

# KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: THE NORMAN CONQUEST 1065-1087

## KEY WORDS

Burh = Fortified town built by Saxon kings.

Ceorl = The majority of the Saxon population, most worked the land but some were in skilled professions such as blacksmithing.

Danelaw = The law in force in the part of England held by the Danes before the Norman Conquest.

Earl = Wealthy Anglo-Saxon landowners, around 5000 in number by 1066.

Fealty = Promised loyalty.

Fyrd = The name given to the army of an Anglo-Saxon king.

Motte and Bailey = Early Norman castles with fort atop large mound and an enclosed bailey.

Pluralism = Holding more than one church position at a time.

Thrall = A slave.

Wergild = The cash value of a human life in Anglo-Saxon England.

Witan = Powerful lords and bishops, advisers to Anglo-Saxon kings and the council that elected the next king.

## 1. ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

### What was Anglo-Saxon England like in 1065?

- English Church was Christian but new many bishops had multiple offices posts in the church, Pope criticized the church for many clerical offences such as Pluralism.
- Many in northern areas shared heritage with Vikings invaders of the past centuries, the country had previously been divided with the Danelaw areas of northern and eastern England having being controlled by Vikings, only recently united as England.
- Very few people could read and society was structure into a hierarchy- The king was at the top followed by the earls, thegns, ceorls and finally thralls (slaves) women are complex to define but were in various sectors of Saxon society.
- Culturally, Saxons had their own art style which can be seen in carvings, jewellery and architecture from the time they built using wood, clay and straw. Main army was the Fyrd, called upon by the king when in need.
- Many Burhs scattered throughout the land. **By 1065 Godwineson family were as powerful as the King Edward the Confessor.**



## 2. INVASION AND VICTORY - TIMELINE

### What made William a conqueror in 1066?

- **1065 Normandy**, William secures his position and the Duchy of Normandy in Northern France, Anjou, Flanders, The Kingdom of France and Brittany are no longer in a position to invade Normandy
- **January 1066 England**, Edward the Confessor dies and on the 6<sup>th</sup> January the Witan elect Harold Godwinson as his successor. Edgar Atheling (Edward the confessor's great nephew) was too young to push his claim. William, furious as he claims Harold once swore fealty to him and to support claim to the throne, prepares to invade with the backing of the Pope.
- **25<sup>th</sup> September 1066**, Harold Godwinson defends his kingship against another claimant, Harald Hardrada, the latter is defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge following his invasion and Victory at Fulford.
- **Late September 1066**, William invades and lands at Pevensey in after lengthy preparations and delays in Normandy. He immediately sets about securing his position by raiding the surrounding countryside and building temporary castles.
- **October 14<sup>th</sup> 1066**, William and Harold Godwinson meet at the Battle of Hastings. William is victorious, Harold's body is mutilated following his death. Luck, good leadership and Harold's weaknesses all play a part in William's victory.



## EXAM QUESTION STEMS

*In Interpretation A...Identify and explain one way in which they do this (3 Marks)*

*If you were asked to do further research of one aspect on Interpretation A, what would you choose to investigate? (5 marks)*

*Interpretation B and C both focus on... How far do they differ and what might explain any differences? (12 marks)*

*...How far do you agree with this view? (20 Marks)*



### 3. RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

Is 'brutal slaughter' how William gained control of England 1067-71?

- Following victory at Hastings and tensions at his coronation, William focuses on quashing rebellions that crop up through England from 1067-1071. There were 3 main areas of concern; the south and west, the north and the east.
- **Growing resistance in Exeter** led by Harold Godwinson's mother Gytha, planned to have an invasion from Ireland and hoped the Danes would join too. William led his army south-west and successfully negotiated with leading citizens the end of the unrest. When he arrived however, the city gates were still closed, William gouged the eyes out of a hostage in front of the city gates in retaliation. After 18 days the city surrendered having had all supplies blocked. William placed trusted guards in the city to ensure control – brutal slaughter not used to subjugate the entire city.
- **Resistance in the North**, after receiving a message declaring the people of the north would fight William if he stood on their lands William marched his army north. Rebellions took place in Durham and York was attacked by rebels. After defeating the rebels at York William built a second castle and famously inflicted massive damage on the north as he destroyed the land so no enemy army could live there, this became known as the "Harrying of the north." Brutality on full display in the treatment of the north.
- **Resistance in East Anglia**, at Ely following a Dane invasion in 1070 an English thegn called Hereward the Wake pillaged the abbey of Peterborough and presented the treasure to the Danes, to have them rebel with him against the Normans. Even after the Danes left Hereward resisted Norman rule, William eventually sieged Ely and blocked its supplies, building a bridge to reach the Island and force the English to surrender. Edwin and Morcar (prominent Saxon nobles) were imprisoned, many other rebels had hands cut off and eyes gouged out. Patience and tactics used, but brutality used to deal with the surrendered rebels.



### 5. CONQUEST AND CONTROL

What was the impact of The Norman Conquest?

- **Land distribution changed significantly** with half of all land owned by Norman lords and 5% by English. Use of Domesday survey to either survey tax revenue or to legitimize Norman lords as new land owners. 1% of the population in 1086 were Norman.
- **Language and culture a dividing line** between the ruling Normans and the English.
- "Norman Yoke" theory of Norman subjugation of the English, with the Saxon era being a "golden age" but disputed.
- Normans brought law and order and re-structured the English church whilst rebuilding cathedrals and monasteries previously pillaged.

Some historians argue Normans brought effective government and rich culture to England, others claim they were a brutal force that oppressed the English. Open to interpretation.

