

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

CASTLE PRISONERS: FIND THE FACTS

KS3

KS4

Recommended for

KS3–4 (History, English, PSHE)

Learning objectives

- Understand Portchester Castle's role as a prisoner-of-war camp during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.
- Explore Portchester Castle's international prisoner-of-war story, including facts about the African-Caribbean prisoners kept here.

Time to complete

45–60 minutes



The second floor of the keep.

SUMMARY

Before your visit, read the sections called 'Prisoners at Portchester' (page 14) and 'Black Prisoners of War' (page 15) in this kit. To find out more, search our website for the various online history articles relating to the prisoners of war at Portchester Castle.

ACTIVITIES AT THE CASTLE

During your visit, gather students on the second floor of the keep (the one with a map in the centre, as seen in the photo on the left). Explain to students that they are going to find out more about the prisoners of war kept here and ask them to look at the 'Flock of Dreams' sculpture above their heads. This represents the letters to and from prisoners of war, flying over the English Channel like birds.

Split students into two groups and ask group 1 to stay on the second floor while group 2 go up the stairs to the third floor (see photo). Please ensure that both groups are accompanied by school staff. Students can explore the rooms to find answers to the questions on page 45.

Once they have completed the first set of questions, ask groups 1 and 2 to swap over and complete the three questions they haven't yet done.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could apply their knowledge by writing a diary entry in the role of a prisoner of war, sharing their experience of being captured, transported and imprisoned at Portchester. They could choose one of these scenarios to help them get started:

- You've just been captured; it's your first day on the ship.
- You've been on the ship for two months.
- You've just arrived at Portchester prisoner-of-war camp.
- You've been at Portchester as a prisoner for six months.



SECOND-FLOOR QUESTIONS

1 Look for the picture of a prison ‘hulk’ (a naval ship with masts removed), painted by Captain Durrant in about 1810. Around 850 prisoners would be kept on one hulk. What did the Transport Office do to their clothing and bedding? Why?

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2 Find the panel called ‘Portchester as a Prisoner-of-War Depot’. Between 1793 and 1815, how many prisoners of war could be kept at Portchester Castle at any one time?

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3 Look for the panel called ‘Prisoners at Portchester’ and read about the prisoners’ daily routine. What two things happened at 12 noon?

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THIRD-FLOOR QUESTIONS

1 Look for the panel called ‘Black Soldiers at Portchester’. What happened in May 1796 on the island of St Lucia?

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2 Read the panel called ‘Life at Portchester Castle’. What three things did the prison staff do to help the African-Caribbean prisoners?

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3 Find the panel called ‘What Happened to the Black Prisoners?’ Captain Louis Delgrès was a mixed-race soldier captured in the Caribbean and brought to Portchester. What happened to him when he eventually returned to the Caribbean?

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