Cadw

History Explorers

Castell Conwy

Quest: Become a Master Medieval Builder



Cadw MINECRAFT EDUCATION Hwb®

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Learning Activity Support Guide: Quest Two - Become a Master Medieval Builder

Learning Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of medieval houses and public buildings.
- Develop an understanding of the structure of the medieval town of Aberconwy.
- Build the medieval town of Aberconwy in Minecraft Education.

Areas of Learning and Experience:

- **Humanities**
  - Enquiry, exploration and investigation inspire curiosity about the world, its past, present and future.
  - Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs.
- **Expressive Arts**
  - Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination.

Cross-curricular skills:

- **Numeracy Framework**
  - Learning about geometry helps us understand shape, space and position, and learning about measurement helps us quantify in the real world.
- **DCF**
  -**Interacting and collaborating:** Communication, collaboration and storing and sharing.
  -**Producing:** Sourcing, searching and planning digital content, creating digital content.

Integral Skills:

- Planning and organising
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Creativity and innovation

Guiding Ideas / Possible questions to ask:

What are the key features of medieval houses/towns?

How will you plan the town?

What are your roles?

Can you explain the features you have included in your town?

Have you had any problems? If so, how did you solve them?

Learning Activity Overview:

Through this quest, learners will delve into the world of James of St. George, a master architect and military engineer. His significant role in designing and constructing some of the most impressive castles in medieval Europe, particularly in Wales under King Edward I, is a testament to his innovative, precise, and strong work. His ability to combine functionality with aesthetic beauty is truly inspiring.

Learners will then develop an understanding of the structure of the medieval town of Aberconwy, its grid plan, monastic roots and the people who would reside there.

After exploring James of St. George's work, learners will be invited to become Master Medieval Builders. They will be motivated by James of St. George's achievements and inspired to apply their creativity and problem-solving skills to their own projects. Their quest? To build the medieval town of Aberconwy in Minecraft Education, a unique and engaging platform that allows their creativity to flourish and their imagination to run wild.

This quest sets an adventurous tone, sparks curiosity about the period's unique architectural style, and encourages a creative mindset.

By engaging in this activity, learners apply concepts from history, art, and even mathematics, fostering a well-rounded educational experience. Furthermore, this hands-on quest not only teaches learners about James of St. George but also allows them to explore their own creativity and architectural skills in a fun and engaging way.

Learning Activity Introduction:

James of St. George was a super-talented builder and designer who helped create some of the coolest castles in medieval Europe, especially in Wales. His castles are famous for being strong and beautiful, showing that you can be both creative and practical at the same time! Learning about his amazing work can inspire you to use your imagination and solve problems in your projects, just like he did!



The learners should interact with the '**Become a Master Medieval Builder** Quest NPC' in the Outer Ward. This NPC is a guide and mentor who provides instructions, feedback, and additional resources throughout the quest.

"You are invited to join King Edward I in building a new town for settlers in Aberconwy! You will need to construct houses, a marketplace, and even a church to create a wonderful community. Your help in planning and building is essential.

Click the buttons below to learn more."

This Quest NPC has three buttons that hyperlink to three different videos.

James of St George

This video briefly introduces James of St Geroge and the impressive architectural legacy he left behind in Wales. He demonstrated his innovation, precision, and strength by combining functionality with aesthetic beauty.

Medieval Builder

This video introduces your young architects and history fans to Aberconwy, founded in 1283 by King Edward I. Learners are taken back in time to discover how Edward built Aberconwy as a fortified town to maintain control over newly conquered lands.

Aberconwy's grid layout, called a "Bastide," was to ensure order and safety. The intersecting streets formed neat blocks, with a central square as a lively marketplace. Before the town, the site housed a monastery, and although Edward moved the monks, he preserved the church for the new residents.

To help populate Conwy, Edward invited settlers, mainly English, to live within the town's secure walls. In the video, learners are asked to build their version of medieval Aberconwy in Minecraft Education, bringing history to life as they recreate its unique layout, strong walls, and a bustling marketplace.

Your Quest

This video outlines the steps the learners should undertake to build successfully Aberconwy in Minecraft Education. Although the steps are broken down, there are three main steps: 1) **Plan the town**, 2) **Build the town**, and 3) **Present and Reflect** on the builds. Invite learners to step into the shoes of James of St. George by planning and building their own town. Here's how you can guide them:

James of St. George:

Link to video of James of St George, which is embedded in the Cadw Cymru Minecraft World

When learners have watched the first video that briefly introduces James of St. George and the castles he designed, such as the Conwy castle, ensure you discuss and highlight how he considered both defence and daily life needs in his designs.

You may want to share images of other examples of his work, such as Caernarfon and Harlech castles, with the learners to highlight his unique designs.

Share other fun facts about James of St. George:

- Regarded as one of the most forward-thinking and influential architects of the medieval period
- James of St. George's father, John, was himself an architect mason, which would likely have been a driving factor in James taking up that line of work.
- Much of his architectural work was groundbreaking for the period he lived in. For example, he was one of the first architects to construct castles, particularly their royal apartments or accommodation on a large, palatial scale.
- In the centuries prior, castles were typically uncomfortable buildings to live in, at least by modern standards. Usually cold, dimly lit, dank, dark, and dreary, castles were primarily valued for their practical, defensive functions, though, naturally, living conditions in castles would be considerably better than what the average peasant experienced in their day-to-day lives. However, James of St. George's approach to castle building completely transformed the function of these buildings and the expectations people had of them. He pioneered the concept of the castle as an enormous structure with lavish, comfortable apartments for their monarchs or lords.
- As a result, James of St. George's castles were often extravagantly expensive. He developed something of a reputation for this! Despite the cost associated with fulfilling James' designs, he was also known to have carried out his work as frugally as possible, keeping a close eye on any expenditure and ensuring that none of his budgets went to waste.

Medieval Builder:

Link to video of Medieval Builder, which is embedded in the Cadw Cymru Minecraft World

When learners have watched the second video, discuss the key features of medieval towns, including walls for protection, a central market square, homes, and public buildings like churches.

Before moving on to building in Minecraft, discuss and highlight with the learners the different parts of a medieval house and the different styles.

Medieval houses varied in style according to their location and the wealth of their owners. Most of them were most likely built with a timber frame and had two floors. The second floor usually had an overhang, even when these were technically forbidden because they decreased air circulation and increased fire risk.

The Ground Floor of a Medieval House

The ground floor of a medieval house was frequently used to:

- Have a shop,
- Keep livestock, or
- Practise a profession.

The First Floor of a Medieval House

The first floor of a medieval house could have:

- A hallway, the biggest and the most prestigious.
- A chamber to sleep in,
- A kitchen,
- A living room, etc.

The living room was where most indoor activities took place. A fireplace in the wall usually separated this room from the kitchen, which could generally be accessed from the kitchen, making it easier to maintain. The living room was usually the only room to be heated and sometimes the only one with windows facing the street. The furniture mainly consisted of a central table with chairs, benches, and chests with cushions. Many medieval living rooms were decorated with wooden panelling.

The second floor sometimes had a pergola or a roofed passage with a staircase to the courtyard or the street.

In the later medieval period, houses could be made of brick, although most were still half-timbered because they were cheaper (some of these still exist today and are commonly referred to as Tudor houses). They had chimneys, the roofs were tiled, and the windows had glass.

The Medieval Peasant House

In the early medieval period, peasant houses were probably made of straw and sticks. None have survived, so we can only guess. Their simplicity was because most people couldn't afford to pay someone to build them.

In the later medieval period, particularly after the Black Death of 1384, which killed many of the population, there weren't enough people to work in the fields. Landowners began offering wages for anyone who

would harvest their crops. With more money in their hands, peasants could now afford better housing. Wattle and daub were frequently used, making the houses taller and broader than previously.

Building a Small Medieval House

Building a medieval house was relatively straightforward:

1. Construct a framework out of timber.
2. Fill in the spaces between the timbers with wattle or woven twigs.
3. Daub the twigs with mud.
4. Create a roof using straw.

Your Quest:

Link to video of Your Quest, which is embedded in the Cadw Cymru Minecraft World

When learners have watched the third video, which details their quest to build the medieval Aberconwy in Minecraft Education, it is time to set the scene and organise them to work in a shared world of Cadw Cymru.

Remind the learners that they are tasked with designing a new town for a growing community in the medieval era. Their town needs to be safe, functional, and beautiful, just like the castles and towns James of St. George built.

Again, highlight medieval towns' key features, including protection walls, a central market square, homes, and public buildings like churches. Therefore, the town design should include essential elements such as homes of different sizes, places of work for various occupations, a market square at the heart, and public buildings.

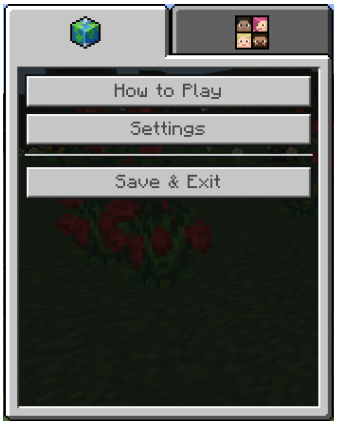
Multiplayer is one of the most popular and effective ways to use Minecraft in the classroom. It's a great way to encourage collaboration, communication, and problem-solving as learners work together on the building project in the shared Minecraft world of Cadw Cymru.

It is advisable that the whole class work on this quest in small groups, in several **Hosted Shared Worlds**, with each group working on various aspects of the planning and building work for their town.

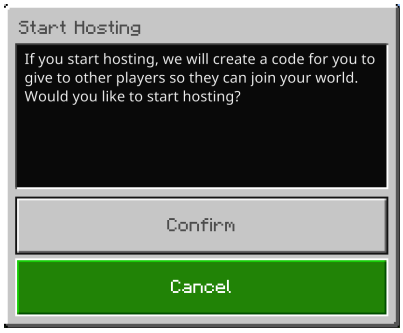
Learners in their group should plan their town; it is sensible to nominate different areas of the town for various group members to build. However, the whole group must agree on the overarching plan, e.g., where the market square should be, the church, etc.

When they are ready to start building, a single learner from each group should be chosen as the '**host'** for the Cadw Cymru World.

Each '**host'** should open the Cadw Cymru World and navigate to Castell Conwy via the Galleri. Once teleported to Castell Conwy, go to where the town would have been situated within the town walls. Then pause the game, and from the **Friends tab,** click Start **Hosting**, then click **Confirm:**







Once confirmed, a picture code will be generated, ready for them to share with their group:



When each learner enters the **Hosted Shared World** via the **Share Link Code,** they will spawn outside the Galleri. They should enter and navigate to Castell Conwy. Once teleported to Castell Conwy, they should go to where the town would have been situated within the town walls to join the '**host**' and other group members.

When the learners enter the area within the town walls of Conwy, they will be in **creative mode,** with access to an infinite number of blocks and items via their inventory. This will allow them to fully embrace their creativity in building their medieval town.

If you have not worked with learners in a Hosted Shared World before, ensure you review How to Set Up a Multiplayer Game on Minecraft Education Support Centre.

Practitioners should encourage learners to go through the following steps:

Planning the Town:

- **Map It Out:** Provide learners with materials like paper and pencils or digital tools to sketch a layout of their town. Encourage them to think about the placement of buildings, roads, and defences. Where will the market square be? How will the town be protected from invaders?
- **Incorporate Creativity:** Suggest adding unique features that reflect their personality or the needs of their imagined inhabitants. For example, a special garden, a grand hall for meetings, or a watchtower with a great view.

Building the Town:

- **Use Models or Digital Tools:** Depending on resources, learners can either build a physical model of their town using materials like cardboard, clay, or LEGO or a simple drawing app before they bring this to life by creating it in Minecraft.
- **Attention to Detail:** Encourage learners to think like architects. How tall should the walls be? What materials would they use for different buildings? How can they make their town both functional and beautiful?

Present:

- Once the towns are built, have each group of learners present their design to the class. They can explain the features they included, how they were inspired by James of St. George, and what challenges they faced during the process.

Plenary / Reflection:

Encourage each group to present their build of Aberconwy to the other groups within the class.

While doing so, encourage learners to reflect on the process. Discuss what they learned about planning and building and how historical inspiration can lead to creative ideas in modern contexts.

Ask the learners if they had any problems, and if so, how they resolved them.

Remind learners they have had to think creatively and solve complex problems, much like a master architect.

Key Vocabulary:

Architect

Engineer

Medieval

Creativity

Problem-solving

Architectural style

Functionality

Aesthetic

Resources / Supporting Files:

- Minecraft Education app installed on devices
- Cadw Cymru Minecraft World

Additional optional resources:

  - Images of James of St Geroge's work, e.g. Caernarfon and Harlech castles.
  - Images/books/web links of images of various medieval houses.
  - Squared paper and coloured pencils.
  - Physical modelling materials, e.g. cardboard, clay, LEGO.