



# 2025 History Essay Contest

## School 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Winner

### Neuschwanstein Castle and Cologne Cathedral

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Germany is a beautiful country with many interesting historical sites. Germany has an abundance of castles and cathedrals that have historical significance. Among these, two stand out:

Neuschwanstein Castle and Cologne Cathedral. These places are historically fascinating and have many interesting facts.

Neuschwanstein Castle was built by King Ludwig II, an extravagant king who was called “mad” by some. The castle’s original name was New Hohenschwangau, after the castle King Ludwig grew up in. Hohenschwangau translates to “High Swan District.” Neuschwanstein was never finished after King Ludwig's death. There are over 200 rooms in the castle but only 14 are finished. The castle is located in Bavaria near the town of Fussen, which is in the Alps. Neuschwanstein Castle stands on the ruins of two smaller castles, which were cleared to make way for King Ludwig’s vision. During World War II, it was used to store art stolen by the Nazis and it is one of the few castles unharmed by the fighting during the war.

The interior of Neuschwanstein Castle is truly unique. It was one of the first castles to have running water and plumbing and was also one of the first to have phone lines. In addition to these

modern conveniences, it also has a very unique artificial cave. The cave was designed to be an interactive experience with a small waterfall that cascaded into the pool. Neuschwanstein is decorated throughout with Romanesque designs that were drawn by scene painter Christian Jank and turned into architectural designs by Eduard Riedel. The elaborate bedroom of the king is decorated with his family's coat of arms, which has a swan on it. He also had an oratory, a small chapel, built next to his bedroom.

North of Neuschwanstein is the next interesting historical place in Germany, Cologne Cathedral. Construction for this cathedral began in 1248 and ended in 1880, lasting 632 years. Cologne Cathedral is the largest gothic cathedral in Northern Germany. It is considered "sui generis" which is Latin for "of its own kind." It has the largest amount of windows in any European 14th century building. The oldest of these stained glass windows was constructed in the 13th century. Cologne Cathedral has the tombs of 12 archbishops from 976-1612. Cologne Cathedral holds the Gero Crucifix in the Chapel of the Holy Cross, which was transferred from the Pre-Romanesque predecessor of the current cathedral. This crucifix is the earliest known Western depiction of Christ on the cross while dead.

Inside the cathedral is a massive gold shrine of the Three Kings, containing supposed relics of the Magi who met the infant Jesus. It was constructed by Nicholas of Verdun. Construction for the shrine began in 1182, ending in 1220, lasting 38 years. Also inside Cologne Cathedral is the altarpiece in the Lady Chapel, which is entitled The Adoration of the Magi. This altar was made by Stefan Lochner.

During the French Revolution, in the 1790s, French troops used the cathedral as a stable and a hay barn. It would not be the last time the cathedral was affected by war. In 1944, the cathedral was badly damaged by allied air raids but the windows had already been removed and therefore survived the attacks. The choir was restored and in use by 1948, and the rest of the interior was restored by 1956. The restoration of the stonework began in the late 20th century.

Because of their long and special histories, Neuschwanstein Castle and Cologne Cathedral are two fascinating places. Neuschwanstein Castle has unique architecture brought to life by a "mad king," while Cologne Cathedral has many beautiful historic windows and Catholic shrines. Although these two sites will always be very important historically, both the castle and the cathedral can be visited and toured to this day. By standing the test of time, Neuschwanstein Castle and Cologne Cathedral are two interesting historical places in Germany.

# Bibliography

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