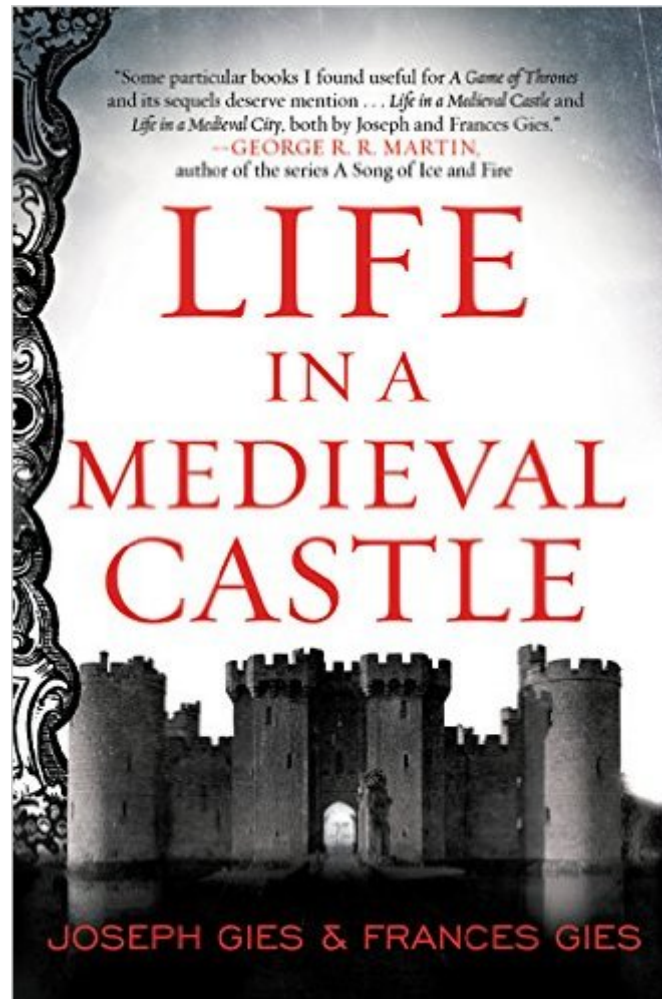


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# Life In A Medieval Castle (P.S. (Paperback))



## Synopsis

"Some particular books I found useful for A Game of Thrones and its sequels deserve mention... Life in a Medieval Castle and Life in a Medieval City, both by Joseph and Frances Gies." — George R.R. Martin, author of the series A Song of Ice and Fire

Medieval history comes alive in Joseph and Frances Gies's *Life in a Medieval Castle*, used as a research resource by George R. R. Martin in creating the world of *A Game of Thrones*. Newly reissued for the first time in decades, *Life in a Medieval Castle* is the bestselling classic that has introduced countless readers to the wonders of the Middle Ages. Focusing on a castle called Chepstow on the border between England and Wales, acclaimed Medievalists Joseph and Frances Gies offer an exquisite portrait of what day-to-day life was actually like during the era, and of the key role the castle played. The Gieses write eloquently about the many people whose lives revolved around the castle, from the lord and lady to the commoners of the surrounding village. We discover what lords and serfs alike would have worn, eaten, and done for leisure; the songs sung; and the codes of sexual conduct that maintained order. We learn of the essential role of honor in medieval culture, the initiation process undertaken by knights, and how castles attempted to keep the constant threats of outside violence at bay. Exhaustively researched and as engaging as any novel, *Life in a Medieval Castle* is the definitive text for anyone wishing to learn more about this fascinating era.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This short book on life in a medieval castle centers around the history of one fortress on the border between England and Wales, and then relates that story to castles across Western Europe. The

passages are divided into chapters on all facets of castle life, and are written in a clear, almost "novel" like way. Some of the facts presented are well-known, but there were enough fresh tidbits and interesting anecdotes that I never found myself bored. In addition, at the end of the book, is a list of historically important castles, ranging in construction from the 9th century to the 15th century, that can be useful if the reader is planning a trip to England, France, Spain or elsewhere in Europe. All in all, an entertaining and well written book.

As a 17 year old freshman, I expected to have to force my way through the assigned chapters of what I expected to be a mega-boring dose of medieval torture. I was delighted enough to read the whole book in a weekend, and have picked it, and its sequels (which were not required reading), up again and again throughout the years. What makes it unique is that its painstaking research is concisely and vividly presented, focusing on specific people within the strata of life within a medieval castle. It doesn't glorify, get bogged down in details, pity or condescend to its subject. There's dirt, disease and war along with everyday chores, pastimes, dining and amusement. It's a must read for anyone interested in an accurate and unembellished picture of the gamut of medieval society. I'm glad to see that it is still in print.

Researching? Expanding your horizons just for kicks? This book is excellent by either account. Perhaps what I appreciated most about this book was that it covered a little bit of everything - from history to architecture to military engagements to domestic uses to the people who actually lived in castles. Castles really come to life in this book - as well as the people housed within. There's enough detail in here to satisfy the researcher - but the prose moves along at a trim pace so you won't get bogged down. If you're interested in a specific facet of castles or castle life, you may have to supplement your knowledge elsewhere, but this is a fine overview of castles and their history.

Life in a Medieval Castle is absolutely masterful! Extremely well researched, each chapter is a goldmine of information. The work not only offers a wonderful summary of the history of the development of the castle but also gives the reader a real feel for castle life. The text is engaging and very well written. Jargon specific to discussions of feudalism and castles is defined in concise tables at the back of the book. Liberally sprinkled with excellent photographs, the book provides extras, such as a schematic drawing of a castle and words and music to medieval songs (although I did find myself wishing that at least some of the plates could have been in color). The geographical guide to castles is comprehensive and examples are chosen with care. Bibliography is provided for

each chapter for those readers who wish to study certain topics in-depth. Bibliographic selections are authoritative, current and comprehensive. The index is also well done and easy to use. The book is an excellent addition to reading lists for courses on the Middle Ages as well as an enjoyable read for anyone who wishes to learn more about medieval life.

This book is an excellent start in study the workings of a Castle and how everyday life was in Medieval times. The starts with the Castle arriving in England, and then moves into the various aspects of Castle life, the function of the Lord and Lady, the running of a household, how hunting was not a sport, but a means of survival. It goes into how a knight was made, how the Castle function in warfare and then shows why Castles slowly faded away. Excellent work for anyone interested in the topic and a must for Historical writers.

This is an excellent overview of castle life in England from just after the Conquest until decline of the feudal era. It's nicely illustrated with photographs of extant castles and period illustrations. I would definitely recommend this as either a book for the casual reader who might have an interest in medieval social life or a beginning for a more serious study. The authors try to do a fair assesment of such issues as medieval hygeine (where it is all too easy to overwhelm the readers with descriptions of how dirty and disgusting the medieval life would be to modern sensibilities, thus overlooking that there was concern about unpleasant smells from the privy chamber, and how to fix it). The discussion on the duties associated with the feudal relationship is also very clear and readable. I particularly was interested in the mention at several points that physical blows were used as mnemonic aids. The buffet given a squire upon being knight was no mere tap, but many times a hearty blow meant to make him remember his oath of knighthood. Also, beating the bounds was used to teach youngsters where the important landmarks were often by giving them a blow at the site of the landmark, or even bumping them against it. Fascinating look at the medieval ideas about learning-- which does have some effectiveness, epecially in a largely illiterate society, although it would probably be cause for arrest in any state in the US if it was used today. Libraries have been written on any one of the subjects that was mentioned in this book so don't expect it to hold the one answer to any question about medieval life in a castle, but it can't be beat for a clearly written overview.

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