

# Battle of Hastings 1066



**A history game for 7-11 year olds**

**Instructions for teachers and play leaders**

## Summary

'Battle of Hastings' is an active role-playing game for 7–11 year olds.

This pack explains how to run the game for up to 30 children. It'll take 40–60 minutes to play four times.

There's a little historical background, simple instructions on how to play and then you'll find learning outcomes at the end.

The game helps players learn about the battle, what it means for us now and what it meant for the people involved.

## Historical Background

**England was conquered in 1066 by the Normans and has never been successfully invaded since.** (Wales, Scotland and Ireland were separate kingdoms then.) The Normans came from Normandy, which is now part of France. We call the people who lived in much of England then Anglo-Saxons.

**The Normans beat the Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Hastings. King Harold, the Anglo-Saxon leader, was killed and the Normans took over the country.** Norman language and culture began to exert an influence and England was changed forever.

## Why did it happen?

King Harold was crowned early in 1066. The previous king, Edward the Confessor, had died without a son. On his deathbed, Edward instructed that Harold should succeed him. However, Edward was half-Norman and his Norman nephew William had also been the designated heir at one time. William decided to press his claim and invaded. The invasion is known as the Norman Conquest and it began with the Battle of Hastings.

### Did you know:

The Battle of Hastings didn't actually happen in Hastings. It took place some way north at Senlac Hill, now known as Battle.

## The Battle of Hastings

The actual battle took place on one very long day, with the Anglo-Saxons at the top of a steep hill, and the Normans attacking from below. The Anglo-Saxons were already exhausted from having fought a Viking army in the north three days earlier.

The Normans had foot soldiers, archers and knights on horseback (although we've simplified their roles in the game), while the Anglo-Saxons were all on foot – foot soldiers and archers, a mix of professional soldiers and farmers roped in for the occasion.

The armies were evenly matched and either side could have won. They started at dawn and it was only towards evening with a series of feigned retreats that the Normans managed to break the Anglo-Saxon shield wall. Once they had broken through, the Anglo-Saxons were mostly killed where they stood, and King Harold himself died on the battlefield.

## The Bayeux Tapestry

**This famous tapestry depicts the Battle of Hastings.**

It is called the Bayeux Tapestry as it was commissioned by William's Cathedral in France. It tells the whole story in pictures, which are available on the internet, including the shooting of King Harold in the eye.

## Why it matters

**The Norman Conquest changed a lot of things about the language and culture of Britain** and some of the effects can still be felt today.

## Preparing to play the game

We're going to assume you're playing with a group of 30 children (the game needs a minimum of ten players to work).

This is an active game where one side plays the Anglo-Saxon army defending England, and the other side plays the invading Normans, trying to steal the treasures of England.

## Space needed:

- A playing area the size of a netball court

## Equipment:

- 30 flags/quoits/cones - something that can be seen when carried. These represent the Treasures of England.
- 30 light balls or beanbags to represent arrows - these need to be something that can be thrown at the legs of the players without risk of hurting them.
- Bibs or sashes in two colours.

### Top tip:

If you want to put larger numbers on the battlefield together, designate four children to be line judges to stamp out any potential cheating.

## Setup

Choose one third of the playing space to represent "Normandy". The rest of the space is "England" (see the diagram). Normandy should stretch the full width of the playing area and shouldn't be too small, otherwise the game is difficult for the Normans. It's easiest to mark the spaces if you're able to use a netball court, otherwise you'll need to mark a clear boundary between the two countries.

Scatter the Treasures of England widely around the playing area, with more at the end of the playing area furthest from Normandy.



## Teams

Two equal teams, Anglo-Saxons and Normans.

If you're playing with more than 20 children, divide each team so that only half the Normans and half the Anglo-Saxons play at any one time.

The others can cheer their team from the sidelines and take part in Norman and Anglo-Saxon chants.

Divide the Anglo-Saxons into archers and foot soldiers - an equal number of each. The Norman team all play knights.

Plan to play the game four times - when each half has taken part, the children tend to want to swap sides and try out the opposite role.

## Aims

The Normans begin the game in Normandy and it is their safe space. They must steal the Treasures of England - the flags/quoits/cones - and take them to Normandy.

The Anglo-Saxons must defend England and protect their treasure. Anglo-Saxon Foot soldiers can tag Normans with their hands. Archers can tag Normans by hitting them below the waist with their arrows (only underarm throws allowed).

## Rules

- When tagged, Normans have to drop any treasure they're carrying and freeze with their hands in the air.
- Another Norman can tag them to set them free (like stick-in-the-mud).
- Normans can pick up one treasure at a time to take back to Normandy.
- Anglo-Saxons may not enter Normandy.
- No firing of arrows into Normandy.
- No throwing of treasure into Normandy if you're tagged just outside.
- When Normans are freed they can pick up any treasure they've dropped.
- Anglo-Saxons can pick up dropped treasures and take them further back into England.
- If the Archers run out of 'arrows', they can go onto the battlefield and collect them, but can't tag anyone while they're there or get arrows from Normandy.
- Give the archers a clearly marked area to stand in outside the main battlefield - along the sides of England works best. The light balls or beanbags are their arrows.
- Foot soldiers can't leave the battlefield or go into Normandy. They can only tag with their hands, not with arrows.

### Top Tip:

Any arrows that hit above the waist don't count.

## Winning

The Normans win if they get all the treasures back to Normandy.

The Anglo-Saxons win if all the Normans are tagged at the same time.

The battle is balanced so that either side can win, but sides that plan and organise themselves generally do better.

## Stalemate

Sometimes a situation arises when one or two Normans are pinned in Normandy, with the whole Anglo-Saxon army waiting for them to come out. This can be handled in one of two ways.

- Either impose a time limit and if the Normans haven't attacked for a reasonable amount of time let the Anglo-Saxons invade.
- Or introduce the idea of hostage negotiation – swap treasures for stuck Normans at a rate negotiated by players.

## Scoring

If you have any group members unable to participate they can act as scorer instead, and keep track of how many treasures the Normans have captured and how many Normans the Anglo-Saxons have captured – something that often gets lost in the heat of battle. They can also analyse how well the different sides performed as the start of a discussion.

You will find printable score sheets at the back of this pack.

## Tips for running the game

Feel confident to make changes to suit your group and teaching style. Some teachers/group leaders have spoken to their group about the need for discipline in the army, and added their own sanctions for rule breakers.

### If you are particularly worried about discipline try these tweaks:

- don't use the chant the first time you play and send the non-playing group away to do something else, for example to think about tactics
- make four players line judges who will stamp out any cheating (which is the thing that is most likely to make discipline break down if left unchecked). Place them (i) & (ii) near the archers, (iii) & (iv) at either end of the Normandy/England border. They make sure the rules are obeyed and their decisions are final.

### If your kids are older or very energetic:

- have fewer players on the battlefield
- use a slightly larger battlefield
- use a playing field if you have one available

## Battle Cries

Battle cries can be shouted by the non-playing group on the sidelines. Normans who have been tagged and want to draw attention to themselves can also use the cries, as can Anglo-Saxons who want to add to the general mayhem.

Both the Normans and Saxons rallied their troops with battle cries in their own language. You can trace the origin of many of the words we use in English today back to either Anglo-Saxon or Norman words.

### Anglo-Saxon cheers

Olicrosse! (means holy cross)\*

Ut! Ut! Ut! (Out, out, out)\*

We're going to belch on your horses!

We're going to hammer your barns!

Normans out!

### Norman cheers

Dex aie! (God aid us)\*

Allons! (Let's go)

We're going to poison your custard!

We're going to trample our enemies!

Normans forever!

\* These are real war cries used at the Battle of Hastings. The rest are made up using words descended from those languages in English. A printable version is at the back of the pack. Print out a couple of copies for each side.

## Traces left in English

If you'd like to make up your own cheers or have a discussion about the two languages and the traces they've left in English, here are some words directly descended from Anglo-Saxon and Norman French. In general Norman was the language of the victors and thus the ruling class, so often where we have a posh word for a thing and a base one, the posh will be the Norman and the base Anglo-Saxon: stomach vs belly, for example. We also have more food words from Norman and more animal words from Anglo-Saxon, more military words from Norman and more farming words from Anglo-Saxon.

### Norman

secret

archer

enemy

argument

fierce

hasty

arrogant

demand

squirrel

haddock

custard

rear

lettuce

cabbage

kennel

stable

penthouse

### Anglo-Saxon

barn

hammer

ladder

shadow

stone

sweaty

greedy

cheap

beard

blood

belch

sell

beetle

apple

horse

goat

wolf

## Learning Outcomes

This game is great for all kids groups, for example Scouts, holiday clubs or community groups, but can also be run as part of a lesson by a teacher. Teachers can use the game to achieve learning objectives for children aged 7-11 (KS2 History and PSHE curriculum).

## History

### Knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past

In the course of playing the game, the players could be taught about:

- the Norman Conquest and the Battle of Hastings
- William the Conqueror and the Normans invading England
- King Harold and the Anglo-Saxons defending their home country
- how the battle was fought with archers, foot soldiers and knights
- that Normans and Anglo-Saxons used different languages
- that the Conquest had an impact on modern UK culture – introducing Norman language and cultural influences.

The Anglo-Saxon and Norman words in the battle cries could form the basis of a discussion about what impact the Norman influx had on our language and culture.

### Historical interpretation

The Normans and the Anglo-Saxons talked about the battle in different ways. In real life the Normans won, so we hear a lot more about their point of view. For example, they commissioned the Bayeux Tapestry to put across their version of events to a population that was largely illiterate.

## PSHE

### To appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom

The Norman Conquest was only one of successive waves of migration in the medieval period.

William was more closely related in blood to the previous English king than Harold, but the English didn't want a Norman on the throne and on his deathbed the previous king had named Harold his successor. Was he right to come and have a battle to claim the crown?

### What democracy is, and about the basic institutions that support it locally and nationally

Contrast how the Anglo-Saxons and Normans changed leaders and took power with how we do it today.

### Why and how rules and laws are made and enforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing rules

Discuss fairness – is it fair if the strongest get to make everyone else do what they want?

### Reflection on spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences

Discuss what it is like in the middle of the battlefield and why armies have to be very disciplined. During the game the children will learn that battles can be confusing and chaotic, and this can be linked to what happened in the actual battle, where the Normans had to use trickery to break the discipline of the Anglo-Saxon battle line.

## **Anglo-Saxon cheers**

Olicrosse! (means holy cross)

Ut! Ut! Ut! (Out, out, out)

We're going to belch on your horses!

We're going to hammer your barns!

Normans out!

## **Norman cheers**

Dex aie! (God aid us)

Allons! (Let's go)

We're going to poison your custard!

We're going to trample our enemies!

Normans forever!

**Norman scorecard:  
Treasures Captured**

**Anglo-Saxon scorecard:  
Most Normans captured at any one time**



