



To complete
the
comprehension
task.

Monday 25th 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.

Re-read the text please

MULTIPLE CHOICE



Circle the correct answer for each of the following questions.

When did William's fleet land in Pevensey Bay, Sussex?

29 September

19 September

14 October

12 October

When did the Battle of Hastings begin?

10 October

29 September

14 October

12 October

Which King of England died in 1066?

Duke of Normandy

Harald Hardrada

Edward the Confessor

William of Poitiers

When did the Battle of Hastings begin?

afternoon

evening

morning

night

Who was killed by an arrow to the eye?

Duke of Normandy

Harold Godwinson

Edward the Confessor

William of Poitiers

Which people supported Harald Hardrada?

Normans

Anglo-Saxons

Vikings

French

How many ships were in William's fleet?

400

around 500

600

around 700

How many men died at the Battle of Hastings?

9,000

around 10,000

11,000

around 12,000

Whose chronicles tell us about the Battle of Hastings?

Duke of Normandy

Harald Hardrada

Edward the Confessor

William of Poitiers

Where did the two sides in the Battle of Hastings first meet?

Senlac Hill

Stamford Bridge

York

Kent

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

TRUE OR FALSE



Read the sentences. Put a tick in the correct box to show which sentences are true and which are false.

Edward the Confessor was King of France.

True False

William's huge fleet of ships landed at Stamford Bridge.

True False

The Battle of Hastings began on 14 October 1066.

True False

The Normans raided local areas near Pevensey.

True False

Legend has it that Harold was wounded by an arrow in the knee.

True False

The Normans charged on horseback.

True False

Harald Hardrada was defeated by Harold Godwinson.

True False

Edward the Confessor left the throne to his son.

True False

The Bayeux Tapestry tells the story of the Battle of Hastings.

True False

Harold's body can be found at Westminster Abbey.

True False

The Duke of Normandy was William the Conqueror.

True False

William was crowned king on Christmas Day.

True False

William of Poitiers' memoirs tell the story of the Battle of Hastings.

True False

2,000 men died in the Battle of Hastings.

True False

William's army included men from Maine and Brittany.

True False

Answers on next
page



Answer

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. 29 September
2. 14 October
3. Edward the Confessor
4. morning
5. Harold Godwinson
6. Vikings
7. around 700
8. around 10,000
9. William of Poitiers
10. Senlac Hill

TRUE OR FALSE

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. False
11. True
12. True
13. True
14. False
15. True