

England before 1066: what was it like?

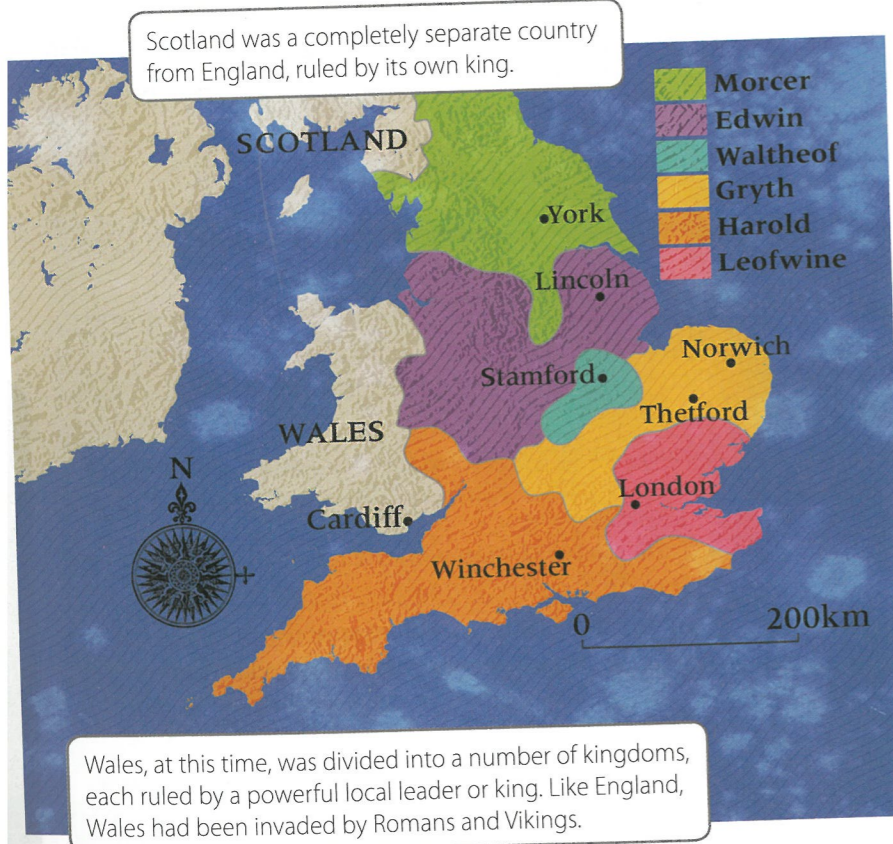
Imagine this: a foreign army invades England. The invaders kill the English King – and replace him with their own king. Most English people with important jobs have their jobs taken by the invaders. Land is taken from the English people who own it and given to the friends of the new foreign king. The new rulers treat the English like slaves and punish them if they object or don't follow the new rules. Most old English buildings are pulled down and replaced by new ones built by the invaders. Finally, the invaders introduce a new language.

Mission Objectives

- Find out how England got its name.
- Investigate what eleventh-century England was like.
- Identify who ruled England in the years up to 1066.

Surely this could never happen! Surely this has never happened! Well it did in 1066, when an army from Normandy (an area in northern France) invaded England. Not all of the things listed above happened straight away, but they definitely happened within a few years. Indeed, after 1066, England was never the same again.

But in order to understand just how amazing the changes were, and the dramatic impact they had on England, we first need to look at what England, Scotland and Wales were like before 1066.



SOURCE A: Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042–1066 is shown being crowned in this manuscript from the 1250s.

SOURCE B: A map showing the eight largest towns in England in 1066. The key also shows the names of King Edward's earls and the areas they helped him run.

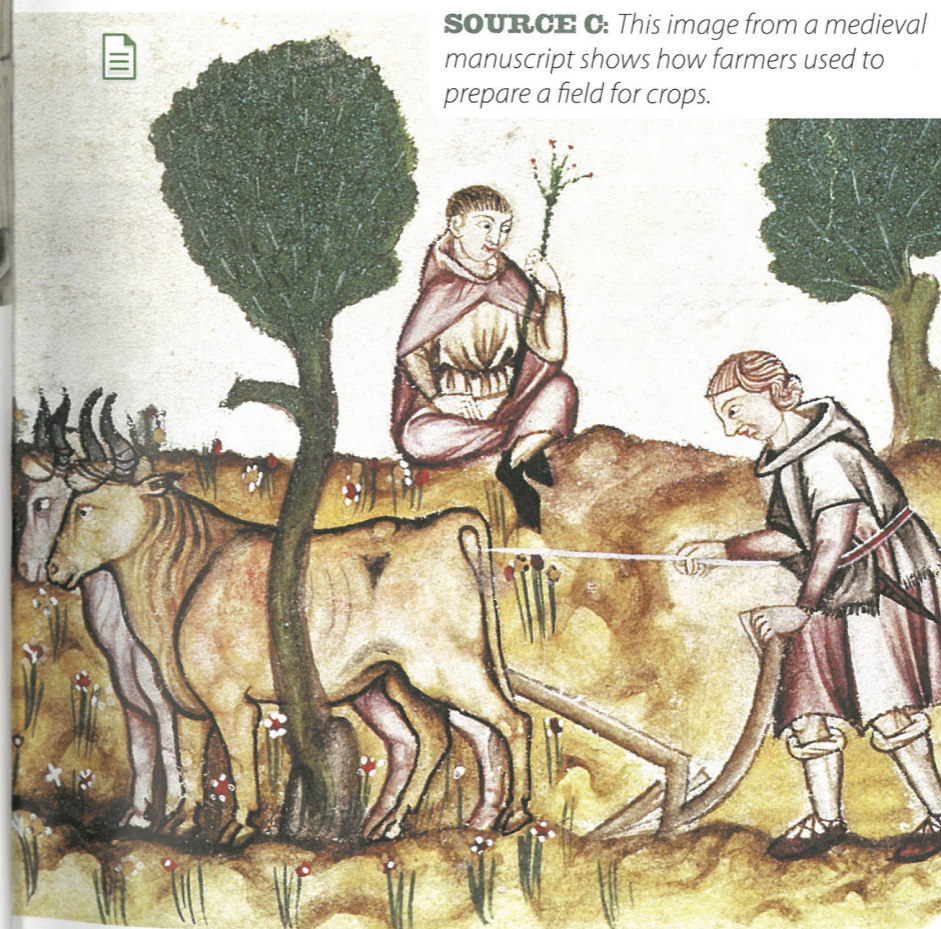
Who ruled?

By 1065, England was a country that contained quite a mixture of different groups whose ancestors came from all sorts of different places. However, despite occasional tensions between rival groups, England was peacefully united under one king – a man named Edward! (see **Source A**).

King Edward was helped in his role by lots of different people. Some were from rich, important families who looked after an area of England called an **earldom** (see **Source B**). But King Edward also took advice from some friends he had in an area of France called Normandy. Edward's mother was from Normandy and he'd spent lots of time there after Vikings had invaded and taken over large parts of England when he was young.

So how many people were there?

The population of the whole of England was about 1.5 million people. Nearly everybody worked as farmers on land that had been cleared but much of England was still covered by forests. People lived in small villages and probably spent most of their lives there. There were few towns – only about 15 with more than 1000 people living there. And only eight towns had a population of more than 3000 (see **Source B**).



SOURCE C: This image from a medieval manuscript shows how farmers used to prepare a field for crops.

Wise Up Words

chronicle earldom evidence

'The English wore short garments, reaching to the knees. They had short hair, their beards shaven; their arms covered with gold bracelets; their skin covered with pictured designs. Drinking parties were common and they drank until they were sick. Drunkenness weakens the human mind and they often fought with fury rather than with military skill.'

SOURCE D: A description of the English by a monk in 1130.

Work

- Who ruled England in 1065?
 - Who helped him rule?
- Write a sentence or two about how Wales and Scotland were ruled at this time.
- Read **Source D**.
 - How does the person who wrote the source describe the English?
 - Do you think the writer liked the English? Give reasons for your answer.

How rich was England?

The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. Out of every 100 people, about two were rich. They made their money from the land they owned (because people paid them rent to live on it) or from trading in all sorts of goods, some of which are shown in **Source A**. Some men made so much money they built fabulous homes and churches and lived in luxury. By contrast, life was very hard for the poor. Each family had to grow its own food – and there were no shops like today where we can buy more if we run out. If the harvest was bad, a family might have to eat roots, leaves, wild berries, and any creatures they could catch.

FACT!
Imagine your life being threatened by a graze or cut! People often died of small wounds and infections because there were few medicines.

SOURCE A: This map shows the goods produced in medieval Britain and where they came from.

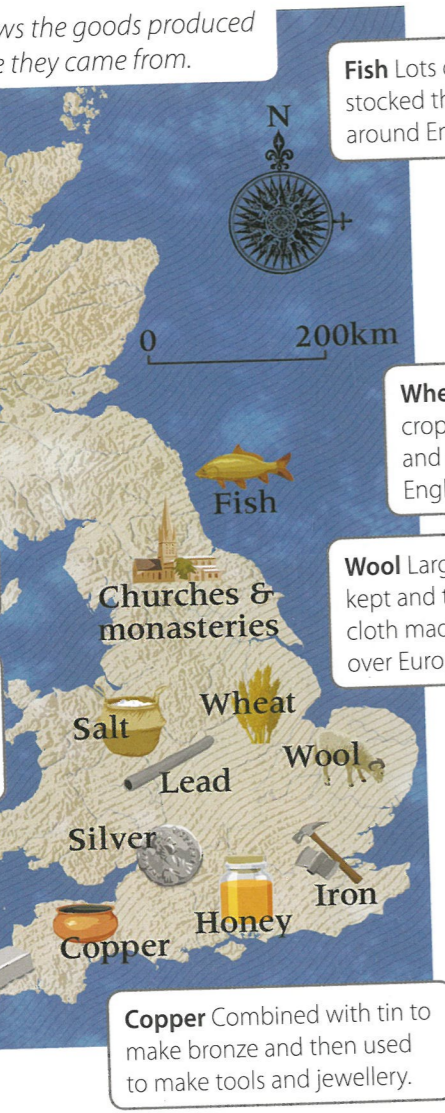
Churches and monasteries
Full of jewels and other valuable items, they were also centres of learning where monks wrote about famous historical events.

Salt
Cheshire's salt mines supplied vast quantities of salt, which was used to preserve food.

Lead
Valuable metal, used by the Romans to make pipes.

Silver
A precious metal, mined in several places in England. Millions of silver coins were used for trade.

Tin
Cornwall's tin mines are said to be one of the main reasons why the Romans invaded Britain! By 1066, England supplied most of Europe's tin.



Fish
Lots of fish stocked the seas around England.

Wheat
Wheat and other crops such as barley and oats were grown on England's fertile land.

Wool
Large flocks of sheep were kept and their wool and the cloth made from it were sold all over Europe.

Iron
Used to make tools and weapons.

Honey
Produced all over the country, it was used as a medicine, an ingredient in beer and as a sweetener.

Copper
Combined with tin to make bronze and then used to make tools and jewellery.



SOURCE B: Anglo-Saxon coins. The money system in 1066 was used in England until 1971. The currency was pounds (£), shillings (s) and pence (d). There were 12d in a shilling and 20s in a pound.



SOURCE C: A page from a monk's chronicle.

Were people religious?

The simple answer is 'yes'. Everyone was a Christian and went to church. In monasteries (large buildings where monks lived) monks kept huge official diaries called **chronicles**. They wrote about religion, politics, history, towns, kings, gossip, and even the weather.

How do we know all this?

We certainly don't know everything about England at this time. However, we know enough to give us a good idea about what life was like. We can look at a number of different sources from the time, which allows us to build up a picture of everyday life – paintings, churches and other buildings, coins, weapons, drawings, jewellery, and books written at the time (see **Source C**). These sources are **evidence** of life in England in 1066.



SOURCE D: The Anglo-Saxon church of St Laurence at Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire. As you can see, the church is very strong and may have been used as a fortress in times of trouble.

Work

1 Use the information on these two pages to match up the start of each sentence (**List A**) with the correct ending (**List B**).

LIST A

- At this time everyone was...
- Monks often kept a record of important events...
- England was well known in Europe for its natural resources such as...
- Most people were poor and...
- There were some rich people who made their money by...

LIST B

- ... renting out their land or by trading goods.
- ... tin, cloth, silver, and lead.
- ... Christian and went to church.
- ... in books called 'chronicles'.
- ... grew their own food.

2 Look at **Source A**.

- What does the map show?
- Do you think this map helps show why so many different groups invaded England over the years? Give reasons for your answer.

3 Use pages 16 to 19 to write your own fact file about England in 1066. You should use ten sentences to write ten different facts.

4 Some written sources in this book were written by chroniclers. These were men who wrote chronicles from their own point of view. They wrote about what they believed and felt, rather than what they actually saw. Why is it important to know this when studying history?

Who will be the next King of England?

1066 is probably the most famous year in British history. Many of you will have heard of it even though you haven't studied it yet. 1066 is so well known because it was the last time England was invaded and taken over by a foreign power. The English king and his followers were killed and the country was divided up between the new invaders. England's language, rulers and way of life changed forever. What a year!

Mission Objectives

- Compare the three different men who wanted to be King of England in 1066.
- Assess the three contenders and judge who had the best claim to the throne.

The Englishman

Name: Harold Godwinson

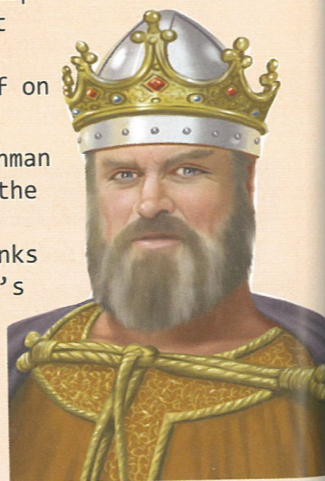
Position: Earl of Wessex, one of the most powerful men in England.

Family history: His father, Godwin, argued a lot with King Edward. At one time Harold and his father were banished from England, but they returned a year later.

Links to King Edward: Harold's sister was married to King Edward.

Was he tough enough? Harold was a brave and respected soldier with a tough streak. In 1063, King Edward sent Harold to crush a Welsh uprising. The Welsh leader was caught and his head was chopped off on Harold's orders.

Support for his claim: He was the only Englishman claiming the throne. The Witan, a meeting of the most important bishops and nobles in England, wanted Harold to be the next king. English monks wrote: 'Harold and his brothers were the king's favourites... on his deathbed that wise king promised the kingdom to Harold.'



The old king dies...

In January 1066, Edward the Confessor, King of England, died. He was 62 years old and left no children behind. There was no clear **heir** to the throne. However, three men believed that they should be England's next king – and they were ready to use their armies to get their hands on the crown! Read through the fact files on each contender for Edward's crown.

The Norman

Name: William of Normandy

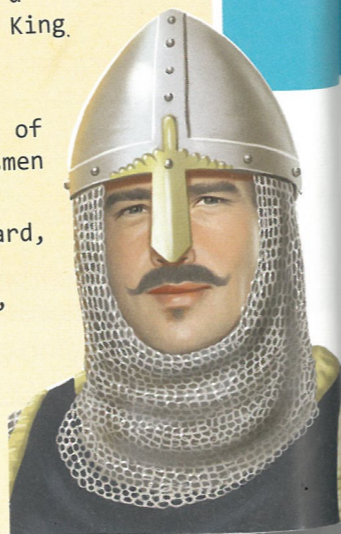
Position: Duke of Normandy, the strongest part of France.

Family history: William came from a fighting family. He had been in control of Normandy since he was a young boy and was used to having to fight to keep his lands.

Links to King Edward: Edward had lived in Normandy from 1016 to 1041. When Edward returned to England to be king, William sent soldiers to help him. As a result, King Edward had promised William the throne in 1051.

Was he tough enough? His nickname was 'William the Bastard' because his father wasn't married to his mother. In 1047, people from the town of Alençon made fun of his mother's family. William captured the town and ordered that 30 of the townsmen be skinned alive.

Support for his claim: According to William of Poitiers, a **Norman** writer, 'Edward, king of the English, loved William like a brother or son... so he decided that William should be the next king.' Harold Godwinson had visited William in 1064, and may have told him this news and promised to support William's claim to the English crown.



The Viking

Name: Harald Hardrada

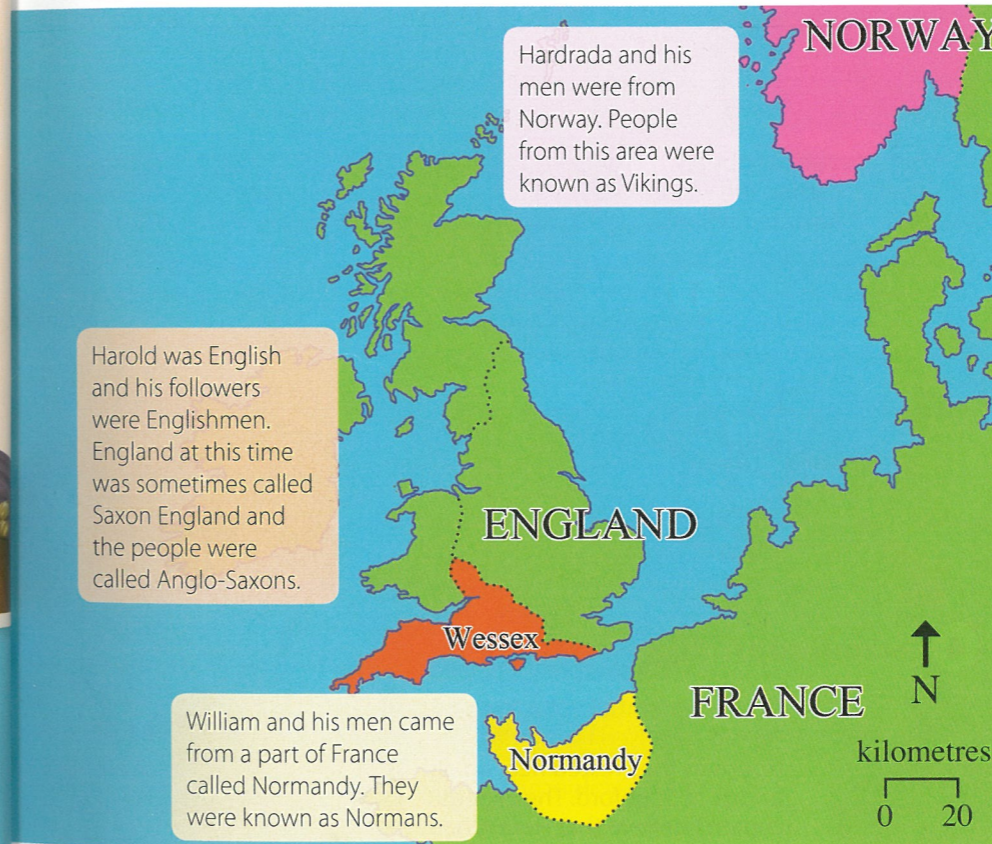
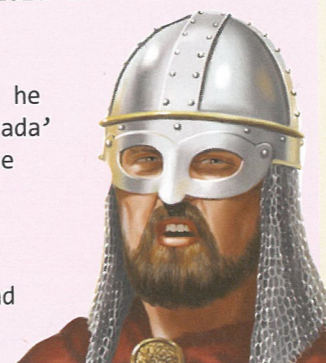
Position: King of Norway

Family history: He had fought alongside several Norwegian and foreign kings and had taken part in raids on the English coast. When he became King of Norway, he began to plan a full-scale invasion of England.

Links to King Edward: None – but a **Viking** called Canute had ruled Norway and England from 1016 to 1035.

Was he tough enough? He was the most feared warrior in Europe – tough, bloodthirsty and he enjoyed watching his enemies suffer. 'Hardrada' means 'hard ruler' and his nickname was 'the Ruthless'.

Support for his claim: Harald's claim was supported by Tostig, Harold Godwinson's brother. The two brothers had fallen out and Tostig wanted revenge.



Wise Up Words

heir Norman Viking

Work

Now you have read about the three contenders for the throne, you must decide who you think had the best claim (reason to be king).

- 1 Copy and complete the following table. Try to include as many reasons as possible.

Contender	Why they should be king	Why they shouldn't be king
Harold Godwinson		
Harald Hardrada		
William of Normandy		

- 2 **a** List the three contenders in order of who you think had the strongest claim. Label your first choice 'strongest' and your last choice 'weakest'.
b In your own words, explain why you placed the three contenders in the order you have chosen.
- 3 Divide into groups. Each group should choose a contender (perhaps pull a name out of a hat!) for the English crown. Design a poster that will convince people that your contender should be king... and that the other two shouldn't!

Round 1: the Battle of Stamford Bridge

For nine months, King Harold of England sat nervously on his throne, waiting for his rivals to make a move for his crown. In September 1066 his wait was over. Hardrada, King of Norway, had landed near York in the north of England and he wasn't leaving until the crown was his. With him was Harold's younger brother, Tostig. Oh, and about 10,000 bloodthirsty Vikings!

Firstly, look at the map below to see how King Harold reacted to the news that Hardrada had landed... and then look through the cartoon on the right-hand page to see what happened when the two sides fought each other.

Mission Objectives

- Identify the contenders for the English throne who fought at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.
- Evaluate the physical and mental condition of the winning side at the end of the battle.



What might have happened at Stamford Bridge?

1 It is early morning... Wake up, wake up! King Harold is here!

2 The battle starts badly for Hardrada's men. Some have left their armour several miles away. I've killed 40 Englishmen with my mighty axe!

3 However, Hardrada's men soon gain control. One brave Viking blocks the bridge so the English can't reach the Vikings. Where did you leave your chain mail? Near the boats... sorry!

4 With no way over the bridge, Hardrada's army fight Harold's men to a standstill. But some of Harold's men come up with a plan. Quick! Let's attack the Vikings while we have the chance! Hurry - some have no armour.

5 After an hour, King Harold's men try to stop the warrior on the bridge. I'll try! Arghhh!

6 The Viking is killed and the English can get across the bridge. Our great King of Norway is dead!

7 By midday King Harold's army is in control. Hardrada is killed, but the Vikings fight on.

8 Later on, Tostig is found and cut into pieces. Cut him up! Kill him!

9 King Harold is the winner. They only need 24 ships to take their battered army home to Norway!

10 Out of respect, Harold buries his dead brother in York. But bad news arrives... You'll have to fight again so my Lord. William of Normandy has landed near Hastings.

Work

- 1 a** What is meant by the term 'chronological order'?
- b** Put the following events in the correct chronological order.
- King Harold marches north to fight the Vikings.
 - The two sides fight at Stamford Bridge.
 - Hardrada and Tostig are killed. King Harold wins.
 - The Vikings arrive in England and seize control of land in the north.
 - King Harold hears that William of Normandy has landed near Hastings.
- 2** Write out the following statements, starting with the one that you think was most important in helping Harold win the Battle of Stamford Bridge.
- Hardrada was killed quite early in the battle.
 - The Vikings were caught unprepared and without armour.
 - The Viking blocking the bridge was killed.
- Now, writing in full sentences and using capital letters and full stops, explain why you have put the statements in the order you have.

Harold's Housecarls

(CURRENT CHAMPIONS)

William's Knights

(THE CHALLENGERS)



DATE: 14 OCTOBER 1066

VENUE: SENLAC HILL, NEAR HASTINGS

KICK OFF: 9.30 AM

Hello and welcome to the town of Hastings. This is the one we've all been waiting over ten months for – the day of the battle is finally here. Here's the English line-up. It's been a tough few weeks for the English boys, despite last month's stunning victory at Stamford Bridge. The weary English have travelled 280 miles, or 450km, in nine days to meet their next opponents.

Mission Objectives

- Compare the weapons and tactics that were used by William's and Harold's men at the Battle of Hastings.



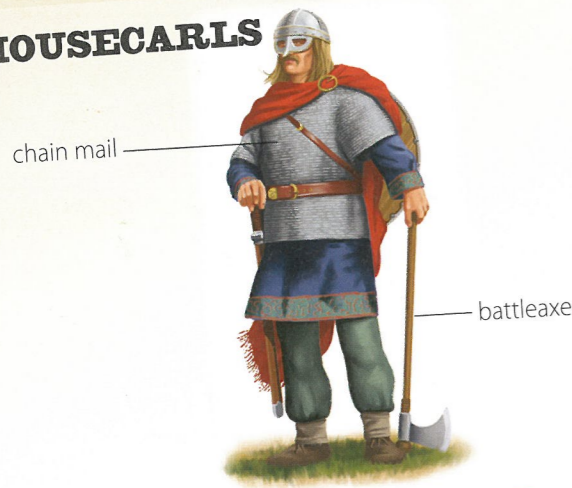
Now let's have a look at the Normans. They've been waiting for this day ever since Harold was crowned in January and they're itching for a fight. William's **invasion** force is massive: it took over 300 ships to transport his 10,000 men and 2000 horses from France. He's even brought a fort separated into pieces with him, so he could build it here quickly! They landed at Pevensey on 28 September and soon moved to Hastings, setting fire to the town to annoy Harold.



Wise Up Words

- battleaxe chain mail fyrd
hauberk housecarl invasion
javelin mace scythe spear

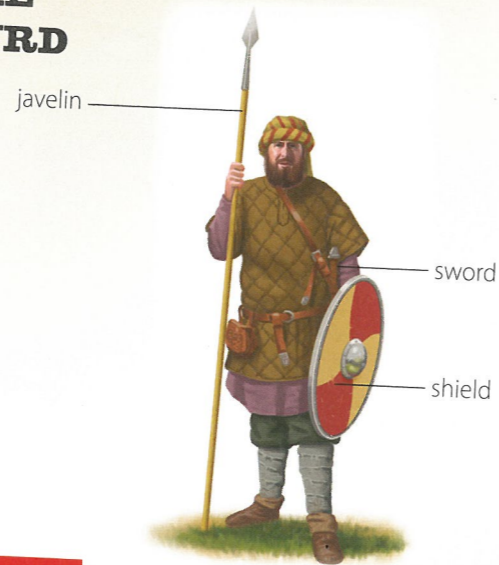
HOUSECARLS



- KILLING POWER: 9/10
- DEFENCE: 9/10
- SPEED: 1/10
- RANGE OF ATTACK: 1/10

The backbone of King Harold's army, there are about 2500 **housecarls** and they are well paid, fully trained and armed with the finest weapons. The favourite weapon of these bearded warriors is the huge **battleaxe**. The handle of the axe is over a metre long and its heavy blade is made of razor-sharp iron – a very precious material in 1066. A housecarl with a battleaxe is capable of chopping the head off a horse or cutting a man in half with a single blow. Their helmets, **chain mail**, large, round shields, and discipline make them excellent in defence too!

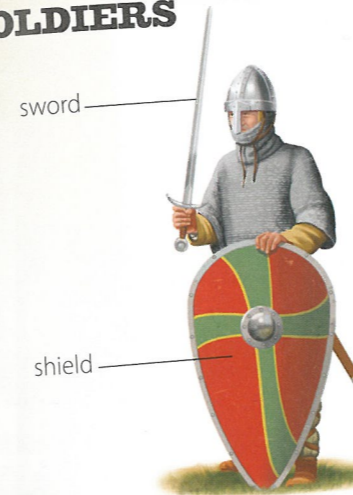
THE FYRD



- KILLING POWER: 3/10
- DEFENCE: 5/10
- SPEED: 3/10
- RANGE OF ATTACK: 3/10

The housecarls are supported by the **fyrd**. This mobile army isn't as experienced or well equipped as the housecarls but it's still a fierce fighting force. The leaders of the fyrd are armed with swords and **javelins** but most of their men use farming tools such as pitchforks and **scythes**. They may not be pretty, but they number over 6000 and they're fighting on their home turf!

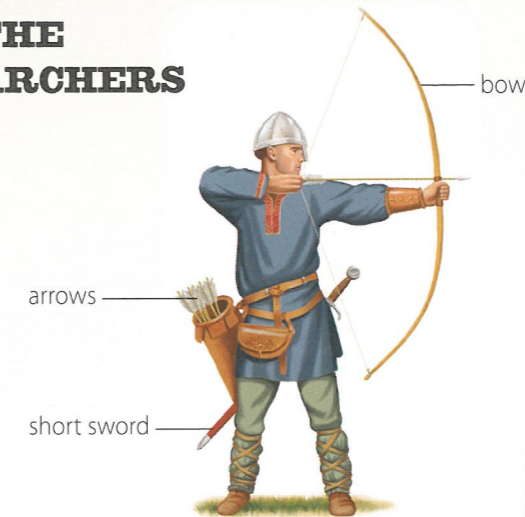
NORMAN FOOT SOLDIERS



- KILLING POWER: 7/10
- DEFENCE: 8/10
- SPEED: 2/10
- RANGE OF ATTACK: 2/10

These form the main part of William's army and are armed with metre-long swords and kite-shaped shields. They attack after the enemy have been softened up by the archers' arrows and charged by the knights.

THE ARCHERS



- KILLING POWER: 4/10
- DEFENCE: 1/10
- SPEED: 4/10
- RANGE OF ATTACK: 2/10

William's 1500 archers are armed with small wooden bows that can fire six or seven arrows a minute. A skilled archer can kill a man from about 180 metres away. Archers have very little, if any, armour and are not much use when the fighting gets up close and personal!

THE KNIGHTS



- KILLING POWER: 8/10
- DEFENCE: 4/10
- SPEED: 10/10
- RANGE OF ATTACK: 8/10

William's best warriors are his 2000 knights: highly trained and fiercely loyal professional soldiers. They ride into battle on big, strong warhorses and are protected by metal helmets, chain mail suits (**hauberks**) and kite-shaped shields. Knights carry **spears** (which can be thrown or used to stab the enemy), a sword or a **mace** (a heavy metal club covered in spikes). Knights charge at full speed towards their opponents, hacking and slashing at the much slower soldiers fighting on foot beneath them.

Work

- Match the words on the left with the correct description on the right:

Housecarl	Rides a horse into battle
Fyrd	A suit of small metal rings sewn together
Archer	Carries a battleaxe
Knight	A housecarl's main weapon
Chain mail	There are 6000 of them in Harold's army
Mace	Can fire six to seven arrows per minute
Battleaxe	A spiked club used by knights
- Find two ways in which William's army is better than Harold's.
 - Find two ways in which Harold's army is better than William's.
- Which army do you think is more likely to win the battle? Give reasons and answer in full sentences.

Round 2: the Battle of Hastings – the morning

The final showdown had arrived. The Battle of Hastings would decide the future of England. King Harold had already defeated Hardrada and his Viking army and now, less than a month later, he and his army were going to have to fight all over again.

Unfortunately for Harold and his men, there had been no time to rest after winning the Battle of Stamford Bridge – they had to march 250 miles to meet William's men! So just where did the two armies face each other? Who made the first move? And which side made the best start to the battle?

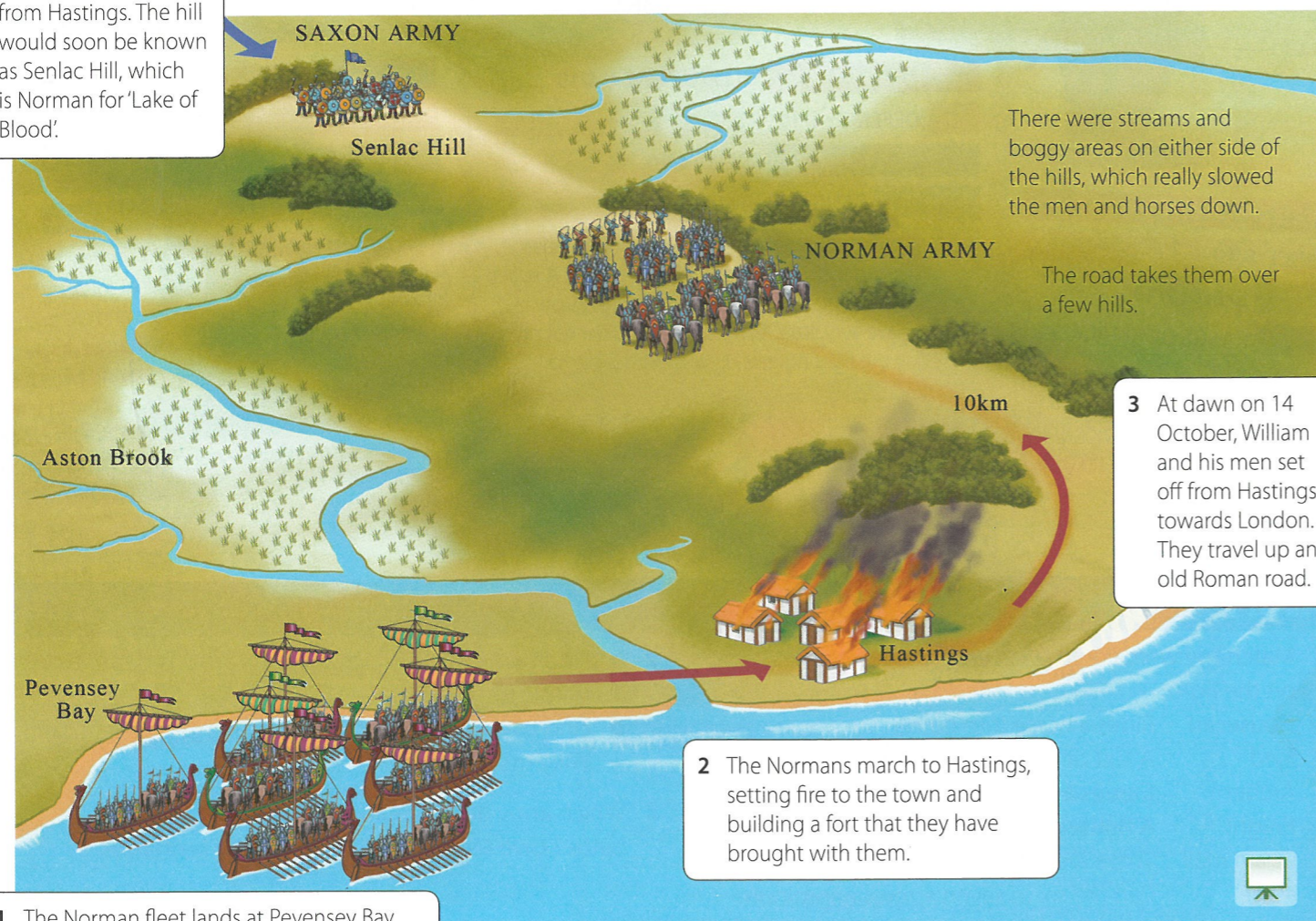
Mission Objectives

- Analyse the tactics used by Harold and William in the battle.
- Judge how each of the armies fought in the early stages of the battle.

4 King Harold sets his army up on a steep hill about five miles from Hastings. The hill would soon be known as Senlac Hill, which is Norman for 'Lake of Blood'.

The battle begins...

Firstly, look at the picture below and read boxes 1 to 4. Then read through the cartoon on the next page to discover what happened during the first few hours of the battle.



1 The Norman fleet lands at Pevensey Bay and William's army comes ashore.

2 The Normans march to Hastings, setting fire to the town and building a fort that they have brought with them.

3 At dawn on 14 October, William and his men set off from Hastings towards London. They travel up an old Roman road.

There were streams and boggy areas on either side of the hills, which really slowed the men and horses down.

The road takes them over a few hills.



1 On 14 October, at around 9:30 in the morning, the Battle of Hastings began. William carried a flag given to him by the Pope. He believed this meant God was on his side. Looking up the steep hill to the English, William ordered his archers to unleash a storm of arrows.



2 Harold's men formed a tight **shield-wall** and hid behind it while the arrows fell amongst them. When the archers stopped firing, the English stood up and started banging their shields and shouting, 'Out! Out! Out!'



3 William decided to send his knights and foot soldiers to smash through the English shield-wall. Unfortunately for William, the steep hill meant his horses couldn't charge quickly. His foot soldiers were absolutely exhausted before they had even started fighting!



4 For over two hours the battle raged. The two sides stood toe-to-toe, hacking, slashing and stabbing viciously at each other. William's men just could not break through the wall of English shields that stretched across the hilltop. Then a rumour started to spread that nobody had seen William for half an hour! Had the Norman leader been killed?



5 William wasn't dead and to prove it to his men he galloped amongst them. He lifted his helmet and shouted, 'Look at me! Look at me! I am alive and, with God's help, will be the victor!'

Wise Up Words

Pope shield-wall

Hungry for More?

Imagine you have been asked to produce a film about the Battle of Hastings. Storyboard the trailer, based on the events on these pages.

Work

- 1 Divide your page into two and separate the following list into factors (or reasons) that would help Harold win the battle and factors that might help William win the battle.
 - William's army had been blessed by the Pope.
 - Harold's men had just come from a battle with Hardrada.
 - The housecarls protected Harold's army with a strong shield-wall.
 - William had a large army of 10,000 men.
 - There were streams and boggy areas on both sides of Senlac Hill.
- 2 Write two sentences that explain why Harold placed his soldiers on the top of Senlac Hill.
- 3 Which side do you think is most likely to win the battle in the afternoon? Give reasons for your answer in full sentences.

Round 2: the Battle of Hastings – the afternoon

After a short break in the action, the battle started again at around 12:30pm. But neither side seemed to be winning because the same thing kept happening over and over again – the Normans kept attacking and the English kept beating away the attacks with their shield-wall! At around 3:30pm, William came up with an idea. So what was William's big plan? How was he going to get through that shield-wall? And what did this mean for King Harold?

Mission Objectives

- Evaluate how William won the Battle of Hastings.
- Discover how William went about increasing his power after the battle.

Now read through the cartoons to discover how the Battle of Hastings was finally won.



- 1 William had to get the English off the top of the hill. He ordered some of his soldiers to run away down the hill as if they were **retreating**. The English, thinking they were winning, charged down the hill after the Normans!



- 2 Without the safety of the shield-wall, Harold's men who had run down the hill were quickly cut to pieces by William's knights on horseback.



- 3 William saw this was his chance to win the battle – and the English crown! He hoped that if he kept repeating the trick, the English would keep falling for it. And they did! Gradually, the English shield-wall grew weaker and weaker. William then turned to his archers once more and arrows rained down on Harold's men.



- 4 As the sun set, Harold was killed and the battle was lost. Some said he had been shot in the eye by an arrow before being cut to pieces by some of William's men! William had the body buried at a secret location despite Harold's mother offering her son's weight in gold in exchange for the body.

After the battle

On the night of 14 October 1066, the Normans held a feast to celebrate their victory and stripped the English dead of their weapons and armour. He may have defeated Harold's army, but William didn't rule England yet. Eventually he left the battlefield and marched towards London. William made sure that every town he came across surrendered to him, while more and more soldiers sailed from Normandy to join him. By early December, William had reached London and he was crowned King of England on Christmas Day. From then on he was known as William the **Conqueror**!

The enemy within!

Although there was no danger of William being defeated by an army after Hastings, he was very nearly defeated by **dysentery**. While on the road to London, William's army was struck by agonising stomach cramps and violent diarrhoea. For some it was so bad that they had to return home to France – others died! Fortunately for William, enough remained fit to continue to London.

'Three horses were killed under him. Three times he leapt unafraid to the ground and killed the man who had killed his horse. This shows how quick he was to make his mind up and how strong he was. With savage blows of his sword, he split shields, helmets and coats of chain mail. He struck a number of enemies with his own shield. His soldiers took new courage when they saw him fighting on foot. Some, who were weak from bleeding, leant on their shields and fought on bravely. William himself helped some of his men to safety... He led his forces with great skill, holding them when they turned to run, giving them courage, sharing their danger. He was more often heard shouting to them to follow him than ordering them to go on ahead. It is clear that it was the Duke's bravery that inspired his soldiers as they went forward and gave them courage.'

▲ **SOURCE A:** An account of William fighting in the battle, written around 1073. The man who wrote it wasn't at the battle, but based what he wrote on things he had found out.

Wise Up Words

conqueror dysentery retreating

Work

- 1 Read **Source A**.
 - a Write down five adjectives or phrases that describe William in battle.
 - b Imagine you were one of William's men. Write down what you think of him.
 - c Do you think the source was written by a supporter of William? Explain how you decided.
 - d Can we totally trust what the source says? Explain your answer.
- 2 Read back through the story of the battle. Create a timeline for the battle, starting at 9:30am. Remember to include all the key events and the time they happened.
- 3 Why do you think the Normans stripped the English of all their weapons and armour? How could this help William control the rest of England? Answer in full sentences and use capital letters and full stops.
- 4 You should now know what happened at the Battle of Hastings. It's time to make up your mind – why did William win the battle? Was it:
 - because he was a brilliant and skilful leader?
 - because Harold was a poor soldier who made mistakes?
 - because the Normans were better equipped and prepared?
 - because Harold was unlucky?
 Or was it a combination of all or some of these reasons? You might want to work in groups.

Be a Top Historian

Top historians realize that different people tell different stories about the past depending on their point of view or beliefs. For example, two people would write a slightly different account of the same football match if they each supported a different side!

1.8 How did King Harold die?

Historians (people who study History – like you!) are like detectives who hunt for clues about people and events in history and piece them together. If they find enough evidence, a clear picture emerges and they can start to make conclusions.

Historians already know lots about the events of 1066. Some people wrote about it at the time, others told stories about what happened (which were then written down), and some people created works of art that show it.

But historians have got a problem with the death of King Harold. We definitely know he died at Hastings – he must have done because a new king began ruling

England – but we just don't know *how* he died! The problem is that the sources (pieces of evidence about his death) don't all say the same thing about the way he died. So your task, as a 'History Mystery Detective', is to treat his death like a puzzle. Look through all the evidence and try to piece together how he actually died. At the end of your investigation you will have to come to your own answer to the question: 'How did King Harold die?'

Evidence A

Date 1080

Writer Amatus of Montecassino, a monk from Italy; the first written account of Harold being killed by an arrow in the eye.

'William gouged out Harold's eye with an arrow.'

Evidence B

Date 1067

Writer Guy of Amiens, a medieval writer from France

'With the point of his **lance** the first knight pierced Harold's chest, drenching the ground with blood. With his sword the second knight cut off his head. The third disembowelled him with his javelin. The fourth hacked off his leg.'

Evidence C

Date 1070

Writer William of Jumièges, a Norman monk. He claims he was at the battle. His **abbey** was given money by William the Conqueror.

'Duke William engaged the enemy at the third hour [about 9am] and continued until nightfall. Harold fell in the first shock of battle, pierced with lethal wounds.'

Evidence D

Date 1077

Made Probably made in England on the orders of Bishop Odo, King William's half-brother. Odo was at the Battle of Hastings.

This is one of the most famous pictures in British history. It is one of 72 pictures that make up a 70-metre-long piece of embroidered cloth called the Bayeux Tapestry. The scene shows two English soldiers – one with an arrow in his eye and another being cut down by a Norman on horseback. Above the picture, over both men, is written 'Hic Harold Rex Interfectus Est', which means 'Here King Harold has been killed'. But which soldier is meant to be Harold?



Evidence E

Date 1130

Writer William of Malmesbury, a monk. Historians believe this source was written after he had seen the Bayeux Tapestry.

'Harold continued; but when he fell, from having his brain pierced with an arrow... he yielded to death... one of the soldiers with a sword gashed his thigh as he lay.'

Evidence G

Date 1729

Artist Bernard de Montfaucon, a French monk

A fascinating image, engraved by Montfaucon after seeing a drawing of the Bayeux Tapestry in 1729. You might notice that there is no arrow in Harold's eye, but a dotted line instead. This is another mystery! Did the monk forget to draw the arrow? Or wasn't there an arrow when he saw the tapestry? Was it a lance or javelin instead? Could the arrow in the tapestry have been added on later?



Be a Top Historian

There are some things that we just don't know about the past. Some historians say the evidence proves how Harold was killed. Others say it proves we can't be sure. Top historians will assess how **reliable** a source is, and how far we can believe it.

Wise Up Words

abbey lance

Evidence F

Date 2000

Writer A modern historian.

'In recent years some people have thought that Harold might be the figure on the floor being attacked by knights, rather than the man with the arrow in his eye. But it seems obvious that the words 'Harold Rex' are written directly above the arrow-struck man. This is significant. I believe that the knights would have then attacked him.'

Work

To try to solve the mystery of how Harold died, start by looking closely at all the evidence on these pages.

1 Find out all the different ways Harold may have died.

What weapons were used? At what stage of the battle did he die? Make a list of your findings.

2 Find out if any of the evidence agrees on how Harold was killed.

Does any one piece of evidence back up what another says? Make notes on what you have found.

3 Think – can you trust the evidence?

Write down why you might not trust some of the evidence. You may believe all the evidence is useful or perhaps just some of it. Do we have an English eyewitness to Harold's death? If not, why not?

4 Now make your decision.

Like a detective, use evidence to back up your theory. If you're not sure, say why. In History it's OK to say you're uncertain, as long as you can explain why.