

Key topic 1: Anglo- Saxon England and the Norman Conquest, 1060-1066

1.1 Anglo- Saxon society

1.2 The last years of Edward the Confessor and the succession crisis

1.3 The rival claimants for the throne

1.4 The Norman invasion

The first key topic is focused on the final years of Anglo-Saxon England, covering its political, social and economic make-up, as well as the dramatic events of 1066. While the popular view is often of a barbarous Dark-Ages kingdom, students should recognise that in reality Anglo-Saxon England was prosperous and well governed. They should understand that society was characterised by a hierarchical system of government and they should appreciate the influence of the Church. They should also be aware that while Edward the Confessor was pious and respected, real power in the 1060s lay with the Godwin family and in particular Earl Harold of Wessex. Students should understand events leading up to the death of Edward the Confessor in 1066: Harold Godwinson's succession as Earl of Wessex on his father's death in 1053 inheriting the richest earldom in England; his embassy to Normandy and the claims of disputed Norman sources that he pledged allegiance to Duke William; his exiling of his brother Tostig, removing a rival to the throne. Harold's powerful rival claimants – William of Normandy, Harald Hardrada and Edgar – and their motives should also be covered. Students should understand the range of causes of Harold's eventual defeat, including the superior generalship of his opponent, Duke William of Normandy, the respective quality of the two armies and Harold's own mistakes.

Key Events

1064
1065
1066- Early
1066- Late

Key Questions

How was Anglo-Saxon society organised?	
Why was there a disputed succession when Edward the Confessor died?	
Who had the strongest claim to the throne?	
Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?	

Key Words/terms

Anglo- Saxon	
Aristocracy	
Ceorls	
Hides	
Earls	
Oath	
Fyrd	
Hostage	
Succession	
Shield Wall	
Thegn	
House of Godwin	
Domesday Book	
Burh	
Cavalry	
Danelaw	
Housecarl	

<p>How was Anglo-Saxon society organised?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monarchy and government. The power of the English monarchy. Earldoms, local government and the legal system. ● The economy and social system. Towns and villages. The influence of the Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anglo-Saxon England as a highly centralised state. The king as the ruler over the whole country. Small group of earls, as the king’s agents, ruling over vast regions. ● Division of England, for the purposes of administration, into shires or counties, further divided into hundreds. ● Agricultural society, with 10% of the population living in towns. ● Social structure, with slaves at the very bottom of society making up around 10% of the population. ● The power of the Church, including the role of Church figures as advisors to the king. The influence of the Church in everyday life.
<p>Why was there a disputed succession when Edward the Confessor died?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The house of Godwin. Harold Godwinson’s succession as Earl of Wessex. The power of the Godwins. ● Harold Godwinson’s embassy to Normandy. The rising against Tostig and his exile. The death of Edward the Confessor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Domination of English politics by the house of Godwin. ● Harold Godwinson’s succession on his father’s death in 1053 as Earl of Wessex, the richest earldom in England. ● Addition to the family’s power with Harold’s brothers Tostig, Gyrrh and Leofwine being granted earldoms. Godwin control of almost all of England by mid-1060s. ● Claim by Norman sources such as the Bayeux Tapestry, around 1064, that Harold pledged to support William’s claim to the English throne. Dispute of this in Anglo-Saxon sources. ● Northumbrian rebellion against Tostig in 1065. Harold exiling his brother, undermining Godwin family strength. ● Death of Edward the Confessor without an heir.
<p>Who had the strongest claim to the throne?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The motives and claims of William of Normandy, Harald Hardrada and Edgar. ● The Witan and the coronation and reign of Harold Godwinson. ● Reasons for, and significance of, the outcome of the battles of Gate Fulford and Stamford Bridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15-year-old Edgar the Atheling’s claim to the throne as the king’s nephew – side-lined by more powerful rivals. Duke William’s claim that Edward had promised him the throne. Harald Hardrada, King of Norway’s claim as a descendant of Cnut, the Viking King of England 1016–35. ● Earl Harold’s coronation with the backing of the Witan and preparations for the inevitable invasion. ● Hardrada’s victory at Gate Fulford. The fighting ability of the Vikings and the inexperience of the Anglo-Saxons led by the young earls, Morcar and Edwin. ● Harold’s victory at Stamford Bridge. The surprise attack, leaving his army severely weakened.
<p>Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Battle of Hastings. ● Reasons for William’s victory, including the leadership skills of Harold and William, Norman and English troops and tactics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● William and Harold’s extensive military experience. The advantage for William’s army of mounted knights and archers, which wore down the Anglo- Saxon shield wall. ● The make-up of the armies: mainly the fyrd or peasant conscripts in the Anglo-Saxon army, but mainly professional soldiers in the Norman army. ● The Norman tactic of feigned flights. ● Criticism of Harold for engaging William too quickly in battle.

Key topic 2: William I in power: securing the kingdom, 1066–87

2.1 Establishing control

2.2 The causes and outcomes of Anglo-Saxon resistance, 1068–71

2.3 The legacy of resistance to 1087 Key topic 2.4 Revolt of the Earls, 1075

The second key topic is focused on the period after the Battle of Hastings when William faced the immense task of translating his victory into meaningful control over a hostile Anglo-Saxon population. Students should understand how control was established, including the submission of the earls, but how by 1068 rebellion had broken out in the North of England, helped by the leadership of the surviving Anglo-Saxon earls, Edwin and Morcar. Students should also cover the renewed uprising in the North in 1069, which escalated out of control as a result of the leadership of Edgar Atheling and aid from Denmark and Scotland, and in 1070–71, the gathering of English rebels in the marshes of Ely to make what turned out to be a last stand. Students should appreciate how and why William defeated the uprisings: he militarised England with a programme of castle building; power was delegated to trusted men and a group of compact earldoms along the Welsh border; he was prepared to unleash total violence, as the population of Yorkshire discovered in the Harrying of the North; and he took steps to ensure that very few Anglo-Saxons continued to enjoy positions of wealth or power. Students should consider why, while the will of the English had been broken by the close of 1071, in 1075 a trio of William's own earls attempted, unsuccessfully, to oust him from power. This was the last challenge William would face in England.

Key Events

1066-
1068 -
1069 -
1070-71 -
1075 -

Key Questions

How did William establish control after the Battle of Hastings?	
How did the Anglo-Saxons resist from 1068-1071?	
How did William defeat the uprisings to 1087?	
What was the Revolt of the Earls in 1075?	

Key Words

submission	
March	
Welsh Marches	
motte	
bailey	
colonisation	
castellan	
harrying	
Guerilla war	
genocide	
Tenants-in-chief	
forfeit	
tenure	
vassal	
reconciliation	
magnate	
excommunication	

<p>How did William establish control after the Battle of Hastings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The submission of the earls, 1066. ● Rewarding followers and establishing control on the borderlands through the use of earls. The Marcher earldoms. ● Reasons for the building of castles; their key features and importance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● William’s brutal march through South-East England after Hastings and impact on Anglo-Saxon resistance. ● William’s receipt of the submission of earls Edwin and Morcar, Edgar the Atheling and Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury. ● Protection of the Welsh border with the establishment of three earldoms, centred on Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford. ● The psychological as well as military impact of motte and bailey castles, unknown in Anglo-Saxon England.
<p>How did the Anglo-Saxons resist from 1068-1071?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The revolt of Earls Edwin and Morcar in 1068. ● Edgar the Aethling and the rebellions in the North, 1069. ● Hereward the Wake and rebellion at Ely, 1070–71. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● William’s initial aim to rule in conjunction with the remaining Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. ● Edwin and Morcar’s defection from William’s court in 1068 due to lack of real power. William’s crushing of their rebellion. ● The challenge of 1069, with two rebellions in the North led by Edgar Atheling and supported by King Malcom III of Scotland and the Danes. ● Hereward the Wake and the final act of English resistance in the marshlands of East Anglia.
<p>How did William defeat the uprisings to 1087?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The reasons for and features of Harrying of the North, 1069– 70. Its immediate and longterm impact, 1069–87. ● Changes in landownership from Anglo-Saxon to Norman, 1066– 87. ● How William I maintained royal power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● William’s aim to destroy the spirit of rebellion in the North. His army’s systematic destruction or harrying of Yorkshire. Flood of refugees south. Designation in Domesday Book in 1086 of a third of Yorkshire as ‘waste’. ● William’s attitude to the native aristocracy as a result of the rebellions – by the end of his reign they had been eclipsed. ● Of 1000 tenants-in-chief listed in Domesday, only 13 were English. ● Maintenance of royal power, including during William’s absences, through e.g. government, landholding, castle building, personal authority.
<p>What was the Revolt of the Earls in 1075?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reasons for and features of the revolt. ● The defeat of the revolt and its effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uprising staged in 1075 by three members of William’s ruling elite: Ralph de Gael, Earl of Norfolk, Roger de Breteuil, Earl of Hereford and Waltheof, Earl of Northumbria, the last surviving Anglo-Saxon earl. ● The crushing of the revolt by Archbishop Lanfranc, William’s regent, while William remained in Normandy, indicating that the revolt did not seriously challenge him. The defeat of the revolt as the end of Anglo-Saxon rebellion.

Key topic 3: Norman England

1066–88

- 3.1 The feudal system and the church
- 3.2 Norman Government
- 3.3 The Norman aristocracy
- 3.4 William I and his sons

The final key topic is focused on the nature of Norman England and the implications of William's death. Students should consider changes to the nature of landownership as William laid claim to the whole of England, granting it out under strict conditions in a process historians have termed feudalism. In the Church, students should understand that Anglo-Saxon influence was squeezed out, while Lanfranc, William's carefully chosen Archbishop of Canterbury to replace Stigand, embarked on a process of modernisation and church building. In the realm of government, students should appreciate that Anglo-Saxon practices such as writs continued while others such as the use of earls and sheriffs were modified. The growth in royal power should be covered, demonstrated by the ambitious Domesday survey, the hated royal forests and the unrestrained greed of Bishop Odo of Bayeux, William's half-brother. They might note that in the economy, the single currency continued but slavery steadily declined.

Key Events

1070
1082
1086
1087
1088

Key Questions

How much did the feudal system change England?	
How much did Lanfranc change the English church?	
How much was Norman government and culture different to the Anglo-Saxons?	
Why was there a disputed succession after William died?	

Key Words

Fief	
Knight service	
relief	
Homage	
Demesne	
Barony	
feudal	
hierarchy	
delegate	
Regent	
Simony	
Forest Laws	
Domesday Book	
Logistics	
Succession	
financial	
Sheriffs	