

Unit 8: Fairy-tale Castle

Narrator: In 19th-century Germany, there lived a young king named Ludwig II. As a boy, Ludwig lived in a castle in the countryside. There, he spent his days listening to stories and operas about brave knights and great kings. Ludwig especially loved the operas written by the great German composer Richard Wagner. These operas would later inspire Ludwig to build a beautiful fairy-tale castle not far from his childhood home. He called the new castle Neuschwanstein Castle. A shy king, Ludwig built Neuschwanstein because he wanted a place where he could relax far away from his busy court.

Neuschwanstein was built to look like a fairy-tale castle, with its tall round towers and high white stone walls. It was built in honor of Richard Wagner. Parts of the castle, like this courtyard, were built to look like stage designs from Wagner's operas. Inside the castle, Ludwig filled rooms with paintings of poets, knights, and kings. In some rooms, he asked for pictures that showed scenes from the Bible, like this one formed out of gold-covered stone.

Sadly, King Ludwig died before his castle was completed. He slept only 11 nights in the castle. Out of 200 rooms, only 14 were finished before his death, and parts of it still remain incomplete to this day.

Neuschwanstein Castle was opened to the public shortly after King Ludwig's death. It is now one of the most visited castles in Europe, with about 1.5 million visitors a year. It also inspired the look of Disneyland's famous Sleeping Beauty Castle.

Although Ludwig II never saw the final Neuschwanstein, his castle has inspired many more happily ever afters.