

Teachers' Kit

1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield

This kit helps teachers plan a visit to 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, where William the Conqueror defeated Harold Godwinson to become King of England. Use these resources before, during and after your visit to help students get the most out of their learning.

Get in touch and book your visit:

- ✉ bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk
- 📄 english-heritage.org.uk/education-bookings



Welcome

This Teachers' Kit for 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield (Battle Abbey) has been designed for teachers and group leaders to support a free self-led visit to the site. It includes a variety of materials suited to teaching a wide range of subjects and key stages, with practical information, activities for use on-site and ideas to support follow-up learning.

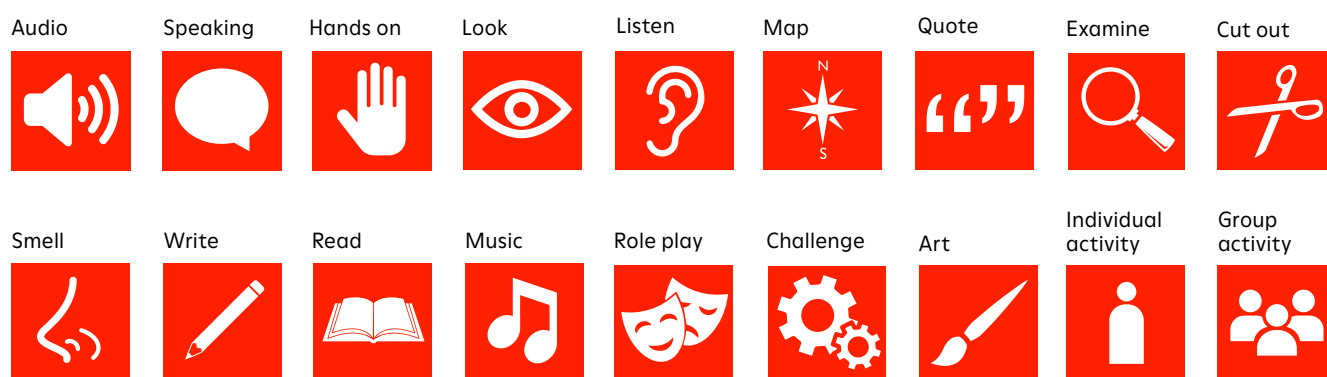
We know that each class and study group is different, so we have collated our resources into one kit allowing you to decide which materials are best suited to your needs. Please use the contents page, which has been colour-coded to help you easily locate what you need and view individual sections. All our activities have clear guidance on the intended use for study so you can adapt them for your desired learning outcomes.

You can find all the information you need to organise a successful and memorable trip, including hazard information and Discovery Visit risk assessments, on our [Battle Abbey School Visits page](#). What's more, when you book, you'll get a handy 'What you need to know' document to help with planning. To make, amend or cancel a booking, please visit our [education bookings page](#) or get in touch with one of the team via bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk.

English Heritage Learning Team

Icon key

The icons below will help you quickly identify the types of activities and information presented.



Contents

SEND**KS1****KS2****KS3****KS4**

Pre-visit

Information and activities you can use in the classroom before your visit.

Site map	5
Orientation photos	6
More to explore	7
Historical information	8–15
Glossary	16–18
Key dates	19
Battle Abbey Carol ■	20–21

At the Abbey and Battlefield

Activities for students to do at Battle Abbey to help them get the most out of their learning.

Walk from Battle station ■ ■ ■	23–25
Self-led activity trail ■ ■ ■	26–27
Self-led 1066 Battle of Hastings role play ■	28–35
Self-led sensory trail: battle re-enactment ■	36–39
Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle combined trail ■ ■	40–43

Post-visit

Information and activities to help you extend your students' learning back in the classroom.

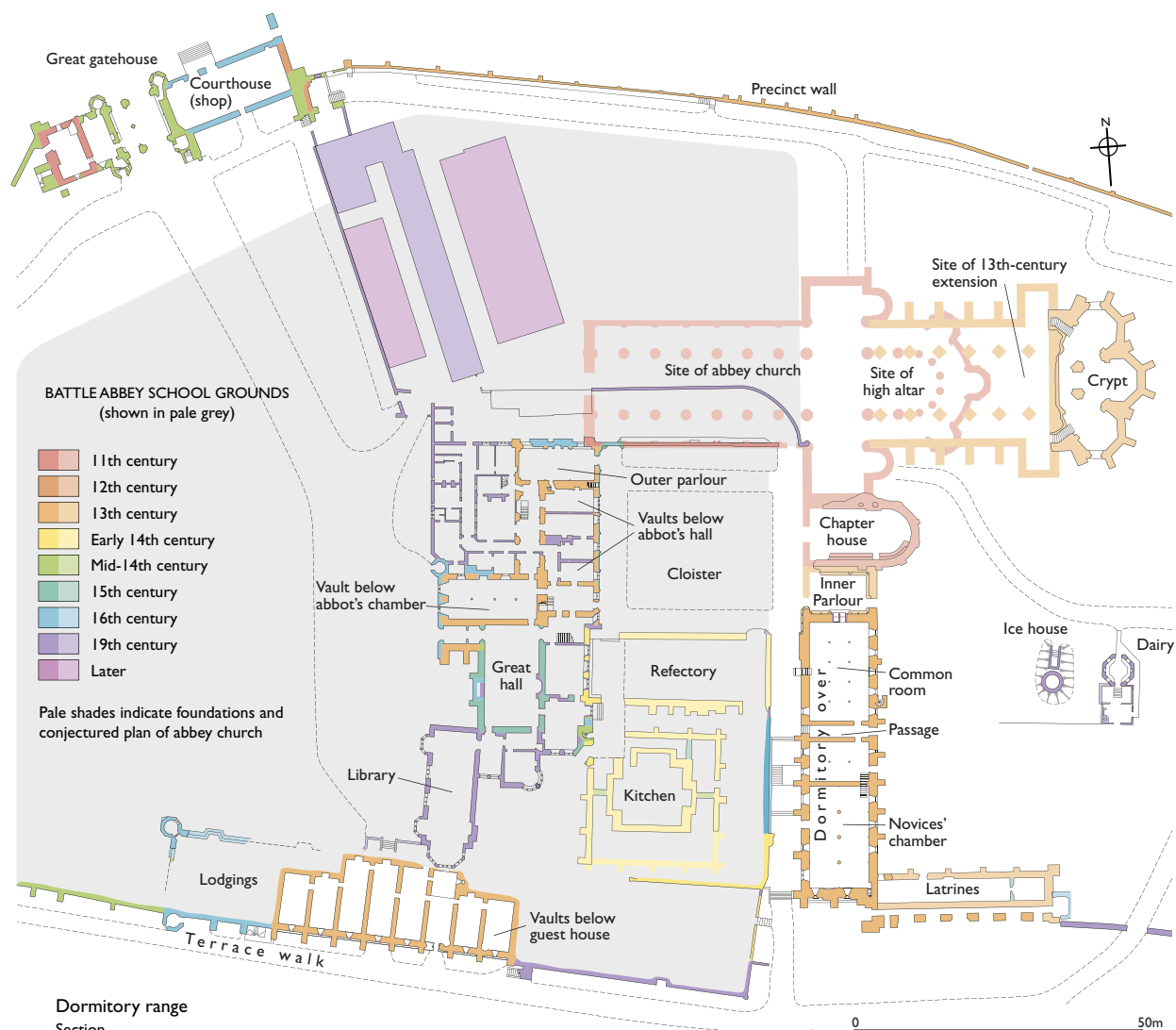
Design your own coat of arms ■ ■	45–48
Who's who in 1066? ■ ■ ■	49–50
Sources	51–55

Pre-visit

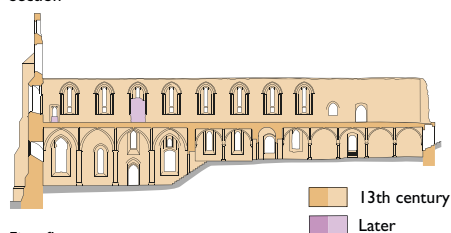
Information and activities you can use in the classroom before your visit.

Site map

A sensory map of Battle Abbey is available on the English Heritage website.



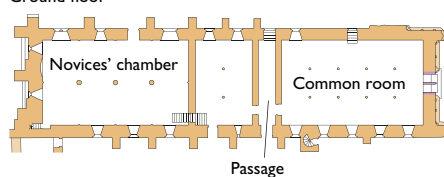
Dormitory range
Section



First floor

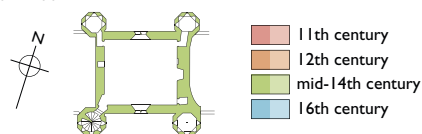


Ground floor

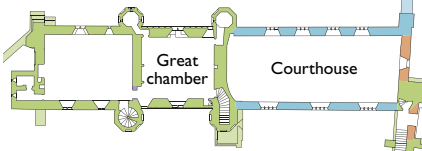


Gatehouse and courthouse

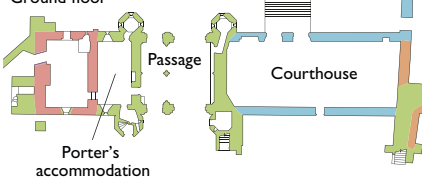
Second floor



First floor



Ground floor



1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield

Orientation photos



When you arrive, you will come through this door to enter Battle Abbey. There is a step-free entrance to the right.



English Heritage staff and volunteers wear a uniform like this.



The toilets are in this building with the café and exhibition. It is to the right when you exit the shop and ticket building.



The gatehouse also has an exhibition, and you can admire views from the roof. It is accessed by steep narrow staircases like this.



There is a playground by the café, which can get quite noisy.



There is sometimes livestock on the battlefield. In bad weather and the winter the battlefield might be closed.

More to explore

To extend your students' learning even further, we have bookable resources and paid-for expert-led Discovery Visits. Visit the Battle Abbey School Visits page of the English Heritage website for more details and how to book.

Bookable resources

Conquests Tour and Tales (KS2–3)

1066: everyone knows this date, but why was it so important? Meet an Anglo-Saxon storyteller and hear tales of Norman power and English rebellion. Re-enact the battle on the battlefield and learn how the dramatic events of 14 October 1066 had such an impact on England. Part of the session will take place outside, so please dress appropriately. Replica medieval weapons will be for viewing only and will be handled by the Discovery Visit leader. Students might like to make and bring their own cardboard shields with them for the battle.

GCSE Discovery Visit (KS4)

Book an expert-led GCSE tour of the 1066 battlefield to give your students a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Battle of Hastings. On this interactive walking tour of the site, you will cover the causes of the Norman invasion, military equipment, tactics and technology, and the ways in which the Normans established and maintained control following their victory.

Sensory supported Battle re-enactment

Support your students with understanding the events of the battle, through a battle re-enactment. Use the provided sensory resources to access a simplified version of the story, in the place where it happened.

Self-led activity: Discovery Chest

Use our Discovery Chest during your visit to Battle Abbey to help bring the story of the site to life for your students. You can reserve this handling collection as part of your booking request through our Online Bookings Portal.

Historical information

Discover the story of 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield

Below is a short history of Battle Abbey. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You'll find the definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

1066: The lead-up to the battle

When the English king Edward the Confessor (r.1042–66) died on 5 January 1066, he left no son to inherit the throne. The most powerful **noble** and military leader in England, **Harold, Earl of Wessex**, was quickly declared king, but he knew he would soon be challenged for the crown.

In September 1066, **William, Duke of Normandy**, set sail from St Valéry with his army, to overthrow King Harold (r.1066). The Norman army landed at Pevensey in East Sussex, unchallenged. After quickly building an earth and timber **fortification**, William led his army on to Hastings.

King Harold, fresh from defeating Harald Hardrada, King of Norway, at the **Battle of Stamford Bridge** in Yorkshire, marched his battle-weary men south to meet William.

Search for Stamford Bridge on the English Heritage website to learn more.



In 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, set his sights on conquering England, attractive for its well-equipped army, powerful navy and rich agricultural land.



The Battle of Hastings

Both armies are thought to have been between 5,000 and 7,000 soldiers – large armies for the time. Both used mostly similar weapons and armour: horses, helmets, mail armour, shields, swords and bows. The differences were key: the Normans used **crossbows** and **cavalry**, and the English used foot soldiers and the terrifying **housecarls**.



The Normans' use of cavalry gave them an advantage over the English foot soldiers.

William learnt of Harold's approach the day before the battle and moved his forces seven miles inland from Hastings. Overnight, the two armies were camped within sight of each other. Soon after dawn on 14 October, Harold arranged his forces into a shield wall along the ridge of the hill (where the buildings of Battle Abbey stand today). William's army to the south split into three ranks, with archers at the front, **infantry** in the middle and cavalry at the back.

At 9am, trumpets signalled the start of the battle. The two armies were so evenly matched that the battle lasted for about nine hours. The Normans repeatedly attacked



William's archers also played an important role in the battle.

the English **line**, which mostly held firm, except for a few breaks in rank to chase after sections of William's troops that were, or pretended to be, retreating. To stop the rumours that he had been killed, which had begun to spread, William rode out in front of his troops and lifted his helmet to show them that he was still in command. With daylight fading, the Normans launched their final assault. King Harold was killed, possibly fatally wounded by an arrow that pierced his brain through his eye.



King William I 'The Conqueror' by an unknown artist © National Portrait Gallery, London

After the conquest

William the Conqueror was crowned king in Westminster Abbey on 25 December 1066. Despite defeating Harold, there was much resistance against the new king from all around the country. William reinforced his authority by defeating the rebellions and giving land to his supporters. Religious leaders were powerful and important, so he replaced almost all Anglo-Saxon **bishops** and **abbots** with Normans. He ordered many new churches, cathedrals and castles to be built. These became a powerful statement of the authority of the new ruling power and were on a scale previously unseen in England.

Founding Battle Abbey

The Battle of Hastings and Norman Conquest had involved much bloodshed. Under pressure from religious figures such as the pope, William needed to pay **penance** for the violence and deaths that he was responsible for.

In around 1070, he founded an abbey on the battlefield, positioning the **high altar** on the spot where Harold had been killed. The abbey both honoured the dead and demonstrated Norman power and achievement. The **monks** of the abbey prayed for all those who died in the battle: Norman and Anglo-Saxon alike. By calling it Battle Abbey, William was also reminding everyone of his victory.



The battlefield was a difficult site for building – it was hilly and the bottom of the valley was swampy. The monks had to level the hilltop to build Battle Abbey. © Historic England_hpr



11th century: Building Battle Abbey

Four **Benedictine** monks came from France to start a new community at Battle Abbey. The building of the abbey was very difficult, as the battlefield was on uneven, swampy ground with no supply of good running water. But William forced the monks to build where he had instructed – where Harold had fallen – saying, 'If God spare my life I will so amply provide for this place that wine shall be more abundant here than water.' William paid for all the building costs from the royal treasury.

By 1076, the **choir** was complete enough to be **consecrated**. When William I died in 1087, he had made sure that the abbey was provided for. This included the **leuga**, which gave the monks all the land within 1.5 miles of the high altar of the abbey church, which they could use for farming and collecting rents. In 1094, the church was finished and consecrated in the presence of William the Conqueror's son, King William II.



Benedictine monks followed the 'Rule of St Benedict'. The monks gathered to listen to a chapter of the Rule read aloud in the chapter house every day.



As the abbey earned more money from its tenants and farming, the abbot spent money on improving the buildings, such as the cloister walks. © Historic England_hpr

13th century: The abbey's rising wealth

In the 13th century, there were changes in farming methods that helped the abbey to earn more money from its land. The value of wool and wheat had grown, so the abbots at Battle Abbey began to farm their land more efficiently. The new method of crop rotation meant that fields no longer had to be left fallow (with nothing growing in it) for a year for the land to recover, meaning more crops could be grown and sold.

The abbots raised the rents of their properties in Battle town. Much of the abbey's increasing wealth was spent on building work. Over the next 100 years, many buildings were rebuilt and the abbey church was extended, modelled on the recent rebuilding of Westminster Abbey.



Life in the abbey

The Benedictine order of monks lived an enclosed life in an abbey, and at Battle Abbey it was no different. It followed the standard Benedictine plan of buildings arranged around an inner and outer **court**, enclosed by a **precinct wall**.

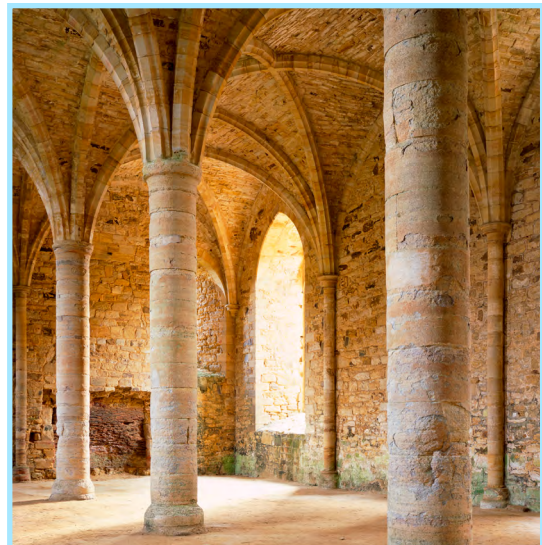
In the outer court were workshops and areas for key services for the abbey, such as blacksmiths and masons. There were barns for grain and hay, wood piles, storehouses, stables, cart sheds and offices and accommodation for the abbey steward and other important officials. Local traders and craftspeople came to the outer court to deliver goods or seek orders from the abbey **cellarer**.

The great **gatehouse** was the entrance to the outer court and, as the town grew, the high street became focused on the gatehouse as it was the source of key business for the town.

The inner court, the buildings around the cloister, was the private heart of the monastery where the monks lived. Here was the abbey church, where the townspeople also worshipped until objections by the monks led to a chapel being built outside the precinct wall – which became the parish church of St Mary's that stands today. Other buildings in the inner court included the **chapter house**, **dormitory**, **infirmary** and **refectory**.



St Mary's church was originally a chapel built for the townspeople outside the precinct wall of the abbey. The monks had become uncomfortable with people worshipping in the abbey church, which went against their life of seclusion. © Historic England_hpr



The 13th-century vaulted novices' chamber underneath the south end of the monks' dormitory. © Historic England_hpr



14–15th centuries: War, plague and recovery

The outbreak of the Hundred Years War with France in 1337 cast a threat of attack over the abbey. French raids were taking place along the south coast of England and the abbot of Battle Abbey was responsible for defence of the area. Abbot Alan de Retlyng strengthened the abbey's precinct wall and built the great gatehouse (though these 'defences' were more for display). In the summer of 1377, the French raided Winchelsea and Abbot Hamo de Offynton of Battle successfully defended the town, wearing his **hauberk** and using a crossbow.

About 50 monks lived at the abbey, but by 1352 this number had fallen to 34 as a result of the **Black Death**. The declining population due to the plague depleted the wealth that the abbey could earn from their rents in the town and from agricultural labour. By the early 15th century, there were just 23 monks living at the abbey. By 1490, the fortunes of the abbey had revived and there was enough wealth for the abbot to extend the abbot's lodgings and to rebuild the cloister walks.



The great gatehouse was rebuilt in 1338 and was a symbol of the wealth and power of the abbey.
© Historic England_hpr



The remains of the cloisters can be seen in the wall of Battle Abbey School today.

16th century: Suppression

In 1535, Battle Abbey was inspected by Thomas Cromwell's **visitor**, Dr Richard Layton. He returned in 1538 to take an inventory of the contents. When it was complete, the abbot and the 18 resident monks surrendered the house. The abbot was given a pension of £100 a year and moved to a house across the road on Battle High Street.

The same year, Henry VIII (r.1509–47) gave Battle Abbey and much of its land to his close friend Sir Anthony Browne. Sir Anthony demolished the church, chapter house, refectory and cloister walk but kept the great gatehouse and moved into the abbot's lodgings.

Sir Anthony's son, Viscount Montague, built the town courthouse, to the east of the great gatehouse, which still exists today. However, the Montague family did not often stay at Battle, and by 1685 the abbot's hall was being used as a barn.

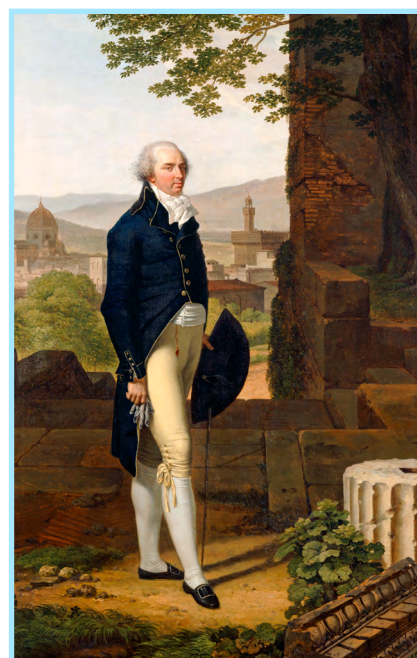


From 1536 to 1541, Henry VIII authorised the disbanding of most monasteries in England. The monks were forced to surrender Battle Abbey, its land and contents, to the king.

18–19th centuries: The Websters

In 1721, the 6th Viscount Montague sold the Battle Abbey estate to Sir Thomas Webster for £56,000.

Sir Thomas was a rich merchant with a keen interest in history. He repaired the abbot's lodging and rented out much of the abbey land. The estate passed down through the family, until the fourth **baronet**, Sir Godfrey, a notorious gambler, gradually sold off parts of the estate to pay his debts. In June 1800, owing huge sums of money, Sir Godfrey shot himself in London. His son, the fifth baronet, who was also a gambler, inherited the estate. He repaired the neglected buildings and built new ones, such as the ice house and the octagonal dairy that can be seen today. He also excavated the ruins of the abbey church crypt. However, mounting debts meant that the fifth baronet fled England, and his trustees sold off more of the estate. The next two baronets inherited the debts, and the estate was eventually sold in 1857.



A portrait of Sir Godfrey Vassall Webster, painted in 1794 by Louis Gauffier. Sir Godfrey sold parts of the Battle estate to fund his gambling and expensive lifestyle.

19–20th centuries: Tourism interrupted by war

The new owners of the estate, the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland, modernised the abbot's lodgings and transformed the grounds, reviving Battle Abbey as a private family residence. When the railway was built in 1852, crowds of visitors began to arrive to view the abbey ruins. The estate was sold again in 1891 – returning briefly into the ownership of the Webster family. By 1922, the Webster trustees leased the estate to Battle Abbey School, which still uses the site today.

In 1940, the War Office took over Battle Abbey for army accommodation, and troops from Battle took part in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944. History had come full circle, as it was now the English launching ships for Normandy, more than 850 years after William the Conqueror's troops landed by boat at Pevensey.

The estate was finally put up for sale for the last time in 1976 and was purchased by the government with American donations. Today, Battle Abbey and the battlefield are in the care of English Heritage.



During the Second World War, Battle Abbey was used for army accommodation and troops stationed at Battle took part in D-Day in 1944. © Crown copyright www.defenceimagery.mod.uk



Battle Abbey as it can be seen by visitors today

Glossary

Tricky terms and what they mean

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring the history of 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

abbey – the building(s) where a community of monks or nuns live and work

abbot – the head of an abbey of monks

baronet – a nobleman; called a 'lord' in person. William the Conqueror created barons in England to govern the land in his name

Battle of Stamford Bridge – the battle that took place on 25 September 1066, where English forces, led by King Harold Godwinson, defeated an invading Norwegian force led by King Harald Hardrada

Benedictine – a monk or nun of an order following the rule of St Benedict



A benedictine monk.

bishop – a person in the Christian Church who manages other clergymen working within a large area (a diocese)

Black Death – the huge outbreak of bubonic plague carried by the fleas of black rats, which killed millions of people across Europe and Asia in the mid-14th century

cavalry – (historically) soldiers who fought on horseback

In the battle of 1066, Norman cavalry had the advantage over English foot soldiers.



cellarer – the person in a monastery who is responsible for providing food and drink

chapel – a small building or room used for Christian worship within a larger building, such as a castle

chapter house – a building used for meetings in a monastery or cathedral

choir – the part of a cathedral or large church between the high altar and the nave, where the services were sung

cloister – the courtyard at the heart of a monastery, around which are its most important buildings

consecrate – make or declare (usually a church) sacred; dedicate formally to a religious or divine purpose

court – a quadrangular (four-sided) area surrounded by a building or group of buildings

crossbow – a bow that is fixed across a wooden support with a groove for the bolt and a mechanism for drawing and releasing the string

dormitory – a large bedroom for a number of people

fortification – a defensive wall or building that strengthens a place against attack

gatehouse – a defensive structure guarding a gateway to a building

Harold, Earl of Wessex – (r. Jan. 1066–Oct. 1066), the last Anglo-Saxon King of England. Harold was named as Edward the Confessor's successor and reigned until he was killed at the Battle of Hastings on 14 October, fighting the Norman invaders led by William the Conqueror.



Harold, Earl of Wessex.

hauberk – a piece of armour originally covering only the neck and shoulders but later a full-length coat of chain mail, or a tunic

high altar – the most important altar in a church

housecarl – (before the Norman Conquest) a member of the bodyguard of a Danish or English king or noble

infantry – soldiers marching or fighting on foot

infirmarium – the place in the monastery (or other institution) where the old, infirm and ill are cared for

leuga – the special privilege granted by William the Conqueror to Battle Abbey giving the abbot jurisdiction over both monks and laypeople (not monks) within 1.5 miles of the abbey church's high altar



Soldiers prepare for battle.

line – in battle, the arrangement of soldiers in a line formation

monk – a member of a religious community of men living according to religious rules

noble – belonging by rank, title, or birth to the aristocracy

penance – a punishment that has to be performed to show repentance so that a sin can be forgiven

precinct wall – the wall around the enclosed area of a monastery

refectory – the room used for communal meals

visitor – someone who inspects and reports on the monastery

William, Duke of Normandy – (r.1066–87) the first Norman King of England. He was Duke of Normandy from 1035, and launched the Norman conquest of England in 1066.



William, Duke of Normandy.

Key dates

1066 Battle Abbey and battlefield

- **1066 September** – William, Duke of Normandy, lands at Pevensey.

Days later, William marches his army to Hastings to meet King Harold's army on their return from Yorkshire.
- **c.1070** – William orders the building of Battle Abbey. He instructs the monks to build the abbey church on the spot where Harold had been killed.
- **1094** – The abbey is finished and consecrated in the presence of King William II (r.1087–1100), William the Conqueror's son.
- **1211** – The monks of Battle Abbey pay King John 1,500 marks to confirm the abbey is free to elect its own abbots.
- **c.1250** – As the abbey's wealth grows, many of the buildings are replaced and improved, including the cloister walk, dormitory range, and abbot's lodging. The abbey church is enlarged, modelled after Westminster Abbey.
- **1338** – Abbot Alan de Retlyng strengthens the precinct wall and builds the gatehouse as a show of power.
- **1490** – The number of monks at Battle Abbey begins to grow again, after the impact of the Black Death. The abbot extends his lodgings and updates the cloister buildings.
- **1538** – Abbot Hammond surrenders the abbey to King Henry VIII as part of the Reformation. Henry gives the abbey to his close friend Sir Anthony Browne. Sir Anthony demolishes many of the buildings including the church.
- **1721** – The 6th Viscount Montague sells Battle Abbey estate to Sir Thomas Webster, who repairs the abbot's lodgings and rents out much of the land.
- **c.1810–20** – Sir Godfrey, the fifth baronet, repairs the neglected buildings and builds new ones, such as the dairy and ice house. He also excavates the ruins of the abbey church.
- **1922** – The Webster trustees lease the estate to Battle Abbey school.
- **1940** – The war office takes over Battle Abbey for army accommodation.
- **1976** – The government purchases the Battle Abbey estate.

Battle Abbey Carol



Recommended for

History, English

Learning objectives

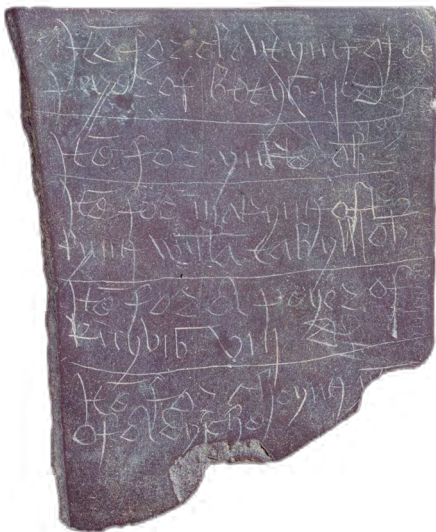
- Understand the role of religion in medieval culture and society.
- Identify and explain the use of literary devices.

Group size

5–6

Time to complete

15–20 minutes



The monks used slate to write sheet music. This piece of slate was discovered at Battle Abbey.

Summary

The monks at Battle Abbey lived according to the Rule of St Benedict. Worship was the focus of each day, with the monks attending church for eight services every day and High Mass. By the late 15th century, some services were accompanied by music sung by choirs and the monks also sang carols in English, such as the Battle Abbey Carol.

You might start an introduction to the Battle Abbey Carol by explaining to students the meaning of the word 'carol', which probably came from the French 'carole', a ring dance. Over the centuries, the meaning of 'carol' had become simply 'song'. A carol always has an opening chorus which is repeated after each verse.

The carol describes a form of piety that focused on the life and sufferings of Christ. The first verse of the Battle Abbey Carol emphasises Christ's poverty and humble living, and his bitter death for mankind. This form of piety was intended to help people repent and adopt a more Christ-like way of living. It highlights mankind's failure to live according to Christ's example, and instead, we should follow Christ's word to live a more Christian existence.

The carol was most likely performed in the great hall in the abbot's lodging, where the abbot would entertain guests and celebrate feasts.

At the abbey

When you visit the abbey, students can listen to the carol playing in the great gatehouse. Listening to the way the carol was sung may help students to understand its meaning and impact. In their group, they can complete the Battle Abbey Carol activity sheet on the next page while listening to the carol.

More learning ideas

Students can read more about the Battle Abbey Carol and its discovery on our website: by searching Battle Abbey Carol on the English Heritage website.

Battle Abbey Carol

“”

Be merry all with one accord
And be you followers of Christ's word.

Then all your doings should here in earth
Present the fact of Christ's birth
His lodging was simple; His living was bare;
His death was bitter; we were His care.

Be merry all ...

I would our life could now be such;
He was full poor to make us rich,
Meek and lowly in all men's sight;
It was the candle which gave us light.

Be merry all ...

Boast not yourself nor your acts advance,
But one lament another chance,
For we be far from this degree
For how we live all men may see.

Be merry all ...

He shall his tongue from slander refrain
Which will be pride no man disdain;
So of all things I think it best
To live and love and be at rest.

Be merry all ...

All fair talk is not worth a straw
Where love is not which fulfils the law;
Wherefore, in meeting where you resort
Belittle no man with false report.

Be merry all ...

Care not too much for worldly pleasure,
Lest hereafter you lose a better treasure,
For sorrow increases and ennui is bold
When charity is scanty and waxes cold.
Therefore be merry with one accord
And be you doers of Christ's word.

A What effect does the use of rhyme have on the carol's meaning?

B How does the use of repetition give the carol impact?

C What effect does the use of personal pronouns have on the listener?

At the Abbey and Battlefield

Activities for students to do at Battle Abbey and Battlefield to help them get the most out of their learning.

Walk from Battle station



Recommended for

History, Maths

Learning objectives

- To explore the landscape where research shows us William likely attacked.
- To picture how hard the battle would've been.

Time to complete

20–30 minutes



The 'Harold stone' marking the spot where the altar of the church at Battle Abbey once lay. It is believed that this was placed in the spot where Harold Godwinson was killed at the Battle of Hastings.

Summary

Explore the likely route of William's army as they attacked Harold's forces, on the walk from the station. For primary students there are activities to complete, pages 24–25. For secondary students, there are highlights for you to point out to your class. Both can be printed in advance.

Research into the descriptions of the battle shows that William's army likely attacked from down near where the railway station is today. His forces fired arrows and attacked uphill to the location of the abbey. For groups that arrive by train and walk up the hill to the abbey, use these points to set the scene while on the way to 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield.

Preparation and resources

For Key Stage 2 students we have a student trail with four activities and sites to look for. The answers, where relevant, are in the teachers' notes on page 25. For Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students, teachers might like to use this more like a tour, with the teachers' notes helping you to guide students to notice key points from what was once part of the battlefield.

More learning ideas

Explore the landscape using an online map. In 1066 the town, abbey and railway station had not yet been built. Historical accounts describe a wooded hill overlooking a cleared valley with Harold and his army positioned on the opposite hilltop. Use the location of the abbey and railway station to see if you can work out where these features would have been.

Walk from Battle station

Around 1070 William the Conqueror ordered the building of Battle Abbey on the site where Harold Godwinson had been killed during the battle in 1066. Research suggests William's army likely approached up the hill from where the railway station is now.

Questions

- 1** Research suggests that William's army attacked up the hill, starting near where the station now stands and heading towards the abbey. **Count** how many steps from the station to the wall of the abbey.
- 2** When you first catch sight of the abbey wall **give** your best battle cry. ☐ **Tick** the box after completing.
- 3** An axe-head was unearthed here, at the top of the road by the roundabout, in 1951. It is held in Battle Museum. It is thought that this might be from one of the axes used in the battle.
- 4** Arrows could fly approximately 50–100m. **Find** the house in this photo. This spot would have been the furthest point the archers stood to fire at Harold's army on the hill.



Tick the box when you find the location. ☐

Draw in where the axe handle would have been.



Photograph of the axe-head found on Marley Road in 1951.
© Battle Museum of local history

Walk from Battle station

Answer sheet

- 1** There are approximately 550 steps from the station to Battle Abbey.
- 2** The battle cries depended on the army:
Anglo-Saxons: "ut,ut,ut" – meaning "out, out, out"
Normans: "Dex aie, Dex aie" – meaning "God be with us"

Teachers' notes for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 highlights

Whilst today this is the train station, sources suggest that in 1066 William's army came from the hillside to the left of the station (as you look at the road). They were likely based somewhere around where the station is today.

As you walk up the road, none of these buildings were here in 1066. This area was mostly open ground with a few trees and shrubs. William's army attacked up this hill.

By the mini-roundabout is a road called Marley Lane. At the top of the lane the only artefact believed to be from the battle has been found. An axe-head was uncovered in an archaeological dig close to the top of this road in 1951. It is now in the Battle Museum at the top of Battle High Street.



Photograph of the axe-head found on Marley Road in 1951. © Battle Museum of Local History

The white house next to the petrol station is approximately 100m from where evidence shows Harold had his standard, within the abbey grounds. This is as far as William's archers could fire their arrows.



Activity trail



Recommended for

History, RE

Learning objectives

- To investigate the events of the Battle of Hastings in the place where it happened.
- Explore the creation of and life in Battle Abbey.
- Learn about the key figures involved in the Battle of Hastings and development of the abbey.

Time to complete

60 minutes



Explore the Gatehouse exhibition, and the exhibition in the Visitor Centre.

Summary

This activity is designed to get students to engage with the site, its history and significance. The questions encourage students to reflect on the site, its history and their experience of visiting. They are open ended to support reflection, and to make them easier to use back in the classroom, after your visit.

Pre-visit activity

Encourage students to consider the questions beforehand, to guide their enquiry around the site, or they can fill it out as they go.

Preparation and resources

You will find the activity trail on the following pages. Please print copies for your students to use on-site or after their visit. The questions will help your students to explore the site, particularly the exhibition next to the café, and in the gatehouse. Access to the battlefield is weather dependent.

More learning ideas

You could use this to explore cause and consequence back at school, or to inform discussion on the changes in England as a result of the Norman Conquest. Key themes like social, economic and political impacts can be explored from the students' answers.

Activity trail

Today, you have the chance to explore the abbey, exhibition, gatehouse and battlefield. While you look around consider these questions, which you can answer at the end of your visit.

One person I had not heard of before visiting 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield is:

.....

I learnt that they:

.....

.....

The most interesting thing I've learnt is:

.....

.....

Something that surprised me is:

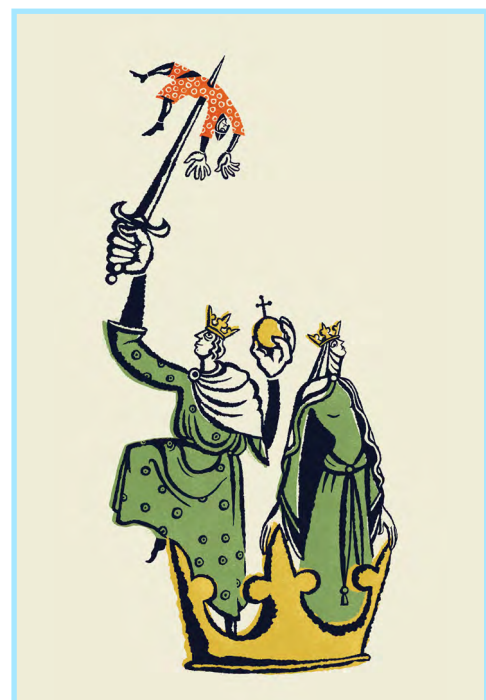
.....

.....

Draw a picture inspired by your visit:



Blank area for drawing.



King William I and Queen Mathilda of England, illustration by Belle Mellor.

1066 Battle of Hastings role play



Recommended for

History, Drama

Learning objectives

- **WHAT:** Learn about the Anglo-Saxon and Norman armies, their weapons and their tactics.
- **HOW:** Take on the role of Anglo-Saxon and Norman soldiers, and re-enact the critical moments of 14 October 1066.
- **OUTCOME:** Critically evaluate events and make considered judgements about the reasons for William's victory and Harold's defeat.

Time to complete

Approximately 30 minutes



A photograph showing scenes from the Battle re-enactment weekend that takes place every October at Battle Abbey.

Health and safety

This activity embraces active learning by encouraging students to recreate the Battle of Hastings. It should be made clear that, while enthusiastic drama skills are encouraged, no prolonged physical contact or actual fighting to cause harm should be tolerated.

Before your visit

Prior learning

This activity focuses on the battle itself, so, to get the most out of it, students should have an understanding of the build-up to the battle.

This can be gained from a visit to the on-site Visitor Centre at 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, which contains historical information, an introductory film and multi-user interactive experiences.

Pre-visit activities

In the classroom, students could prepare by making shields from card and/or helmets. Search for the 'How to make a cardboard shield' (1 min 54 sec) video on our YouTube channel to help.

Preparation and resources

Print and bring the role play activity outline with you to the battlefield. You will probably want to discuss the activity with your supporting staff and agree who will be stationed where on the battlefield. You may wish to split your class in half and elect your 'lead' characters and army segments in advance (see 'Build an army' instructions on the next pages). This could support some more in-depth independent research and character preparation in advance of the role play.

Contents summary

1. Build an army – split class and assign roles
2. Prepare for battle – learn about location, formation, armour and weapons
3. Let battle commence! – re-enact the Battle of Hastings
4. The aftermath – reflect on the events of the battle.

More learning ideas

You might like to ask students to freeze frame parts of the battle to take photos to use later in the classroom.

Self-led Activity 1066 Battle of Hastings role play

1. Build an army

Both armies were fairly evenly matched: estimates vary between 5,000 and 7,000 men. The numbers here are meant to be largely representative of the proportion of each section of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman armies.

The suggestions below are based on a class of 30; please adapt as required.

Divide students into two groups to form an Anglo-Saxon and a Norman army.

Side	Role	Character suggestions	Number
Anglo-Saxons	Harold Godwinson, King of England	Body: shoulders back, chest and chin lifted, sword in hand, powerful strides. Voice: low pitch, controlled pace, assertive tone, booming volume.	x1
	Housecarls, Harold's highly trained soldiers	Body: wide stance, clenched fists, battle axe/sword in hand, marching steps. Voice: fast pace, aggressive tone.	x5
	Fyrd, mainly from farming communities	Body: restless feet, hunched shoulders, shield in hand, lumbering movements. Voice: fast pace, blood-thirsty tone.	x8
Normans	William, Duke of Normandy	Body: shoulders back, chest and chin lifted, sword in hand, powerful strides. Voice: low pitch, assertive tone, booming volume, French accent!	x1
	Infantry (foot soldiers)	Body: wide stance, gritted teeth, weapon in hand. Voice: angry tone, fast pace, low pitch, loud volume.	x4
	Archers	Body: upright posture, facing side on, staring intensely, bow in hand. Voice: loud volume, controlled pace, confident tone.	x3
	Cavalry (knights on horses)	Body: torso upright, legs on stirrups, reins in one hand, weapon in the other. Voice: loud volume, arrogant tone, energetic pace, low pitch.	x6
Other roles	Narrator/trumpet player (doesn't need an actual trumpet)	Body: wide stance, shoulders back, chest and chin lifted, trumpet in hand. Voice: loud volume, steady pace, engaging tone.	x1
	Taillefer, William's minstrel	Body: taunting gestures, brandishing weapons, arrogant body language. Voice: heavy breathing, fast pace, mocking tone.	x1

Self-led Activity 1066 Battle of Hastings role play

2. Prepare for battle

Find a good location in which to stage your battle re-enactment. If at 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, this can be done on the battlefield itself or at a point along the terrace walk. It would be helpful to have an area of higher ground to best illustrate the positions of the two armies.

Ask the narrator to set the scene by reading this script:

The year is 1066.

Two armies are stationed at Battle near Hastings.

The reason for them being here depends on who you ask.

A Norman would tell you that William, the Duke of Normandy, was promised the throne of England. And not just once – but twice. The first time by Edward the Confessor, the English king who's just died; the second time by Harold himself, who swore on holy relics that William was to be king. Harold had been shipwrecked in Normandy and, while he was there, William looked after and protected him, before sending him safely home to England.

But with Edward the Confessor dead, the treacherous Harold has claimed the throne for himself. Outraged by this, William has taken his case to the highest authority in Europe, the pope, and has got his blessing for an invasion of England. A crusade if you will, to right this terrible wrong.

An Englishman would tell you that it might be true that Edward promised the throne to William – but he promised it to Harold too. And what was Harold supposed to do in Normandy? Shipwrecked, he was essentially a prisoner – if he hadn't promised the crown to William, he'd never have been released.

Besides, when Edward died it was the nobility of England who chose Harold as their leader – as is proper in English law. Everyone knows the Normans love to expand into new lands. Originally from Norway, they're now in France and Italy. They'll find any excuse to invade the rich and cultured land of England, the greatest prize in Europe.

Whichever side you are on, one thing is for certain: the fate of the throne of England is going to be decided here, today, 14th October 1066, on the battlefield...

Now use the information in the next table to get everyone into formation on the battlefield. 'Equip' them with their armour and weapons; give them the opportunity to act out using them, and talk through the discussion points. Be certain to stress that both sides were fairly evenly matched and there was no foregone conclusion of William's victory.

Self-led Activity **1066 Battle of Hastings role play**

	Harold's Anglo-Saxon army	William's Norman army	Action/discussion points
Location	On the top of Senlac Hill, facing downhill.	At the bottom of Senlac Hill, facing uphill.	Get students into the correct location. Who had the advantage, Harold or William? (William's men would have had to run or gallop uphill to attack, which would have been tiring.)
Formation	Arranged in a single, solid shield wall formation along the top of the ridge, standing shoulder to shoulder with their shields overlapping. King Harold would have stood in the middle with the elite fighting men, the housecarls, around him. The fyrd make up the rest.	Three lines: Front line – Norman archers. Second line – Norman infantry (foot soldiers). Third line – cavalry (knights on horseback). Each group could be used to carry out specific attacks.	Ask students to organise themselves into the two respective battle formations. What are the options available to both leaders? How significant was the cavalry to William?
Armour	Helmets and chain mail shirts that covered the whole body down to the knees called hauberts.	A combination including chain mail and conical nasal helmets (with the metal piece to protect the nose).	Students to imagine putting on their armour. Discuss what it might have felt like, the ability to move in it etc. The Battle of Hastings lasted for around nine hours. What might it have been like to fight in this armour for that length of time?
Weapons	Housecarls – long battleaxes that are razor sharp and swords. Fyrd – mostly from farming communities and therefore small axes, spears and stones.	Archers – short bows and crossbows. Foot soldiers – axes, spears and swords. Cavalry – spears, lances (for jabbing and throwing), swords and maces.	When 'presented' with their weapons, students can practise using them, mimicking shooting arrows or swinging a sword. Noises as appropriate! Which would have been the most easy/difficult to use? Which would have been the most deadly?

Self-led Activity 1066 Battle of Hastings role play

3. Let battle commence!

As the teacher, you will direct the action in this section, but we would advise you to pause at regular intervals. Students should improvise the action as the detail of each stage is introduced. At the end of each stage of the battle, discuss the suggested reflection questions. There are four stages in total.

Stage	Instruction/Action!	Reflection
STAGE 1 9am The start of the battle	- Duke William rallies his army and makes a rousing speech. - The Anglo-Saxons shout the word 'Ut!', or Out! at the Normans and drum on their shields. - The Normans shout in return 'Dex Aie' which means God Help Us. - Legend has it that William asks for a man to take on one of the English army in single combat. It's said that William's minstrel, Taillefer, volunteers. He rides forward singing a popular tune of the day, the 'Song of Roland', and juggles his lance. He defeats the English challenger then charges at the English battle lines where he's immediately cut down. - A trumpeter sounds their horn; the battle begins. - Duke William orders his archers to shoot arrows into the shield wall to soften up the Anglo-Saxons. - This has little impact and so William orders archers to the side of the battlefield and infantry forward uphill to engage – intense fighting takes place. - The English fyrd throw stones and axes at the infantry. Then hand-to-hand combat takes place. - However, the Saxon shield wall stands firm. - Realising the infantry are having little effect, William orders the cavalry to charge uphill with lances and swords.	What strategies are each army employing? What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each? 'The Song of Roland' is an epic poem based on the Battle of Roncevaux in 778 during the reign of Charlemagne who was king of the Franks. Why might William's troops have chosen to perform this poem as they went into battle? At this stage in the battle, what strategy is more likely to work, A or B? A. Anglo-Saxons standing firm on high ground allowing the Normans to do most of the work. B. Normans using a combination of military manoeuvres: archers, infantry and horse charges with knights.
STAGE 2 10.30am–12pm The battle continues	- The Norman cavalry are beaten back and fail to penetrate the shield wall. Fighting is deadlocked. - Suddenly, the left-hand side of the Norman cavalry begins to break off from attacking the shield wall, as a rumour goes round that William is dead. - They retreat back down the hill and this starts panic among many of the Normans on the left-hand side or flank of the battlefield. - The Anglo-Saxon fyrd on that side of the field decide to leave the shield wall and chase after the retreating Normans on the left flank. - William sees the panic and races around in front of his men. - William gallops past his army and, raising his helmet, shouts 'Look at me! I am alive and will be the victor with God's help!' - The Anglo-Saxon soldiers who race downhill after the retreating men are suddenly surrounded and cut down by the Normans.	What would the students do at this moment (both Anglo-Saxons and Normans)? Was it a good idea for the Anglo-Saxons to go after the retreating Normans? What should William's next move be? What should King Harold do? What does William's shout to his men tell us about his belief that he will win?

Self-led Activity 1066 Battle of Hastings role play

Stage	Instruction/Action!	Reflection
STAGE 3 12.30pm–4pm The turning point	1. William orders further cavalry charges uphill. 2. He decides to order at least two false retreats, where the Norman cavalry pretend to run away with the intent of drawing out the defenders. 3. The students who are the cavalry should do at least two false retreats and encourage some of the shield wall soldiers to follow them. 4. These mock retreats begin slowly to break up the shield wall as more and more Anglo-Saxon fyrd and some housecarls attempt to pursue the retreating Normans. Gaps appear and William's cavalry encircle the groups of separated fyrd and cut them down. 5. Emphasise the gaps that appear in the shield wall. 6. Norman infantry and cavalry can now penetrate the shield wall and get at the Anglo-Saxon soldiers behind the main wall.	False retreats were a tactic that had been used before by the Normans, but evidence suggests that William was inspired to do this after the first unplanned retreat. What has stayed the same about William's strategy and what has changed? What does this suggest about William as a leader in battle?
STAGE 4 5pm The battle comes to an end	1. William orders his archers to shoot arrows high over the front of the shield wall onto the English soldiers nearer the back. 2. During these volleys an arrow possibly strikes Harold in the eye. He is then cut down by three Norman knights. 3. The English army is broken and begins to flee pursued by the Normans. 4. The Normans are victorious on the field. 5. Many bodies lie around the battleground and the victors, the Normans, start taking weapons, jewellery and armour from the dead.	What might the scene on the battlefield have looked, felt and smelt like after around nine hours of fighting? How would the English soldiers, still alive, feel, knowing they had lost their king? For the Norman victors, how would they feel? What would they do next? How might they celebrate?

Self-led Activity **1066 Battle of Hastings role play**

4. The aftermath

To provide an opportunity for students to share their perspectives, we would encourage pairing up Anglo-Saxon characters with Norman ones and giving them some time to discuss and compare their battle experience before coming back together as a group.

Suggested questions to ask after the re-enactment:

Anglo-Saxon soldiers, the fyrd and housecarls

1. Why do you think your position was a strong one?
2. When did you feel the battle turned against you?
3. How did fighting a losing battle feel?
4. What do you think your army could have done differently to win?

Note on historical interpretation:

Some historians believe that if the fyrd on the left of the battlefield had been disciplined and not split from the shield wall, weakening it, the English could perhaps have retained their strong position on the hill and beaten the Normans.

Normans

Cavalry

1. How did you feel when charging at the English line?
2. What moment caused you the biggest worry?
3. When did things turn in your favour?

Infantry

1. How did it feel to be repelled by the shield wall many times?
2. How do you think you could have fought better?

Archers

1. Which had the best effect, shooting arrows to the front of the shield wall or to the rear?
2. How did the decision to use archers in the battle affect the outcome?

William the Conqueror

1. How do you feel now that you've conquered England?
2. What are you going to do first to show the people of England that you are in charge?

Self-led Activity 1066 Battle of Hastings role play

Ask the narrator to finish the activity by reading the concluding text, explaining what William did next:

After the battle, William rode on to London. He was crowned King of England on 25th December 1066.

Despite this, resistance to the Normans continued and rebellions in the West Country, the Welsh Marches, the Midlands, the North, and East Anglia were not finally put down until 1071. William showed himself to be merciless in dealing with these revolts, devastating the crops, cattle and homes of those who opposed him.

To strengthen his legitimacy as king, William was crowned by representatives of the pope when they met at Easter 1070. He followed this by making sweeping changes to the church and the law. For example, almost all Anglo-Saxon bishops and abbots were replaced by Normans and most of the English nobility were replaced and their lands given to Normans.

William began a massive building campaign of churches, cathedrals and castles. One such building was the abbey he had built at Battle. William insisted on having the abbey church built on the very spot where Harold had been killed. Some have seen this as a way for him to atone (apologise) for the bloodshed; others have viewed it as another way for William to show off his power and authority.

Either way, with William's rule, the face of England was dramatically altered.

This is a great lead-in to exploring aspects of Norman England such as the feudal system, Norman architecture and castles.



Pevensey Castle is a good example of Norman architecture.

Sensory trail: Battle re-enactment



Recommended for

History, Drama

Learning objectives

- To learn the events of the battle in 1066, in the place where it happened.
- Understand William became king after the battle in 1066.

Time to complete

30–45 minutes



Re-enactors on the battlefield.

Summary

This activity gives the students the chance to explore the concepts of kings and queens, and some understanding of the ideas of knights, medieval battles and taking the crown. Also understanding that students are visiting the remains of an abbey.

Pre-visit activity

Use the sensory story to prepare for your visit. It can be downloaded and printed in advance from pages 37–39. There is a longer and a shorter version, each of which works with the same sensory resources. You can choose whether you want to tell the longer, more complex, or shorter simplified version of the story.

This has been written for a wide range of users. You might like to check the resources beforehand and decide which objects are most relevant to your students.

Preparation and resources

You will find the activity trail on the following pages.

Book online in advance to have access to the bags of sensory resources to support this activity. They will be made available for you at the beginning of your visit.

Walk through the story with your students, using the actions and props to help to illustrate what happened here.

More learning ideas

You might like to revisit this story back in the classroom, can the students recall who won the battle to become king?

Students might also like to create their own royal stories or stories of battles in the classroom.

You may also like to use this for more storytelling about kings, queens and knights.

Self-led Activity

Sensory trail: battle re-enactment – long version

Activity one

Where: Outside gatehouse

Resources: Activity bag one

Say: It is 1066. Harold is King of England.

Do: All class practise bowing to the king.

Activity: Show students the king with his crown from activity bag one.

Activity two

Where: Outside gatehouse

Resources: Activity bag two

Say: William sails over from Normandy in France.

Do: Practise blowing the sails on the ship to sail across the sea.

Activity: Pass around the model of the boat, of William and sea smell cube from activity bag two.

Activity three

Where: Terrace

Say: Harold and William have a big battle here. The Saxons led by Harold formed a shield wall.

Do: Stand half your class shoulder to shoulder ready for battle – this is a shield wall.

Activity: Call 'Ut Ut Ut', the Saxon battle cry for 'Out, out, out'.

Activity four

Where: Terrace

Resources: Activity bag three

Say: William's army had archers and soldiers on horses.

Do: The other half of your class line up to face the shield wall, make horse clapping noise, and mime pulling back a bow and arrow.

Activity: Pass around the horse smell box, sound button, and the arrow from activity bag three.

Self-led Activity

Sensory trail: battle re-enactment – long version

Activity five

Where: Terrace

Resources: Activity bag four

Say: William's cavalry tricked Harold's army. They pretended to run away. When Harold's army chased them, it broke the shield wall.

Do: William's army all cheer.

Activity: Wave the banners of William's army from activity bag four.

Activity six

Where: Harold stone

Resources: Activity bag one and two

Say: Harold dies and William becomes the king.

Do: All bow again to the new king.

Activity: Move the crown from the model of Harold from activity bag one to the model of William from activity bag two.

Activity seven

Where: Abbey building

Resources: Activity bag five

Say: William has this abbey built after the battle to say sorry.

Do: Mime praying as the monks did here.

Activity: Pass around the cross, rosary beads and Bible, and the choral music sound button from activity bag five.

Self-led Activity

Sensory trail: battle re-enactment – short version

Activity one

Where: Outside gatehouse

Resources: Activity bag one

Say: It is 1066. Harold is King of England.

Do: All class practise bowing to the king.

Activity: Show students the king with his crown from activity bag one.

Activity two

Where: Outside gatehouse

Resources: Activity bag two

Say: William sails over from Normandy in France.

Do: Practise blowing the sails on the ship to sail across the sea.

Activity: Pass around the model of the boat, of William and sea smell cube from activity bag two.

Activity three

Where: Terrace

Resources: Activity bag three

Say: Harold and William have a big battle here.

Do: Stand shoulder to shoulder ready for battle – this is a shield wall. Try to scare your teachers with your best battle cry.

Activity: Pass around the horse smell box, sound button, and the arrow from activity bag three.

Activity four

Where: Harold stone

Resources: Activity bag one and two

Say: Harold dies and William becomes the king.

Do: All bow again to the new king.

Activity: Move the crown from the model of Harold from activity bag one to the model of William from activity bag two.

Activity five

Where: Abbey building

Resources: Activity bag four

Say: William has this abbey built after the battle to say sorry.

Do: Mime praying as the monks did here.

Activity: Pass around the cross, rosary beads and Bible, and the choral music sound button from activity bag five.

Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle trail



Recommended for

History

Learning objectives

- To identify key locations and evidence from Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle.
- Understand Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle as evidence of key themes in the Norman Conquest.

Time to complete

60 minutes

Summary

This activity gives the students the chance to explore Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle as sources of information. This can support using either site as a site-specific study for GCSE. The locations provide evidence to historians of the main themes of the Norman Conquest, with detail about the Battle and why it was so close, and evidence for William's eventual victory. They also provide evidence of the later impact of the Conquest, looking at evidence of different methods of Normanisation.



Pevensey Castle gatehouse.

Pre-visit activity

This resource can either be used as an introduction to the topic, or to recap learning. In either case, it helps students to identify the evidence in the sites that helps historians to understand the events and significance of the Norman Conquest and the Battle of Hastings.

Preparation and resources

You will find the activity trail on the following pages.

Print a copy for each of your students, then encourage them to explore to find each of these locations. The supporting information can be used back in the classroom to reinforce learning and the significance of each of these pieces of evidence.

More learning ideas

You can encourage further learning by investigating the ideas of integration and force in Normanisation at other sites around the country. History pages of other English Heritage sites, including St Augustine's Abbey, Clifford's Tower, Richmond Castle and Old Sarum, may well help, among others.

You could also use the sources later in this Teachers' Kit to explore how historians use information from many different sources to piece together events of the past.

Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle trail

Find key evidence for events in 1066

Explore the material evidence for key features of the battle, why William I won and how he consolidated his power.

Evidence William was well prepared for battle

1. Pevensey moat ☒

William of Normandy's army landed at Pevensey. They took over and strengthened a Roman fort there.



2. Arrows ☒

William I brought archers to the battle; they helped to break down the shield wall.



3. Cavalry ☒

William I used mounted soldiers. They changed the course of the very close battle, especially with the feigned retreat.



Evidence Harold was well prepared for battle

4. Shield wall ☒

Harold Godwinson was a formidable opponent; his shield wall held for hours. This tactic had proved strong lots of times before.



5. High ground ☒

Harold stationed his army at the top of Senlac Hill, tiring William with every attack. The Norman troops were exhausted, but the shield wall still held.



6. Housecarls ☒

These elite soldiers fought against the Normans for hours with axes. They were protected in the shield wall and powerful enough to stop the soldiers and horses.



Battle Abbey and Pevensey Castle trail

Find key evidence for events in 1066

Evidence of Normanisation by force

7. Norman building ☒

William built lots of Norman structures to show his power and control through force. The zigzag masonry in Pevensey's outer wall may be a Norman repair.



8. Pevensey Castle ☒

Castles were built from wood and stone as bases to suppress uprisings. The king's castles were often spaced a day's march from each other.



9. Helmets ☒

William's followers built castles throughout the country. They made sure the local people obeyed William's laws, sometimes with force.



Evidence of Normanisation by integration

10. Crowned king ☒

William I had himself crowned king using the English crown to convey legitimacy.



11. Battle Abbey and town ☒

Battle town was founded by the abbey's monks. A mixture of Norman and English people lived here.

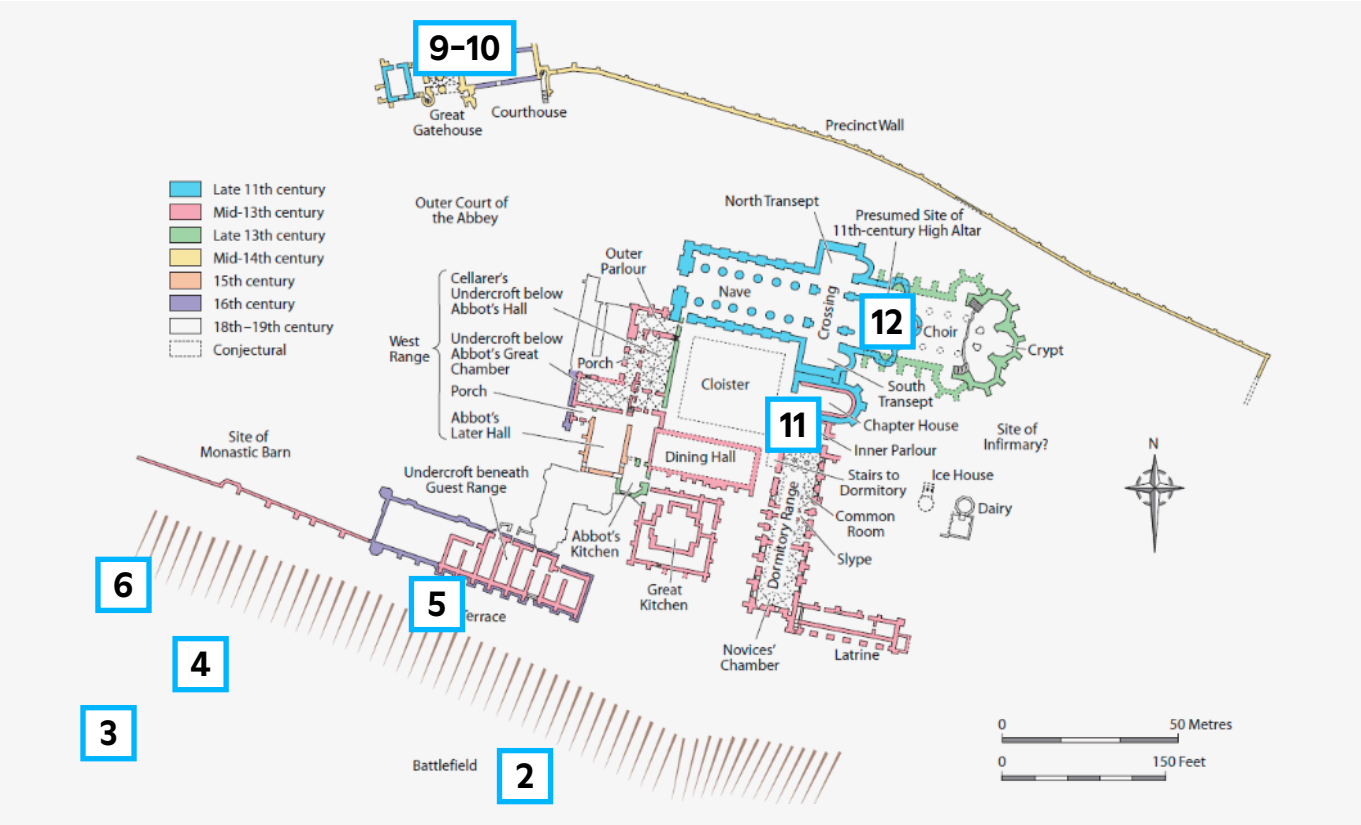


12. Grave marker ☒

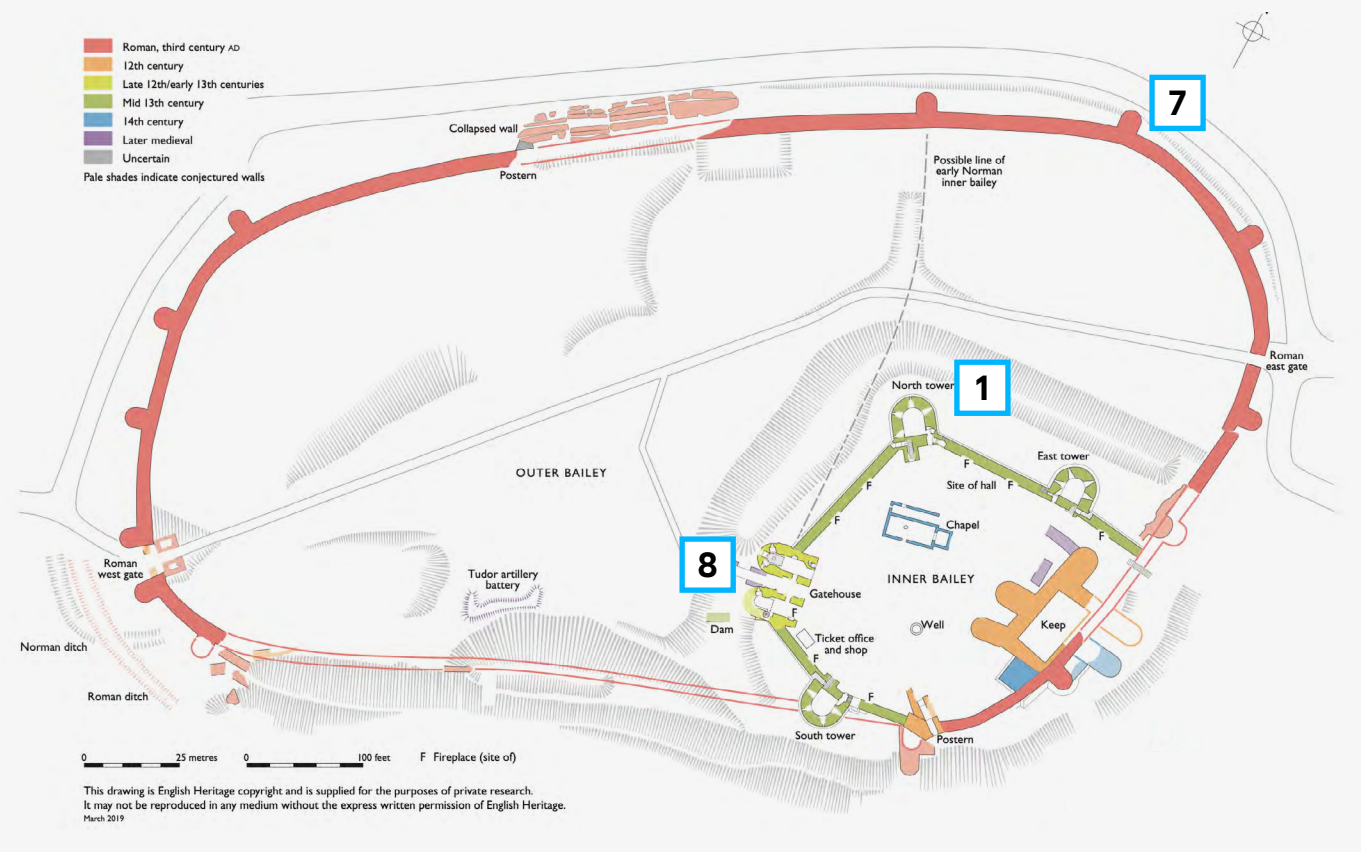
William founded Battle Abbey as a place where monks would pray for all those who fell in the battle. This stone marks the site of the abbey's high altar.



Battle Abbey floor plan



Pevensey Castle floor plan



Post-visit

Information and activities to help you extend your students' learning back in the classroom.

Design your own coat of arms



Recommended for

History, Art and Design

Learning objectives

- Understand the origins, meaning and purpose of heraldry.
- Evaluate the legacy of William the Conqueror's victory and its impact on Battle Abbey.

Time to complete

30 minutes

Group size

5-6



Battle Abbey's coat of arms can be found displayed in several places in the gatehouse.

Summary

The Battle Roll was a commemorative list of the names of 551 knights who fought for William in the Battle of Hastings, 1066. It was displayed at the abbey until it was lost in the 16th century.

Students create their own coat of arms imagining they fought at the Battle of Hastings and would be included on the Battle Roll.

To a medieval knight, showing your family name at an important battle or tournament was vital for your reputation. From the early 12th century, knights began wearing helmets that covered the whole face, so it was difficult to identify them. To be recognised, they began to paint personalised combinations of colours, shapes and/or animals on their shields and banners. Over time, these coats of arms were also used to represent organisations or institutions, such as monasteries or guilds.

Students can use the activity sheets below to follow the medieval rules and symbolism of heraldry to create their own coat of arms.

Use our online guide, which you can find by searching Guide to Heraldry on the English Heritage website.

Bring students' coats of arms as A5 pieces of artwork for us to display on our Battle Roll board in the great gatehouse.

More learning ideas

Students could think about how coats of arms are still used today. Does their school/local council/football club have one? What connections are there between the medieval use of coats of arms and how we use them today? Why is the shield design still used?

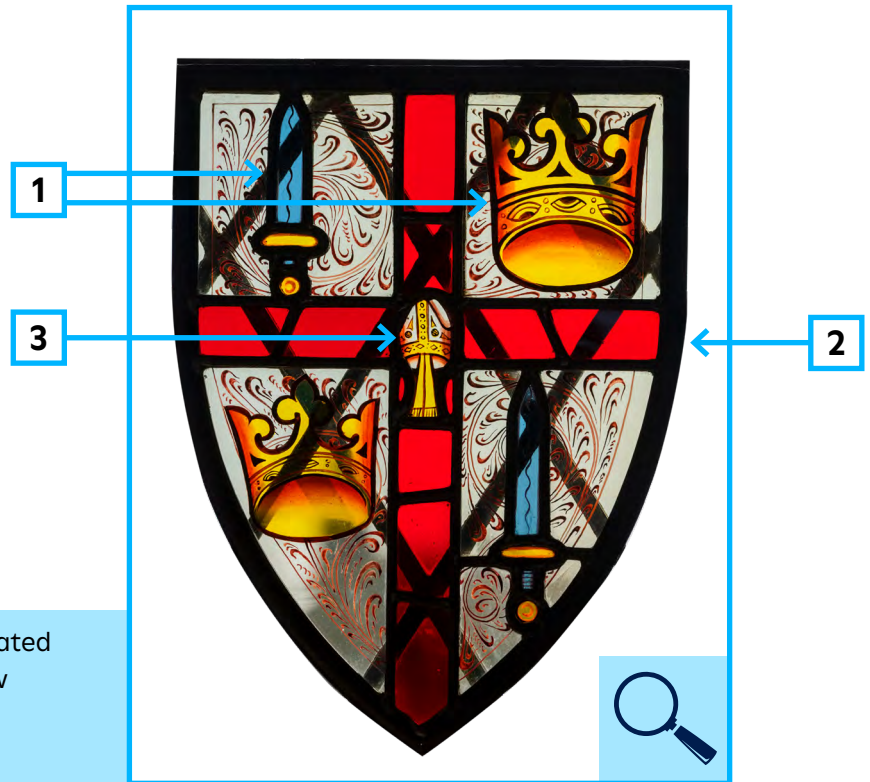
Higher-level questioning:

How do students think medieval ideas of heraldry (family identity, achievement, mottos) relate to modern-day organisations' trademarks, slogans and copyright?

Design your own coat of arms



Discover the meaning of the Battle coat of arms and learn how to make your own.



The Battle coat of arms has been recreated here in a modern stained-glass window in the gatehouse. It is copied from a 14th-century panel.

- 1** The sword is most likely a reference to the victory of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings, 1066, and the crown symbolises his ultimate achievement as a consequence of the battle – becoming King of England.
- 2** The red cross on a white background may symbolise England, or perhaps the crucifix – the symbol of Christianity.
- 3** The mitre (tall headdress) symbolises the power of the bishop and some senior abbots in the Church. Permission to use the mitre symbol could only be granted by the pope, as the head of the Church. The abbots of Battle received the right to use the mitre in the late 14th century.

What was the abbey trying to communicate through its coat of arms?

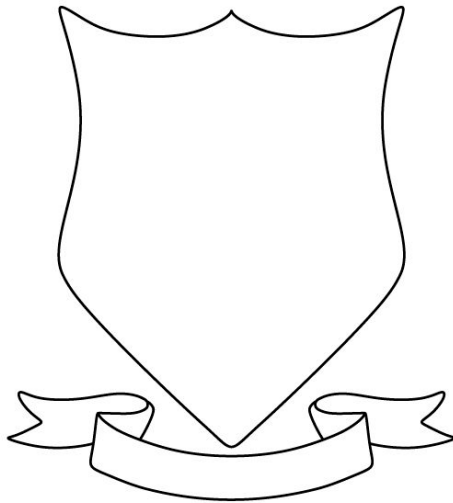
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Design your own coat of arms



Follow the heraldic rules below to create a coat of arms that represents you.



Pssst!

Use the big shield on the next page to design your coat of arms.

Background

Colours

- Red = gules
- Blue = azure
- Green = vert
- Black = sable
- Purple = purpure

Metals

- Gold or yellow = ore
- Silver or white = argent

Furs

- Ermine
- Vair

Animal

- Lions = bravery
- Dogs = faithfulness, reliability
- Stags = wisdom and long life
- Eagles = power and nobility
- Hares = speed
- Badgers = endurance

Charge

- Crosses – of many different types
- Stars
- Rings
- Balls
- Crescents
- Diamonds
- Flowers
- Fleurs-de-lis

Ordinary

- Fess Pale
- Bend
- Chevron pointing upwards
- Cross = a plain cross
- Saltire = a 'St Andrew's cross'
- Chief
- Bordure
- Pile

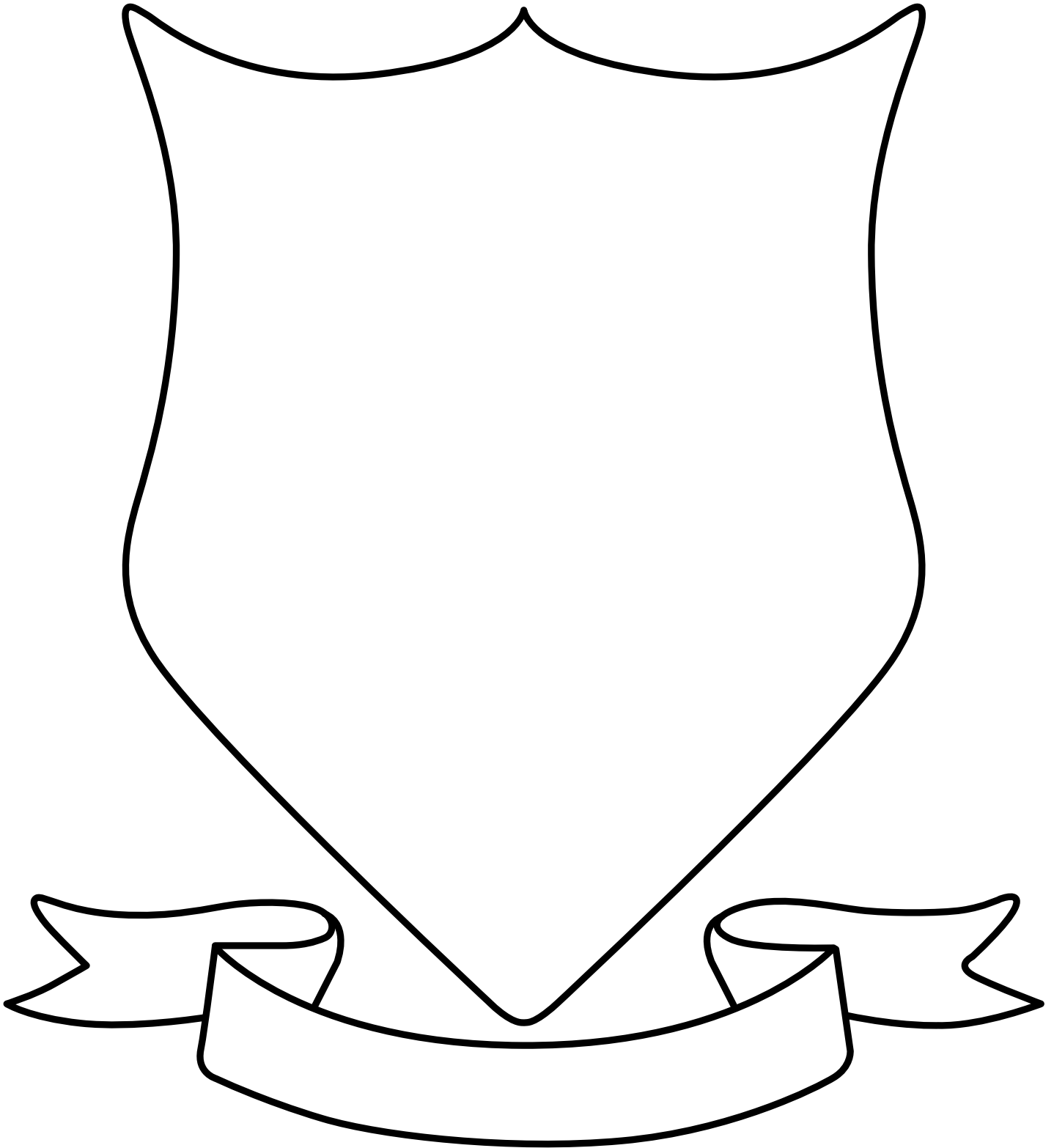
Motto

A motto is a phrase that summarises your general motivation or intentions. For example: 'Be prepared'.

Design your own coat of arms



Draw your own design on to the shield below.



Who's who in 1066?



Recommended for

History, Literacy

Learning objectives

- Learn about key figures in Anglo-Saxon and Norman England.
- Reflect on similarities and differences between Anglo-Saxons and Normans.

Time to complete

20–30 minutes



King William and Queen Mathilda of England, illustration by Belle Mellor.

Summary

Students can create their own version of the game Guess Who, with key individuals and groups from the events of 1066 and the Norman Conquest. This might be used to learn more about the people involved, or as revision.

Prior Learning

An understanding of the events of 1066, both before and after the Battle of Hastings, will help the students. This activity is designed to support them to know more about the people involved, so an understanding of the changes the Norman Conquest brought to England would be beneficial too.

Preparation and resources

To play

1. Print two copies of the cards on p.50 and get students to cut them out.
2. Each student arranges the cards face up in front of them.
3. Each student chooses one card the other student has to guess. They take it in turns to ask questions to narrow down the character.
4. The first student to guess the character the other student chose is the winner.

More learning ideas

You might like to encourage students to make their own character cards to add to the game, like Hereward the Wake. For each character they need to add their own summaries of their role in events of the Norman Conquest.

Students might also like to use the character cards to storyboard the events of 1066.

Who's who is 1066?

King of England from 1042 to 1066, his death led to a succession crisis in the kingdom.	Duke of Normandy, he became King of England in 1066 after his victory at the Battle of Hastings.	Earl of Wessex, he became king in 1066, but was defeated at Hastings.	King of Norway, his claim to the throne was through his grandad.
Edward the Confessor	William the Conqueror	Harold Godwinson	Harald Hardrada
Half-brother of William, he fought in the Battle of Hastings and later became Earl of Kent.	Wife of Edward the Confessor and sister of Harold Godwinson.	15-year-old Great-nephew of Edward the Confessor, had a claim to the throne but no money or army.	Anglo-Saxon forces who fought for the king in return for land.
Odo of Bayeux	Queen Edith	Edgar Aethling	Fyrd
Soldiers who fought with bows and arrows in the Norman army.	Soldiers on horseback in the Norman army. They were crucial in the feigned retreat.	Highly trained Anglo-Saxon soldiers who fought directly alongside Harold.	Harold's brother, he was exiled from England and later returned to fight alongside Harald Hardrada against his brother.
Archer	Knight	Housecarls	Tostig Godwinson
Anglo-Saxon archbishop of Canterbury he was replaced by William in 1070.	Norman archbishop who helped to rule England when William was in Normandy.	Norman lord who was murdered in Durham which then triggered the harrying of the north.	Earl of Mercia, he fought at Fulford Gate, but not the later battles. He rebelled numerous times against William I's rule.
Archbishop Stigand	Archbishop Lanfranc	Robert Cumin	Earl Edwin
Earl of Northumbria, he fought at Fulford Gate, but not the later battles. He rebelled numerous times until imprisoned by William I.	Wife of William the Conqueror, she acted as regent at times while William was in Normandy.	First wife of Harold Godwinson, she reportedly was asked to identify his body on the battlefield.	Wife of Earl Godwin and mother of Harold Godwinson and Tostig, she raised an uprising against William in Exeter after 1066.
Earl Morcar	Queen Mathilda	Edith Swanneck	Gytha Godwin

Sources

Peer into the past

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object.

It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Our experts have chosen these sources to help you learn about 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield history.

Source 1

‘You are just returned worn out after the war against the Norwegians, now you are hastening to move against the Normans?’

Harold’s brother Gyrth, as quoted in Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Book III

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Source 2

‘The furious King was hastening his march all the more because he had heard that the lands near the Norman camp were being laid waste.’

William of Poitiers, a Norman chaplain, writing in *Gesta Guillelmi*

“”

Source 3

‘The first, cleaving his breast through the shield with his point, drenched the earth with a gushing torrent of blood; the second smote off his head below the protection of the helmet and the third pierced the inwards of his belly with his lance; the fourth hewed off his thigh and bore away the severed limb.’

An excerpt from the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* or ‘Song of the Battle of Hastings’, attributed to Guy of Amiens and written sometime before 1068

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Source 4

‘The Normans, though strangers to the district, pursued them relentlessly, slashing their guilty backs and putting the last touches to the victory. Even the hooves of the horses inflicted punishment on the dead as they galloped over their bodies.’

An account of the Norman army pursuing the Anglo-Saxons as they fled, by William of Poitiers

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Source 5



Battle scene from the Bayeux Tapestry. Detail of the official digital representation of the Bayeux Tapestry – 11th century. Credits: City of Bayeux, DRAC Normandie, University of Caen Normandie, CNRS, Ensicaen, Photos: 2017 – La Fabrique de patrimoines en Normandie

Source 6

‘The English were greatly helped by the advantage of the high ground, which they could defend by ... their great numbers massed together and their weapons which could easily find a way through shields ... The Normans and their allies, realising they could not overcome an enemy so great in numbers and standing so firm without great loss to themselves, retreated, deliberately pretending to run away ... Some thousands (of English) boldly launched themselves as if on wings after those they thought to be running away. The Normans, suddenly wheeling their horses about, cut them off, surrounded them, and killed them on all sides, leaving not one alive. Twice they used the same plan with the same effect ... William ... was a noble general, turning back retreat, inspiring courage, sharing danger ...

Three horses were killed under him. Three times he leapt to his feet, unalarmed, and took swift revenge ... As the day wore on the English army realised beyond doubt that they could no longer stand against the Normans. ‘They knew that they were reduced by heavy losses and that the king himself ... had fallen ... They therefore retreated and made off as soon as they got the chance, some on stolen horse, many on foot.’

Extract from ‘The Deeds of William, Duke of the Normans and King of England’ by William of Poitiers, written about 1071.

William of Poitiers was a Norman soldier and later personal priest to King William. This source is translated from the Latin original. Although William of Poitiers did not fight in the battle, he clearly knew those who had.

Source 7

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‘I make a vow on this very battlefield I shall found a monastery for the salvation of all, and especially for those who fall here, to the honour of God and his saints, where servants of God may be supported: a fitting monastery, with a worthy liberty. Let it be an atonement: a haven for all as free as the one I conquer for myself.’

From the 12th-century ‘Chronicle of Battle Abbey’, author unknown. Read more about William’s founding of Battle Abbey

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/1066-battle-of-hastings-abbey-and-battlefield/history-and-stories/the-foundation-of-battle-abbey

Source 8

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‘As cellarer of the monastery let there be chosen from the community one who is wise, of mature character, sober, not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable, not offensive, not slow, not wasteful, but a God-fearing man who may be like a father to the whole community ... Let him not think that he may neglect anything.

He should be neither a miser nor a prodigal and squanderer of the monastery’s substance, but should do all things with measure and in accordance with the abbot’s instructions.’

(Chapter 31)

‘Let a good pound weight of bread suffice for the day, whether there be only one meal or both dinner and supper ... Above all things, however, over-indulgence must be avoided and a monk must never be overtaken by indigestion; for there is nothing so opposed to the Christian character as over-indulgence according to Our Lord’s words, “See to it that your hearts be not burdened with over-indulgence” (Luke 21:34) ... Except the sick who are very weak, let all abstain entirely from eating the flesh of four-footed animals.’

(Chapter 39)

‘Let those who receive new clothes always return the old ones, to be put away in the wardrobe for the poor. For it is sufficient for a monk to have two tunics and two cowls, for wearing at night and for washing.’

(Chapter 55)

This source is a selection of extracts taken from the ‘Rule of St Benedict’ or ‘Regula Benedicti’ in Latin. It is a book of rules for behaviour written by Benedict of Nursia (AD c.480–550) for monks living in a monastery.

The spirit of St Benedict’s Rule is summed up in the motto: pax (peace) and ora et labora (‘pray and work’).



'Spice

For 10 gallons [45 litres] honey bought by the cellarer, 10 shillings. For white salt bought, 7 shillings 8 pence, ... For 1 oz mustard seed bought, 2 shillings. For 6 gallons [27 litres] honey bought in the neighbourhood, 6 shillings. For almonds and raisins bought in London and elsewhere, 9 shillings 4 pence. For oil bought there, 26 shillings 7 pence. For 1 barrel bought for putting the said oil in, 13 pence. For lump salt bought, 14 shillings 4 pence.

Fish

... For fresh fish bought at Wynchelse and Hastyng this year, £35 16s 3d. For salt fish, salmon and eels bought at London and elsewhere, along with the expenses of seeking, £16 20½d. For 410 stokfyssh bought at London and elsewhere, along with the expenses of seeking, 113s 9½d.

Meat

For chicken cock, hen, pullet, duck and goose meat bought in the neighbourhood by the cellarer, £7 17s 5d. For suckling pig bought in the neighbourhood by the same, 75s 7d ... For beef and cow meat bought both in the manors and in the neighbourhood, £23 2s 1d. For mutton bought in the same way, £29 3s 9d ... For veal bought in the same way, £7 18s 6d ...'

This source is an extract from the accounts log kept by the cellarer at Battle Abbey. The cellarer was in charge of providing food and drink for the monks.

In the medieval period, spices and salts were used for preserving meat and to make it edible. Most monasteries ate large quantities of fish, and Battle Abbey had access to a ready supply from Hastings fish market.'

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Source 10



Slate containing sheet music found at Battle Abbey

This slate was first used in c.1500 for teaching choristers how to sing in polyphony (in multiple melodies). When it broke in half, the back of the slate was used for writing out accounts.

The payments in the accounts are for:

'Item for mending a pair of boots: 2d

Item for ink: ½d

Item for repair of King William's painting: 4d'