

# Castles around the world

Encourage the children to extend their interest in the different castles on this poster by close observation, discussion, referring to websites and looking at books

## Using the poster

- Invite parents to supply photographs and postcards of castles that they have visited with their children to use in a 'Castles' display. Use the poster to form the centrepiece of the display and surround it with parents' contributions and pictures, together with the children's drawings and paintings of castles. Display the children's model castles underneath (see activity ideas below) along with a selection of model knights and horses.
- Hang the poster in the creative area to encourage the children to produce two-dimensional drawings and paintings of castles, and three-dimensional models from recycled and malleable materials.
- Display the poster in the construction area to encourage the children to build symmetrical castles.

## Activities across the curriculum

### Personal, social and emotional development

- Look at the image of Olite Castle. This castle was originally built for a king and part of it is now used as a hotel. Would the children like to go for a holiday to Spain and stay in this castle? What do they think the rooms would look like? Does it look like any of the hotels that the children have stayed in? (Be sensitive to individual circumstances.)
- Look at the picture of the knight on horseback and explain how knights used to protect the lord who lived in the castle. Would the children like to be knights? What would be the best part of being a knight? Look at the picture of a knight's helmet and discuss how it would protect the face in battle. What do the children think it is made of? Would it be comfortable to wear? Compare this helmet with safety helmets worn today, such as a builder's hard hat and a cyclist's crash helmet.

### Communication, language and literacy

- With parental permission, take the children to a library to find out more about castles and knights. Look for books such as *Castle and Knight* (Eye Wonder series, Dorling Kindersley). Discover more about the individual castles depicted on the poster.
- Introduce exciting new words to the children and point to examples on the poster such as battlements, portcullis, moat, turret, tower, knight and so on.

### Mathematical development

- Look at the structure of the castles on the poster together. What do they have in common? How are they different? Encourage the children to describe the shapes of battlements and windows and try to draw them. Explain that the smaller towers to the side of large towers are lookout posts to watch for enemies. Why do the children think that there is a long bridge leading to Bodiam Castle?
- Look at the round central tower of Belvoir Castle. Point to the small, middle-sized and large windows and invite the children to say how many there are of each size? Count other items on the poster.

### Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Use the internet to search for general information about castles. Visit [www.castlesontheweb.com](http://www.castlesontheweb.com) then search for websites to find information on the individual castles depicted on the poster.
- Consider how the positions of the castles on the poster affect their shape. For example, Neuschwanstein Castle was built on a high crag with little space so that it is why it has lots of tall towers. Bodiam Castle was built in a flat open area and was easy to approach so that is why it needed a wide moat for protection. Some castles are built within the walls of a town and others are on islands safely surrounded by sea.

### Practitioner's notes

Neuschwanstein Castle,  
Bavaria, Germany

Olite Castle,  
Spain



Belvoir Castle,  
Leicester, England

Bodiam Castle,  
East Sussex, England

### Physical development

- Look at the image of a knight on horseback and provide fabric scraps and foil for the children to transform small-world characters into knights and horses dressed for battle.
- Discuss how castles are usually made from large stone blocks. Make clay blocks and invite the children to use them to create model castles. Suggest that they use clay tools to draw the windows.

### Creative development

- Look at the photograph of Neuschwanstein Castle on the poster. Explain to the children that it was used as the model for Walt Disney's Cinderella castle. Read the story of 'Cinderella' and other fairy tales set in castles, such as 'Rapunzel' and 'Sleeping Beauty'. Provide role-play clothes for the children to re-enact the stories.
- Transform a square climbing frame into the children's favourite castle from the poster. Tape white paper printed with stone block shapes around the walls and attach long cardboard tubes to the insides of the four corners as turrets. Provide the children with suitable resources for castle role play, such as dressing-up clothes and musical instruments. Emphasise to the children that they must not try to climb up the frame.

**Jean Evans** is an early years consultant and author.