



To complete  
the  
comprehension  
task.

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

# 1 THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

The Battle of Hastings is one of the most famous and bloody battles in British history. On the morning of 14 October 1066, two armies prepared to fight for the throne of England. Nearly a thousand years later, the impact of that battle is still felt.

## The build-up

When Edward the Confessor, the Anglo-Saxon King of England, died in 1066, he left no clear heir to his throne. Three contenders for the crown emerged: Harold Godwinson, Earl of Essex; Harald Hardrada, King of Norway; and William, Duke of Normandy in France. When Harold Godwinson was named king, he expected some opposition. Predicting an invasion from France, he gathered his troops in the south of England, poised for the attack. News soon arrived, however, that Harald Hardrada and his Viking army were on their way to the north of England. The troops quickly relocated and took the Vikings by surprise. Harold's quick response meant that the Vikings were defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, near York, where Harald Hardrada was killed.

As Harold Godwinson's army was recovering from the battle, news arrived that William and his troops had arrived in the south of England. It was as Harold had originally expected – but his army was no longer ready. Nevertheless, the troops hurried south to meet the Norman invaders.

## The battle

William's huge fleet of around 700 ships had landed at Pevensey Bay, in Sussex, on 29 September 1066. They raided the local areas and set about readying themselves for battle. Harold and his forces were back in London only by 12 October. Harold gathered what extra support he could and then proceeded towards Hastings.

When the two sides met at Senlac Hill on 14 October, Harold's troops were still exhausted. They were unmotivated and poorly paid. William's troops, however, were well prepared.

Some debate surrounds the size of the two armies. It is thought that each side had between 5,000 and 7,000 men, although both may have been bigger. William's troops were thought to have not only included Normans but also men from Brittany, Aquitaine and Maine, whom he had persuaded to support his invasion – in large part because he had received the Pope's blessing for his actions.

The forces steadied themselves for the confrontation. Harold's troops gathered at the top of the hill, forming a wall of shields. The Normans on foot fired arrows, while others on horseback charged up the hill. A rumour soon spread amongst the Normans that William had been killed, causing unrest and panic. William, however, is said to have removed his helmet and declared, 'Look at me! I'm alive and with the aid of God I shall gain the victory!' This rejuvenated his troops' spirits immediately.

It is also believed that the battle took a significant turn when the Normans pretended to run away. When they were chased, they turned and attacked – forcing Harold's army to lose the advantage of controlling the hill.

Harold's troops put up a brave fight against the Normans. The king, however, was killed in the battle, alongside his two brothers. Legend has it that he was wounded by an arrow in the eye and then was charged down. In total, around 10,000 men died in the battle.



Our understanding of the fighting, now commonly known as the Battle of Hastings, is much clearer than other events of the time. The Bayeux Tapestry, made soon afterwards, depicts the story of events from 1064 to the end of the battle. The chronicles and memoirs of the well-connected William of Poitiers, a Norman soldier, also provide us with vital information. However, it is important to remember that all of these surviving records were created from a Norman viewpoint. As is often the case, history was written by the victors.

## The repercussions

Following the bloody battle, on Christmas Day 1066 William was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey. The coronation marked the end of Anglo-Saxon rule and heralded a new period in British history. Gradually, the Norman influence transformed England and its language, law, customs and even architecture.

William had Harold buried next to the battlefield with a headstone reading 'Here lies Harold, King of the English', and built Battle Abbey on the site as an act of respectful penance. However, years later, Normans forgot William's humbleness. They destroyed the headstone and dug up Harold. His body now rests at Waltham Abbey, near London.

William is now often referred to as William the Conqueror – a just title.

Read the text and use a dictionary for words you don't understand before continuing.



# 1 THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

## FILL IN THE GAP



Read the sentences and choose the correct word or words to fill the gap.

On the morning of 14 October 1066, two armies prepared to fight for the \_\_\_\_\_ of England.

William's huge fleet of around \_\_\_\_\_ had landed at Pevensey Bay, in Sussex, on 29 September 1066.

The troops quickly \_\_\_\_\_ and took the Vikings by surprise.

The \_\_\_\_\_, made soon afterwards, depicts the story of events from 1064 to the end of the battle.

Harold's troops gathered at the top of the hill, forming a \_\_\_\_\_.

A rumour soon spread amongst the \_\_\_\_\_ that William had been killed, causing unrest and panic.

It is thought that each side had between 5,000 and 7,000 men, although both may have been \_\_\_\_\_.

Following the bloody battle, on Christmas Day 1066 William was crowned King of England at \_\_\_\_\_.

William is now often referred to as William the \_\_\_\_\_ – a just title.

When \_\_\_\_\_ was named king, he expected some opposition.

When the two sides met at Senlac Hill on \_\_\_\_\_, Harold's troops were still exhausted.

They were unmotivated and \_\_\_\_\_. William's troops, however, were well prepared.

Harold's quick response meant that the Vikings were defeated at the \_\_\_\_\_ near York, where Harald Hardrada was killed.

The \_\_\_\_\_ and memoirs of the well-connected William of Poitiers, a Norman soldier, also provide us with vital information.

The Normans on foot \_\_\_\_\_, while others on horseback charged up the hill.

# 1 THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

## MATCHING



Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

the battle began
Harold's troops
the king was killed
the Normans on foot

predicted an invasion from France
legend says Harold died by
William was crowned King of England
Harold's troops were

William's huge fleet
supported invasion of England
Vikings were defeated
14 October 1066

depicts the Battle of Hastings
the two sides met at
Edward the Confessor
the Battle of Hastings

Harald Hardrada
Duke of Normandy
killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge
William's fleet

fired arrows
alongside his two brothers
in the morning
put up a brave fight

at Westminster Abbey
unmotivated and poorly paid
an arrow lodged in his eye
Harold Godwinson

Battle of Stamford Bridge
Battle of Hastings began
700 ships
men from Brittany, Aquitaine and Maine

left no heir to his throne
famous and bloody battle
the Bayeux Tapestry
Senlac Hill

landed in Pevensey Bay, Sussex
had a Viking army
William
Harald Hardrada

Answers on next  
page



# Answer

## 1. THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

### FILL IN THE GAP

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. throne            | 9. Conqueror                  |
| 2. 700 ships         | 10. Harold Godwinson          |
| 3. relocated         | 11. 14 October                |
| 4. Bayeux Tapestry   | 12. poorly paid               |
| 5. wall of shields   | 13. Battle of Stamford Bridge |
| 6. Normans           | 14. chronicles                |
| 7. bigger            | 15. fired arrows              |
| 8. Westminster Abbey |                               |

Abbey

### MATCHING

the battle began	in the morning
Harold's troops	put up a brave fight
the king was killed	alongside his two brothers
the Normans on foot	fired arrows
predicted an invasion from France	Harold Godwinson
legend says Harold died by	an arrow lodged in his eye
William was crowned King of England	at Westminster Abbey
Harold's troops were	unmotivated and poorly paid
William's huge fleet	700 ships
supported invasion of England	men from Brittany, Aquitaine and Maine
Vikings were defeated	Battle of Stamford Bridge
14 October 1066	Battle of Hastings began
depicts the Battle of Hastings	the Bayeux Tapestry
the two sides met at	Senlac Hill
Edward the Confessor	left no heir to his throne
the Battle of Hastings	famous and bloody battle
Harald Hardrada	had a Viking army
Duke of Normandy	William
killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge	Harald Hardrada
William's fleet	landed in Pevensey Bay, Sussex