Castle Structure and Function

Castle Use

A Castle’s Structure:

- Large and of great defensive strength
- Surrounded by a wall with a fighting platform
- Usually has a large, strong tower

A Castle’s Function:

- Fortress and military protection
- Center of local government
- Home of the owner, usually a king

The Parts of a Castle

allure: the walkway at the top of a castle wall. The allure was often shielded by a protective wall so that guards could move between towers; also called a wall-walk

arcading: a series of columns and arches, built in an upside-down U shape

arrow loop: a tiny vertical opening in the castle wall; a thin window used for shooting arrows at the enemy; also called a loophole or meurtriere

ashlar: blocks of stone, used to build castle walls and towers

bailey: an open, grassy area inside the walls of the castle containing farm pastures, cottages, and other buildings. Sometimes a castle had more than one bailey; also called a ward.

balustrade: railing along a path or stairway

barrel vault: semicircular roof made out of wood or stone

bastion: a small tower on a courtyard wall or an outside wall

battlement: a narrow wall built along the outer edge of the wall-walk to protect soldiers against attack

boss: the middle stone in an arch; also called a keystone

concentric: having two sets of walls, one inside the other

cornerstone: a stone at the corner of a building uniting two intersecting walls, sometimes inscribed with the year the building was constructed; also called a quoin

crosswall: a wall inside a large tower
curtain wall: a castle wall enclosing a courtyard

corbel: stone support for a beam

crene: the low segment of the alternating high and low segments of a battlement

donjon: the strongest, best-defended section of a castle; also called a keep

drawbridge: a wooden bridge leading into or out of a castle, capable of being raised or lowered

drum tower: a round tower built into a wall

dungeon: the castle jail, usually in a tower

escalade: to climb a castle wall

finial: a slender piece of stone used to decorate the sawtooth-shaped portion of the castle wall

footings: bottom part of wall

gallery: long-shaped room

gate house: the complex of towers, bridges, and barriers built to protect each entrance to a castle

hall: principal living quarters of a medieval castle or house

keep: the strongest, best-defended section of a castle; also called a donjon

keystone: the middle stone in an arch; also called a boss

loophole: narrow window; also called an arrow loop or a meurtriere

merlon: the high segment of the alternating high and low segments of a battlement

meurtriere: narrow window; also called an arrow loop or a loophole

moat: a deep trench around the castle, usually filled with water, to prevent enemies from entering

motte: a large mound on which a castle was built

oillette: a round opening at the base of a loophole, to insert a cannon

oubliette: a jail space reached by a trapdoor

palisade: a temporary wooden fence

parapet: protective wall at the top of a fortification, around the outer side of the wall walk

quoin: a stone at the corner of a building uniting two intersecting walls, sometimes inscribed with the year the building was constructed; also called a cornerstone
**revet**: a layer of stone added for strength

**turning bridge**: a drawbridge that pivots in the middle

**turret**: a small tower built on top of one of the main towers, used to keep a lookout for enemies

**wall-stair**: staircase built into the thickness of a wall

**wall-walk**: the area along the tops of the walls from which soldiers could defend the castle; also called an *allure*

**ward**: courtyard; also called a *bailey*

**Sources:**

Castle information adapted from Castles on the Web (http://www.castlesontheweb.com/glossary.html) and Castle of Wales (http://www.castlewales.com/casterms.html).