

TASK: Read the story of the unit, to find out more about what we're going to study in the next eight lessons. Then, answer the questions at the bottom of the page (use a separate piece of paper).

In January 1066, **Edward the Confessor** - who had been King of England for 24 years - died, leaving no heir to take over from him. His wife's brother, **Harold Godwinson**, was a powerful Anglo-Saxon earl, and he was quickly crowned king: everyone was worried that, if no clear **successor** was found for Edward, there would be an invasion from abroad.

In September 1066, there was indeed an invasion - and it was led by **William, Duke of Normandy**. William was distantly related to the old king Edward, and he wanted to take the chance to seize the English throne. William used clever tactics and experienced knights to help him defeat Harold Godwinson and his Anglo-Saxon army at the Battle of Hastings. Harold was killed, and William declared himself the King of England. He was crowned on Christmas Day, 1066.

Though William had won at Hastings, he still had very little authority over the Anglo-Saxon people. He faced almost constant **rebellions** for the first few years of his reign, as powerful Anglo-Saxon earls resisted the arrival of the Normans. William dealt with the rebels carefully: sometimes he punished them harshly as an example to others, but sometimes he forgave them - aiming to prove that he was a noble person, and the rightful king.

Though William won over some of the Anglo-Saxons, he still faced



resistance from people in the north of England. To deal with this, William ordered his Normans to march into villages and towns across the north, and destroy people's homes and crops. This event became known as the **Harrying of the North**, and it resulted in around 10,000 deaths. Many died from starvation; others froze to death, with no homes to protect them from the bitterly cold winter.

Though he was known for his violence and ruthlessness in battle, William is considered by some to have had a more peaceful side. He is known to have been a religious man, and he set about reforming the **Church**. He built hundreds of impressive new churches and cathedrals, some of which still stand today.

The Norman Conquest changed the lives of many Anglo-Saxon earls and landowners, who found that their land had been confiscated and given to the Normans. Women's lives changed for the worse, as their right to inherit land was removed. However, William did bring about an end to slavery, which had been common in Anglo-Saxon England.

TASK: Answer the questions below:

- 1: Who took over as king when Edward the Confessor died?
- 2: What happened at the Battle of Hastings?
- 3: Why was William's position not fully secure after the Battle of Hastings?
- 4: How did William assert his authority in the north of England?
- 5: Why do some people consider William to have had a peaceful side?
- 6: How did life in England change after the Norman Conquest?

