

Medieval Setting Descriptions

CASTLE ROOMS/GROUNDS

BEDCHAMBER

Sight

bag of medicinal in chest
basin of cold water on small table by window
bath tub (servants carry in pails of water)
battered wooden trunk
canopied bed
carved wooden bed post
chairs
chamber pot
chests (for clothing, small knives, medicinal, other items)
copper tub
coverlet (bedspread, decorative or plain woven wool)
fabric draping bed
featherbeds
fine linen sheets
fireplace in the wall
floral tapestry
four-poster bed
hung bed (made of wooden frames with holes and rope pulled through holes in criss-cross pattern) with a mattress (made of feathers or straw)
iron door handle
lattern
light from small window or loophole (closed with square of oiled paper or thin horn)
linen cloth for bathing
linen to wrap around after bath and to dry with
locked chest at foot of bed contained a hoard of silver plate (tableware), silver could be melted down and sold
pail to rinse washed hair
pallets or trundles with straw mattresses (for the poor)
quilts or fur coverlets
sheets (linens) and pillow
straw mattress (poor people)
tallow candle
thick oak door with bolt
tick (cloth bag or mattress cover)
two plain wooden tables on each side of the bed
unlit candle on bedside table

Sounds

jangle of removing his sword and belt
soft thump of boots hitting the floor when removed
soft whoosh when things landed on the rushes

Smells

scented soap

Touch

cold stone floor
hands slick with soap
hot water in bath

CASTLE GROUNDS

Sight

crenellated walls with arrow loops
dusty inner bailey
excellent fortress, gray and cold
flowering apples trees in the orchard
four thin towers with narrow windows
grassy incline with patch of eglantine and violets
guards posted on the ramparts
hidden postern gate
inner ward
inner ward filled with men, women, children and animals
iron teeth of portcullis (to be lowered onto an enemy)
narrow inner passage 30 feet long
obstacles of rusted pikes buried in the ground at irregular intervals (sharp teeth to rip open a horse's belly or a man's throat if he fell on them)
obstacles: holes covered with grass and reeds, holding vertical spears set on high rocky hill
standing guard like a grim sentinel
over mile upon mile of countryside
twenty-foot thick oak gates
walls eight feet thick

Sounds

chickens squawking
gates grinding closed
inner ward with people talking at once, children shrieking

loud creaking sound of gates raising
pigs squealing

Smells

scent of apple blossoms, musk roses and violets
smell of human excrement from the jakes
smells of dogs, cattle, pigs
smells of lathered horses
stiff eastern breeze
stinking moat

Touch

thick, slimy mud in moat

CASTLE PARTS

arrow loops (narrow slits in castle wall for archers to fire arrows through)
arsenal tower
bailey (courtyard or open space surrounded by walls), usually several baileys (lower, middle, upper)
barbican (stone structure that protected the gate of a castle, a gatehouse)
battlements (structures at tops of walls surrounding castle, also called crenellations)
buttery
cellar (housed court documents, rolls of parchment)
chapel for worship (close to domestic rooms, traditionally highest room in castle so nothing between chapel and heaven)
constable's quarters (in gatehouse)
crenels (gaps between raised sections of stonework), often hinged with shutters to raise in protection
curtain wall (stone walls around castle); 10 or more feet thick
drawbridge (wooden bridge in front of main gate; built to raise up in hinged fashion)
forebuilding
forget-me-not (oubliette), hidden at back of dungeon, cramped cell-

Medieval Setting Descriptions

within-a-cell where prisoners were forgotten

gallery (in thick wall of tower, provided access to other rooms and staircases; musicians would play from there during feasts)

guardhouse

keep (main tower, tallest, strongest structure in castle, used as last line of defense during a siege)

latrine tower

lead troughs (carried water through wall, spout on outside)

linen store

lower bailey

middle bailey

mill tower

moat (body of water surrounding the outer wall, often 5 to 15 feet deep) to stop tunelers under a castle to collapse the walls or infiltrate)

murder holes in gateway (provide way to shout orders and when portcullis was dropped the archers could pick off the enemy one by one)

pantry

portcullis (metal or wood grate dropped vertically just inside the main gate)

rampart (top sections of outer wall of castle; reached by walkway up against outer wall)

roof (constructed from fireproof materials like lead, tile or slate to protect from attacks of flaming arrows over walls)

saltcellar

siege engine tower

squint (tiny peephole in dungeon, let jailer check on prisoners)

stair turret

town gate

upper bailey

watch turret (high above castle walls to see over countryside)

wine cellar

CASTLE WALLS

Sight

secret passageway built into walls run between rooms, join up at a

tunnel that ends outside the bailey walls, way to flee if castle was ever attached

set of stairs carved into the stone wall to parapet

DUNGEON

Sight

4-by-4-foot cell

barred metal door

dark corners

dimly lit

key on heavy ring

rats skittering on floor

rough-hewn stone steps

rusty old cot

thick oak door

Sounds

clang of metal door closing

footsteps on stone steps

grating sound of key in lock

rats skittering on floor

Smells

cool, musty air

GREAT HALL

*Meal Times: breakfast (6-7 am);

midday (12-2 pm); supper (6-7 pm)

Sight

at night every bit of floor space filled with sleeping bodies (male and female, young and old)

beam-arched ceiling so high

benches at tables

beyond-filthy rushes littered with

food and other things

boat-shaped saltcellar

broken furniture

buffets with plates of gold and

silver on display

cavernous entrance

dearth of light, much darker than it was out in sunlight

dirk (each person eat with one)

dirty tapestries on walls

enameled tile floors

fireside chairs

gray stone walls

group of knights enjoying an ale

hard stone floors

heart of castle, full of people

heavy trays of steaming platters

knives (each person has own)

lord's and lady's chairs

maids bustling about

master's high-backed chair

meals: breaking fast, nooning, sup

monstrous fireplace

people breaking their fasts

people sitting to speak or eat

raised dais for lord's table

rushes

scarred wood of table

servant cleaning

silverware for lords and ladies

smoke-blackened beams

supporting high ceiling

smoke-stained walls

soldiers coming and going

stairs at side of room

tapestries representing heroes of

ancient history or events

torches

trencher (thick slice of stale bread,

often shared) to hold the food

trestle tables in squared-off U

shape in center

whiskey: amber liquor

whitewashed walls

women sitting by fire after the sup,

chatting and mending or

embroidering

wooden dishes for all but lord

Sounds

air abuzz with conversation

buzz of excitement in air

floor rushes snapped and crackled beneath feet

loud chatter

people talking, laughing

raucous shouts and cheers

scrape of chair

thwack of wooden broom cleaning

whiskey-sharpened tongues

Smells

basket of fresh bread

boar presented on one large platter,

had been cooked on the spit,

stuffed

men who reek of whiskey

rotten food on rushes

Medieval Setting Descriptions

stale smell
sweaty bodies
sweet smelling herbs to disguise
smells: lavender, chamomile, rose
petals, daisies, fennel

Tastes

ale
boiled raisins
honey and almond pastes
honey bread
honey mead
jellied eggs
pigeon pie with carrots, turnips and
potatoes
thick slab of bread soggy with rich
gravy and large chunks of beef

KITCHENS

Sight

built-in cooking ovens
bundles of herbs drying
buttery
carving a chicken
cook in apron
cupboards
fireplaces
heavily scored wooden table
kitchen boys
larders
large knife
male and female workers
plums and buns
rotund male cook
sinks
spit to hold cooking boar
splattered with grease
stool
strong male servants to do the
heavy work
sudden splash of sunlight when
door to outside opened
wall seats
well at back of kitchens
window seats
women bustling around

Sounds

cook barking orders

Smells

blast of hot, humid air on opening
door

bread baking
drenched with perspiration
roasting meat on spit
salting
smoke-laden air
sweltering heat

Tastes

cheese
fish: herring, salmon, eel, whiting,
cod, trout and pike
fresh bread
fresh fruit
honey
honeycomb
honey mead
meats: venison, beef, pork, goat,
lamb, rabbit, hare, mutton, swans,
herons and poultry
pastries and pies
pasty (sweet and flaky) melts on
tongue
pheasant
pie of cream, eggs, dates, prunes
(sickly sweet)
pig's head
porridge (parritch), thick oats
portage: thick vegetable soup with
bacon, milk and cheese
roast heron
sauces: to disguise salty taste
shell fish: crab, oysters, mussels,
cocles
spices: pepper, mustard, saffron,
cloves, cardimon and cinnamon
stew with vegetables
vegetables
wine

LISTS

Sight

broadsword
men dressed in mail, braies and
helmet
men practicing at battle
practice field a hive of activity
practicing with swords, lances,
maces
seasoned soldier
shields

Sounds

grunts and groans

Smells

sweaty men

PADDOCKS & STABLES

Sight

baiting the castle's bull
blacksmith
dark and warm
dust
fence post
fence rails
horse bucking, twisting and
leaping about
manure
mass of bodies watching some
activity
men wildly gesturing and waving
mice, small animals
mud, grime
rider flying off a horse
riding bareback on a mad horse
rows of stalls running length of
stables
sedate canter
series of paddocks ran up to the
outer wall
small stretch of grassy land
spider, webs
stable master
water bucket
wooden fence

Sounds

chewing noises
creaking boards
donkey brayed
frantic shouts
grunting
huffing breath
pigs rutting happily in refuse,
squealing
roar of laughter
rubbing noises as animals scratch
posts or rails
shouting
shriek of horror
slosh of water
snorting
squeak of a gate
stamping
swish of a tail
whinnies

Medieval Setting Descriptions

Smells

animals
fresh hay, dung and horses
grain (dusty & earthy)
hay
salt
straw
urine, manure

Tastes

dust & chaff in air
spit

Touch

chaff getting into clothes
dry & hairy tickle of horse lips
heavy footsteps against rough floor
horsehide
pain of being kicked by an injured
or frightened animal
patting a flank
prickly hay and straw
running a hand through the mane
slivers
sweat trickling down face, sides,
back
warmth of animals pressing against
you for attention

SOLAR/STUDY

Sight

book-lined shelf
chests
desks and chairs
dusting caused a cloud of fine
powders to rise and swirl
gossamer cobwebs billowing in
breeze of opened windows
high ceiling
rushes half-rotted away, half-
petrified
shutters on windows
tapestries
unused room, cobwebs
window ledges
wooden chandelier hung by a
chain from ceiling (two pieces of
wood crossing each other with
prickets at each end of piece of
wood with four candles)

Smells

acrid scent of smoke

smell of corpses of little rodents
among the rushes
unused room, musty, moldy smell

STAIRWAY/HALLWAY

Sight

deeply indented stone stairs
flickering light from torches
little light except through arrow
slits at intervals in wall rising
above great hall
long and empty with doors coming
off it
torches in holders, lit in morning
until the lord goes to bed at night

STEWARD'S ACCOUNTING ROOM

Sight

book of building and repairs
books stacked on floor
bound book of birth and marriage
records
bound ledgers
ledgers of: crops, what was planted
in which section of land, price of
grain, sale of product, log of
villeins who'd worked each section
with number of hours and days
low trunk at foot of cot
narrow cot against one wall
quills and ink pots
rolled parchments tied with bits of
string in small cubicles
small room
thick pile of foolscap on table
wooden shelves built against the
walls

Smells

stale, airless room

TOWER ROOM/PRISONER

Sight

chair
hard floor
iron bars on window
narrow cot
tray with piece of bread and mug
of water
wooden staircase leading to tower

Sounds

door creak open
guards muttering
heavy footfalls on wooden
staircase
key turning in lock

Smells

musty

Touch

cold at night
cold floor

FOREST/WOODS

Sight

cluster of pines
trees grew so close together, the
cover overhead might as well have
been a stone wall
very little sunlight getting through

Sounds

crunch of leaves and twigs being
trampled underfoot

LOCH

Sight

big, smooth-faced rock
heather-covered ground
moonlight shimmering on loch
rocky outcrop lined the loch
stone beach

Smells

sweet clover-like scent
salty tang of sea air

Sounds

gentle ebb and flow of tide

Touch

cool breeze off water

WATERFALL

Sight

boulder at water's edge
crystal clear water
meadow surrounded by trees
mist in the air from the falls
small clearing near river

Medieval Setting Descriptions

small waterfall
soothing spot

Sounds

spitting water and coughing after
falling into water
tinkle of water

Touch

cool rush of water

CAMPING WHILE

TRAVELING

Sight

bag of medicinal with balms and
salves
bed of furs on floor of tent
chest in tent with candle and flint
cloth bag with bit of bread, cheese,
an apple, piece of roasted quail
glow of firelight around fire
lord's travel tent on far side of
open area
rain
roasting rabbit over fire
Scots bundle in greased plaids
against the weather
soft glow of candlelight in tent
wagon with items they take with
them, maid sleeps in wagon
waist-high weeds and grass

Sounds

breeze wafting off loch
crackle of undergrowth
rustle of tent flap
rustling trees

Smells

roasting meat, rabbit

WEDDING

Process

Blessing of man: groom kneels
before the priest and must accept
the solemnization he is about to
engage; man accepts; he is deemed
worthy; guests cheer

Entrance of Bride: maidens enter;
children with bells and gift for
couple enter; bride enters with
escort

Wedding Introduction: priest tells
all why they are gathered together
for this day of binding; asks for
impediments; decrees
solemnization be deferred; guests
say "let them marry"

Wedding Challenge: no
impediment, priest asks man to
"love her, comfort her, honor, and
keep her in sickness and in health,
forsaking all others", when he "I
will" then priest asks same of
woman; answers "I will"

Giving of Bride: priest asks who
giveth this woman; escort gives
answer and puts right hand in hand
of minister and leaves

Exchange of Vows: man takes
woman's right hand and says his
vows; woman takes man's right
hand and says her vows

Blessing of the Rings

Bestowing of Ring Gift: priest tells
man to put ring on woman's left
hand and "with this ring I thee
wed, etc."; if double-ring
ceremony, woman does the same
Wedding Prayer: couple kneels
before priest and he prays
Community Wedding Prayer
Joining of Man and Woman: priest
joins the couple's right hands and
says "Whom God hath joined
together let no man put asunder"

Taking of the Chalice: couple
takes the sacred chalice and man
offers drink of wine to woman; she
does so to man

Blessing by Priest: priest adds
blessing, turns the couple to the
guests, they kiss and leave the
altar; couple departs with hand
maidens and knights following

Sight

Bridal gown: blue (color of purity
then), velvet, low cut; veil (protect
bride from evil eye, after
Crusades); headpiece of flowers-
orange blossoms; blue garter
Bride's richly curling hair long and
thick down her back, with flowers
twined together into a crown on
her brow

Bridal bouquet: for pleasant smells
castle inhabitants stand outside the
church waiting.

dancing
feasting and consumption of ale
groom in bright blue tunic
priest will arrange groom and his
man on the chapel steps to wait for
the father to bring the bride from
the keep.

scores of trestle tables laden with
food and ale

Wedding Feast

ale, mead, wine
capons and pigeons
gilded and slivered whole calves'
heads
ham, roasted suckling pigs
pastries
roast partridge and sauce
whole roast sheep
wild boar

Smells

roasted hare and pork

Sounds

array of Latin words in ceremony
loud, riotous cheering from all his
people
yells and howls of glee

BEDDING

Sight

Bloodied sheet from
consummation hung on stair rail as
proof of her innocence
breaching a veil (breaking hymen)
Candle flickered in bedchamber
group of singing men will bring
him in, surround him and strip him
with little care for his clothes.

Then they will put him naked in
bed as well.

Her nerves will be stretched taut as
she contemplates the night ahead.
linens and blankets
maiden's veil (hymen)
master's bedchamber
sheathing his sword in the woman
The entire castle knows what will
happen that night. They would all

Medieval Setting Descriptions

be sitting below stairs, continuing to drink and the men will make ribald jokes about what they are getting up to.

The women (her maids) will bring her above stairs, strip her, bathe her, and put her naked in the bed. While the linen and furs are briefly pulled back to put him in bed, the men will take a good gander at her. wielding cock like a sword
Women remove bride's clothes and place her in the master's big bed.

Sounds

door crash open as riotous singing, drunken men bring groom inside drinking and ribald jokes down in great hall
women giggling and offering advice to bride

COTTAGE

Sight

dark and smoky
earth floor covered with straw
hearth fire
holes in walls for windows, no glass
roof space stored hay
thatched
timber frame filled with "wattle and daub" (mixture of mud, straw, and animal hair)
tiny
two rooms (one for family, one for animals)

Sounds

door squeaked open