

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

FALMOUTH'S GREAT FORTRESS



KS1–2

Recommended for

KS1–2 (History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Investigate the geographical position of Pendennis Castle and St Mawes Castle.
- Understand the strategic significance of the position of both castles.
- Understand the significance of both castles in the history of the local area.

Time to complete

20–30 minutes



The Pendennis peninsula.

SUMMARY

This activity will help students understand the geographical and strategic location of Pendennis Castle and St Mawes Castle. Use the activity sheets on the next pages with your students to help them investigate:

- the location of the forts in the Falmouth area
- the shape of the coastline where the forts were built
- the key topographical features surrounding Pendennis Castle

Students can answer the questions about the Ordnance Survey map to explore the shape of the coastline around the Carrick Roads estuary and decide why this was an important place to protect. The estuary was wide and deep and sheltered from the wild weather of the Channel – a good place for enemies to anchor their ships. The estuary reaches far north into Cornwall, helping the enemy mount an invasion on land.

Students can find the position of Pendennis Castle and St Mawes Castle and identify their position in relation to each other. Both castles worked together using crossfire to stop an enemy sailing into the mouth of the Carrick Roads estuary.

The second worksheet explores the topography of the Pendennis peninsula. The rocky shoreline was not a safe place for ships to dock, so the castle guns could aim fire at enemy ships trying to sail past into the safe harbour. The peninsula is long and thin, reaching out from the mainland so the castle could attack ships on their way into the estuary. The ground on the peninsula is high up so the castle has a good view of enemies approaching on the horizon.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Ask students to find the name of a river on the map that feeds the Carrick Roads estuary. Explore the etymology of the word 'Falmouth' meaning the 'mouth' of the River Fal. They could use a map of the coastline to investigate other coastal towns that have similar combinations of words e.g. Portsmouth, Bournemouth and Plymouth. 'Aber' is a very ancient word for 'river mouth' in Cornish and Welsh and the Cornish name for Falmouth is 'Aberfala'.

WHERE ARE PENDENNIS CASTLE AND ST MAWES CASTLE?



- 1 Find** and circle Pendennis Castle and St Mawes Castle on the map.
- 2 Find** and circle the Carrick Roads estuary on the map.
- 3 Why** were two castles built at the entrance to the Carrick Roads estuary?
- 4 Follow** the line of the Carrick Roads estuary with the end of your pencil until you reach the end.
- 5 Why** was protecting the entrance to the Carrick Roads estuary important?

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



Pendennis Castle on the peninsula.

- 1** **Label** the landscape features on the image above.
- 2** **Why** is the peninsula a good place to build a castle?