶ Granaries, workshops (for blacksmiths, carpenters, etc.), a buttery (for wine and beer storage), stables, secondary accommodation, a chapel, and perhaps a space for hunting dogs and birds if in a bigger castle.

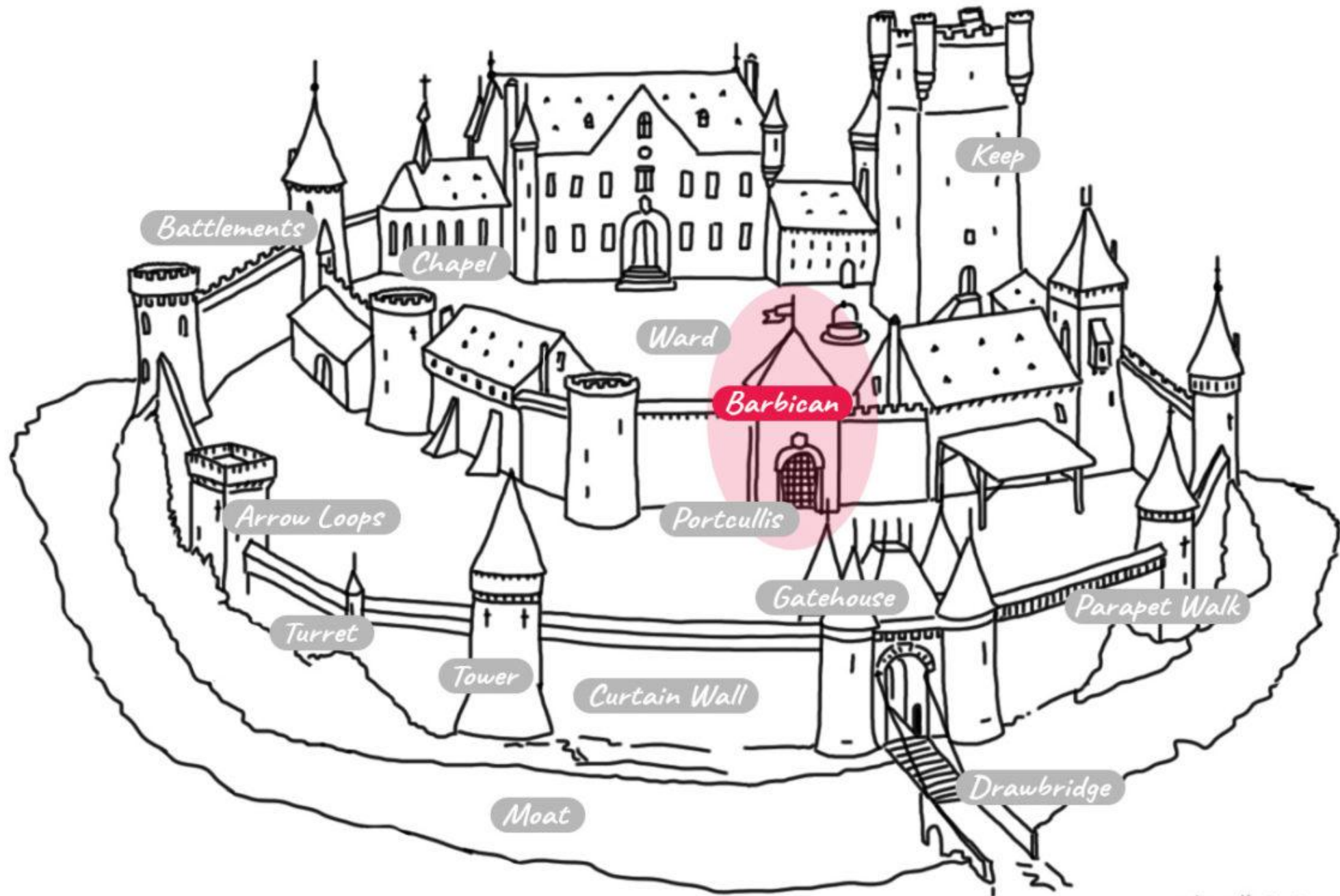




Features of a Castle- Latrines

- ▶ Generally built into towers.
- ▶ Basically a board with a hole in it that was above the moat.





Types of Castles

- ▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHbHc_MSkaQ
- ▶ Life inside a Medieval Castle
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWcCCS8NIgU>

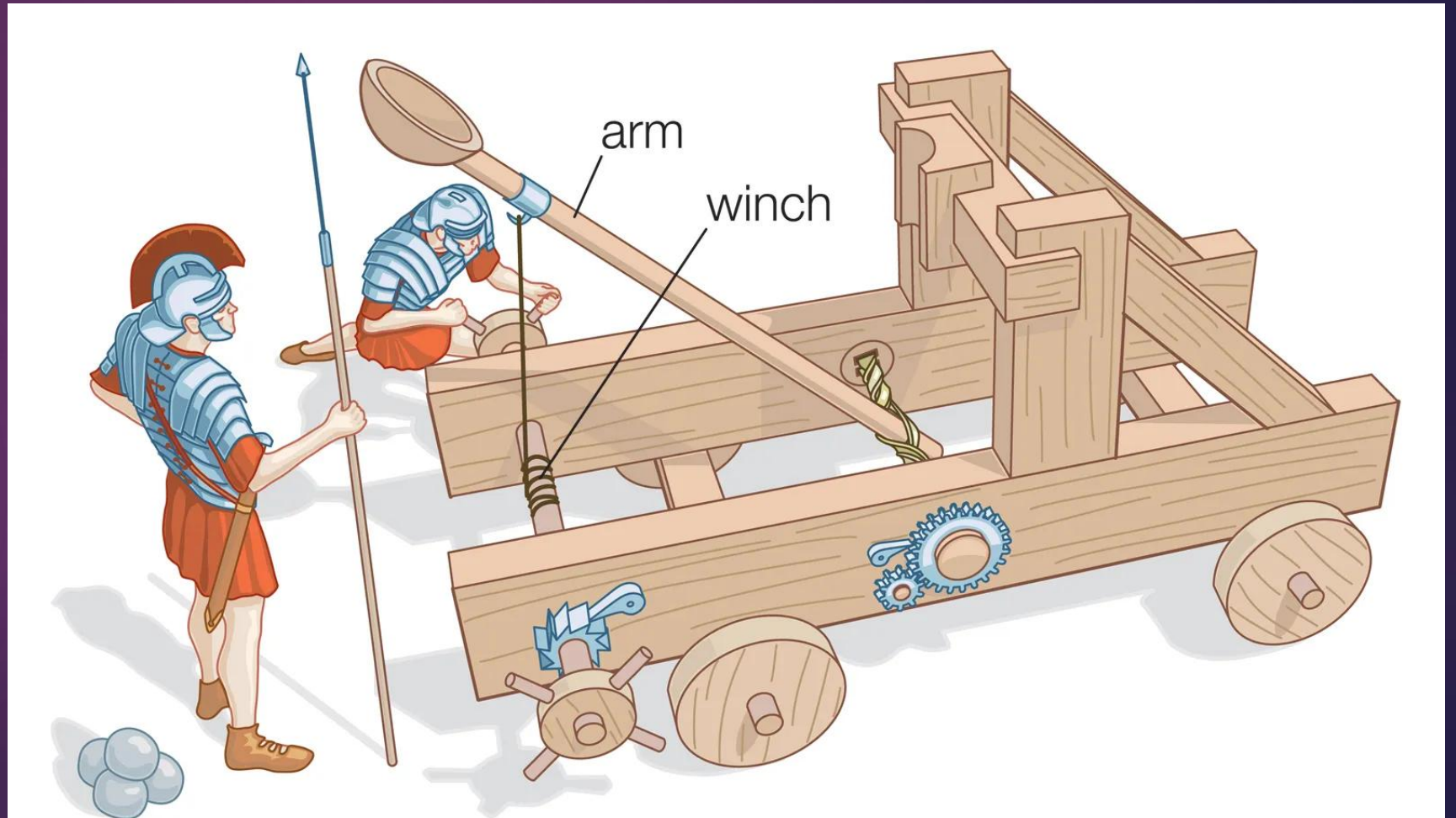
How to Siege a Castle

- ▶ But how does one break into a castle?
- ▶ Usually easier to starve out the inhabitants but there are ways to break in such as:



How to Siege a Castle- Catapults

- ▶ A torsion or tension-powered machine that launched stones, fire, or debris at a high arc.



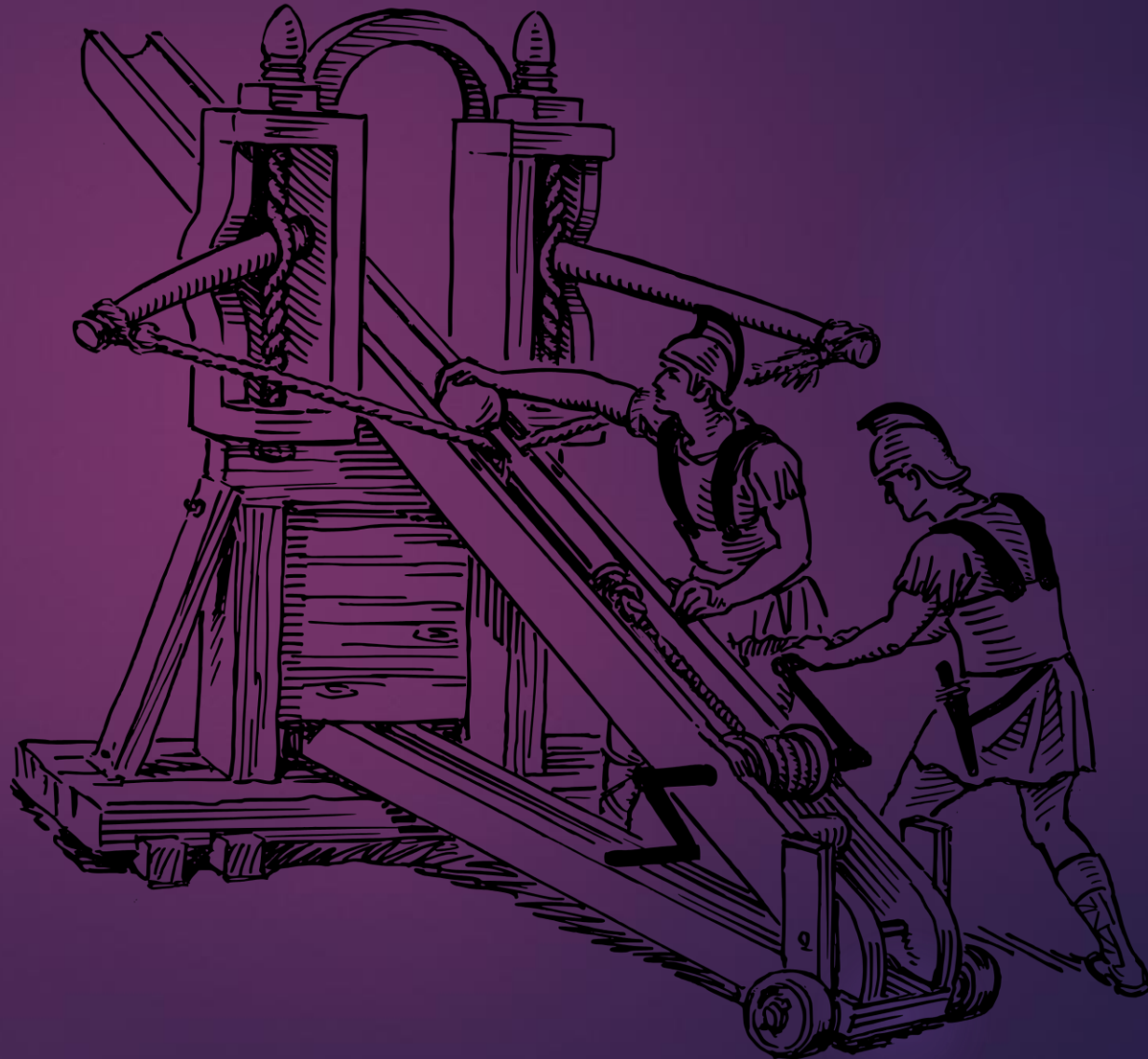
How to Siege a Castle- Trebuchets

- ▶ A gravity-powered weapon that used a heavy counterweight to hurl massive boulders and projectiles over castle walls.



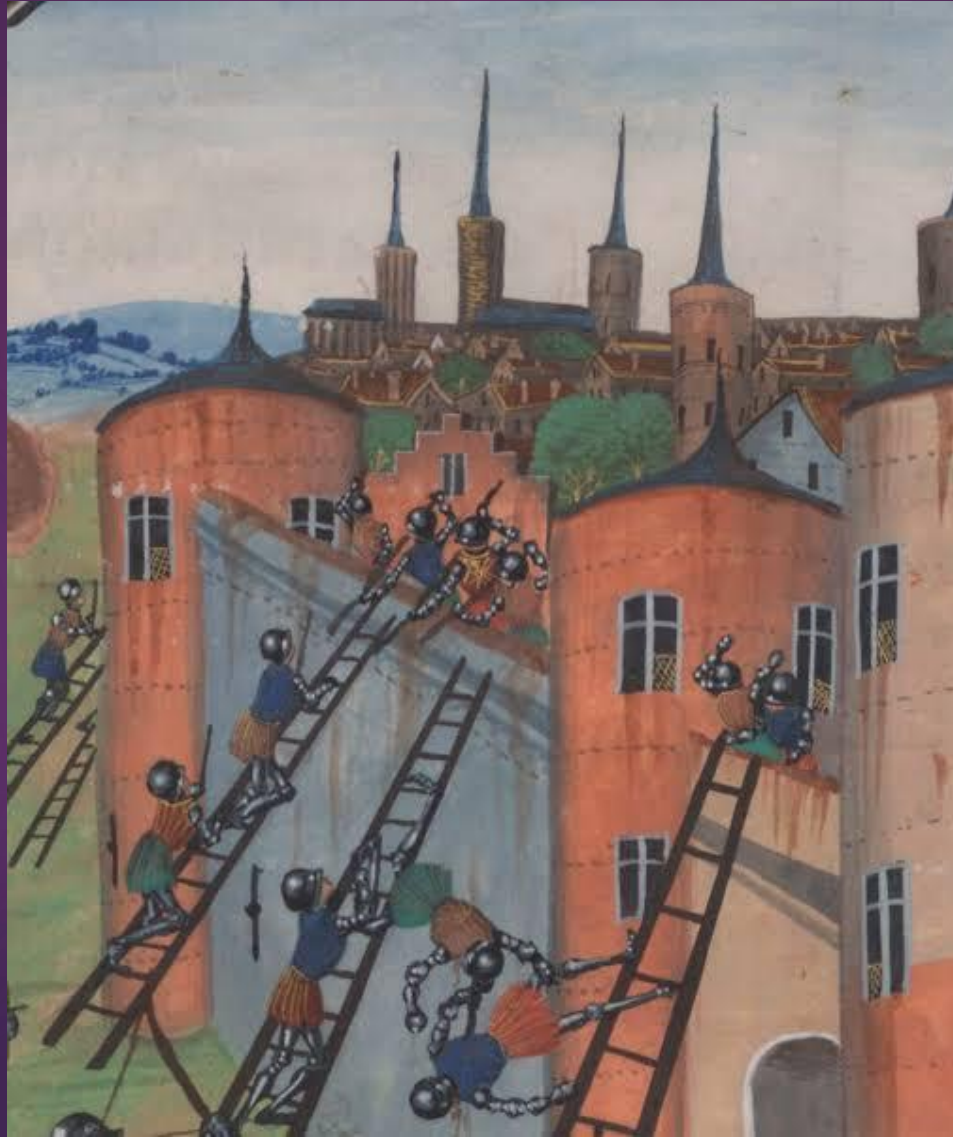
How to Siege a Castle- Ballista

- ▶ A giant, precision crossbow used to shoot heavy wooden bolts and target defenders on the ramparts.



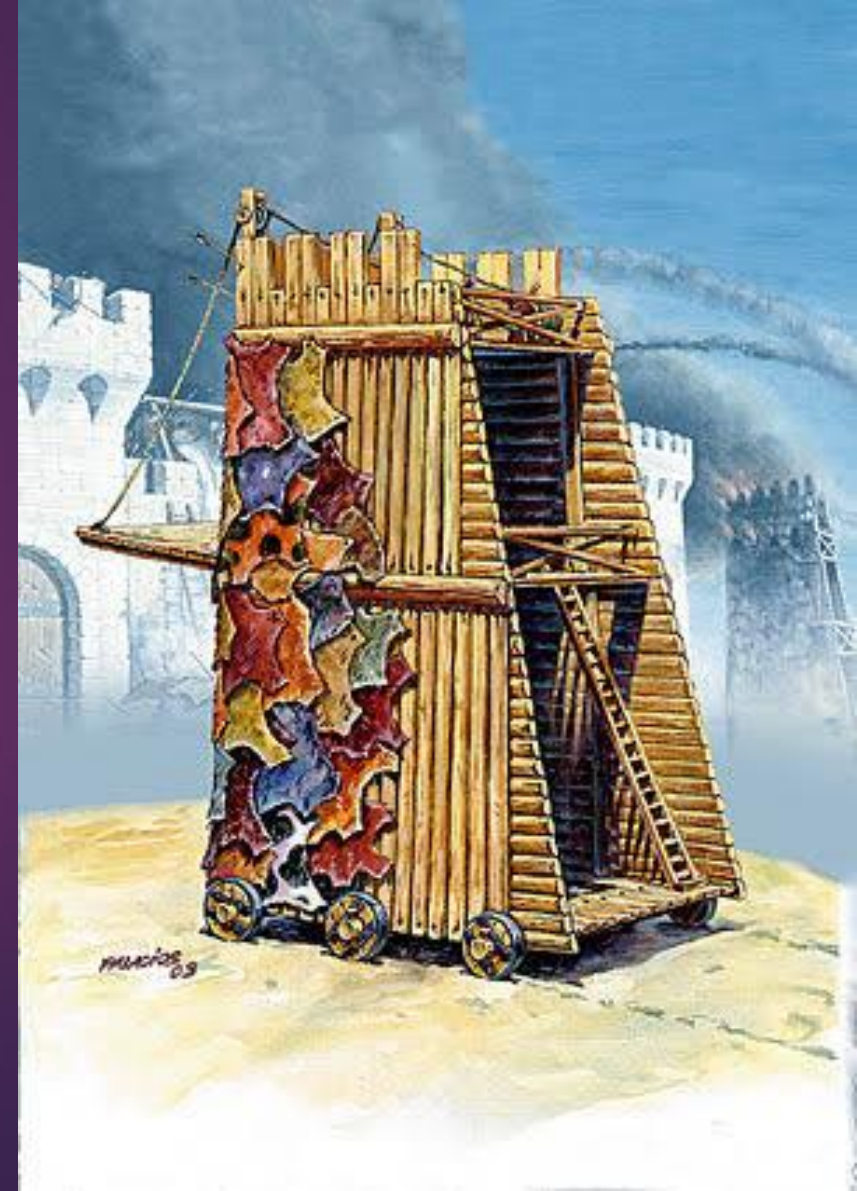
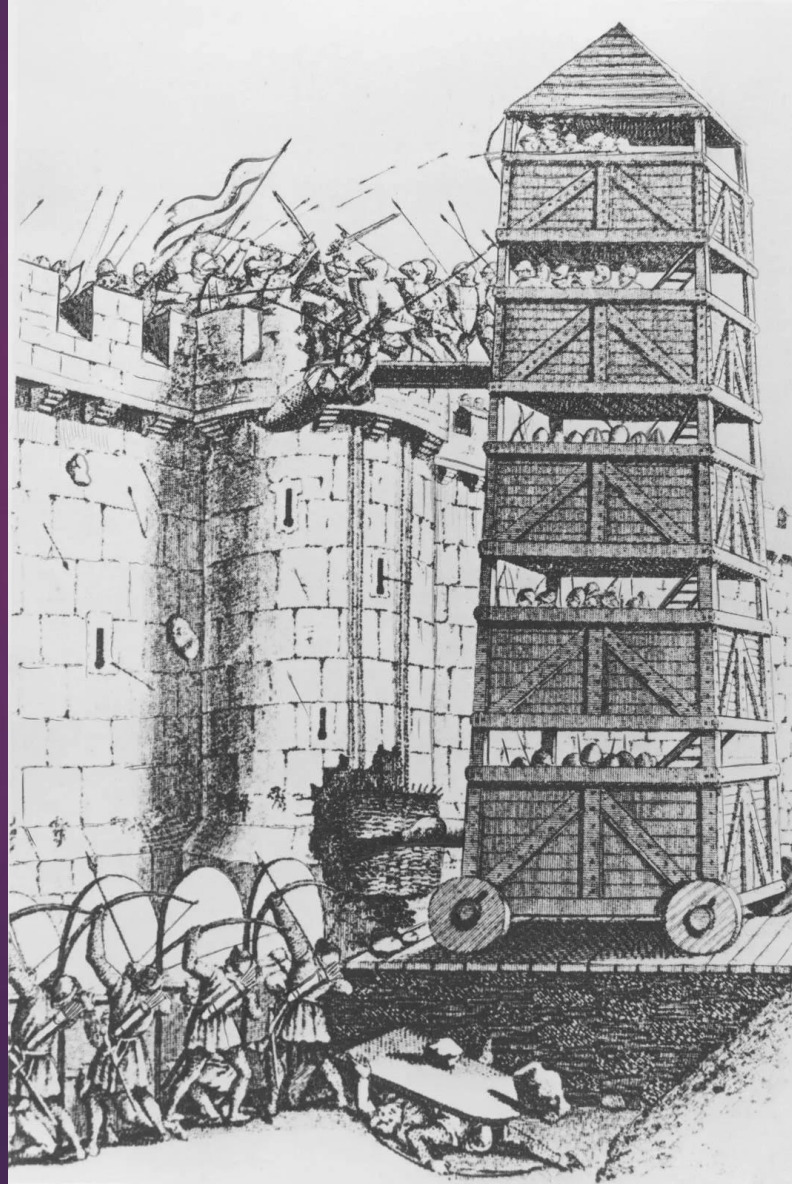
How to Siege a Castle- Ladders

- ▶ Low-tech, highly portable wooden ladders used by infantry to swarm walls from multiple points.



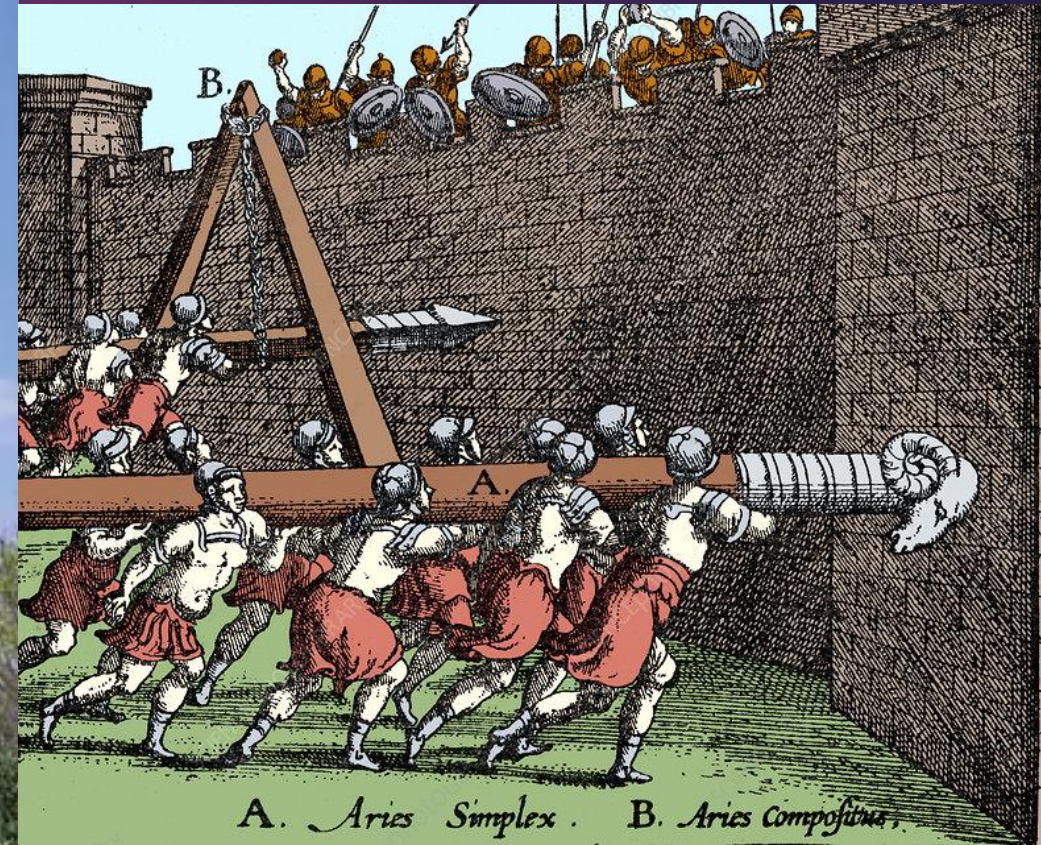
How to Siege a Castle- Siege Towers

- ▶ A tall wheeled wooden structure with a drawbridge that let attackers fight their way onto the castle battlements.



How to Siege a Castle- Battering Ram

- ▶ A heavy iron-capped log hung inside a rolling wooden shelter, used to smash gates and weaken walls.



How to Siege a Castle- Mantlet/Pavise

- ▶ Large mobile wooden shields that protected archers and frontline troops from incoming arrows.

