

**Lords and Ladies Text 1: “Castle Life”**

Supported by the labor and taxes of the peasants, the lord and his wife would seem to have had a comfortable life. In many ways they did, even though they lacked many of the comforts of modern society.

The lords owned large self-sufficient estates called manors, which included the land worked by the serfs. The manor houses, where the lords lived, were often protected with defensive works. About the 12th century these palisaded, fortified manorial dwellings began to give way to stone castles. Some of these, with their great outer walls and courtyard buildings, covered perhaps 15 acres and were built for defensive warfare.

At dawn the watchman atop the donjon (main tower) blew a blast on his bugle to awaken the castle. After breakfast the nobles attended mass in the castle chapel. The lord then took up his business. He might first have heard the report of an estate manager. If a discontented or ill-treated serf had fled, doubtless the lord would order retainers to bring him back—for serfs were bound to the lord unless they could evade him for a year and a day. The lord would also hear the petty offenses of peasants and fine the culprits or perhaps sentence them to a day in the pillory (a wooden frame that secured a person’s head and arms, causing physical discomfort and exposing the person to public ridicule and abuse). Serious deeds, such as poaching or murder, were legal matters for the local court or royal “circuit” court. (See below “Crime and Punishment.”)

The lady of the castle, or chatelaine, had many duties. She inspected the work of her large staff of servants. She saw that her spinners, weavers, and embroiderers furnished clothes for the castle and rich vestments for the clergy. She and her ladies also helped to train the pages, well-born boys who came to live in the castle at the age of seven. For seven years pages were schooled in religion, music, dancing, riding, hunting, and some reading, writing, and arithmetic. At the age of 14 they became squires.

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<b>Lords and Ladies Text 1: “Castle Life” Glossary</b>	
<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
self-sufficient	provide for themselves without needing help from others
palisaded	surrounded by a fence or wall made from wooden stakes
vestments	clothes worn by people in the church