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The Normans

Learning Resources

Teacher Notes

KS3/4



Overview

The Royal Armouries learning resources have been created for teachers to use in the classroom or for your pupils to access from home with teacher guidance. The Normans learning resources are specifically designed to:

- Assist your Key Stage 3 pupils in studying the statutory development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509 section of the National Curriculum
- Pupils studying the AQA, OCR and Edexcel GCSE specifications

The resources will assist pupils in their understanding the year of 1066, with reference to the Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest as a whole. They will help pupils to develop their skills in:

- **understanding historical concepts**
- **understanding methods of historical enquiry**
- **understanding historical perspectives**

Below are notes intended to help you use our online resources and collection to bring this topic to life for your pupils.

General information

The year 1066

When Edward the Confessor died in January 1066 without a clear heir to the crown, a succession crisis ensued. Edgar Ethling was the teenage heir to the English throne, but his age and inability to rule on his own merit rendered him unsupportable. Instead, Harold Godwinson, an influential Saxon nobleman, was crowned King.

However, two other men laid claim to the English throne. William, Duke of Normandy believed that the throne of England had been promised to him, with Harald Hardrada, King of Norway believing it was his birth right. Both prepared to invade England.

The Yorkshire battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge resulted in Harald Hardrada being killed and the Norwegian army defeated. The victorious Harold Godwinson then had to march his weary troops south from the Battle of Stamford Bridge to face William of Normandy at Battle of Hastings, where the Saxons were defeated and Harold slain.

With both of his rivals dead, William was crowned as King of England on Christmas Day 1066 at Westminster Abbey. The Norman era in England had begun.

Key Terminology

Housecarl Elite warriors of the Saxon army who fought as the bodyguard of King Harold. They typically wielded a two-handed axe when fighting, and fought with a shield on their back for defense.

Thegns Men who owned land in Saxon England in return for fighting on behalf of the king. They were not quite nobility but were higher status than Fyrd.

Fyrd Men who were free but fought for their lord when required.

Mail Armour made of thousands of interlocking rings. Also known as chain mail

Battle/Dane/Bearded Axe- A large axe that requires 2 hands in order to wield.

Cavalry A soldier that fights on horseback. Prominent in the Norman army.

Trelleborg shield A round shield with a central metal boss to protect the hand. Favoured by the Saxon English to make shield walls.

Kite shield A kite shaped shield that would protect the legs as well as the body, especially on horseback.

Shield wall Tactical defense involving warriors interlocking their shields to create a 'wall' of protection.

The resources

The Battle of Hastings Video

Using historical sources from the Royal Armouries collection and the Bayeux Tapestry, this video explores the historical significance of the year 1066 and the Battle of Hastings, by looking at the weaponry and armour used during the battle. It provides pupils with:

- **critical historical knowledge for this topic**
- **improved source analysis skills**
- **critical thinking skills**

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle readings

Reading from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, these audio bites will give students the opportunity to analyse how written sources compare against the physical objects they describe from the Royal Armouries collection, and against the illustrated sources, like the Bayeux Tapestry. It provides pupils with:

- **critical historical knowledge for this topic**
- **improved source analysis skills**
- **critical thinking skills**

Photo Bank

The photo bank has been compiled to assist your lessons in any way that you see fit. They are all original photographs or images of items in our collection. Please download them for educational use only. They would be great for increasing historical knowledge, building evidentially supported enquiries and historical source work.

Images will be added and updated on a regular basis.

We have added notes to each image; collections items are hyperlinked in the descriptions to our Collections Online, where you can get more images and technical information; and the asset numbers for our Image Library are given where relevant. If you would like any more information about any image, please contact educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk and we would be happy to assist.