

Video: Close-up of the destructive power of a 12th-century catapult

What is a Trebuchet? What is the structure of a trebuchet? Let's find out together!

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What is a catapult?

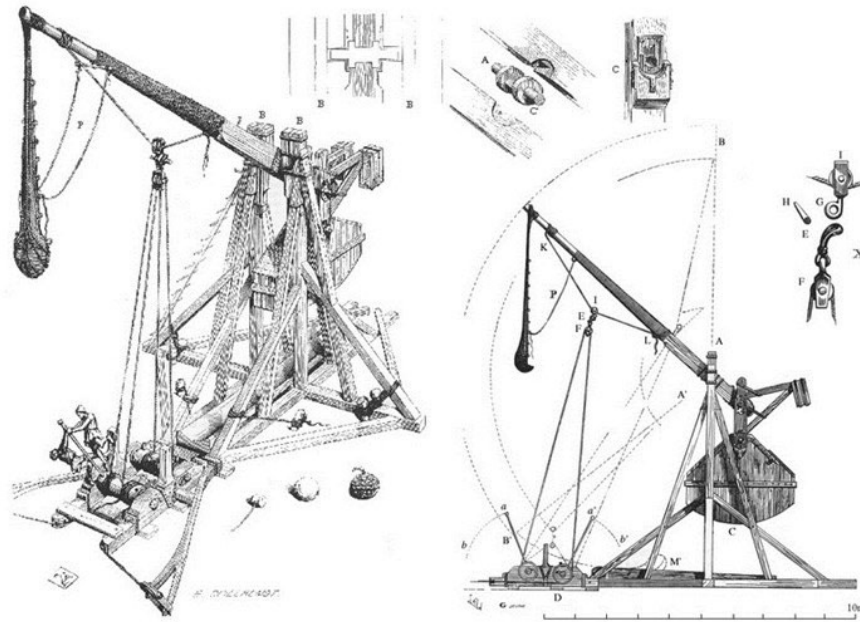
A catapult is a machine used as a weapon to throw rocks or other objects such as hot tar, which can cause damage to other objects. Usually, catapults are placed on higher ground or on castle towers to be able to shoot farther. They shoot rocks to break down castle walls, or shoot regular or hot tar to burn the target.

Catapults used weights and levers to launch rocks or other objects into the air. They did not project as far as modern weapons, and were not useful in modern warfare. Catapults were very common in the past, especially in the Middle Ages.

A catapult typically had two wooden arms attached to a length of rope. The rope was made of human or animal hair. The rope was attached to a winch and pulled backwards, bending the arms backwards.

The trebuchet was a siege weapon that dominated medieval battlefields for several centuries until the advent of gunpowder weapons.

The catapult operates on the mechanical principle of leverage. The structure of the machine consists of a hanging rope, a lever arm and a heavy counterweight. When the lever arm and the hanging rope swing into a vertical position, the bullet at the end of the hanging rope is launched and flies towards the target with terrible force, capable of breaking apart many solid stone walls.



Large catapults can hurl rocks weighing up to 140kg about 300m away. In fact, history has recorded giant machines that can hurl rocks weighing 1.5 tons. With this ability, catapults are extremely dangerous and highly destructive weapons. However, they only truly unleash their terrible destructive power when besieging a city.

In addition to stone bullets, catapults were also used to hurl fireballs at enemy strongholds, playing an important role in many major battles.

A replica of a trebuchet catapult is located in Beckdorf, Lower Saxony, Germany. Weapons expert Mike Loades decided to test the power of this machine. To operate this medieval siege weapon, Mike Loades needed the help of a whole team.

In this test, large wooden stakes were set up as targets. The stone was fired from the machine and hit the target, causing the wooden stakes to collapse like matchsticks. For details on the test of the destructive power of the 12th century catapult, please watch the video below.

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