

**MEDIEVAL ENGLAND  
(410-1485): NORMAN  
INVASION OF 1066**



# MEDIEVAL ENGLAND (410-1485): NORMAN INVASION OF 1066

## Description

Through an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basic facts behind the Norman Invasion, the role William the Conqueror played in transforming Britain by combining Anglo-Saxon and Norse culture and institutions, how and why the landscape of the island was transformed by the building of castles (including the Tower of London – built as a symbol of royal power along the River Thames) after the Norman conquest, why items such as the Domesday Book and the Bayeux Tapestry are critical primary sources from the period, and why the conquest is seen today by many historians and teachers as a watershed year in world and European history.

## Subjects

English / Language Arts  
European History  
World History  
World Geography

## Grade Level

11-12

## Duration

180 minutes (2 x 90 min)

## Tour Links

- Tower of London
- River Thames, London
- Bayeux Tapestry, Normandy
- National Archives, Kew

## Essential Questions

- What was the Norman Invasion of 1066? Who was William the Conqueror? Who were the Normans?
- Why are the Norman Invasion and the Battle of Hastings critical to understanding Britain's history in the subsequent 500 years, especially in the areas of government, church relations and the establishment of feudalism on the island?
- Why did William the Conqueror build the Tower of London in the wake of the invasion?

## Academic Summary

After this had the king a large meeting, and very deep consultation with his council, about this land; how it was occupied, and by what sort of men. Then sent he his men over all England into each shire; commissioning them to find out 'How many hundreds of hides were in the shire, what land the king himself had, and what stock upon the land; or, what dues he ought to have by the year from the shire.' Also he commissioned them to record in writing, 'How much land his archbishops had, and his diocesan bishops, and his abbots, and his earls;' and though I may be prolix and tedious, 'What, or how much, each man had, who was an occupier of land in England, either in land or in stock, and how much money it were worth.' So very narrowly, indeed, did he commission them to trace it out, that there was not one single hide, nor a yard of land, nay, moreover (it is shameful to tell, though he thought it no shame to do it), not even an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine was there left, that was not set down in his writ. And all the recorded particulars were afterwards brought to him.

*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (12th century) discussing the purpose behind the Domesday Book*

The Norman Conquest of Britain in 1066 BCE... an event to which Winston Churchill in his four volume work *The History of the English Speaking Peoples* refers as the "birth of medieval Britain," radically altered England's political, social, linguistic and religious history in the subsequent centuries.

Through an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basic facts behind the Norman invasion, the role William the Conqueror played in transforming Britain by combining Anglo-Saxon and Norse culture and institutions, how and why the landscape of the island was transformed by the building of castles (including the Tower of London – built as a symbol of royal power along the River Thames) after the Norman conquest, why items such as the Domesday Book and the Bayeux Tapestry are critical primary sources from the period, and why the conquest in 1066 is seen today by many historians and teachers as a watershed event in world and European history.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the Norman Invasion of Britain in 1066, including the Battle of Hastings and the subsequent creation of the Norman kingdom in England under William the Conqueror.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Norman Invasion of Britain in 1066 is seen as a watershed event in both English and European history.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the political, social and religious changes brought to England as a result of the Norman Invasion of 1066, including but not limited to the introduction of feudalism to William's new kingdom.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Bayeux Tapestry and the Domesday Book are linked to the Norman Invasion of 1066 and why each is considered a world treasure, both for historians and for the general public.

## Procedures

### I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What is a census? How and why do governments take a census today? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed below. (5 min)

### II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Norman Invasion of 1066 and William the Conqueror (20 min)
- Video – William the Conqueror (15 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on the Norman Invasion of 1066, taking notes as appropriate. (30 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles for homework the night before class to prepare for class discussion.
- Group Activity – Discussion on the Norman Invasion of 1066, the purposes behind the Bayeux Tapestry, the Domesday Book and the building of the Tower of London. (15 min)

### III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay: Analyze William's decisions in the wake of the Norman Invasion of 1066. How did he try to control and administer his newly conquered territories? Was he successful? What role did the Domesday Book and the building of the Tower of London play in his decisions? Be sure to give examples from the texts.

## Extension

### On four: Tower of London

While on tour, you will visit the Tower of London, where students will have the opportunity to see for themselves the edifice William had built to show his power over England. The Tower has a long, storied and bloody history, but it still has traces of its Norman roots.

## Web Links

### Lesson Plan Websites

- [nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/discover-domesday/](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/discover-domesday/)  
"The Domesday Book" – UK National Archives. Contains a great deal of information on the book itself and why it is considered a national treasure.
- [fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1186ASChron-Domesday.asp](http://fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1186ASChron-Domesday.asp)  
"Medieval Sourcebook: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The Domesday Book, 1086" (excerpts). From the Internet History Sourcebook's Project at Fordham University.
- [fordham.edu/Halsall/source/will1-lawsb.asp](http://fordham.edu/Halsall/source/will1-lawsb.asp)  
"Medieval Sourcebook: Laws of William the Conqueror." From the Internet History Sourcebook's Project at Fordham University.
- [essentialnormanconquest.com](http://essentialnormanconquest.com)  
"Essential Norman Conquest" – website maintained by Osprey Publishing, a leading publisher of military history in the United Kingdom. The site is extensive, and has a great deal of information on the invasion, the Battle of Hastings, William the Conqueror and the legacy of the Normans in England. There are also many primary sources, images and maps for students.
- [bayeuxtapestry.org.uk](http://bayeuxtapestry.org.uk)  
"Britain's Bayeux Tapestry" – website maintained by the Museum of Reading in the United Kingdom. The site goes scene by scene on the Tapestry, giving both visual (primary source) and textual (analysis) descriptions of the Tapestry. There is also a detailed account of life in Medieval Britain after the Battle of Hastings, including an informative description of feudalism.
- [youtube.com/watch?v=vWPwnvYyAhc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWPwnvYyAhc)  
"The Normans" (clip) – Global BBC iPlayer: What was the Domesday Book Actually for? Historian Stephen Baxter reveals the human and political dramas behind The Domesday book.
- [youtube.com/watch?v=F8OPQ\\_28mdo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8OPQ_28mdo)  
"Seven Ages of Britain" (video) – BBC One: The Bayeux Tapestry. The BBC's David Dimbleby describes the historical significance of the Bayeux Tapestry.
- [youtube.com/watch?v=h6iUU9wbM3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6iUU9wbM3k)  
"The Tower of London: An introduction." From Historical Royal Palaces, an independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and the Banqueting House on Whitehall. Their YouTube channel offers a behind-the-scene introduction to these palaces and the people that tell their stories.

### Background Information

- [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman\\_conquest\\_of\\_England](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_England)  
"Norman conquest of England" – Wikipedia article. The Norman Invasion of 1066.
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/the\\_united\\_kingdom/london](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/london)  
On the Road: London – city facts from Passports Educational Travel
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/the\\_united\\_kingdom/windsor\\_castle\\_and\\_runnymede](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/windsor_castle_and_runnymede)  
On the Road: Windsor and Runnymede from Passports Educational Travel

### Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/medieval-britain-chaucer-canterbury-tales](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-chaucer-canterbury-tales)  
Medieval England – Chaucer's Canterbury Tales
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/magna-carta-of-1215](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/magna-carta-of-1215)  
Medieval England – Magna Carta of 1215
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/medieval-britain-king-arthur](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-king-arthur)  
Medieval England – King Arthur and the Arthurian legend
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/medieval-britain-richard-the-lionheart](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-richard-the-lionheart)  
Medieval England – Richard the Lionheart
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/medieval-britain-robin-hood](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-robin-hood)  
Medieval England – Robin Hood

## Key Terms

- Anglo-Saxons
- Battle of Hastings 1066
- Bayeux Tapestry
- BBC – Brit. Broadcasting Co.
- Domesday Book
- Feudalism
- Normandy
- Normans
- Tower of London
- UK National Archives
- William the Conqueror

