



THIS CHAPTER ASKS

Why is the year 1066 so important?
Why were there three rivals for the English throne?
Why did Harold lose the battle of Hastings?
How much did the Norman Conquest change England?

1066 AND ALL THAT...

How many dates of important events in British History do you know? The chances are that one of them is 1066. Many people remember this date even if they do not know any others! It is the date of the Norman **Conquest**. In 1066, Duke William, the ruler of Normandy invaded England. Normandy is in France, but in 1066 it had its own ruler and was separate from the kingdom of France.

William killed the English king, Harold, at the Battle of Hastings. William went on to be crowned King of England on Christmas Day, 1066. He had made himself ruler of Normandy and England. Historians call England before 1066, 'Anglo-Saxon England'. After 1066 they call it 'Norman England'. Kings of England continued to also be rulers of Normandy until the 13th Century.

NEW WORDS

CONQUEST: to capture or take over something.

OATH: a special promise which should never be broken.

We call William of Normandy 'William the Conqueror', because he defeated Harold at Hastings. In 1066 many people knew him as 'William the bastard', because his parents were not married.

SOURCE A



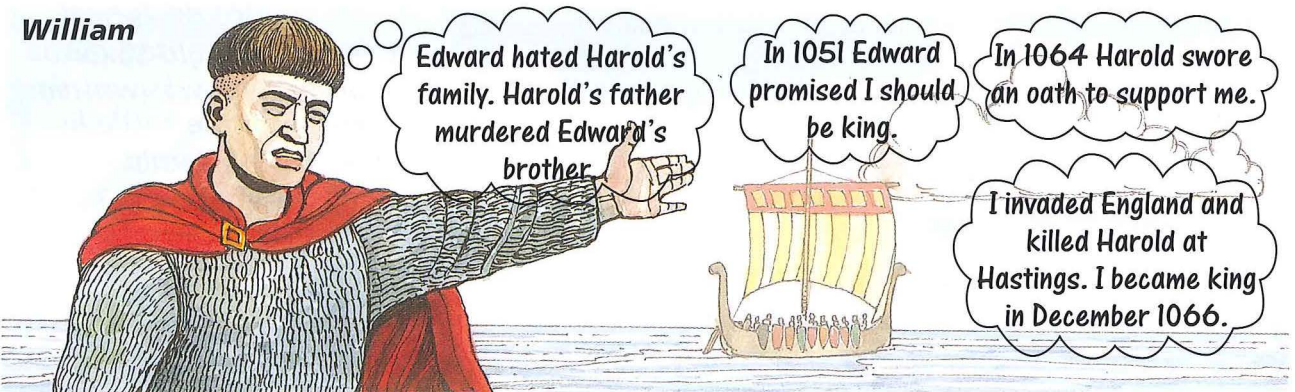
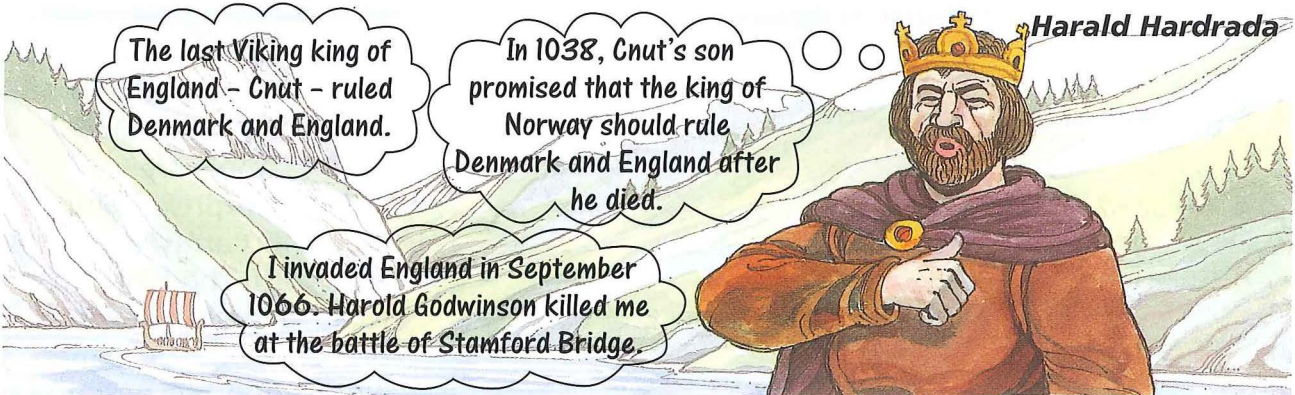
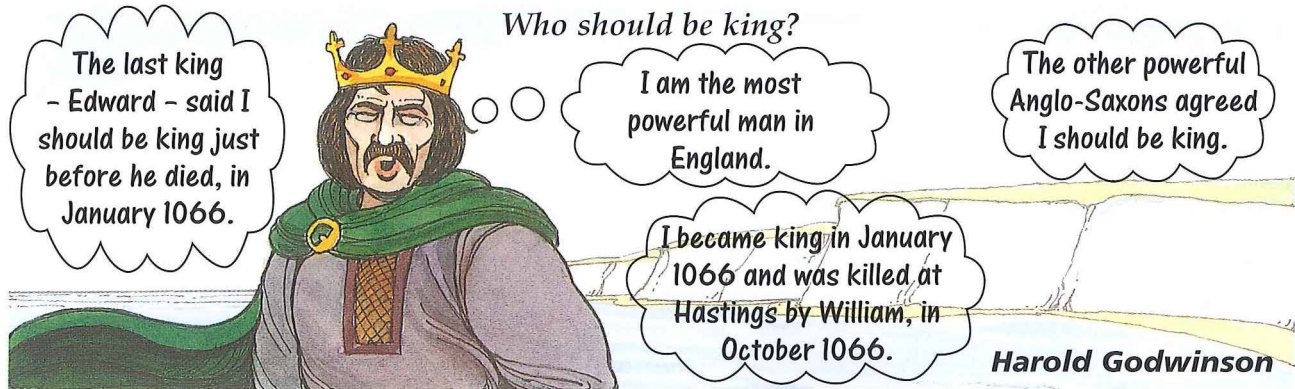
◀ A scene from the Norman Bayeux Tapestry, showing King Harold in January 1066. The star in the sky is Halley's comet, which people thought was a sign that big events were coming.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

RIVALS FOR THE ENGLISH THRONE

Why did William of Normandy think he should be King of England? Well, in 1066 there were actually three people who thought they should be king!

Each one of these rivals had his own reason for being king. But only one could be king. By the end of 1066 two were dead. Each had died in battle. Only William survived to be the king.



Q

1. Carry out a survey of your friends and family. What important dates do they know from British History and why?

2. Design three Spidergrams to show the reasons why each of the three rivals

in 1066 thought they should be king of England. Which rival do you think had the strongest claim and why?

Discussion Point

How do we choose our government today? Is it a better way?



Why did Harold lose at Hastings?

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM CAUSES

When historians look at why events happen they often divide them into different kinds of reasons (or 'causes'). Things that happen some time before the event are called 'long-term causes'. Things that happen close to the event are called 'short-term causes'.

In October 1066 William defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings. But why did he win? What different causes were there? What kinds of evidence will help us find out? Like a detective, historians have to look at all the clues.

NEW WORDS

CHRONICLE: A book listing events in the order in which they happened. It does not explain things the way most history books do.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS BEFORE THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

- **Friday September 8th.** Harold had kept an army on the south coast in case William invaded. He decided William would not invade and let his army go home.
- **Wednesday September 20th.** Harald Hardrada invades England and defeats an Anglo-Saxon army at Fulford, near York.
- **Monday September 25th.** Harold defeats Harald Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, near York. Many are killed on both sides.
- **Wednesday September 27th.** A change in the wind allows William to sail to England with his army across the English Channel.
- **Sunday October 1st.** Harold, still in York, hears that William has landed in Sussex and is destroying villages owned by Harold's family. Harold marches 190 miles back to London.
- **Thursday October 5th.** Harold arrives in London and spends five days getting a new army together.
- **Friday October 13th.** Late at night, after a 60 mile march from London, Harold's army camps north of Hastings, in Sussex. Harold hopes to catch William by surprise but William discovers that Harold is near him.
- **Saturday October 14th.** At dawn, William moves his army to meet Harold. Battle starts at 9am. William defeats Harold.

SOURCE A

Harold gathered a great army and came to oppose him [William] at the old apple tree. And William surprised him before his army was ready. But the king still fought against him very bravely, with those men who supported him.

▲ *From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This was written shortly after the battle by supporters of Harold.*

SOURCE B



▲ *The Bayeux Tapestry, made shortly after the battle to tell the Norman side of the story. It shows Harold's soldiers on foot facing well armed Norman knights.*

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

SOURCE C



▲ Another picture from the Bayeux Tapestry. It shows part of the battle where Norman knights retreated. Some English soldiers chased them down the hill and were surrounded and killed. After this the Normans pretended to retreat twice. Each time they killed the English soldiers who chased them and this weakened Harold's army.

SOURCE D

A rumour spread that Duke William was dead. But he shouted 'Look at me - I am alive! And with God's help I will win. What madness makes you run away. There is nowhere to escape to. There is only the sea behind us. We have no choice but to win or die'.

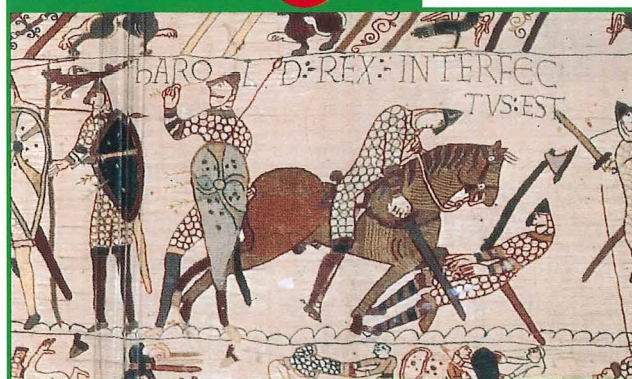
▲ Written by the Norman, William of Poitiers. He wrote shortly after the battle and seems to have got his information from Normans who were there.

SOURCE E

Although Harold knew that some of the bravest men in all England had died in the two battles [Fulford and Stamford Bridge] and his army was not yet gathered together, he did not hesitate to meet his enemy. Nine miles from Hastings he fought them before a third of his army had arrived.

▲ The Worcester Chronicle, 1095. The writer used information from the time.

SOURCE G



▲ The Bayeux Tapestry may show Harold wounded in the eye by an arrow. He was later killed by Norman knights. The Normans had many archers. The English had very few.

Harold's body was so badly chopped up that the Normans were not sure it was his. His girlfriend, Edith, was made to check the bits. Only she could tell it was him because she knew his body so well!

SOURCE F

Many soldiers deserted Harold before the battle. The English army spent the night before the battle drinking and singing. The Normans spent the night praying.

▲ Written by an English writer in about 1125.



1. Look at each of the sources. Say how much you think you can trust each one and why you think this.

2. Why did Harold lose?

- Explain the long-term reasons (events before the battle).
- Explain the short-term reasons (events during the battle).
- End by saying which reason you think is most important and why.



Alric's complaint

YOUR MISSION: *did the Norman Conquest change the lives of English people for the worse?*

The Domesday Book lists who owned land in England in 1086, twenty years after the Norman Conquest. (See chapter 2 for more about the Domesday Book). At Marsh Gibbon, in Buckinghamshire, the Domesday Book records:

'Alric holds land from William FitzAnsculf. He owned it himself before 1066. But now he has to rent it from William. He is miserable and has a heavy heart.'

Imagine Alric has brought a complaint to a modern court. Alric has had his land taken away and given to one of William the Conqueror's Norman friends. Alric is accusing William the Conqueror of completely changing the lives of English people for the worse. You are the jury. Look at each piece of evidence. Look at the evidence against William. Then at the evidence in his favour. Do you agree, or disagree with Alric's complaint?

SOURCE A

He caused castles to be built which were a terrible burden to poor people. A hard man was the king. He took from his people much money in gold and many more hundreds of pounds in silver. This money he took from his people mostly unjustly. He was very greedy. Whoever killed a deer was to be blinded. The rich complained and the poor were sad. But he did not care if everyone hated him.

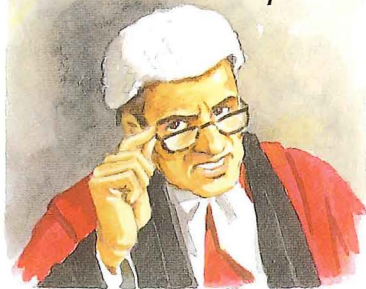
▲ *From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 1087. This was the year that William the Conqueror died. The person who wrote this thought William should not have been king of England. Alric will have heard that a Norman castle was built near him, in Oxford, in 1071. The Normans who built it put it right on top of the homes of English people.*

SOURCE B

England has become the home of foreigners and has become their property. You might see great churches rise in every village, town and city. They are built in a way not seen before. But I hear many say it would have been better to have kept the old.

▲ *Written by William of Malmesbury, 1125. Marsh Gibbon had no church, but Alric has heard of Norman rebuilding elsewhere.*

The Case Against William the Conqueror.



'He has completely changed the lives of English people for the worse.'

SOURCE C

The great English people who survived the battles of 1066 live poorer or in exile. Normans have taken their land and their power.

▲ *Historian James Campbell in an essay called, 'Where are the Anglo-Saxons?', 1986.*

SOURCE D

Another sign of a total take-over was the disappearance of English used by the government. The new bosses spoke French and wrote Latin.

The Normans had pulled down every Anglo-Saxon cathedral and abbey and most of the churches too, and had rebuilt them on a much bigger scale, in the Norman version of 'modern' architecture.

▲ *Written by the historian, W.L. Warren, in a book, The Middle Ages, 1985.*

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The Case in Favour of William the Conqueror.



'Much has not changed. What has changed has been for the better!'

SOURCE F

King William was a man of great wisdom and power. Though stern to those who opposed him, he was kind to those good men who loved God. We must not forget the peace he kept in the land. Anyone could travel safely across the country with pockets full of gold.

▲ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 1087.*

SOURCE G



▲ *A silver penny of the kind Alric would have owned. It was made at Oxford by a man named Brihtraed. The same people made the same kinds of money at Oxford before and after the Norman Conquest.*

SOURCE E

What effect has the Conquest had on the **peasantry**? Not much. In places the freedom of some peasants who used to be independent has been reduced. On the other hand many who were slaves in 1066 have now achieved some freedom.

▲ *James Campbell, in Where are the Anglo-Saxons?, 1986.*

SOURCE H



◀ *The kind of pottery used by Alric. It was used around Oxford. These became more popular after the Norman Conquest but were made in the same way as they had been before 1066.*

NEW WORDS

ARCHITECTURE: the way a building is put together.

PEASANTRY: ordinary poor farmers who didn't own the land they worked on.

INVESTIGATION

You are the jury in the court.

From the evidence, you can reach one of three verdicts:

- William changed things for the worse.
- William changed things for the better.
- William changed some things for the worse, some things for the better, some things were not changed much at all.

Whatever you decide, explain why you have reached this decision, mentioning the evidence (**Sources**) you used.