

Extension: Critical Thinking

Name _____

Date _____

Your Turn

Read the following short article about the rise and fall of castles in medieval Europe. Then, in the space below, analyze the information in this article by using one of the strategies and organizers shown on *Inquire* pages 22 and 23.

Castles Rise and Fall in Europe

Often when people think of the Middle Ages, they think of gleaming-white castles, but castles got their start because of desperate times. In the ninth and tenth centuries (A.D. 800-999), most areas of Europe didn't have a strong central government. Local lords, therefore, had to take responsibility for defending the land. They didn't get along with each other and had border clashes, and they also were threatened by Viking and Moorish invaders.

As a result, local lords began to fortify their manor houses. They might have put a thick hedge around their home, or a ring of earth, or even a stone wall. Building a manor on a hilltop and making it of stone also helped. The first castles were born. From the 11th century onward, castles spread throughout Europe and became increasingly more elaborate. They became centers for mounted warriors called knights, who wore plate armor into battle—like portable castles themselves.

But in the 1380s, gunpowder made its way into Europe. At first, it posed little threat to castles and mounted knights because guns were too inaccurate and unreliable to use in war. Arrows and trebuchets worked much better. However, by 1500, cannons were battering down castle walls. New castles were built with rounded edges and angles meant to deflect cannonballs, but castle designs could not keep pace with gunpowder technology. Castles began to fade from use, as did the shining armor that could deflect arrows but not bullets.

Follow-up: Which strategy and organizer did you use to analyze the article? What other strategy could you have used? How do the different strategies affect your analysis of the information?