

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

PERFECT PLACE FOR A CASTLE



Recommended for

KSI-2 (History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Identify geographical features in the past and today and how the local landscape has changed over time.
- Explain how the geographical position of the castle helped its defence.

Time to complete

30–40 minutes



An aerial view of Carisbrooke Castle, showing its proximity to the coast.

SUMMARY

This activity will help students understand the geographical and strategic position of Carisbrooke Castle. It begins with students analysing the map symbols on an Elizabethan map of the Isle of Wight and comparing it with a modern map.

Students then identify geographical features and landmarks on the maps that help them to understand the castle's defensive position.

By comparing the maps students can draw contrasts, and recognise continuities, that illustrate how the landscape of the Isle of Wight has changed over time. Students then reflect on how such changes are reflected in the changing role of the castle through history.

The activity involves practising geographical skills such as interpreting maps and recognising map symbols.

ACTIVITY ANSWERS

A – On the 1579 map, Carisbrooke Castle is just above the word 'VECTA'.

B – 1. Hills, 2. Wood or forest (depending on density of trees), 3. Rivers.

D – 1. Museums (tourism), 2. Golf courses (sport and recreation), 3. More housing on the coast, i.e. Ryde, Shanklin and Sandown.

The island is no longer at threat from a naval attack and has a higher population.

Some students may suggest 'roads' as an answer, as they are not evident on Map 1. The 1579 map shows mainly coastal features, an impression of natural topography and settlements. One of its purposes was to highlight vulnerable areas of coastline in the event of a naval attack. Unsurfaced roads and tracks did exist on the Isle of Wight during the Elizabethan era but are not shown on Map 1.



An aerial view of Carisbrooke Castle, showing how the castle is on high ground overlooking the town.

ACTIVITY ANSWERS

E – 1. Rivers, 2. Carisbrooke Castle, 3. Woods/forests.

F – 4: Hurst, Calshot, Haselworth ('hasellorde') and Southsea ('Sowthsee').

Hurst and Calshot Castles (both English Heritage) can still be identified on Map 2 – the location of Southsea Castle is only shown by a lighthouse, though the castle is a visitor attraction with a museum.

Haselworth Castle was abandoned in 1556 and no remains are visible today.

G – The castle is built in the centre of the island, on a hill, to give it the best vantage point possible. It was also an intimidating visible prospect for approaching invaders.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Using role play or storytelling, students could imagine themselves as 16th-century Spanish sailors on board ships, heading across the sea to attack the Isle of Wight. What would they see as they approached the island? What would they feel when they saw the castle? What would they say to their shipmates? Students could film or write their descriptions of their experience.

MAP READING

MAP 1

The Isle of Wight from the book 'Atlas of the Counties of England and Wales', 1579. The map shows important things on the coastline. These maps were important as England was threatened with invasion from Spain.



MAP 2



A modern, 21st century, Ordnance Survey map of the Isle of Wight.

Look at Map 1

There has been a fort or castle at Carisbrooke for over 1,000 years. You are going to investigate why this is a good place to build a castle and how Carisbrooke defended the Isle of Wight.



The historical symbols tell us about features in the landscape.

This symbol represents a whole village.

A Can you find Carisbrooke Castle? **Draw** a circle around it.

B **Find** these three other symbols on the map. What features do they show?



Look at Map 2

Map 2 shows how the Isle of Wight has changed since 1579. The symbols show different features of the landscape today.

C **Find** Carisbrooke Castle and draw a circle around it.

D What three features are **different** in the Isle of Wight today?

E What features have stayed the **same** since 1579?

1

1

2

2

3

3

In the 16th century, Carisbrooke Castle protected the Isle of Wight and southern England from invasion. The castle needed to stop an enemy from capturing the island and using it for attacks on Portsmouth and Southampton.

F **How many** castles were built on the mainland?

G **Why** is the castle in the centre of the island?