

Life in a Medieval village

The vast majority of people in Medieval England lived in villages. Life in the villages was tough for the peasants—they have to work very hard in the fields that belonged to a Lord. The Lord let the peasants live on his land in return for their loyalty and several days of work on his land. The fields around the village were divided up into strips and shared out amongst the villagers. All food that people ate was grown in these fields. Some people in the village had specialist jobs such as a blacksmith, carpenter or cloth weaver.

Most people lived in simple 'Cruck Houses'. These were made from "wattle" (sticks woven together) and "daub" (a mix of mud, dung and straw). The animals would live in the house with them.

After 1066, some villages grew in size and became towns. Eventually some townspeople bought their land and freedom from the Lord or King. Their freedom was written down and called a Charter. By 1400 London had a population of 40,000.



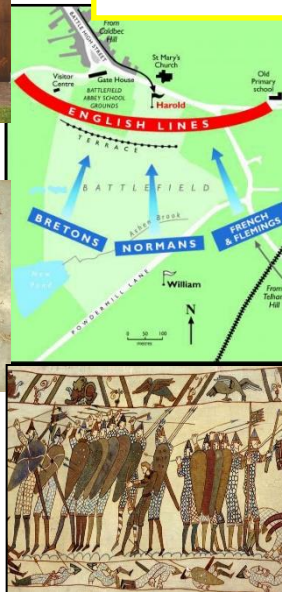
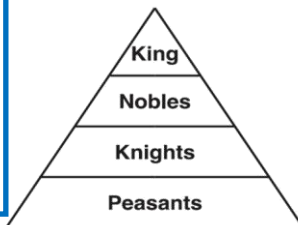
William keeping control over England

William quickly crushed any enemies—especially at Dover Castle

He built many castles across the country to control different areas—the first castles were known as Motte and Bailey castles.

William sent officials all over the country to make a survey of the country he had conquered—this became known as the Domesday Book

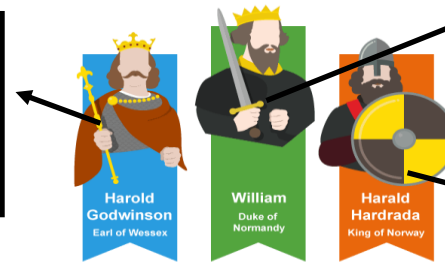
William brought in the Feudal System, where land was given to loyal people, in order to control the country.



The Norman Conquest- 1066

In January 1066, Edward the Confessor, King of England, died. He left behind no children so there was no clear heir to the throne. However, there were three men who believed that they should be the next King of England. They were:

English, one of the most powerful men in England, the most important bishops and nobles wanted him to be King



Normandy was the strongest part of France and he had been in control here for some time, had been promised the throne by Edward in 1051

King of Norway, a Viking (Canute) had ruled England from 1016-1035, one of the most feared warriors in Europe

Harold Godwinson had the advantage as he was in England and he wasted no time and was crowned King shortly after Edward's death. He waited for his rivals to make a move!

In September 1066 Hardrada landed in the North of England with an army of 10,000—they quickly took the town of York. Harold sent his troops up North and a fierce battle took place at Stamford Bridge. Harold's men win the fight but almost as soon as they were victorious Harold heard that William of Normandy had landed on the South coast near Hastings! There was no time to rest and he had to march his troops 250 miles South to meet William's men and decide the future of the country.

The Battle of Hastings

King Harold set his army on top of a hill called Senlac Hill. William travelled to meet him.

On the 14th October at about 9:30 in the morning the battle began. William unleashed his archers but Harold's men formed a strong shield wall. William sent troops to attack but they couldn't get through. William came up with a brilliant plan...he ordered some of his troops to pretend to run away...the English, thinking they were winning chased after them! They were massacred by William's cavalry and with the shield wall broken he could break through the English. Harold was killed (some believe by an arrow in the eye) and then chopped into pieces!

William had won, they marched towards London and he was crowned King on Christmas Day, 1066.