



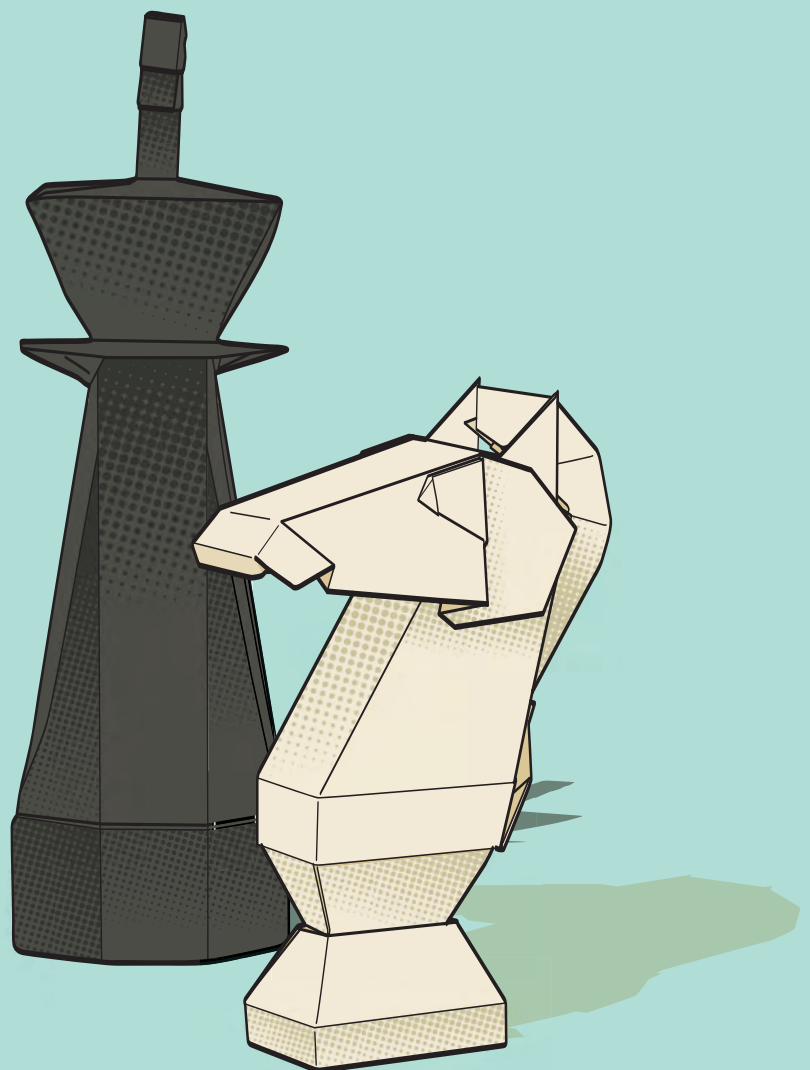
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Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)

History

**Anglo-Saxon and Norman
England, c1060–88**

Revision Guide & Workbook + App



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History

**Anglo-Saxon and Norman
England, c1060–88****Revision Guide & Workbook + App**

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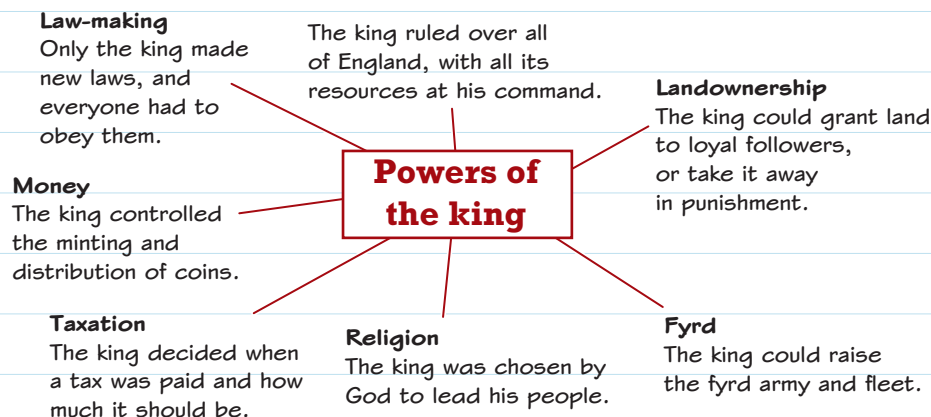
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A small bit of small print

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The king and the earls

In Anglo-Saxon England it was the king who was the most powerful person in the land: no one could tell the king what to do. In order to govern the country, kings granted out some of their power to their earls and took advice from their council, the Witan.



Half the country was Anglo-Danish, with its own laws and customs, known as the Danelaw. The king was still king here, but he needed to allow the Danelaw some independence.

The Witan

The Witan was a council that advised the king, but it was not a limitation on the king's power.

- The king decided who was appointed to the Witan.
- The king decided what the Witan should advise him on.
- The king did not have to follow the Witan's advice if he did not wish to.

Thegns (local lords) could complain to the king about earls who governed an earldom badly. This happened with Tostig, the earl of Northumbria in 1065, where the Witan was also involved in deciding what should happen.

The earls

The earls were the most important men in the country after the king and governed large areas of England on the king's behalf. To do this they were granted some of the king's powers:

- ✓ Collecting taxes from their earldom for the king. Earls kept a third of the taxes for governing and protecting their earldom.
- ✓ Overseeing law and order in their earldom. Judging cases and deciding punishments for those found guilty.
- ✓ Military powers. Earls were the king's 'generals', leading their loyal thegns in battle against the king's enemies.

Large earldoms meant earls could become very powerful indeed in Anglo-Saxon England.

Edward the Confessor (1003–66)

Advantages

- 👍 As a religious leader people believed that God was guiding him.
- 👍 He was respected as a wise lawmaker.
- 👍 He was married to Edith, daughter of the rich and powerful Earl of Godwin.



Edward the Confessor in the Bayeux Tapestry.

Disadvantages

- 👎 He had been exiled in Normandy for most of his life, so had few supporters in England.
- 👎 He had no children to succeed him.
- 👎 He struggled to keep control of Earl Godwin.

Now try this

Pick **two** features of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy from the diagram at the top of this page. For each feature, describe how they made the king of Anglo-Saxon England powerful.

Local government and law

Anglo-Saxon England had a complicated system of government that made sure the king's wishes were carried out throughout his kingdom, and that each community completed its duties, especially providing men for the fyrd, collecting tax payments and maintaining law and order.

The shire reeve (sheriff)

The shire reeve was the king's representative in local government.

The king issued orders to the shire reeve through **writs**.

The geld tax was the tax levied on land. Edward the Confessor only levied the tax rarely: he lived on the revenues from his own lands.

Writ from King Edward to his shire reeve

Your responsibilities are:

- To collect revenues from my land in the shire
- To collect the geld tax from the shire when I decide to levy the tax
- To collect fines from the shire court
- To judge cases and witness my laws being enforced at the shire court
- To make sure men are provided for the fyrd and that all roads and defences are well-maintained.

The shire reeve judged at the **shire court**.

The shire reeve was responsible for the defences of the shire.



Shires, hundreds, tithings and hides

- ✓ Each earldom was divided into shires.
- ✓ Each shire was divided into hundreds.
- ✓ Each hundred was divided into tithings. A tithing was (originally) 10 households; a hundred was (originally) 100 **hides** of land.

The administration of Anglo-Saxon England was based on the hide. Each hide of land (about 120 acres) carried obligations: for example, having five hides of land meant the obligation to provide one man for the fyrd.

Key terms

- ✓ **Shires** – an earldom was divided up into shires.
- ✓ **Hide** – an area of land covering about 120 acres.
- ✓ **Ceorls** – peasant farmers.
- ✓ **Fyrd** – the men of the Anglo-Saxon army and fleet.
- ✓ **Writ** – written orders from the king. A royal seal proved it was official.

Law and order in Anglo-Saxon England

Strengths
Depended on everyone in the community knowing each other very well.

Collective responsibility – if one member of a tithing broke the law, the rest were responsible for bringing him to court or would be punished themselves.

Hue and cry – anyone in the community could call on all the others to help them track down a criminal. The sheriff could also call on the community in the same way.

Wergild – compensation paid to avoid blood feud.

Weaknesses
Powerless to prevent powerful men (like earls) from breaking the law.

Trial by ordeal – God was asked to judge cases where community courts could not decide.

The king – treason was a very serious crime; the death penalty could be imposed.

Now try this

Describe **two** features of the shire reeve/sheriff's role that had an economic function.

The economy and social system

Anglo-Saxon England was one of Europe's wealthiest countries with strong trading links across the seas. England's towns were trading centres, though almost everyone worked in farming.

What gave England its strong economy?

- 👍 There was a good climate for farming, especially in the south and east for crops and in the west for livestock.
- 👍 England had strong trade links across the North Sea to Scandinavia and across the Channel to Normandy and Flanders.
- 👍 The efficient tax system boosted the earnings of the king and also the income of his nobles and the Church, who kept some of the tax.
- 👍 Central control of money supply and trading centres (burhs) meant that money was reliable (kept its value) and trade could be taxed, benefitting the nobility.

Anglo-Saxon society

Out of a population of 2 million in 1060, only 4000–6000 were nobles (thegns). 9.7% were slaves. The rest were peasant farmers (ceorls).

Thegns

Anglo-Saxon warrior/noble class with five hides of land or more.

Ceorls

Most depended on thegns for land and work. Some ceorls were freer.

Slaves

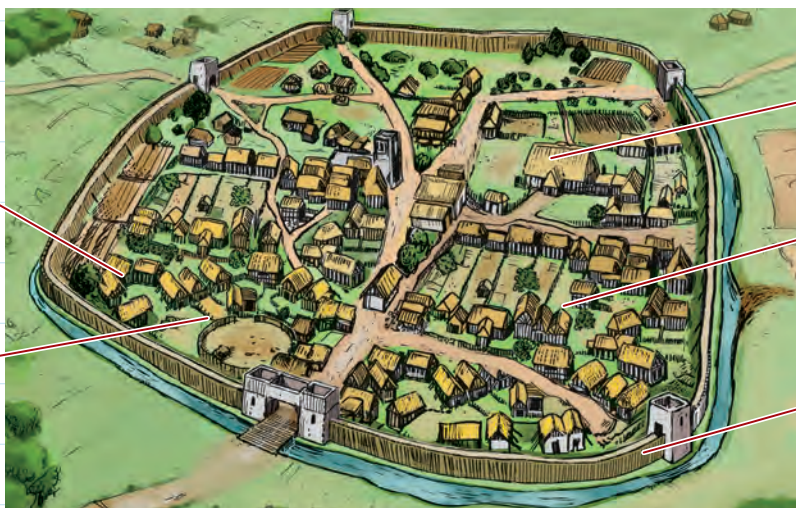
Treated as property: people who could be bought and sold.

90% of
population

Burhs

Burhs were the fortified main town of each shire.

People from the countryside would take refuge in the burh when Vikings were around.



All significant trade had to be carried out in burhs by law. This trade was then taxed.

Around 10% of the population of England lived in towns in 1060. Everyone else lived in family groups in the countryside.

Strong walls and ramparts made the towns difficult to attack by Viking raiding parties.

The Church

Five key features of the Anglo-Saxon Church:

- 1 Bishops were rich and important. They controlled large Church districts. The Witan always included important bishops.
- 2 Very few people in Anglo-Saxon England were literate, so the Church provided all the king's clerks and record-keepers.
- 3 Most local priests farmed like peasants, were not well educated and were married.
- 4 Monks and nuns farmed the land in the same way as ordinary people, but they lived in separate communities.
- 5 The Church was resistant to reforms from Europe. English bishops stuck to their old ways.

Social roles

Anglo-Saxon society was flexible. Peasant farmers could become thegns if they did well and acquired more than five hides of land. At the same time, peasants who did badly might have to sell themselves into slavery. Slaves could be freed by their masters and become peasants.

Thegns were the Anglo-Saxon warrior class. Their land holdings meant they could afford weapons, armour and a horse. They were expected to always be ready to serve their lord in battle, and fight to the death to protect him.

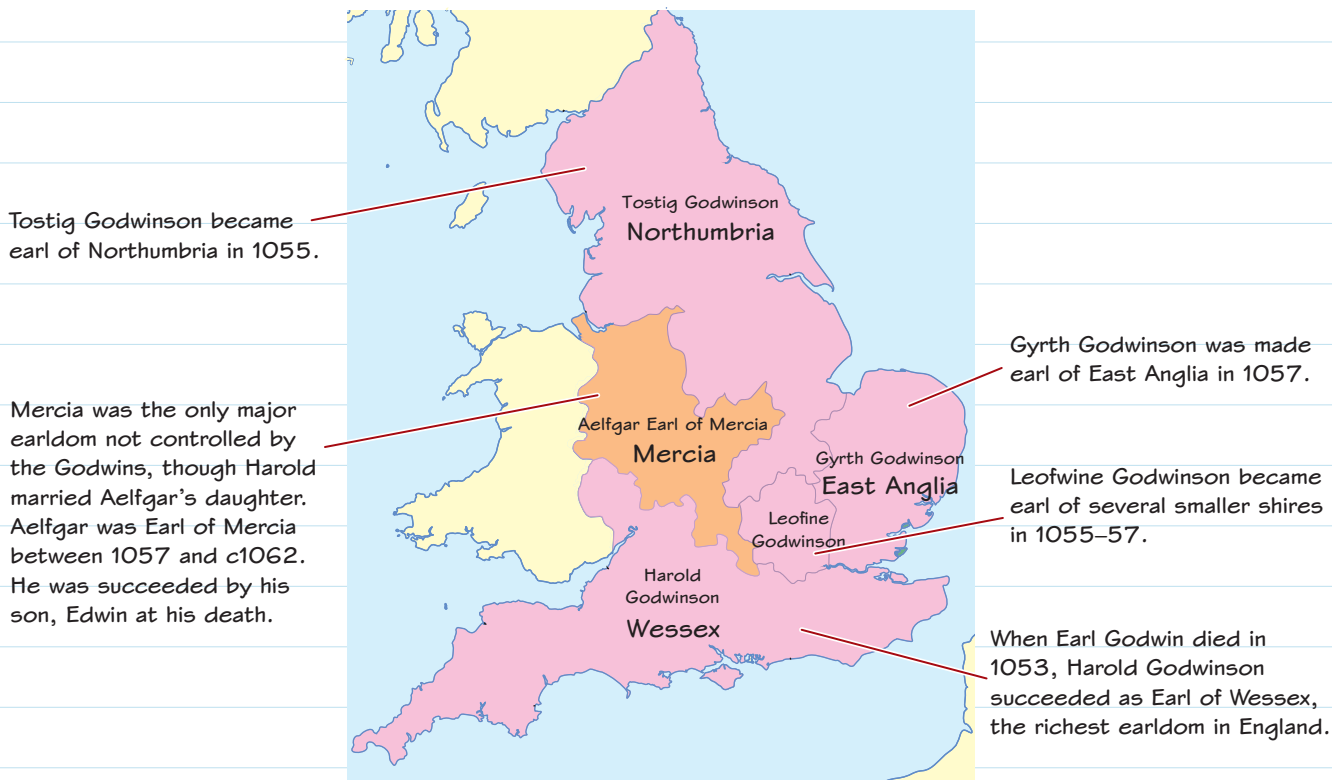
Now try this

Explain **three** reasons why thegns were an important part of Anglo-Saxon society.

The power of the Godwins

By the 1060s, the 'House of Godwin' had come to dominate Anglo-Saxon politics, building a powerbase from Wessex out to all the major earldoms of England, except one: Mercia.

Godwins in control



Political marriages: three Ediths and a Judith

The House of Godwin increased its power and influence with important political marriages.

- ✓ Earl Godwin's daughter Edith married King Edward.
- ✓ Harold Godwinson had a political marriage to Edith of Mercia daughter of Aelfgar and then a second marriage to Edith the Fair, who was influential in East Anglia.
- ✓ Tostig Godwinson married Judith, daughter of Baldwin of Flanders.

Godwins in trouble?

In the 1050s, King Edward tried to free himself from Earl Godwin's dominance. Some historians think he turned to his friends in Normandy for help (Edward had been an exile in Normandy for most of his youth). This might have been where Edward promised William the throne of England.

Though the Godwins were exiled for a year, when they returned with a huge fleet, Edward pardoned Godwin rather than risk a civil war.

Now try this

'Earl Siward of Northumbria died in 1055. His eldest son had been killed in battle the year before, and his second son, Waltheof, was only five. Northumbria had major problems with lawlessness and England was under threat in the north from Scotland. Tostig Godwinson had made a very important political marriage with the daughter of Baldwin of Flanders (an important trading country in present-day Belgium).'

Use this information in an answer to the question: Why did King Edward agree to make Tostig Earl of Northumbria?

Edward the Confessor

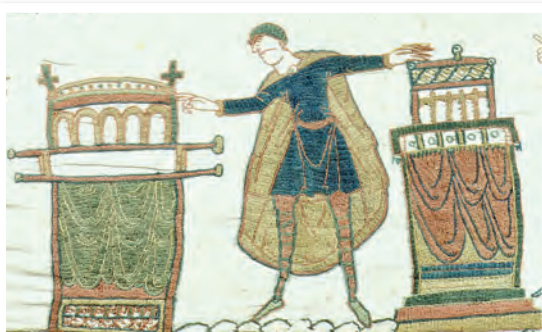
The last years of Edward the Confessor saw a struggle between Harold and Tostig that undermined some of the power of the House of Godwin as Harold set his sights on becoming king after Edward.

Harold's embassy to Normandy

Here are three key features of Harold's **embassy** to Normandy in 1064 (or 1065).

- 1 King Edward sent Harold to Normandy but we do not know what message he wanted him to give to William of Normandy.
- 2 Harold was taken prisoner by Count Guy of Ponthieu but William rescued him. Harold fought for William and William rewarded him with gifts of weapons and armour.
- 3 Harold swore a very serious **oath** as part of the embassy but we do not know for certain what promise he was making.

Norman sources say: Harold swore allegiance to William in recognition that William was the future king of England.



English sources say: The embassy was to recover two hostages from Normandy and the oath was nothing to do with the succession.

Why was the embassy important?

- 1 It shows that Harold was King Edward's trusted right-hand man for politics as well as for leading military campaigns.
- 2 Normans claimed that the embassy was about the plan for William of Normandy to succeed to the throne of England after Edward died. William used this argument to legitimise becoming king after the Conquest.
- 3 Normans used the embassy to claim that Harold was an 'oath-breaker' when he took the crown himself after Edward's death rather than supporting William's claim.

Key events in the rising against Earl Tostig

- 1 October 1065: Northumbrian thegns revolt against Tostig, marching on York.
- 2 Northumbrians invite Morcar (the brother of Edwin, earl of Mercia after 1062) to be earl instead.
- 3 King Edward orders his earls to put down the uprising, but they find ways not to obey.
- 4 Instead, Harold agrees to the rebels' demands on King Edward's behalf: Tostig is to be replaced by Earl Morcar.
- 5 By 1 November, Tostig is exiled. Harold has weakened the House of Godwin, but perhaps strengthened his own claim to the throne.

Reasons for the uprising: Tostig went too far in his crackdown on lawlessness, abusing his power to threaten nobles and assassinating rivals. He became friendly with Malcolm III of Scotland instead of fighting him, and he over-taxed the Northumbrians.

Why didn't Harold stand up for his brother? It is likely that Harold suspected that King Edward did not have long to live. Edward had no children and perhaps Harold saw his chances of being made king would be stronger without Tostig. Harold may also have known that he needed to show he could act for the good of England, rather than just for his family, if he was going to get the Witan's support for his becoming king.

Key terms

- ✓ **Embassy** – A diplomatic mission to meet with the ruler of another country.
- ✓ **Oath** – a solemn promise to do something.

Now try this

Explain why there was an uprising against Tostig in 1065.

The rival claimants for the throne

Harold Godwinson was crowned king on the same day as Edward the Confessor's funeral on 6 January 1066, but there were other strong claimants to the throne due to agreements Edward had made in the past and because Edward had died without a son: a succession crisis.

Harold Godwinson (c1022–66)

Claim	Appointed successor by the king on his deathbed.
Strength of claim	Good – supported by witnesses (ones already loyal to Harold).
Chance of success	Excellent – Harold had the support required (the Witan) in order to be made king.

Harold had been Edward's *sub regulus*, he was proven in battle, he had shown he was willing to go against Tostig for the good of the country, and he was King Edward's brother in law. England backed him.

Edgar Aethling (c1051–c1126)

Claim	Royal blood – A descendant of King Alfred the Great.
Strength of claim	Strong in theory but Edgar had nothing to back it up with.
Chance of success	Weak – Edgar was only a teenager. The threat of invasion was too great to risk him as king.

Although Edward the Confessor had planned to make Edgar his heir in the 1050s, he didn't take his plan further. The Witan could not risk England's defences to a boy king.

Harald Hardrada (c1015–66)

Claim	Based on a secret deal made between two other Vikings.
Strength of claim	Weak – what mattered though, was the force Hardrada could call on to back up his claim.
Chance of success	Good – Hardrada had 300 ships and 15 000 warriors, huge battle experience and expected the Danelaw regions to welcome him.

Hardrada could also make his claim as a descendant of King Cnut, the Danish king of England. Hardrada probably did not consider acting on his claim until Tostig persuaded him that the throne could easily be his.

William of Normandy (c1028–87)

Claim	An agreement with King Edward following Harold's embassy to Normandy.
Strength of claim	Backed by the pope, but lacking evidence.
Chance of success	Quite good because of William's military strength, but only if he was able to get his knights across the Channel to England.

William's claim was based on an agreement with Edward the Confessor in the 1050s when, William said, Edward promised him the throne in return for Normandy's help against Edward's rebellious earls. The pope's backing for William was linked to a plan to introduce reform to England's Church.

 weak chance  good chance

Harold's coronation and reign

- Harold was crowned the day after Edward the Confessor died: 6 January 1066.
- Most of the Witan were already gathered at Westminster, making it easier for Harold to gather the support he needed.

For more on the Witan see page 1.

King Harold's reign

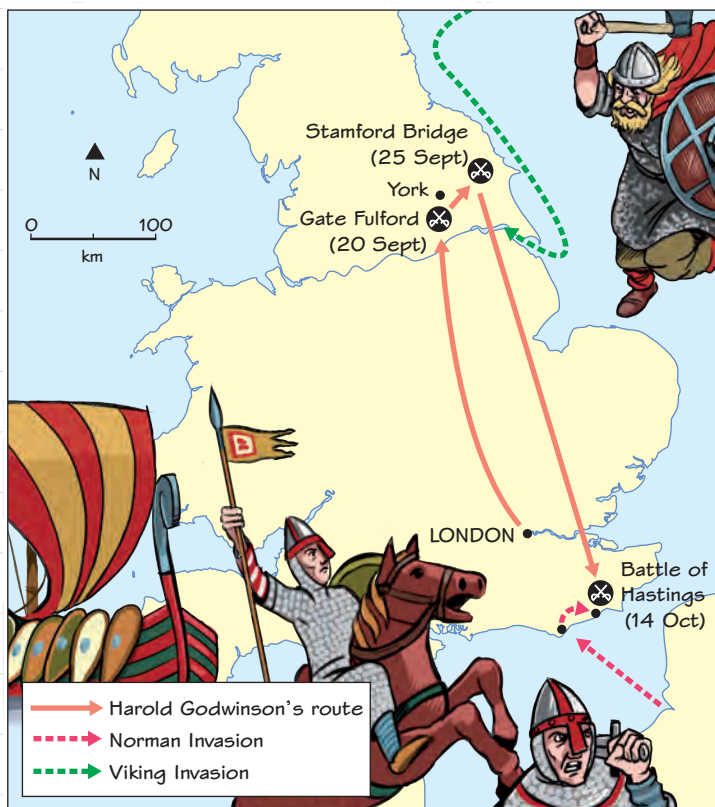
- Soon after his coronation he went to York to make sure he had the north's support.
- He put together the largest army England had ever seen in the south of England. A fleet also patrolled the Channel.

Now try this

Identify **two** challenges that Harold II faced as he began his reign in January 1066.

Gate Fulford and Stamford Bridge

Harold's fyrd were ready to defend England's southern coast all through the spring and summer of 1066, but as September came, the fyrd had to be disbanded for the harvest. By mid-September, Hardrada and Tostig had launched their invasion, which Harold heard about on 19 September.



Although leaving the southern coast turned out to be a terrible decision for Harold II, there were good reasons at the time to think the threat of invasion from Normandy had passed for 1066. The Channel was notorious for winter storms, making a September crossing extremely risky. The wind was also still blowing from the north when Harold set off, thus trapping William in port in Normandy.

Reasons for the Battle of Gate Fulford

- Morcar, Earl of Northumbria, and his elder brother Edwin, Earl of Mercia, had gathered an army to defend the north.
- Hardrada and Tostig had landed with 10 000 warriors on the River Humber and then marched up towards York.
- Morcar and Edwin decided to meet them in open battle at Gate Fulford rather than defend the fortified city of York.

Events of the Battle of Gate Fulford

- Edwin and Morcar were outnumbered.
- As the English shield wall surged forward against Tostig's weaker troops, Hardrada hit the English troops with his best warriors from the side (a clever flanking tactic).
- Thousands of English troops were killed or wounded, making them unavailable to fight against the Norman invasion. Hardrada and Tostig took many English hostages.
- Harold was forced to come north to deal with Hardrada and Tostig, with consequences for the Battle of Hastings.

The English were positioned with marshland behind them, which meant that when they were pushed back they became stuck in mud and were massacred.

The Battle of Stamford Bridge

- Having led a rapid march to the north, gathering troops along the way, Harold's army surprised the Viking army at Stamford Bridge.
- Harold was victorious. Both Hardrada and Tostig were killed in the battle.
- The Vikings had left their armour with their ships. The English broke their shield wall.

Now try this

Identify **three** reasons why Harold was victorious at Stamford Bridge.

Significance of the Battle of Stamford Bridge

- King Harold achieved a great victory, defending England from invasion.
- However, William invaded in the south while Harold was in the north.
- Harold had to rapidly move south again, tiring his housecarls.
- Harold's victory may have made him complacent about William's threat.
- The battles in the north may have prevented troops reaching Hastings from Mercia and Northumbria.

The Battle of Hastings

You need to know about key features of the Battle of Hastings, including the composition of the two armies (the types of troops that made up each army).

Timeline

1066

28 Sep the Normans land at Pevensey

6 Oct Harold reaches London

14 Oct the Battle of Hastings



Norman knights v. English housecarls

Norman knights

Advantages – highly trained, heavily-armoured mounted knights could launch devastating charges using their height advantage to beat down foes.



Disadvantages – horses

were vulnerable to attack, advantages of a cavalry charge were lost if horses had to run uphill.

English housecarls

Advantages – a disciplined shield wall was very hard to break. Housecarls knew how to fight together and their axes were highly effective.

Disadvantages – once the shield wall began to break, housecarls were vulnerable to cavalry and archer attacks.

Key terms



Housecarls – trained soldiers who were also bodyguards to their lord.

Norman foot soldiers v. English fyrd

William's foot soldiers were a mixture of Normans and mercenaries from across Europe. There were lightly armoured archers and crossbowmen and heavily armoured foot soldiers. Foot soldiers may not have trained with knights, making coordinated attacks difficult.

While thegns had good weapons, many of Harold's general fyrd would have had farm tools and long knives. There were few archers. General fyrdsmen were not well trained.

Key events of the Battle of Hastings

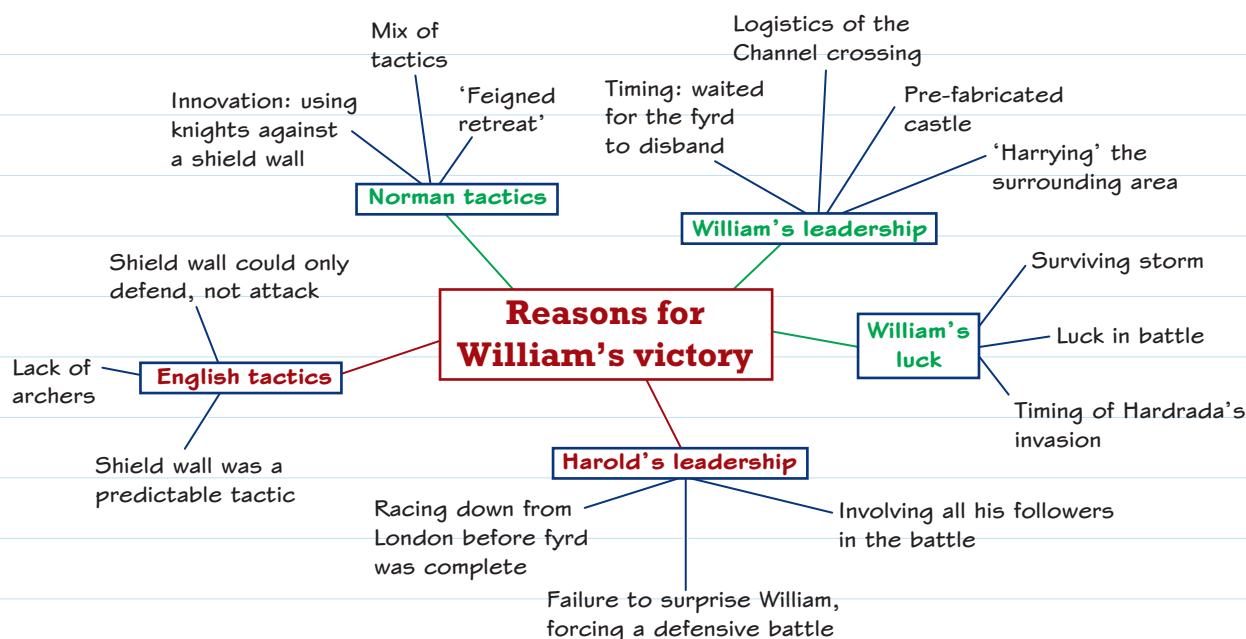
- 1 William's scouts spotted Harold's advancing army – Harold failed to achieve a surprise attack.
- 2 Harold's army was able to position itself along a ridge at the top of a hill. That meant that William had to attack up hill.
- 3 The battle lasted eight hours – a very long time for a medieval battle. This was perhaps because the two sides were quite evenly matched. There were different phases to the battle.
- 4 William's archers were first to attack, but the archers had to stay out of English javelin range and the English shield wall knew how to catch the arrows on their shields.
- 5 William's foot soldiers and knights were beaten back by the shield wall initially. The English **housecarls** did great damage to horses and men with their two-handed axes.
- 6 At one point the Norman army was panicking that William had been killed. William tipped back his helmet to show he was still alive.
- 7 A feigned retreat (or a real retreat) meant English fyrdsmen left the shield wall to chase after retreating Normans. The English were then surrounded and cut down.
- 8 The shield wall was gradually thinned out. Norman knights then charged through it and caused great damage. Norman archers also became more effective as the shield wall failed.
- 9 Harold and his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, and their housecarls, made final stands at the top of the hill, fighting to the death. Harold and his brothers died.
- 10 The rest of the English army then ran for it. The *Bayeux Tapestry* ends with the words (in Latin): 'and the English turned and fled'.

Now try this

Describe **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of the Norman foot soldiers and **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of the English fyrd troops.

William's victory

You need to know about the range of causes of Harold's eventual defeat, including William's superior leadership skills, the strength and skills of the two armies, and Harold's mistakes.



Battle advantages

Harold

- 👍 Harold was fighting on home ground: Wessex.
- 👍 The housecarls were experienced, disciplined and skilled warriors.
- 👍 The English had the best position on the battlefield: on a ridge at the top of the hill.

William of Normandy

- 👍 William's troops were trained in tactics that the English had never experienced before, including the feigned retreat.
- 👍 His troops had to fight to survive: they would not be able to retreat or escape.
- 👍 William had obtained the pope's blessing for his invasion and he and his men believed that God was on their side.

Battle disadvantages

Harold

- 👎 The men of the general fyrd were inexperienced and lacked discipline.
- 👎 The core of his army was tired from fighting at Stamford Bridge and marching south. They may also have been demoralised by having to fight yet another battle.
- 👎 A lack of archers – it is possible that English archers were among the fyrd troops who arrived in London after Harold had already rushed off down to Hastings.

William of Normandy

- 👎 Having to fight up hill made knights and archers less effective.
- 👎 Although his knights had trained for years in their battle tactics, many of his foot soldiers were mercenaries who had not trained to fight in combination with knights.
- 👎 Knights had trained to charge against other knights: charging a shield wall was probably something entirely new.

Now try this

Explain the importance of the 'feigned retreat' as an explanation for William's victory at the Battle of Hastings.

Establishing control

You need to be able to explain why the earls submitted to William following his march on London, how William rewarded his followers and how he protected the borders of his new kingdom.

The march on London

- Following the Battle of Hastings, William and his men marched to Dover where they became very ill with dysentery.
- In London the remaining English nobility chose Edgar Aethling as Harold's successor, but they did not attack William at Dover.
- Having recovered, William led his army on a brutal march through south-east England, destroying homes and farms.
- Towns and villages were intimidated and surrendered. William led his army round London to Berkhamstead rather than attacking London directly.



The submission of the earls

Why did Edgar Aethling, Edwin, Morcar and the other English nobles submit without a fight?

- William had seized the royal treasury so Edgar Aethling had little to offer followers in the way of reward.
- William's march round London may have threatened to cut the city off from supplies.
- England's best warriors died at the Battle of Hastings.
- Did the surviving English nobles believe William's victory was God's will?
- The English should have attacked William at Dover. Perhaps Edgar and the earls couldn't agree about what action to take.

William rewards Anglo-Saxons

Rewarding loyalty

Edwin and Morcar keep their earldoms.

Although...

Edwin and Morcar's earldoms are smaller than before.

Edwin promised William's daughter in marriage.

This marriage never actually occurs.

Gospatric made earl of northern Northumbria.

Gospatric had to pay William a lot of money for the earldom.

Everyone who fought against William loses their land.

All this land goes to William and his followers, not to Anglo-Saxons.

Rewarding followers

William had promised his followers great riches in return for their support for the invasion.

- ✓ He sent lavish gifts to the pope (probably from the English royal treasury).
- ✓ He set a heavy geld tax, to pay his mercenaries (professional soldiers).
- ✓ He declared that all land in England belonged to him. He then granted land and earldoms to his followers.

Hugh d'Avranches, William FitzOsbern and Roger de Montgomery were followers of William and had supported him in the invasion. They became the first three Marcher earls.

Controlling the borderlands

William created three new earldoms (Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester) to protect the Marches – the border with Wales. The Marcher earl had special rights and privileges. They:

- ✓ could create new towns to promote Norman colonisation of the Marches
- ✓ had total control: their sheriffs reported to them rather than to the king
- ✓ did not have to pay tax on their lands, so they could invest in defence
- ✓ could build castles as they wished.

Now try this

Who were the first three Marcher earls? Explain what powers they had.

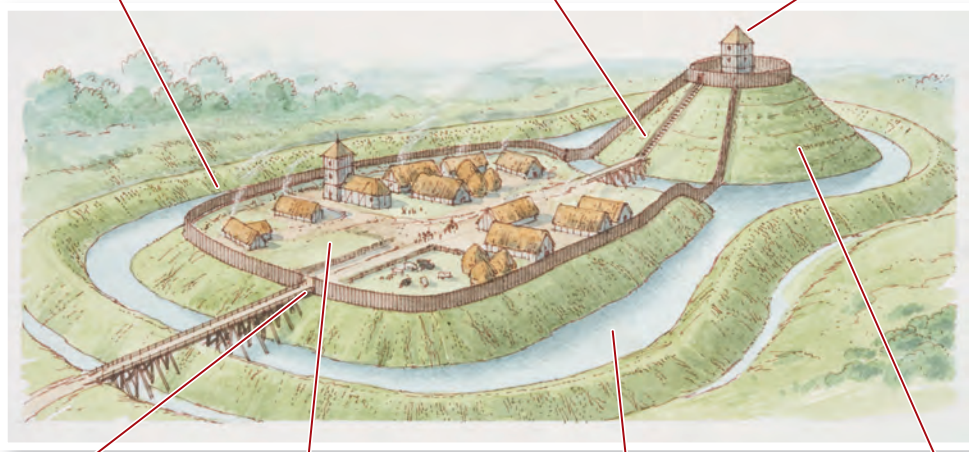
Castles

The Normans' motte and bailey castles were almost unknown in Anglo-Saxon England. They had a huge military and psychological impact that made it easier for the Normans to establish control and secure their conquest.

A palisade (strong fence) was made of solid timbers driven deep into the ground: it was strong and quick to build. Sometimes a double fence with earth packed in between was built.

Access to the keep was either up steep steps cut into the motte or, in some castles, up a sort of bridge.

A strong wooden tower called the keep provided a lookout point, an elevated attack position for archers to defend the whole area of the castle and a final point of defence from attack.



Access into the castle was controlled through the gatehouse. Sometimes a drawbridge over the ditch could be pulled up to defend the gatehouse from attack.

The bailey was the enclosure below the motte and also protected by the palisade and outer defences, where the stables and barracks would be for the garrison of troops. During attacks, local people and livestock could take shelter here.

A ditch was cut that surrounded both the bailey and the motte. Sometimes the ditch was filled with water, protecting the palisade.

The motte was a large mound of earth, typically 5–7 metres high. Because it was earth, it was fireproof. With enough peasant labour a motte was quick to build. Historians think most motte and bailey castles took between four and nine months to construct.

Why were castles important?

- They were located in strategically important places, for example, at river crossings. This made it easier to keep the local population (and any rebel activity) under surveillance.
- They were used as the base for attacks. A garrison of troops in the castle could ride out to suppress trouble, and if they came under attack they could return to the castle's defences.
- The Normans built castles to control areas. When a town was overlooked by a Norman castle, it had a psychological impact on the locals: making them feel dominated.

How were castles different from burhs?

- Burhs protected Anglo-Saxons; castles were built to control Anglo-Saxons.
- Burhs were large and designed to defend whole communities; castles were small and mainly private.
- Castles were part of the Norman domination of areas. Burhs took longer to construct, and were designed to defend inhabitants from attack by foreign invaders.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes the Normans building castles everywhere, oppressing the unhappy local people and making things 'always go from bad to worse'.

Now try this

Using the diagram above, describe **two** features of the castle that made it difficult to attack.

Anglo-Saxon resistance, 1068

William initially aimed to include the Anglo-Saxon earls in governing England. However, in 1068, earls Edwin and Morcar fled William's court and led a revolt against him. Other important Anglo-Saxon nobles joined the revolt, including earls Waltheof and Gospatric and Edgar Aethling.

Causes of the revolt



Edwin's resentment

Edwin was unhappy because William promised Edwin he could marry his daughter but William went back on his word and also reduced the size of Edwin's earldom.



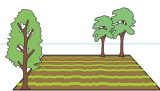
Bad government

It was reported that Odo of Bayeux and William FitzOsbern had seized land unlawfully and allowed soldiers to rape Anglo-Saxon women without punishment.



Morcar's resentment

Morcar was unhappy because his earldom was reduced in size by William giving parts of it away to Tostig's old thegn, Copsi, and to Maerlswein, who had been a steward of King Harold's.



The loss of lands

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1067 reports: 'When William returned (from Normandy) he gave away every man's land'. Odo and FitzOsbern's land grabs were repeated all over the country, with William's followers seeking to expand their grants by every means possible.

Causes of the revolt



Castles

Castles were resented as being a symbol of Norman domination. Housing was cleared to build castles and people were forced to provide resources for the castle garrison.



Taxes

William imposed a heavy geld tax in December 1066. He returned to Normandy in the spring of 1067, taking with him a lot of English treasure. It became clear to Anglo-Saxon earls that William planned to take money from England to make Normandy and the Normans richer.

William's response and its outcome

- William took his forces north into Mercia, Edwin's earldom, and Northumbria, which Morcar governed parts of (as did Gospatric and Waltheof).
- William first took control of the burhs of Warwick and then Nottingham and built castles in both places, destroying houses to make room for their construction.
- As soon as William took control of Warwick, Edwin and Morcar came down to Warwick with their men and submitted to William.
- Edwin and Morcar's actions meant the rest of the revolt collapsed. Edgar Aethling and other rebels escaped to Scotland and the protection and support of King Malcolm III.
- William pardoned Edwin and Morcar, and they returned to being William's 'guests' at his court, until 1071 when they escaped again.

Consequences of the revolt

- William decided that he needed to put a Norman in charge of the north. The man he chose, Robert Cumin, was a trigger for the next rebellion in the north. See page 13
- Edgar Aethling's escape to Scotland created a new centre of resistance to Norman control at Malcolm III's court. Edgar would attack northern England again.
- Castles proved very effective at bringing areas under control. Edwin and Morcar's rapid surrender to William probably came after they concluded that the Normans were too strong to resist.
- There were other revolts at the same time as Edwin and Morcar's revolt: for example, Eadric the Wild's rebellion against the Marcher earldoms, and in Exeter. Some Anglo-Saxons fought against these revolts, meaning that William was able to rely on some Anglo-Saxon troops to suppress Anglo-Saxon resistance.

Now try this

Explain why Odo of Bayeux and William FitzOsbern helped cause the revolt of 1068.

Anglo-Saxon resistance, 1069–71

The most serious Anglo-Saxon resistance came from the two rebellions associated with Edgar Aethling in the north in 1069. The last Anglo-Saxon rebellion against William's rule occurred in Ely in 1070–71, and is associated with Hereward the Wake.

Uprisings in Durham and York

January 1069	February 1069
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert Cumin is appointed as the new earl of northern Northumbria. Looting by his men triggers a rebellion in Durham: Cumin and his men are killed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An uprising in York, the governor and Norman troops are killed. Edgar Aethling comes down from Scotland to join the rebellion. Norman sheriff and his garrison are attacked.

- William races north with a large army and quickly ends the rebellion.
- William lays waste to the whole city of York and builds new castles.
- William returns south for Easter.

William was able to defeat the rebels in the north easily.

William entrusted York to William FitzOsbern while he went back to Winchester for Easter, to celebrate the festival as England's king.

Anglo-Danish attack on York

September 1069
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> King Sweyn of Denmark sends a large invasion fleet to England. The Danish invasion force meets up with Edgar Aethling. 21 September: the Anglo-Danish attack on York. 3000 Normans are killed. The Danes retreat to the Lincolnshire coast.

- Anglo-Saxons in the north begin guerrilla warfare, sheltered by locals.
- New rebellions begin in Devon, Shrewsbury and Chester.
- As soon as William's forces subdue unrest in one region, it starts again somewhere else.
- The Danes bide their time, protected by marshland.

William's solutions

(1) Pay the Danes to leave England.

and

(2) The Harrying of the North.

Hereward the Wake and rebellion at Ely

- Hereward had returned to Ely around 1069 from exile. He started a rebellion because he had lost his lands to a new Norman lord.
- In 1070 the Danes returned and set up base in Ely. The Danes and Hereward joined forces for a raid on Peterborough Abbey.
- Hereward had hoped to save the treasures of the monastery from the Normans, but the Danes took all the treasure and sailed back to Denmark with it.
- Morcar and his men came to Ely and joined Hereward. They defended Ely but the Normans eventually defeated them.
- Morcar was captured while Hereward escaped – but he was not heard of again.

Anglo-Saxon resistance – a summary

Anglo-Saxon nobles who submitted to William were allowed to keep their positions as William wanted to rule with consent rather than by force.

William deprived the Anglo-Saxon nobles of any power and reduced their lands. This caused the rebellions.

William underestimated the independence of the north, but the real threat came with the Danish invasion.

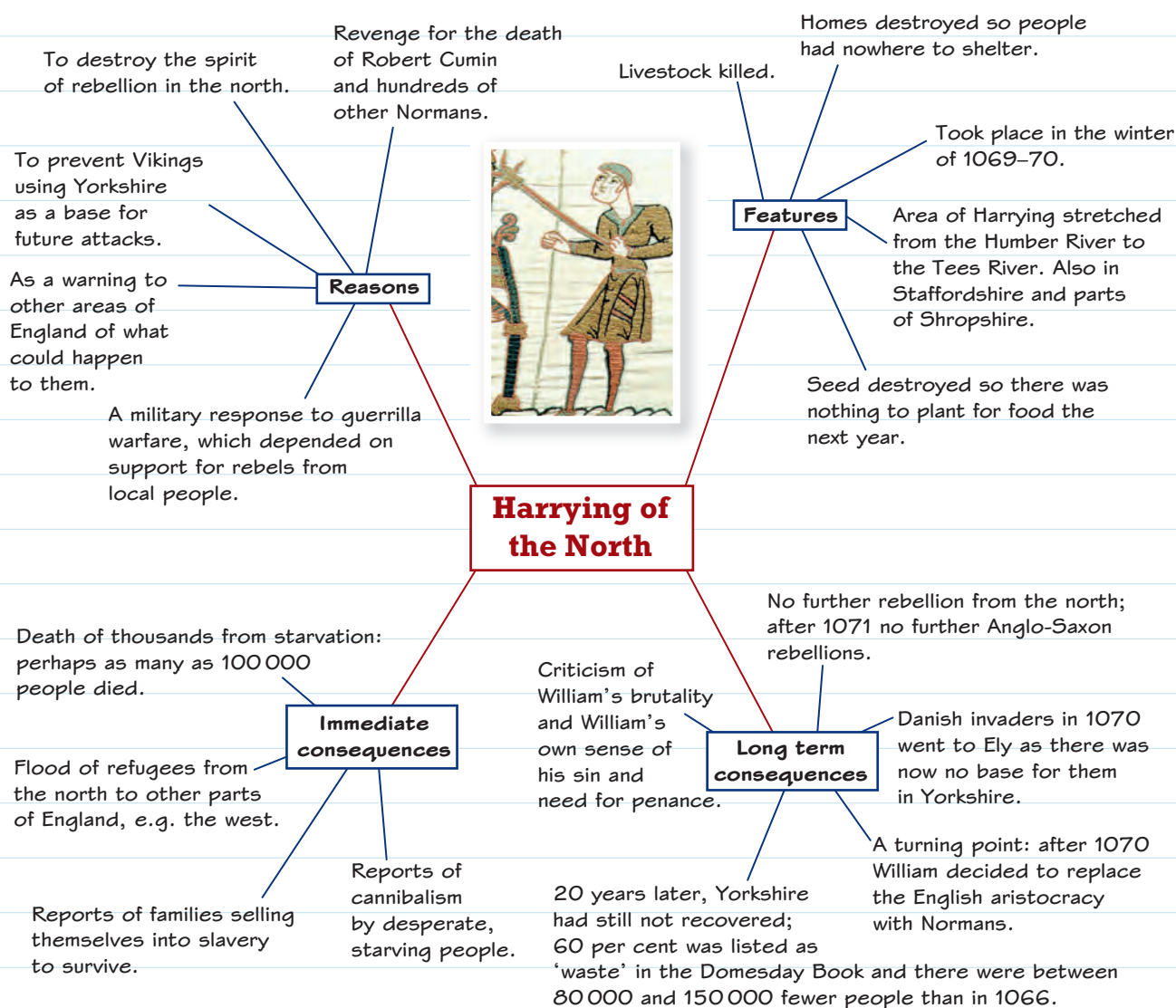
As a result of the resistance, William decided that England could not be ruled with consent. The Anglo-Saxon aristocracy needed to be removed from power to prevent further resistance in the future.

Now try this

One outcome of the Anglo-Saxon resistance 1068–71 was that William decided to replace the remaining Anglo-Saxon aristocracy with Normans. Describe **one** other outcome.

The Harrying of the North

The brutality of the Harrying of the North shows that William was prepared to take the most extreme measures to keep England under his control. His decision to lay waste to the north had both immediate consequences (1069–70) and a longer-term legacy (1069–87).



The early medieval period was a violent time, but William's Harrying of the North was seen as especially brutal, even by his contemporaries. William was criticised by the pope for his actions, and was said to have repented for the deaths of so many people for the rest of his life.

Now try this

Look back at page 13 to answer this.

King Sweyn's invasion in 1070–71 went to Ely rather than to the north. Explain why this shows that the Harrying of the North achieved one of its goals.

Landownership, 1066–87

One of the legacies (long term consequences) of Anglo-Saxon resistance was the way the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy was removed from power and replaced by Normans. This mainly happened through changes in landownership.

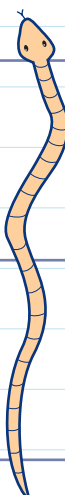
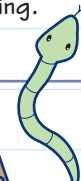
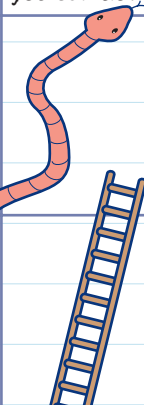

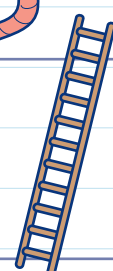
Landownership changes by 1087

- ✓ Over half the land in England in 1087 was held by just 190 of the tenants-in-chief. Only two of these were Anglo-Saxons.
- ✓ Only around 5% of land was still held by Anglo-Saxon aristocrats in 1087, most of it in small estates.
- ✓ The king's own royal estates made up 20% of the land and the Church owned 25%.

More power to the king

- Changes in landownership made William more powerful and rebellion less likely.
- Anglo-Saxons had to pay William to redeem land (get back land they owned before) and heirs paid the king to inherit land.
- When landholders died without an heir, the land went back to the king, and those who acted against the king could forfeit land (have their land taken from them).

Ways land could be lost or gained

You've acted against the king: forfeit all your lands.		The sheriff illegally grabs your land: he's in charge of the law court so there's nothing you can do.
	You can't afford to redeem your land from the king. 	
	The king has made you 'heir' to a dead Anglo-Saxon thegn. Take over their land.	

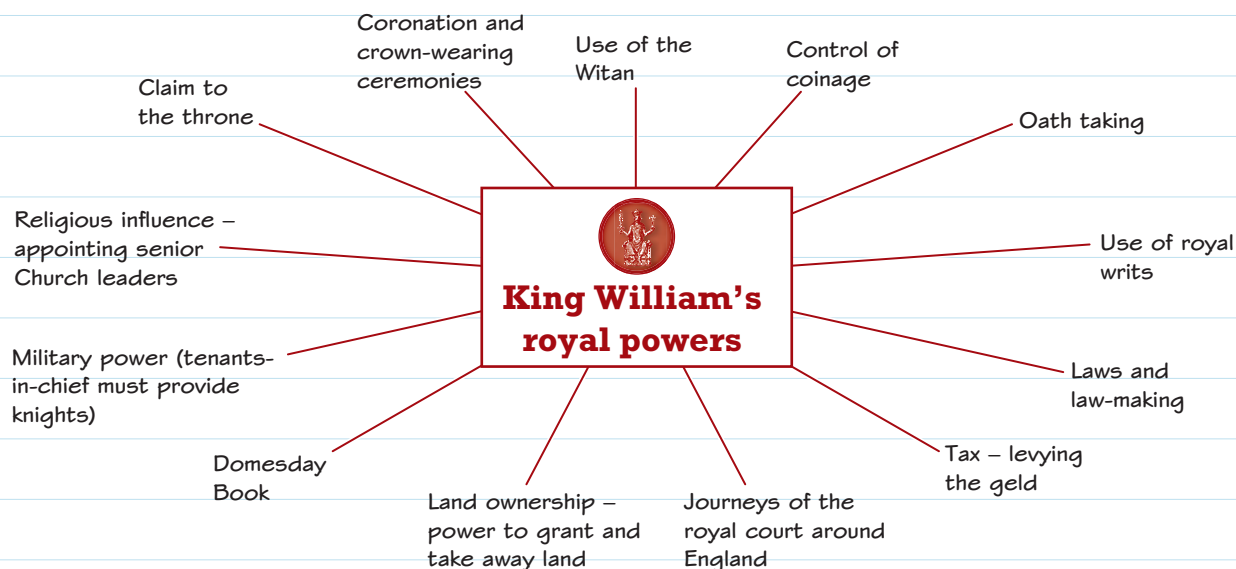
Impact on thegns	Impact on peasants
<p>With Normans becoming the major landholders, English thegns became their tenants. The Normans had followers of their own whom they needed to reward with land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When thegns died, Norman followers would 'inherit' their land, not the thegns' children. • Thegns who did not obey their Norman lords could forfeit their land. <p>Many thegns left England to work as mercenaries in Europe. Those that stayed were forced to obey their new lords.</p>	<p>Life for many peasants probably went on much as it did before the Conquest, since one lord was much like another from the peasants' point of view. However, it is likely that Normans were stricter about their peasants meeting all the obligations due from the land they worked.</p> <p>Ceorls – the 'free' peasants who could decide to leave one lord and go and rent land from another – became rarer and rarer. Norman lords worked to reduce the independence of ceorls.</p>

Now try this

Edwin forfeited his lands in 1071 after he died (he was killed by his own men). Morcar forfeited his lands in 1070 after joining which rebellion?

Maintaining royal power

William used force to get control of his new kingdom, but he wanted to rule as England's legitimate king as well as its conqueror. He adopted the powers and symbols of Edward the Confessor and promoted the claim that he was the rightful successor to King Edward.



Royal factors

- 👑 **Claim to the throne:** Norman propaganda stressed that William had been Edward's rightful successor, as well as his relative.
- 👑 **Royal ceremonies:** William began a new ceremony of being seen wearing his crown three times a year, at events where he also consulted with his Witan.
- 👑 **Coinage:** William's coins featured his image, reinforcing his role as king.
- 👑 **Writs:** William's image also appeared on the royal seal of his writs. William used writs to issue his orders across the land. The Anglo-Saxon writ system was designed to maintain royal power across England and William used writs enthusiastically.
- 👑 **Oath taking:** William held oath-taking ceremonies in which landholders swore their allegiance to William as their king.
- 👑 **Journeys around England:** by travelling to different parts of his kingdom, William could show himself as king to his subjects. He could also show favour to important subjects by visiting them and holding talks.

Other factors

- ✚ **William's military strength:** Anglo-Saxons respected great warrior-kings. However, such kings would ideally also show wisdom in their law-making and mercy in their treatment of their subjects, for example, Edward the Confessor was respected for living on the revenues of his own estates rather than benefitting from frequent geld taxes.
- ✚ **Religious influence:** William had control over appointments to senior positions in the Church. His reforms (with Archbishop Lanfranc) of the Church in England increased Norman control of the messages given out in churches, which were used to praise William as king.
- 🐎 **Landownership:** William was able to use forfeited Anglo-Saxon lands to reward his followers. This helped ensure their support for William's rule as England's king. Challenges to William's rule came from those who thought they had not been given enough land.

Now try this

Explain the consequences of William's claim to the throne for landownership in England.

The Revolt of the Earls

In 1075, three of William's own earls tried, unsuccessfully, to remove him from power. This was the last revolt William would face in England before his death a decade later. This page looks at the reasons for revolt; the next page is on its features, its defeat and effects.

The rebel earls and their motives

Roger de Breteuil, Earl of Hereford, was the son of William FitzOsbern. Roger resented the way William had reduced the size of his Hereford earldom after FitzOsbern died. FitzOsbern had been one of William's most trusted followers.

Ralph de Gael, Earl of East Anglia, had grown up in Brittany and became Earl of East Anglia after his father died around 1069. It is likely his involvement in the revolt was for similar reasons to Roger de Breteuil. He married Roger's sister in 1075.

Waltheof, had taken part in the rebellions in the north in 1069, but had submitted to William, was pardoned and made Earl of Northumbria (his father had been Siward, Earl of Northumbria). He was the last surviving Anglo-Saxon earl. Presumably, Northumbrians would have supported their earl if there was a good chance of success against the Normans.

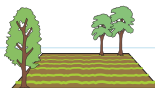
Loss of privileges

One of the features of the Marcher earldoms, which included Hereford, was that sheriffs answered to the earl, not to the king. William changed this so that he had more influence in all his earldoms. Roger resented this loss of privilege and there may have been others, too.



Loss of land

William was concerned that earls should not have too much power. This was why he took the opportunity of their fathers' deaths to reduce the size of Ralph and Roger's land.



William's absence

In 1075, William had returned temporarily to Normandy, leaving the government of England to his regent, Archbishop Lanfranc. The rebels saw his absence as an opportunity to strike.



Reasons for the revolt

Loss of power

Under Anglo-Saxon rule, earls had been very powerful. The three earls planned to recreate this situation by dividing William's kingdom between the three of them.



Anglo-Saxon rebelliousness

The Revolt of the Earls took place soon after the rebellions of 1068–71. The three earls must have assumed Anglo-Saxons would join their revolt, especially with Waltheof involved.



Powerful allies

Ralph contacted King Sweyn of Denmark for support in the revolt. It is likely that Waltheof was important in making this deal with the Danes. King Sweyn's son Cnut put together a large fleet. The rebels also had support from William's enemies in Brittany and France.



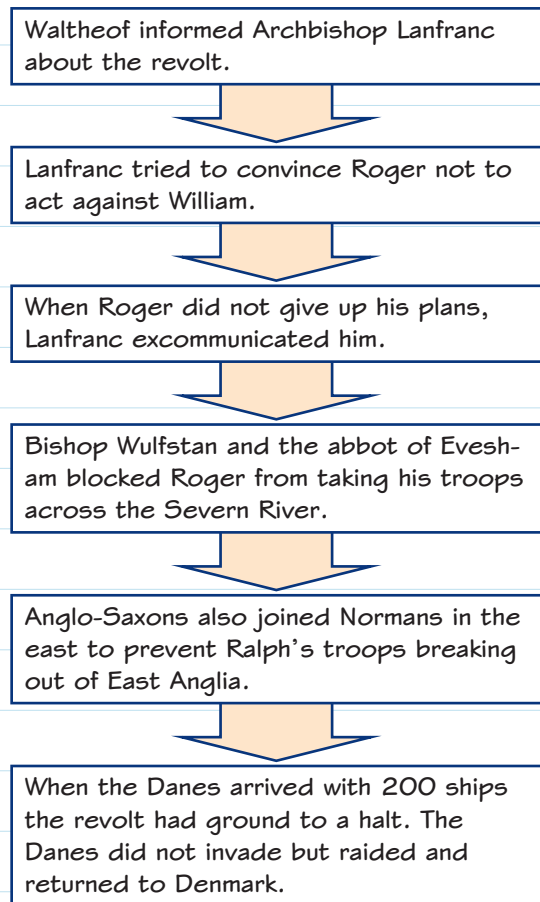
Now try this

Explain **one** reason why William wanted to reduce the power of his own earls.

Features and effects of the Revolt

Unfortunately for Earls Roger, Ralph and Waltheof, their revolt did not succeed and was quickly defeated. Key to their defeat was the way Anglo-Saxons joined Normans to prevent the revolt.

Features of the revolt



Key feature 1: Waltheof decided against being involved in the revolt, perhaps hoping to be rewarded for his loyalty in informing. However, William ordered him to be executed instead.

Key feature 2: Lanfranc had time to prepare for the revolt. His arguments to Roger were that Roger should remember his father's loyalty.

Key feature 3: Although all Anglo-Saxons might have been expected to join the revolt against William, most did not. Even more significantly, Anglo-Saxons in the Midlands joined with Norman garrisons in preventing the revolts from spreading out of Herefordshire and out of East Anglia.

Key feature 4: The Danes had an impressive invasion force but they did not want to engage with the Normans in battle, at least not until Norman forces had already been significantly weakened by Anglo-Saxon uprisings.

The defeat of the revolt

William returned to England before the Danes arrived, and oversaw the defeat of the revolt.

- Roger was captured and imprisoned for life.
- Ralph escaped to Brittany, though William captured some of his Breton followers and punished them by blinding them.
- Waltheof fled abroad, but William tricked him into coming back to England. When Waltheof returned he was imprisoned and then executed.

Challenges to William and his sons were now from William's own earls and barons.

The planned Danish invasion of 1075 was the end of the Viking threat to England.

Significance of the revolt

Anglo-Saxons defended William's rule from revolt, suggesting some English support for William.

Despite Anglo-Saxon support in defeating the revolt, William continued to suppress Anglo-Saxon nobles.

Now try this

Lanfranc excommunicated Earl Roger. Which **one** of the following is the best definition of excommunication?

- Making someone an outlaw, which meant they could then be legally killed.
- Cutting someone off from the Church community, so they could not confess their sins.
- Sentencing someone to pay a fine to the Church in order to be forgiven.

The feudal hierarchy

When William became king, he established himself as the owner of all England's land. His key allies became his **tenants-in-chief**, who received huge grants of land direct from the king in return for their military service. They then granted land out to their followers in turn, creating a feudal **hierarchy** with the king at the top, with huge power to command and control the system.

Key terms

Barony – lands held by a baron (a major land owner, often a tenant-in-chief).

Fief or **feud** – land held by a **vassal** in return for service to a lord ('feud' is where feudalism comes from).

Homage – a public display of allegiance (loyalty) to a lord.

Tenant-in-chief – someone who held their fiefs directly from the king.

Vassal – someone who held land from someone else in the feudal system.

Hierarchy – where society is organised into levels of importance with each level obeying the level above them.

Knight service

Knight service was the duty to provide a knight or knights for the king for up to 40 days a year.

Some knights had not much more land to farm than peasants.

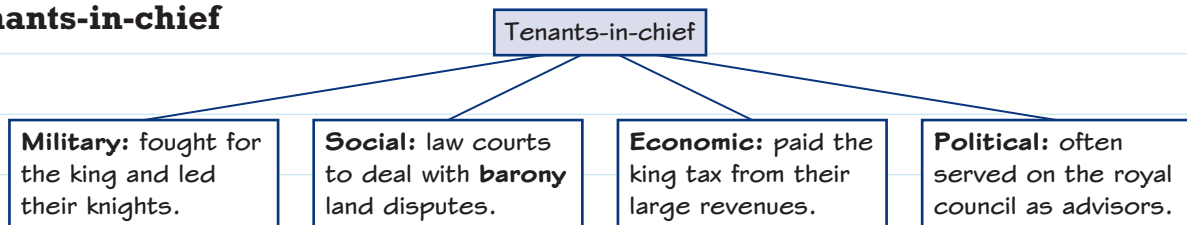
Some knight service involved guarding the king's castles.



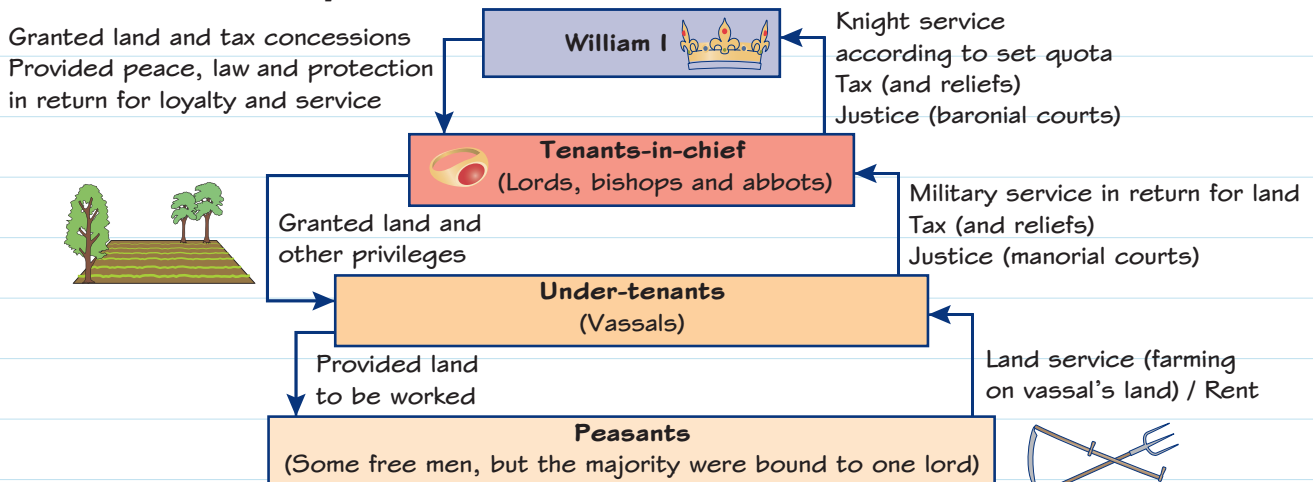
Other knights were very powerful Norman nobles.

The knights had to be equipped and given money to live on during knight service.

Tenants-in-chief



The feudal hierarchy



Now try this

Describe **two** features of the feudal hierarchy that increased William's military strength.

The nature of feudalism

The feudal system probably took several decades to develop. William took the opportunity of the Conquest to clear away the complex relationships between England's landholders and redevelop them to consolidate his power.

Feudalism and military power

The feudal system was a way of ensuring that the king had military power without having to pay for it.

Knights were extremely expensive to equip, train and maintain, but William needed lots of them. The feudal system developed so William received knight service in return for grants of land – both knights to fight in battle and knights to garrison his castles.

The fyrd still continued to operate alongside knight service: probably more of a **militia** provided by the general fyrd. William's son, William Rufus, used English fyrd troops to defeat a rebellion against him after William the Conqueror's death.

Feudalism and political power

Feudalism gave the king political power: he could control his barons through grants of land, reliefs and forfeiture.

William needed to be able to control his barons, or they would get too powerful and demand political power for themselves. **Forfeiture** meant that William had the power to punish severely anyone who acted against him by taking away their lands and granting them as a reward for loyalty to someone else.

In both Normandy and in Anglo-Saxon England, noble sons usually inherited their fathers' landholdings automatically. William toughened up the procedures and made inheritance dependent on a formal ceremony of **homage** to the king, and on paying as much for their relief as the king thought was suitable.

Feudalism and the peasants

Feudalism was a social system that made sure the nobility stayed rich and in control.

Just as the vassal provided military service for his **fief**, peasants provided labour service for their lord in return for land and protection from attack, but this came at a cost. Instead of ceorls being able to decide to leave a lord and go and work for another one, peasants were now bound to their lord, unable to leave his or her service.

How 'feudal' was Anglo-Saxon England? It seems likely that most peasants in Anglo-Saxon England were already bound to their lords through obligations and relationships that were very similar to labour service. These were obligations that came with each hide of land and the Domesday Book suggests these obligations continued after the Conquest.



Vassals swearing allegiance to a medieval king in an act of homage.

Now try this

Explain what was involved in forfeiture.