



RE-DISCOVERING

# Medieval Realms

BRITAIN 1066-1500



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Medieval  
Realms



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**BRITAIN 1066 – 1500**

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## The Schools History Project

This project was set up by the Schools Council in 1972. Its main aim was to suggest suitable objectives for history teachers, and to promote the use of appropriate materials and teaching methods for their realisation. This involved a reconsideration of the nature of history and its relevance in secondary schools, the design of a syllabus framework which shows the uses of history in the education of adolescents, and the setting up of appropriate examinations.

Since 1978 the project has been based at Trinity and All Saints' College, Leeds. It is now self-funding and with the advent of the National Curriculum it has expanded its publications to provide courses for Key Stage 3, and for a range of GCSE and A level syllabuses. The project provides INSET for all aspects of National Curriculum, GCSE and A level history. Its website can be found at [www.tasc.ac.uk/shp](http://www.tasc.ac.uk/shp)

Words printed in SMALL CAPITALS are defined in the Glossary on page 104.

**Note:** The wording and sentence structure of some written sources have been adapted and simplified to make them accessible to all pupils, while faithfully perserving the sense of the original.

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# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION



**1265** The siege of Kenilworth



**1348** The Black Death



**1381** The Peasants' Revolt

1300

1400

1500



# What were the Middle Ages like?

Some history books say that the Middle Ages were violent and dangerous. According to these books, there was war and killing; illness and disease; cruelty and superstition. Look at the paintings on pages 2-5 which come from the Middle Ages and see what you think.

## COLLECTION A

▼ SOURCE 1



SOURCE 2 ►



▼ SOURCE 3







▲ SOURCE 4

▼ SOURCE 5



## ▼ ACTIVITY

**1** In your own words, describe what is happening in each of the sources in Collection A. Here are some words that might help you:

coffins   burying   baiting   attacking  
witchcraft   goat   broomstick  
bodies   hanging   looting   war

**2** Which of the words below do you think best describe the Middle Ages as they are shown in Collection A?

violent   friendly   peaceful   caring  
dark   dangerous   nasty   safe

**3** If you were living in the Middle Ages which scene would make you most afraid? Explain why.

**4** What chance would you have of living a peaceful, pleasant life?



## WHAT WERE THE MIDDLE AGES LIKE?

### COLLECTION B

#### ▼ ACTIVITY

- 1 Describe what you can see in Collection B. Use the words and phrases below to help you:

hard-working  
skilled craftsmen  
nice buildings  
clever people    games  
peaceful    religious  
plenty of food to eat  
full of light

- 2 Which of these scenes would you most like to be in? Explain why.
- 3 How does this view of the Middle Ages differ from the one in Collection A?

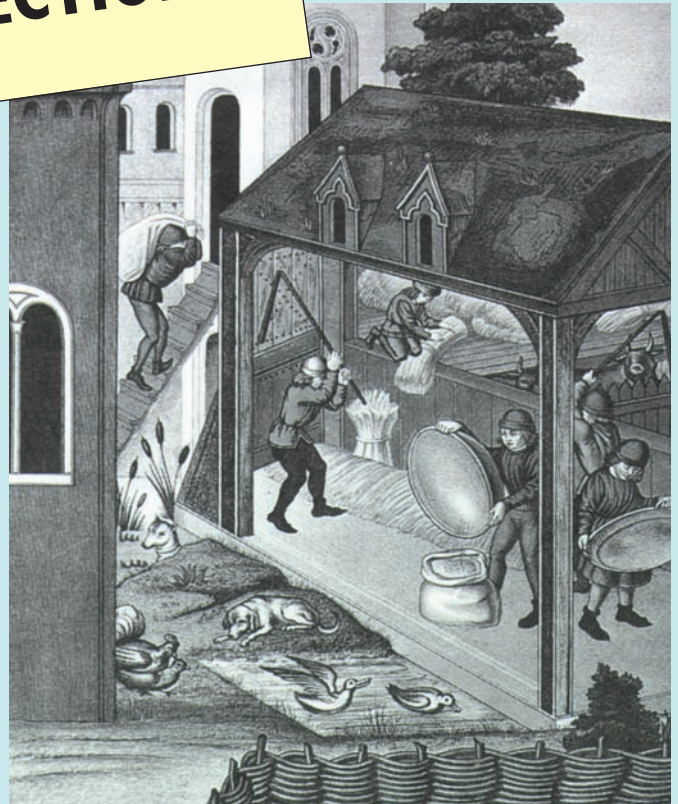
#### ▼ DISCUSS

- 4 You would have a very different view of the Middle Ages if you had only seen the paintings in Collection A. How does this help us to understand why we sometimes have different ideas about what the Middle Ages were like?

#### ▼ YOUR QUESTIONS

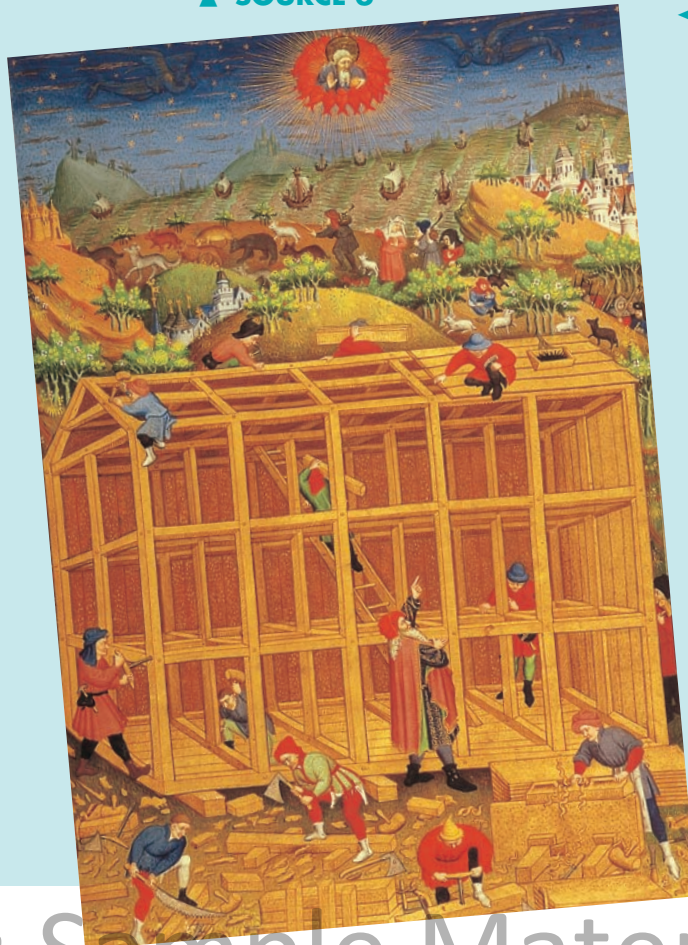
- 5 Working in pairs, write down five questions you would like to ask about the Middle Ages.

Discuss your questions as a class and create a class list of questions. Keep them safe. You will need them later.



▲ SOURCE 6

◀ SOURCE 7







▲ SOURCE 8



▲ SOURCE 9



▲ SOURCE 10



# Your pathway

In this book you will be finding out about life in MEDIEVAL times. The rest of this book is split into several sections.

## Section 2: The Norman Conquest

This section tells you about the last time England was invaded, in 1066. After a fierce battle at Hastings, the English got a new king – William of Normandy. You will find out how William conquered the country and made the people obey him. You will also find out how he started to change things.



## Section 3: Living in medieval times

This section tells you about different aspects of life in the Middle Ages. For example, you will find out about:



- how people lived in villages



- the work people had to do for the lord of the MANOR



- what people believed about God, Heaven and Hell



- the horrors of the Black Death.

## Section 4: Problems facing medieval kings

It was not always easy being a king. People might try to get rid of you or take some of your power away. This section tells you about some of the problems kings faced and what happened. These are:



- problems with the Church leading to the murder of Thomas Becket



- problems with the BARONS leading to the siege of Kenilworth Castle

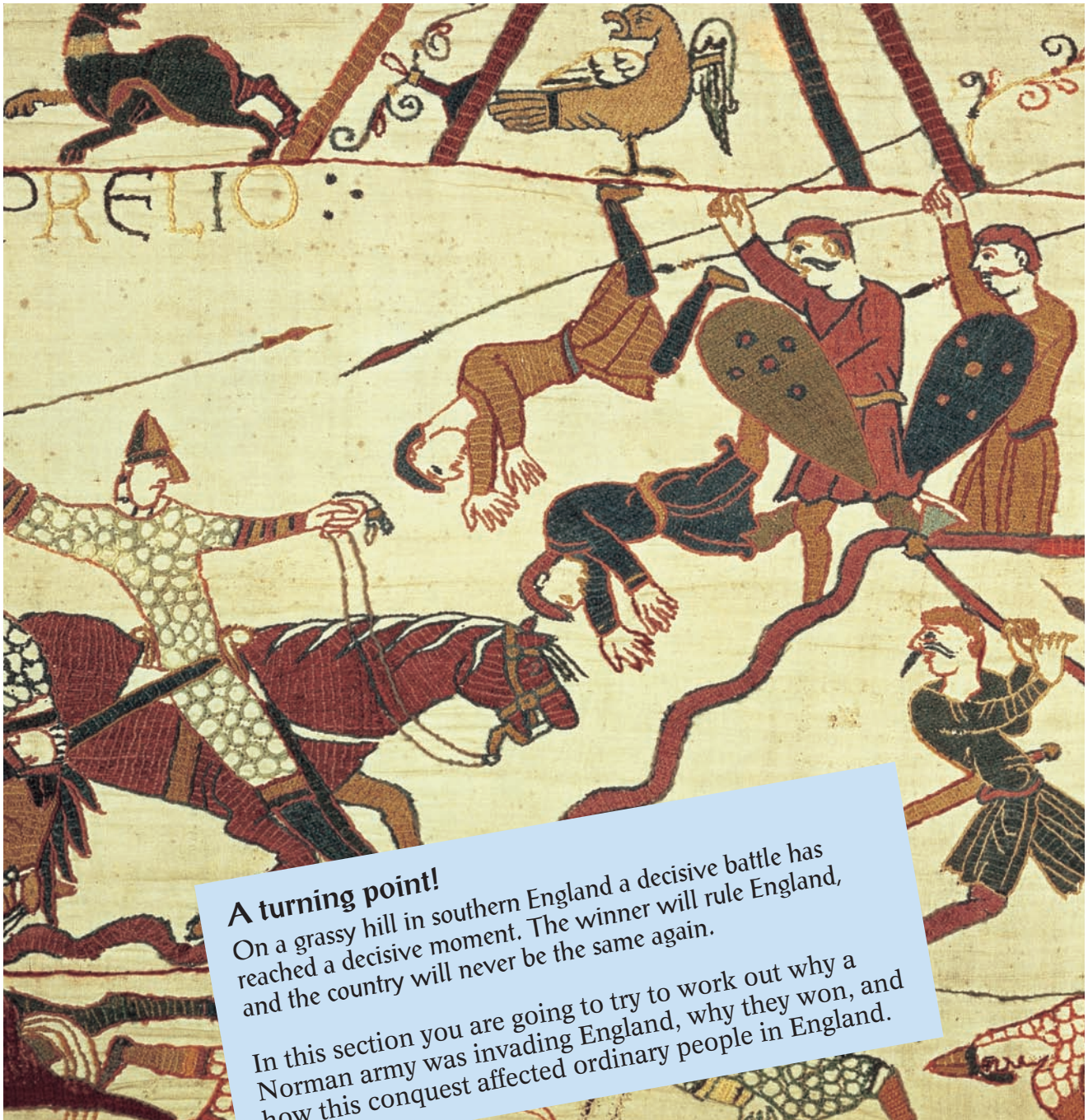


- problems with the peasants leading to the Peasants' Revolt.



## SECTION 2

# THE NORMAN CONQUEST



### A turning point!

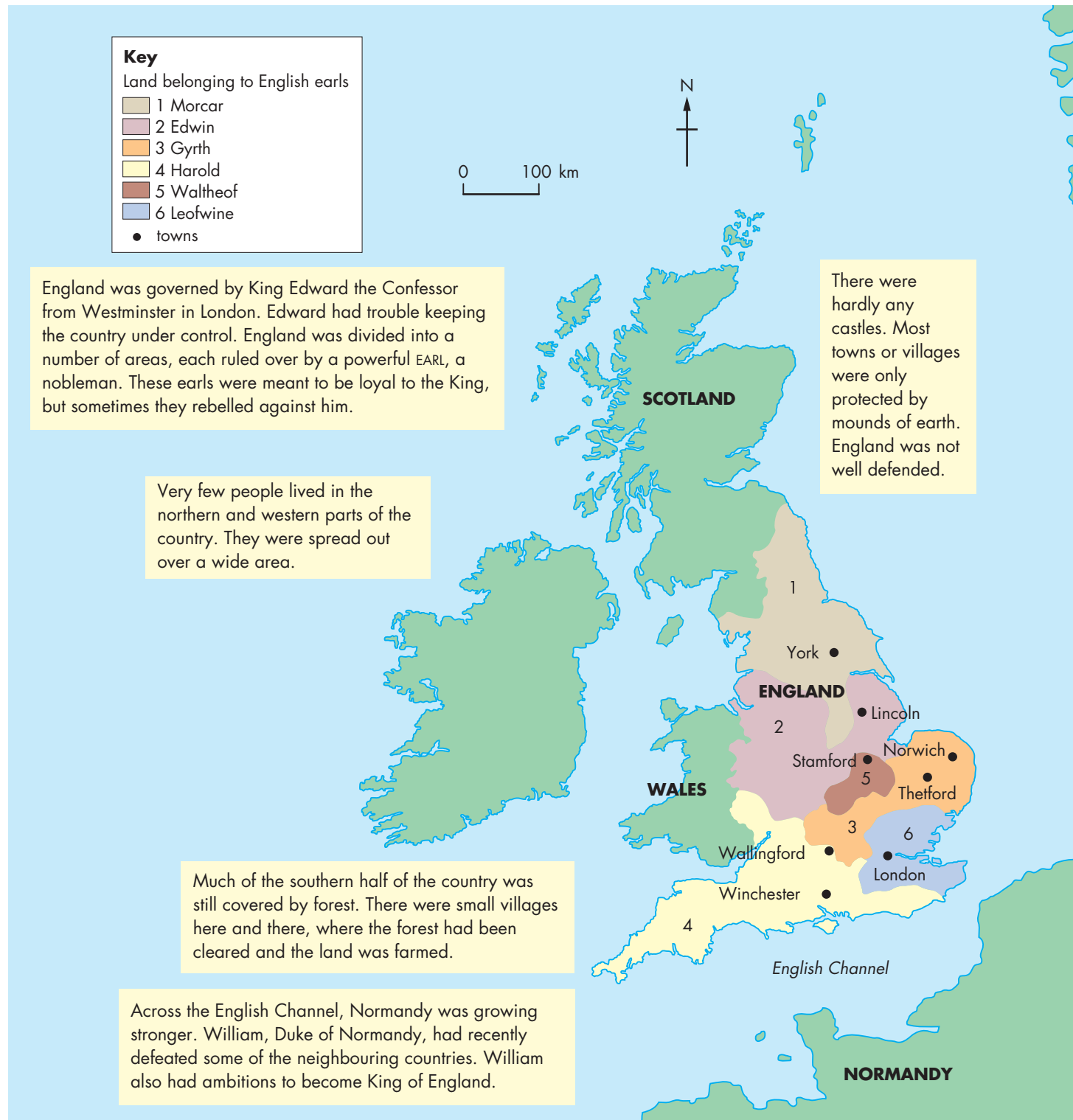
On a grassy hill in southern England a decisive battle has reached a decisive moment. The winner will rule England, and the country will never be the same again.

In this section you are going to try to work out why a Norman army was invading England, why they won, and how this conquest affected ordinary people in England.

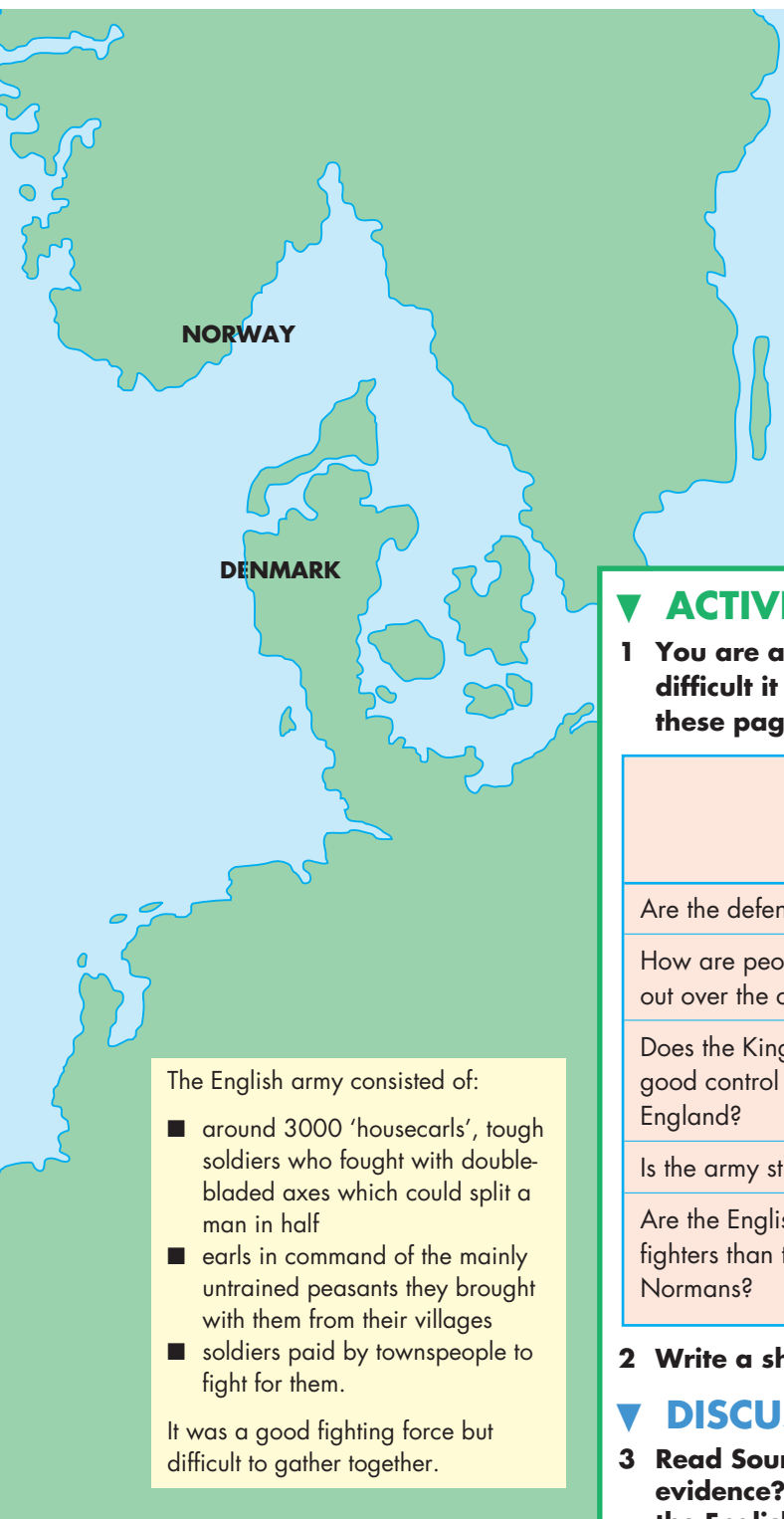


# England in the 1060s

William, Duke of Normandy, is thinking of invading England. On pages 8–9 you are going to be a spy for the Normans to find out if England was a strong country in 1066.



**SOURCE 1** A map of England in the 1060s showing major towns and earldoms (areas ruled by an earl)



▼ **SOURCE 2** *Descriptions of the English and the Normans in the 1060s written by William of Malmesbury, a monk. He was half English and half Norman by birth*

**a)** The English, at that time, wore short garments reaching to the midknee; they had their hair cropped; their beards shaven; their arms covered with golden bracelets; their skins covered with punctured designs. Drinking parties were very common and they drank until they were sick. Drunkenness weakens the human mind and they often fought with rashness and fury rather than with military skill.

**b)** The Normans were very particular in their dress and ate and drank with care and not to excess. They were used to war, and could hardly live without it. They were fierce in rushing against the enemy, and where strength failed they tricked and deceived the enemy.

### ▼ ACTIVITY

**1** You are a Norman spy sent by William to see how easy or difficult it will be to **INVADE** England. Use the information on these pages to complete a copy of the table below.

	What have you discovered?	Would this make it easier or harder to invade?
Are the defences good?		
How are people spread out over the country?		
Does the King have good control over England?		
Is the army strong?		
Are the English better fighters than the Normans?		

**2** Write a short report for William telling him your findings.

### ▼ DISCUSS

**3** Read Source 2 again. How reliable is this source as evidence? Do you think the monk who wrote it favoured the English or the Normans?

The English army consisted of:

- around 3000 'housecarls', tough soldiers who fought with double-bladed axes which could split a man in half
- earls in command of the mainly untrained peasants they brought with them from their villages
- soldiers paid by townspeople to fight for them.

It was a good fighting force but difficult to gather together.



# From across the water

▶▶ William did decide to invade. Pages 10–11 tell you about the Normans landing in England.

The date is 27 September 1066, early in the morning. The place, Pevensey, on the south coast of England. A boy and a girl head for the ruins of the old Roman fort on the cliffs. They have a hunk of black bread soaked in warm milk to eat for breakfast as they watch the sun come up over the sea. They have already milked the cow and done their chores around the farmhouse.

From where they sit, they have a good view of the beach and the sea beyond. As they look out on the cold, crisp morning they shiver in the light breeze coming off the water. The girl suddenly points out to sea. Some dark shapes are beginning to form on the horizon and they seem to be coming towards the beach. As the shapes get closer the children see that they are ships – many ships.

They watch the ships come closer and closer until they land on the beach below. The children watch nervously ...



## ▼ ACTIVITY

1 a) Match the captions below to the pictures in Sources 1–3.

### Captions

The Norman army lands

The Normans prepare a feast

The Norman fleet approaches the coast of England

b) Put the pictures in the correct order.

2 Look at Source 1:

- how are the two cooks (A) cooking the meat
- what are the men at (B) doing
- what is happening at (C)?

3 You are the girl or the boy. Tell the people in the village what you have seen. Give them detailed information about the ships, the soldiers' clothing, their weapons and what they have brought with them? How well prepared do you think the Normans are? Write down or role play what you might say.

## ▼ SOURCE 3







▲ SOURCE 1



▲ SOURCE 2

Sources 1–3 come from the Bayeux Tapestry. It was embroidered in the 1070s to tell the story of their invasion of England





# Who should be the King of England?

On 5 January 1066, King Edward the Confessor died. He had no children so there was no one who would naturally become the next King of England. Three men now claimed to be the rightful king. They all had a good claim. But which one had the best claim? Pages 12–13 will help you find out.

▼ **SOURCE 1** *The three people who thought they should be King of England*

## Harold Godwineson



My family are the most powerful in England. We have controlled Wessex for years. We intend to control all England one day.

Fifteen years ago we tried to take over. We rebelled and tried to get rid of King Edward the Confessor. But he beat us and threw us out of England.

But I came back. I wasn't going to be beaten that easily.

I have the best claim to the throne. I'm related to Edward – he is my brother-in-law. I am the only Englishman. And – note this very carefully – on his death-bed Edward said 'I commend all the kingdom to your protection.' **Edward wanted me to be king!** What more can I tell you?

By the way, don't confuse me with the other Harald (spelt differently and smells different too – what a cheek to think a Viking could be King of England).

Also don't believe what William says about oaths. Whatever I said, I was forced.

## William, Duke of Normandy

I am a patient man. Fifteen years ago I was promised the throne of England when Edward died. Now I am ready to take it.

You wonder how this came about. Let me tell you. Edward loved us Normans. He grew up with us here in Normandy from when he was a boy until when he became King of England in 1042. It was only natural for him to call for my help when he faced a rebellion in 1051 (from that disloyal Harold Godwineson). I sent my best soldiers to help Edward. In return **Edward promised me I would be king when he died.**

Oh and another thing, last year Harold also needed my help. I was holding his nephew prisoner here and Harold came to release him. 'On one condition' I said. 'Edward promised me I would be king when he dies. If you support me in that, I will let you have your nephew back.' And Harold swore loyalty to me. So there you are ... I should be king.





## Harald Hardraada

It's Harald, with two 'a's. Don't mix me up with that Wessex Harold. I'm a Viking. I'm King of Norway.

Why should I be King of England? Well the North of England is ruled by Vikings – has been for one and a half centuries – and England has had loads of Viking kings. From 1016–1042 **they were all Vikings** – until that Edward seized the throne from us rightful kings.

Now that Edward has died England should have a Viking king again. If I'm not given the crown I will take it by force. I have an army ready to invade. The people in the North of England will support me in this. I'll be unbeatable.



### King Cnut

King of England from 1016–1035 (also King of Denmark and Norway). Passed on his throne to his son

### King Harthacnut

King of England 1040–42. Lost the throne but claimed he was the rightful king of England and promised the throne to

### King Magnus of Norway

who passed on the claim to the next king of Norway

### Harald Hardraada

▲ **SOURCE 2** Harald Hardraada's claim to the English throne



▲ **SOURCE 3** A map of England (including Wessex), Norway, Denmark and Normandy

## ▼ ACTIVITY

**1 Make a copy of the chart below. As you complete column 2 think about:**

- whether Edward wanted this person to be king
- was he related to any previous King of England
- was he from the right country
- had he been promised the throne by anyone?

Person	Why he thought he should be King of England
Harold Godwineson	
William of Normandy	
Harald Hardraada	

**2 Now divide into small groups for a class debate. Each group will support one claimant. Use what you have learnt on pages 12–13 to:**

- put the case for your claimant
- say why the other two claimants should not be king.

# Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?

In 1066 England was invaded twice. There were two bloody battles for the English throne and England had three kings. From this year of crisis William of Normandy emerged as the winner. Over the next eight pages you are going to examine why William won. Was he the best prepared? Was he the best leader? Or was he just the luckiest? At the end of this enquiry you will be writing an essay to explain in your own words why William won.

## THE MONTHS BEFORE THE BATTLE

### Harold Godwineson becomes king

Harold Godwineson did not wait to see what William or Harald Hardrada would do. He had an advantage over the others – he was **in England**, the others were abroad. So as soon as Edward died Harold went to London and had himself secretly crowned king.

He knew William and Harald would not back down. He knew he would have to fight them at some point. So all through the summer he got his army ready. The big question was who would he have to fight first?

### What should Harold do?

Think hard about Harold's situation. Source 1 shows you his situation in the summer of 1066. There were two armies ready to invade – one to the north, one to the south. Harold could:

- guard the south coast
- guard the north coast
- split his forces and guard both coasts
- ignore both invading armies and get on with being king.

### ▼ ACTIVITY

1 Working with a partner, draw up a table showing the advantages and disadvantages of each of Harold's options. These were:

- a) guard the south coast
- b) guard the north coast
- c) split his forces and guard both coasts
- d) ignore both invading armies and get on with being king.

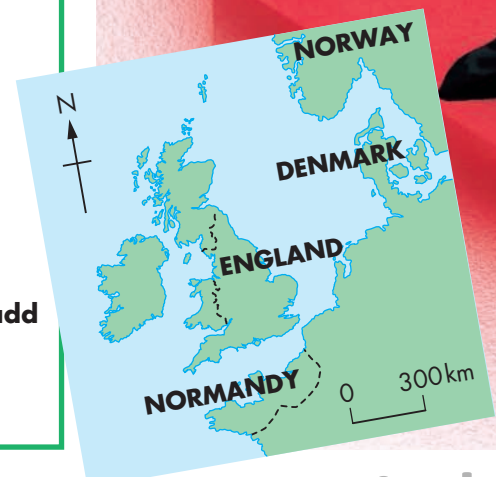
If you can think of something else he could have done add it to your table.


2 Now look at what Harold did (on the opposite page). Did he choose well?

▼ **SOURCE 1** *Threats to Harold in 1066*

I have 5000 well-armed soldiers in London. I can get them to the north coast in ten days, or to the south coast in three days. But I'm really not sure which to do.

**William's** army is ready. I've been told he has 5000 foot soldiers and 2000 knights on horseback. People are also saying he has a fleet of ships to carry his forces across the channel. Luckily for me the wind is blowing in the wrong direction, but he could invade at any moment if the wind changes.





What should I do?

## What did Harold do?

Harold decided to wait with his army on the south coast. He thought that William presented the greatest danger. But the weather meant William stayed in Normandy. At the end of the summer Harold sent his army home because he could not continue to feed them.

## Harold beats the Norwegians

Just after he had done this, Harald Hardraada, with his fleet of 500 ships, swept into the River Tyne in the north-east. On 20 September his Norwegian army landed and fought the English Earls Edwin and Morcar. After a long fight, the English fled.

Harold was now in a desperate position. He had to gather his army together again and march hundreds of miles north to fight the Norwegians. On 25 September he met them at Stamford Bridge. It was a bloody battle in which Harald Hardraada was killed. His army was beaten. Most of his ships were burnt. Only 24 returned to Norway.

## Bad news!

Harold had won a great victory but only three days later he received shattering news – William's invasion force had landed in the south! The wind direction had changed and William's fleet had been able to make the crossing. He had waited patiently until the time was right and luck was on his side – Harold was stuck in the north.

Just think how Harold must have felt! Now he had to get his army, or what was left of it, back to the south as quickly as he could. They would be very tired. On the other hand, he was a powerful warrior, feeling good about his victory over the Norwegians. On the following page you can see what happened next.

People say that **Harald** is preparing an invasion fleet of around 500 ships and possibly 10,000 men. He'll probably get support from the King of Scotland and from Viking families in the north of England. He's also got the support of my very own brother, Tosti.



# Glossary

- AD** stands for *Anno Domini* which means ‘in the year of the Lord’. It is used for dates after the birth of Christ
- ANGLO-SAXONS** people from Germany who ruled England from the fifth century until 1066
- ARCHAEOLOGIST** person who studies past peoples, usually by digging for remains they have left behind, such as buildings or tools. These remains are called **ARCHAEOLOGICAL** evidence
- ARCHBISHOP** a powerful Church leader
- BAILIFF** a medieval manor official appointed by the lord (see **REEVE** and **STEWARD**)
- BARON** a powerful lord who was granted land by the king (see **FEUDAL SYSTEM**)
- BC** Before Christ. BC years are counted backwards from the birth of Christ, so 200BC came before 100BC
- BISHOP** a man in charge of the affairs of the Christian Church over a large area called a diocese
- BOON-WORK** see **WEEK-WORK**
- CANDLEMAS** a feast with a blessing of candles to celebrate the Virgin Mary (2nd February)
- CHARTER** a medieval document setting out the rights of a town or a group of people
- CLERGY** all the people such as priests, monks, nuns who have been appointed to perform religious duties in the Christian Church
- COMMONS** ordinary people who are not lords or knights
- DEMESNE** the part of the **MANOR** farmed by the lord in the Middle Ages
- EARL** a powerful nobleman
- ESTATE** a large area of land owned by a lord or important churchman
- FREEMAN** a peasant who had achieved some freedom from the lord (see **VILLEIN**)
- GUILD** an association of merchants, or workers with a particular craft
- INVADE** to bring an army into a country to try and control it
- JURY** a group of people who hear evidence in a court and decide the verdict
- KNIGHT** a lord who was granted land by a baron in return for support and army service
- LATIN** official language of the Roman Empire
- MANOR** the area controlled by a medieval lord, usually only one village
- MANUSCRIPT** handwritten book, often with brightly coloured illustrations
- MEDIEVAL** dating from the Middle Ages. In this book, the period called medieval is about AD1000–1500
- MERCHANT** person who trades in goods, often from foreign countries
- PEASANT** the vast majority of poor people in medieval villages, who worked on the land
- PILGRIMAGE** journey to a holy place, such as a **SHRINE**
- PLAGUE** a disease which affects large numbers of people
- PRIEST** a man in charge of religious ceremonies. In Christian countries, he is responsible for a particular village or parish
- REBELLION** people fighting against their rulers
- REEVE** a medieval manor official – one of the villagers, and elected by them (see **BAILIFF** and **STEWARD**)
- REVOLT** trying to overthrow the king or person in power
- SHERIFF** official appointed by the king, responsible for keeping law and order in medieval Britain
- SHRINE** holy place, usually sacred to a god or a saint
- STEWARD** official who ran the lord’s manor for him in the Middle Ages (see **BAILIFF** and **REEVE**)
- TITHE** tax which medieval people had to pay to the village priest: one tenth of their farm produce
- VIKINGS** Scandinavians who raided and settled in the south and east of Britain during the ninth and tenth centuries
- VILLEIN** a peasant who was under the control of the lord of the manor in the Middle Ages. A villein could buy his freedom and become a **FREEMAN**
- WEEK-WORK** the services, fixed by tradition, that all medieval **VILLEINS** had to give to the lord. **BOON-WORK** was the extra service the peasant did for the lord when the manor needed it