

The Battle of Hastings

One of the most legendary battles in English history was fought between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans and is called the Battle of Hastings. It took place in Hastings on the south-east of England over 950 years ago and changed the course of English history and culture forever.

In January 1066, Edward the Confessor (the English king) was dying. Three men now laid claim to the throne of England: William of Normandy from France; Harold Godwinson from England and Harald Hardrada from Norway.

On 6th January, one day after Edward's death, Harold Godwinson was crowned King of England. As news spread of Harold's coronation, William and prepared to invade England. They both planned to kill King Harold and claim the throne for themselves.

Harald Hardrada invaded first from the north of England on 25th September. However, his army were easily defeated by the Saxons and he himself was killed in battle. King Harold was then informed that William of Normandy had landed in the south of England and was attacking the surrounding countryside. King Harold was furious and marched his exhausted troops 300 kilometres back towards the south to meet him.

Eight days later, Harold and his men reached London where they were finally allowed to rest. William sent an envoy to King Harold with a message asking him to hand over the throne and accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's treacherous demand.



Harold was advised to wait before attacking the Normans. His troops were weary and unprepared for a battle. They had suffered some losses fighting Hardrada's troops and needed time to rebuild. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13th October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill, now known as Battle Hill, and set up a fortress by forming a shield wall that was surrounded by sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. Harold ordered his forces not to leave their fortified positions, no matter what.

The Battle

On 14th October, the battle commenced. Norman infantry raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. However, they were at a disadvantage as it was tiring running up hill. Despite their efforts, they could not break the Saxon shield wall. The battle lasted for approximately thirty minutes. William's forces were cut down and suffered heavy losses.



Next, William ordered his cavalry to charge up the hill. They too were unsuccessful and, even though the Saxons lost many men, they did not manage to break Harold's wall.

Many hours later, the Normans attacked once again and eventually managed to break through the Saxon shield wall and the two sides fought hand to hand. William ordered Eustace of Boulogne and some of his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they did so, the battle was over and William was victorious.

After the battle, William (now known as William the Conqueror) was crowned as the new King of England.



Did You Know...?

The story of the Battle of Hastings was sewn onto a piece of tapestry called the Bayeux Tapestry.



The Battle of Hastings – Questions

1. Who fought in the Battle of Hastings?

2. Who was Edward the Confessor?

3. Where was Harald Hardrada from? Tick **one**.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweden | <input type="checkbox"/> France |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Norway | <input type="checkbox"/> England |

4. How do you think King Harold felt when he heard that William of Normandy had attacked England in the south? Explain your answer fully.

5. How far did the Saxons march back to the south? Tick **one**.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 300 miles | <input type="checkbox"/> 500 kilometres |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 300 metres | <input type="checkbox"/> 300 kilometres |

6. **Find and copy** a word that means **disloyal**.

7. Explain how the Saxons protected themselves in the Battle of Hastings.
Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. Explain what you think 'fought hand to hand' means.

The Battle of Hastings Answers

1. Who fought in the Battle of Hastings?

The Anglo-Saxons and the Normans fought at the Battle of Hastings.

2. Who was Edward the Confessor?

Edward the Confessor was the King of England in 1066.

3. Where was Harald Hardrada from? Tick **one**.

Sweden

France

Norway

England

4. How do you think King Harold felt when he heard that William of Normandy had attacked England in the south? Explain your answer fully.

Pupil's own response, such as: I think that King Harold would have felt angry and annoyed. Angry because William was trying to take his throne from him and annoyed because he had just finished fighting Harald Hardrada and now had to march his army all the way back to the south to fight again.

5. How far did the Saxons march back to the south? Tick **one**.

300 miles

500 kilometres

300 metres

300 kilometres

6. **Find and copy** a word that means **disloyal**.
treacherous

7. Explain how the Saxons protected themselves in the Battle of Hastings.
Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Pupil's own response, such as: The Saxons protected themselves in the Battle of Hastings by building a fortress on Battle Hill. They dug ditches and stuck sharp stakes into them and they formed a shield wall which the Normans found difficult to break through.

8. Explain what you think 'fought hand to hand' means.

Pupil's own response, such as: I think that 'fought hand to hand' means that because they were fighting so close to each other, they weren't shooting bows and arrows or throwing spears but were fighting with their hands using swords and daggers instead.

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One of the most legendary and bloody battles in English history was fought between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans and is called the Battle of Hastings. It took place in Hastings on the south-east of England over 950 years ago and changed the course of English history and culture forever.



In January 1066, Edward the Confessor (the English king) was dying. Three men now laid claim to the throne of England: William of Normandy from France; Harold Godwinson from England and Harald Hardrada from Norway.

On 6th January, one day after Edward's death, Harold Godwinson was crowned king of England. As news spread of Harold's coronation, William and Harald prepared to invade England. They both planned to kill King Harold and contest the throne.

Harald Hardrada invaded first from the north of England on 25th September. However, his army were easily defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge by the Saxons and he and his brother were both killed. King Harold was then notified that the Normans (William of Normandy's army) had travelled to the south coast of England by boat and were attacking the surrounding countryside. King Harold was furious and marched his exhausted troops 300 kilometres back towards the south to meet him.

Eight days later, Harold and his men reached London where they were finally allowed to rest. William sent an envoy to King Harold with a message demanding that he hand over the throne and accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's treacherous request.

Harold was advised to wait before attacking the Normans. His troops were weary and unprepared for a battle. Furthermore, William had an army of 15,000 soldiers while King Harold had just 5,000. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13th October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill, now known as Battle Hill, and set up a fortress by forming a shield wall that was surrounded by sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. The shield wall provided the best kind of protection from the Norman's flying arrows. Harold ordered his forces not to leave their fortified positions, no matter what.



The Battle

On 14th October, at dawn, the battle commenced. Norman infantry raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. However, they were at a disadvantage as it was hard running up hill. Despite their efforts, they could not break the Saxon shield wall. The battle lasted for approximately thirty minutes. William's forces were cut down and suffered heavy losses.

As part of a second wave of attack, William ordered his cavalry to charge up the hill. They too were unsuccessful and, even though the Saxons lost many men, they did not manage to break Harold's wall.



Around nine hours later, the Normans attacked once again and eventually managed to break through the Saxon shield wall and the two sides fought hand to hand. William ordered Eustace of Boulogne and some of his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they did so, the battle was over and William was victorious.

William apparently fell off his horse at some point during the battle. He got back on quickly so as not to deflate the enthusiasm of his soldiers.

After the battle, William (now known as William the Conqueror) was crowned as the new King of England.

Did You Know...?

The story of the Battle of Hastings was sewn onto a piece of cloth called the Bayeux Tapestry. The tapestry is nearly 70 metres long and 50 centimetres tall.



The Battle of Hastings – Questions

1. Complete the following sentence:

_____ was from England and _____
_____ was from Norway.

2. What happened on the 6th January? Tick **one**.

- The Battle of Hastings began.
- Harald Hardrada attacked England.
- Harold Godwinson was crowned.
- William of Normandy landed in England.

3. Where did Harold Godwinson defeat Harald Hardrada?

4. How long did the march to London take? Tick **one**.

- eight weeks
- ten days
- eight days
- eighteen days

5. Explain in your own words what you think an envoy is.

6. **Find** and **copy** a word which means **tired**.

7. Why do you think Harold ignored the advice to wait before attacking William and his army?

8. What advantages did the Normans have over the Saxons at the start of the battle.
Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

9. Why do you think it was so important for William to get back on his horse after he fell?
Explain your answer fully.

The Battle of Hastings Answers

1. Complete the following sentence:
Harold Godwinson was from England and **Harald Hardrada** was from Norway.
2. What happened on the 6th January? Tick **one**.
 The Battle of Hastings began.
 Harald Hardrada attacked England.
 Harold Godwinson was crowned.
 William of Normandy landed in England.
3. Where did Harold Godwinson defeat Harald Hardrada?
Harold Godwinson defeated Harald Hardrada at Stamford Bridge.
4. How long did the march to London take? Tick **one**.
 eight weeks ten days
 eight days eighteen days
5. Explain in your own words what you think an envoy is.
Pupil's own response, such as: I think that an envoy is a messenger that is sent from the opposing side with a message or an ultimatum for the enemy.
6. **Find** and **copy** a word which means **tired**.
Accept weary or exhausted.
7. Why do you think Harold ignored the advice to wait before attacking William and his army?
Pupil's own response, such as: I think that Harold ignored the advice to wait because he wanted to try and take them by surprise. William might have known that the Saxon's would be tired after their journey and would have expected them to rest. King Harold was also angry with William and so probably wanted to defeat him quickly to get rid of him.
8. What advantages did the Normans have over the Saxons at the start of the battle. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
Pupil's own response, such as: The Normans had 15,000 soldiers whereas the Saxons had just 5,000. Also, the Saxons had just fought a battle and had marched 300 kilometres so the Normans would have a lot more energy than the Saxons to fight.

9. Why do you think it was so important for William to get back on his horse after he fell?
Explain your answer fully.

Pupil's own response, such as: I think it was important for William to get back on his horse because if his soldiers, who were probably scared and tired, saw their leader fall, they might have thought he was dead. If they thought he was dead, they would probably either retreat or surrender.

The Battle of Hastings

The Norman conquest of England, led by William the Conqueror, began in 1066 and is one of the most legendary and bloody battles in English history. The battle was fought between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans and is famously known as the Battle of Hastings. It took place on the south-east of England in Hastings, Sussex, over 950 years ago and changed the course of English history and culture forever.

In January 1066, the English king (Edward the Confessor) was dying. Three men now laid claim to the throne of England: William of Normandy from France; Harold Godwinson from England and Harald Hardrada from Norway. They all believed that they were the rightful King of England.

However, on 6th January, one day after Edward's death, Harold Godwinson (previously the Earl of Wessex) was crowned King of England. As news spread of Harold's coronation, William and Harald prepared to invade England, planning to kill King Harold and contest the throne.

Harald Hardrada invaded first from the north of England on 25th September. However, his army were easily defeated by the Saxons at the Battle of Stamford Bridge and he and his brother were both killed. King Harold was then notified that the Normans (William's army) had travelled to Pevensey on the south coast of England in 700 ships and were attacking the surrounding countryside. King Harold was infuriated and marched his exhausted troops 300 kilometres back towards the south to stop him.

Harold and his fatigued men reached London eight days later where they were finally allowed to rest. William sent an envoy to King Harold with a message demanding that he concede the throne and declare William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's treacherous and arrogant request.

Harold's troops were weary and unprepared for a battle. Whereas William had an army of 15,000 soldiers, King Harold had just 5,000. Harold was advised to wait and allow his army to recover. However, Harold ignored this advice and on the eve of the battle, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They set up a fortress at the top of a hill, now known as Battle Hill, and formed a shield wall; they stood in a long line and overlapped their shields to form a line of defence. The shield wall provided the best kind of protection from the Norman's flying arrows.

The Battle

On 14th October, at dawn, the battle commenced. Norman infantry raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's miniscule army. However, they were at a disadvantage as it was hard running up hill. Despite their efforts, they could not break the Saxon shield wall. The battle lasted for approximately thirty minutes. William's forces were held back and they suffered heavy losses.

In the second prong of attack, William ordered his cavalry to charge up the hill. They too were unsuccessful and, even though the Saxons lost many men, they did not manage to break Harold's wall.

Approximately nine hours after the battle began, the Normans attacked once again and eventually managed to break through the Saxon shield wall and the two sides fought hand to hand. William ordered Eustace of Boulogne and some of his best knights to find Harold and kill him. As dusk fell, Harold was dead, the battle was over, and William was victorious.

William apparently fell off his horse at some point during the battle. He got back on quickly so as not to deflate the enthusiasm of his soldiers. If they thought that he was dead, they were likely to retreat or surrender.



On Christmas Day 1066, William of Normandy (now known as William the Conqueror) was crowned as the new King of England. The town of Battle and an abbey that William built after his conquest have both taken their name from this famous battle.

Did You Know...?

The story of the Battle of Hastings was sewn onto a piece of cloth called the Bayeux Tapestry. The tapestry is nearly 70 metres long and 50 centimetres tall and is held in a museum in Normandy. It is considered a very important piece of historical evidence that has provided a lot of information about the battle.



The Battle of Hastings – Questions

1. Explain what the phrase 'bloody battles' means.

2. In what county did the Battle of Hastings take place? Tick **one**.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Essex | <input type="checkbox"/> Wessex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sussex | <input type="checkbox"/> Suffolk |

3. What was Harold Godwinson's previous title?

4. Where did the Normans land in England? Tick **one**.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Penzance | <input type="checkbox"/> Pevensey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dover | <input type="checkbox"/> Folkstone |

5. **Find** and **copy** a word which means **angry**.

6. Why did the battle last for so long? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Write a synonym for the word **fatigued**.

8. Explain in your own words what a shield wall is.

9. Explain in your own words what the Norman conquest was.

10. Explain why the Bayeux Tapestry is an important piece of historical evidence.

The Battle of Hastings Answers

1. Explain what the phrase 'bloody battles' means.
Pupil's own response, such as: 'Bloody battles' means that the battle was fierce and violent and a lot of blood was shed. Bloody is being used as an adjective.
2. In what county did the Battle of Hastings take place? Tick **one**.
 Essex Wessex
 Sussex Suffolk
3. What was Harold Godwinson's previous title?
Earl of Wessex
4. Where did the Normans land in England? Tick **one**.
 Penzance **Pevensey**
 Dover Folkstone
5. **Find and copy** a word which means **angry**.
infuriated
6. Why did the battle last for so long? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
Pupil's own response, such as: The battle lasted so long because the Saxons, although a smaller army, set up a fortress on top of Battle Hill and formed a shield wall. The Normans found this hard to break through and were held back several times. The Normans also had a disadvantage because they had to attack up the hill which meant that they were slower than they should have been at defeating the Saxons.
7. Write a synonym for the word **fatigued**.
Accept any correct response such as: exhausted, weary, tired, beat, worn out.
8. Explain in your own words what a shield wall is.
Pupil's own response, such as: A shield wall is a human wall made out of shields that are overlapped to form a line of defence. The shield wall protects the soldiers from the enemies' arrows.
9. Explain in your own words what the Norman conquest was.
Pupil's own response, such as: The Norman conquest refers to the time when William of Normandy (also known as William the Conqueror) and the Normans invaded England and fought the Saxons. They killed King Harold and so William became the new King of England. This changed English history and culture.

10. Explain why the Bayeux Tapestry is an important piece of historical evidence.

Pupil's own response, such as: The Bayeux Tapestry is an important piece of historical evidence because it tells the story of the Battle of Hastings. Because the battle happened so long ago, there will not be much other evidence to use such as photographs and written evidence. The images on the tapestry tell the story instead.