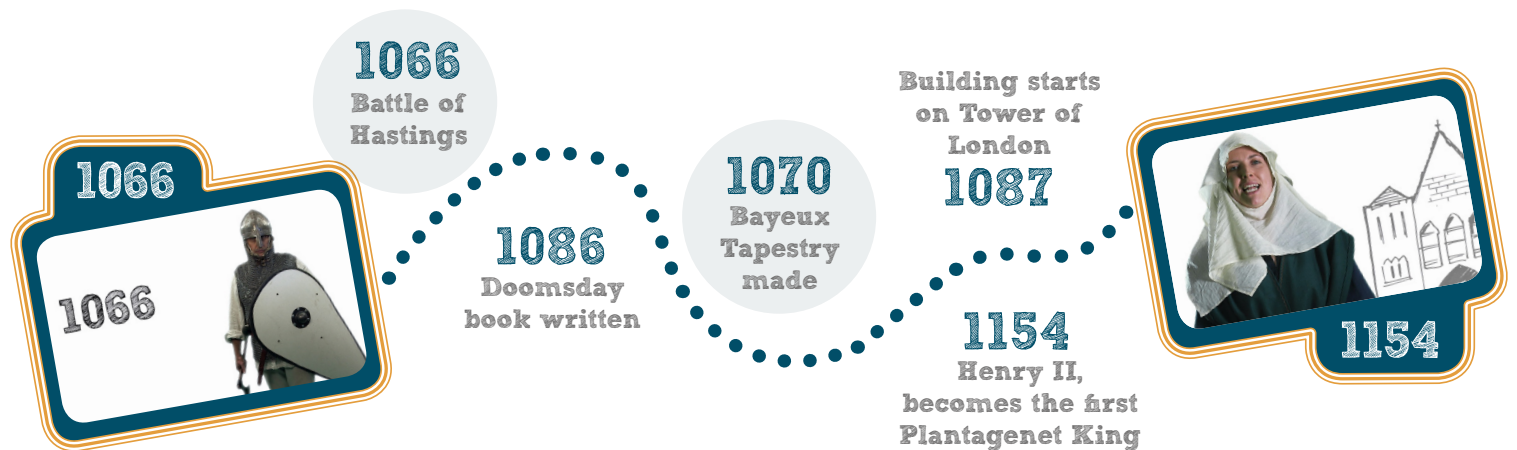


# NORMAN CONQUEST

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 7



## National Curriculum subject links

*The development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain, 1066–1509*

- The Norman Conquest
- Pupils creating their own structured accounts, including written narratives.

## Coverage and links

The Norman Conquest is undoubtedly one of the key turning points in British history. Simon Schama, in 'A History of Britain', says that "For the most part, history moves at a deliberate pace...but there are moments when history is unsubtle; when change arrives in a violent rush - decisive, bloody, traumatic. 1066 was one of those moments."\*

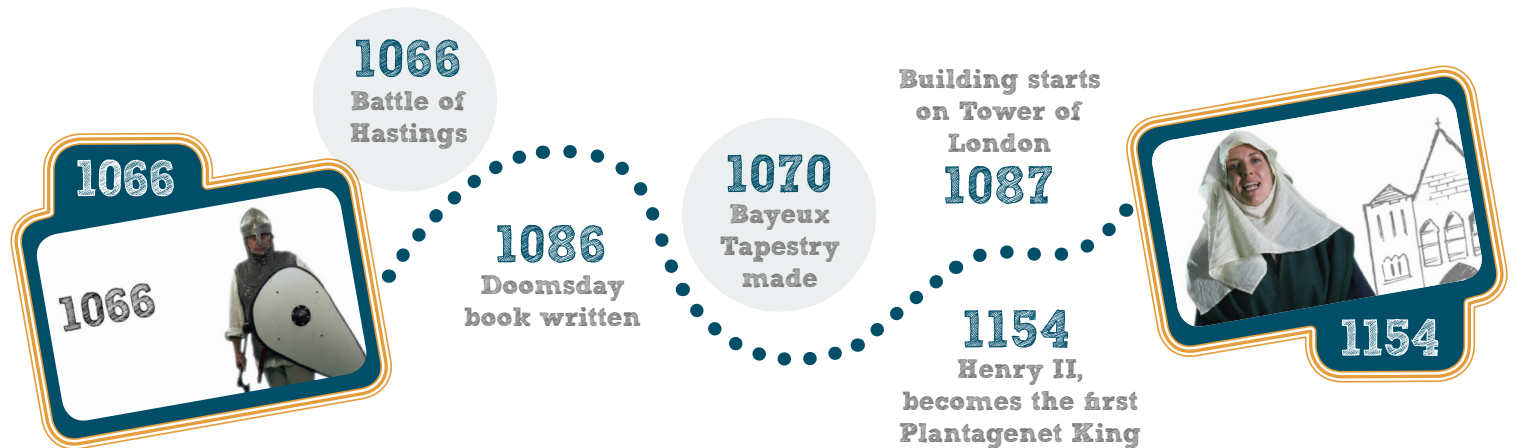
It is likely that pupils will study the Norman Conquest right at the start of Key Stage three. These lessons will help pupils to build their knowledge of this important event and, moreover, they will engage with a range of concepts that will reoccur in their study of the past at secondary level; monarchy, conquest, power. Whilst there will be some discussion about causation in these lessons, the focus is on the learning of and then writing of a narrative of the Norman Conquest. Narrative is the lifeblood of exciting history – it is what interests people in the past. Certainly analyses of causation, change and continuity, etc. are useful and important, but the ability to tell a story of the past is crucial. The films here are thus used for details that might pepper a good narrative account. The Bayeux Tapestry is also used both as one narrative account of the Conquest and as an inspiration for new narratives.

It would be useful to have access to images of the Bayeux Tapestry for use in this enquiry. The whole tapestry can be seen at [Bayeux Tapestry](#) and reproductions of the tapestry are available to buy. Other accounts of the Conquest, from textbooks and historians, could be used to support this work further.

\*Simon Schama, *A History of Britain : At the edge of the world? 3000BC – AD1603*, BBC Worldwide Ltd, 2000.

# NORMAN CONQUEST

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## Suggested learning outcomes

*By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...*

- Give some details about the reasons why and the methods by which the Normans conquered England
- Suggest strengths and limitations of narrative accounts of the Norman Conquest, such as the Bayeux Tapestry
- Write their own narrative account of the Norman Conquest.

## Pre-lesson homework

To prepare for the sequence pupils could be asked to complete a timeline of Britain in the first millennium, noting the dates of Roman Britain, the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and the dates of some of the more significant rulers, like Alfred the Great and Athelstan. These would then be used to summarise the story up to the Norman Invasion.

## Lesson 1 – What was the Norman Conquest?

Films to use

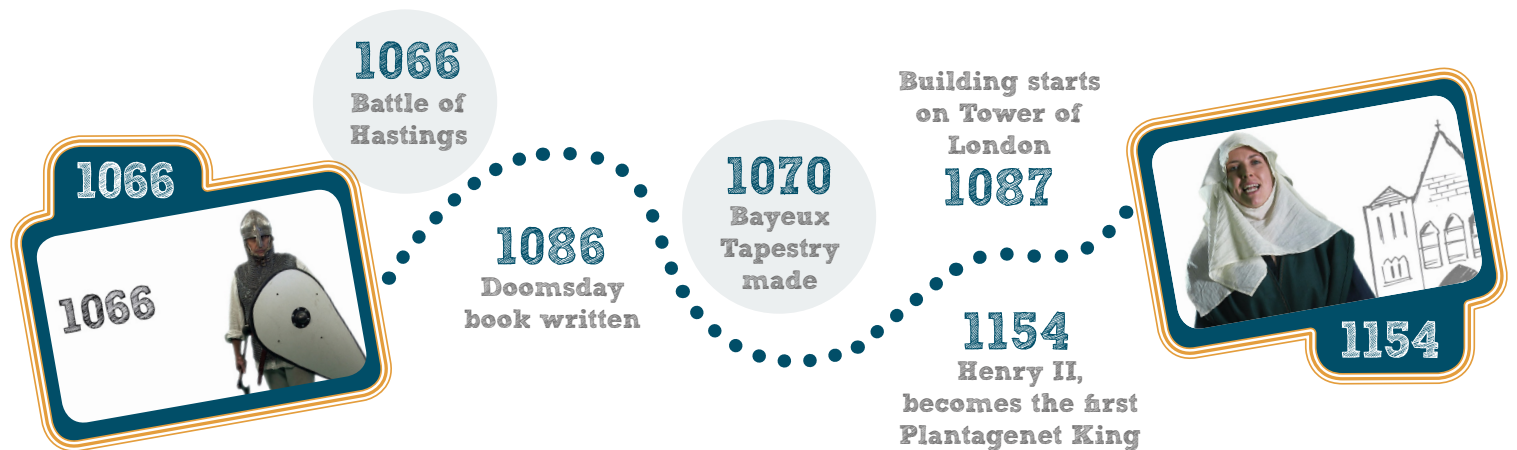
- **Who were the Normans?**
- **Why did the Normans invade England?**
- **Motte & bailey**
- **Cathedrals & Monasteries**

**Start this lesson** by telling a good story of a historical event or person. It doesn't really matter what the narrative covers as long as the story has pace and drama, fascinating details and interesting characters. At the end, get pupils talking about why history is such an interesting subject and what sorts of stories from the past they enjoy. The crucial thing here getting them intrigued about stories and narratives.

**Then** set up the lesson sequence by introducing the Norman Conquest. You could use the Simon Schama quote used in the introduction above so that pupils get a sense of the importance of the Conquest. During this first lesson pupils will build knowledge of the events and people associated with the conquest before digging deeper in the following lessons.

# NORMAN CONQUEST

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 7



## Lesson 1 – What was the Norman Conquest? ...continued

**Show Who were the Normans?** The film describes the Normans' background as Viking invaders, settling in that region of France. This background might add a layer of interest to pupils' narratives, as they note that all the potential Kings of England in 1066, Harold, Harald Hardrada and Duke William, shared a Viking heritage. At the end, ask pupils why a Norman Duke who rules in what we now call France might want to invade England. At this point, speculation is fine. The aim is to encourage thinking and discussion.

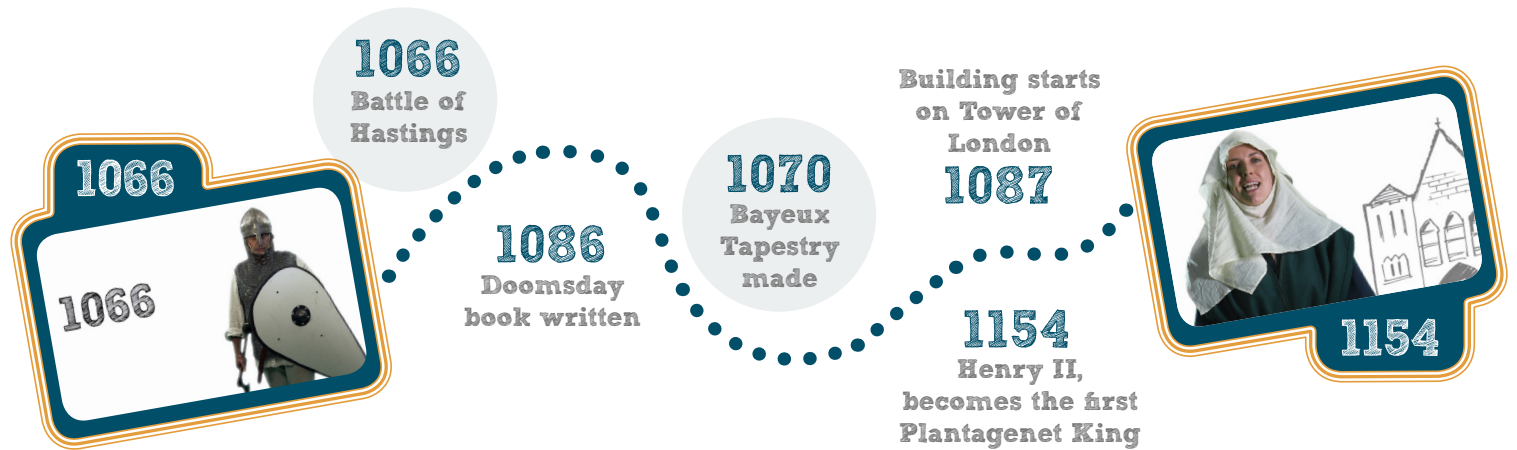
**Now show Why did the Normans invade England?** At the end of the film, pupils should record the reasons stated in the film before discussing whether these were legitimate reasons. You might encourage them to consider and note down some of the more surprising aspects of the story, such as the fact that Harold Godwinson was elected king after the death of Edward the Confessor.

If pupils are going to get a sense of the big picture here, you are going to have to do a big reveal! Harold Godwinson, King Harold, gets killed at the Battle of Hastings and William is crowned on Christmas Day 1066. The final two films in this lesson, **Motte and bailey** and **Cathedrals & Monasteries** will tell pupils what the Normans did next to settle the country. Pupils should record details from these for the final task.

**At the end of the lesson,** pupils will use this new knowledge to do some writing. They should answer the lesson question – 'What was the Norman Conquest?' The key to success here, though, is in making the definitions as precise as possible. Encourage deeper thinking; what do we mean by 'Conquest'? Was the Conquest good for the people of England? Could we echo Schama's style as he talks about the 'bones under the buttercups'? After writing (even a few sentences for some) ask pupils to become critics for each other and themselves before improving and rewriting.

# NORMAN CONQUEST

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 7



## Lesson 2 – What happened at the Battle of Hastings?

Films to use

- **Stamford Bridge – Saxon View**
- **Stamford Bridge – Viking View**
- **Norman invasion – preparation**
- **Battle of Hastings – Norman view part 1 | part 2 | part 3**

**This lesson** is all about building knowledge of the Battle of Hastings. Pupils will find out about the Battle of Stamford Bridge, the Norman preparations and the battle itself. Panels from the Bayeux Tapestry that cover this part of the story will be necessary in this lesson. If it's not possible to distribute them amongst pupils, then having some projected would be ideal.

Start by showing a map of England, noting London, Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire and Hastings. In September 1066, whilst anticipating an attack on the south coast, King Harold gets word that the Norwegian King Harald III has landed in the north. King Harold (you're going to have to be careful with Harald and Harold!) has to lead his army to the North to meet them and makes the journey in only four days.

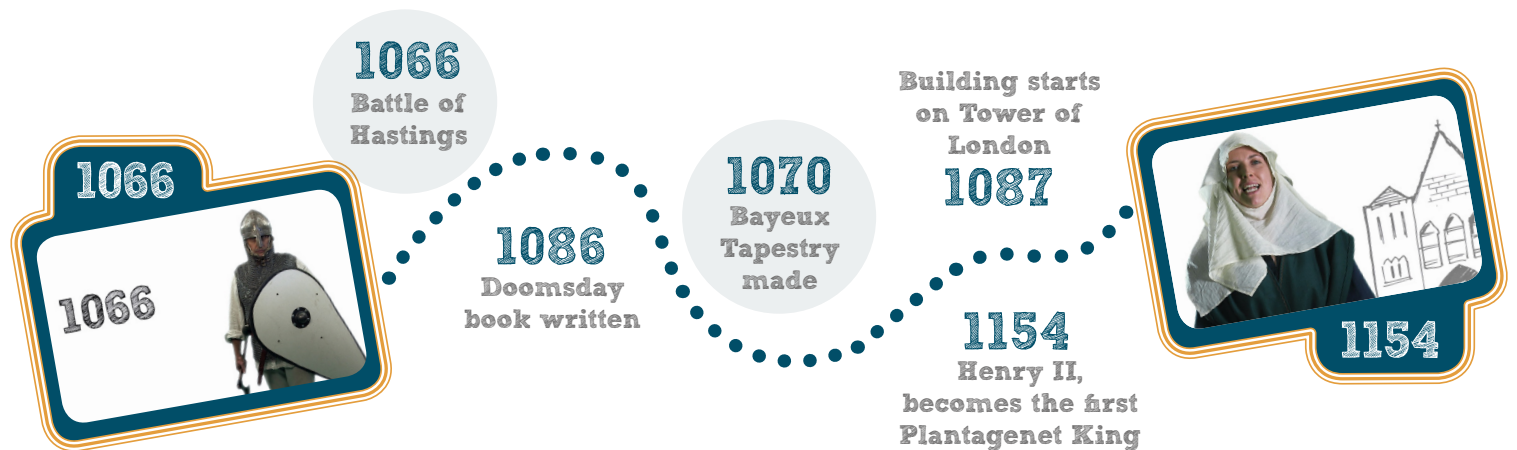
On 25th September the two armies meet at Stamford Bridge; play the first film **Stamford Bridge – Saxon View**. Now go straight on and show **Stamford Bridge – Viking View**. At the end make sure your pupils make notes of the details of the battle; the more interesting details, the better to write their final narrative accounts. They will also need to consider why the accounts might be different? Why did the Saxon say what he said and why did the Viking say something different? Again, these ideas will all help in the final writing.

The next set of films, **Norman invasion – preparation** and the three **Battle of Hastings – Norman view part 1 | part 2 | part 3** films can be shown quickly at this point.

Make sure your pupils are recording details to use later.

# NORMAN CONQUEST

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 7



## Lesson 2 – What happened at the Battle of Hastings?...continued

At the end of this lesson use the pictures from the Bayeux Tapestry that cover the Norman preparations and the Battle itself. Certainly the whole class could work on one section, though small groups might instead work on different sections. Pupils should write a short narrative that tells the story of that panel, using details that they've picked up in the clips. Try to move them beyond a simple description of the picture (though of course, some pupils will see this as a challenge in itself) and instead encourage a narrative account of that part of the conquest.

## Lesson 3: What stories can we tell about the Norman Conquest?

Films to use

- **Bayeux Tapestry**

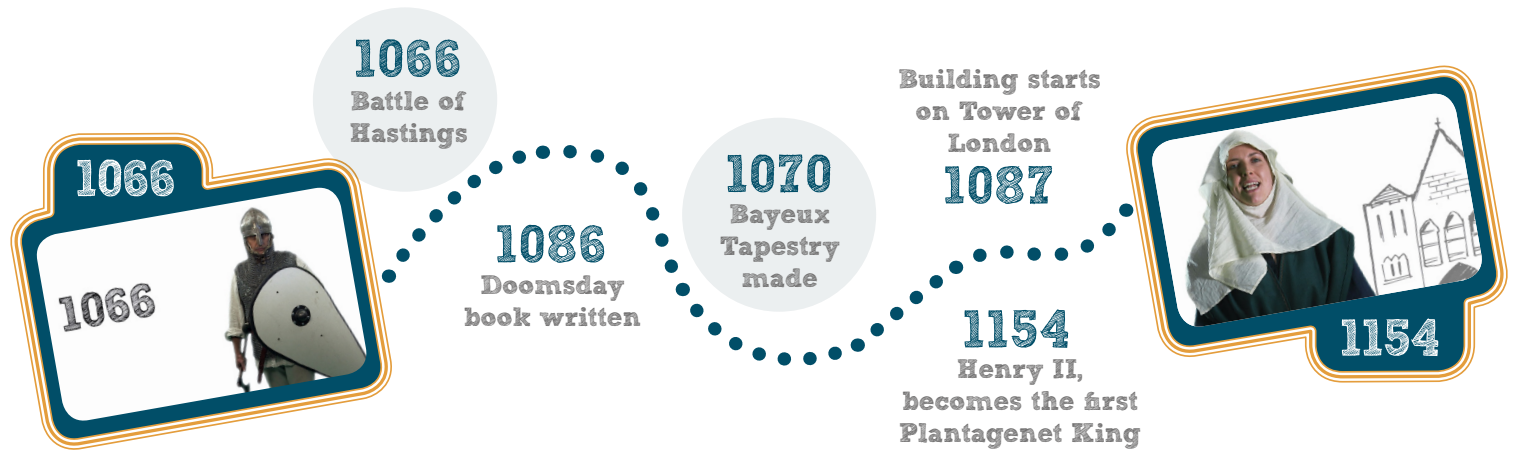
Begin the lesson, if it's possible, by looking at the entire Bayeux Tapestry. There are useful clips on YouTube that show the entire tapestry – the animated version is of particular note – and there is a scrolling image at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux\\_Tapestry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux_Tapestry) that could be shown on a big screen. Ask students how the tapestry tells the story. The answers will perhaps be obvious, but then ask them to think about why it might tell the story. Drop some clues:

- **it was made in the 1070s, probably in England**
- **it was commissioned by, historians think, Bishop Odo, a relation of William's.**

Show the film, **Bayeux Tapestry** and have a wider discussion; how does someone's point of view affect their telling of events? Why might a Norman version of the invasion be different to a Saxon view?

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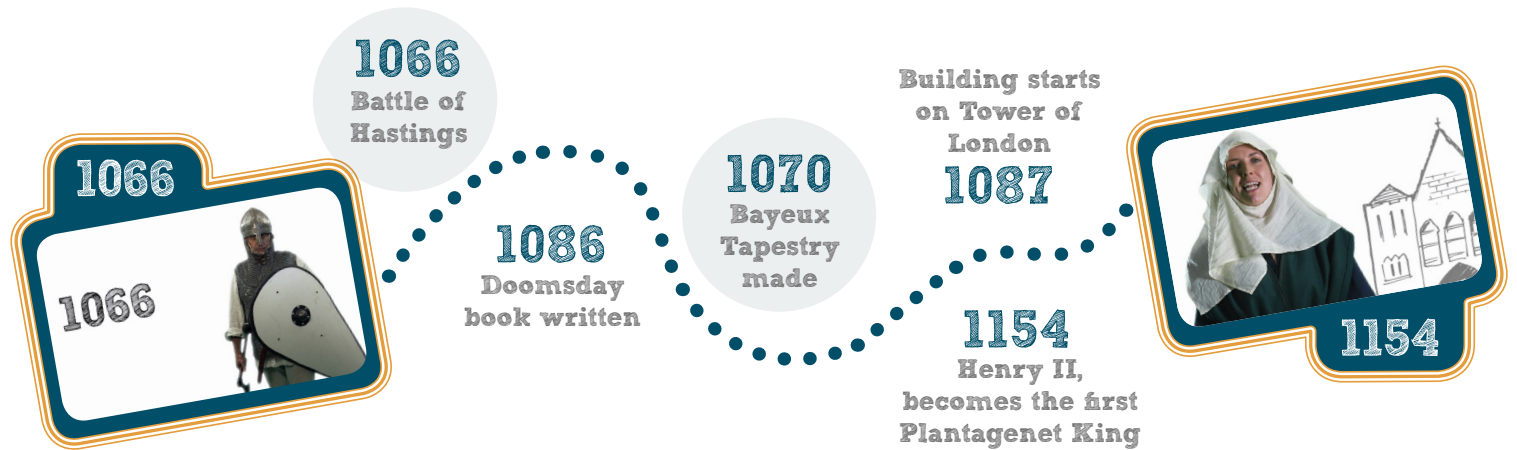
### Lesson 3: What stories can we tell about the Normans? ...continued

The sequence of lessons will thus end with pupils writing their own narrative accounts of the Norman Conquest. This could take many forms and the challenge given to each pupil will, of course, be based on a range of factors. Some pupils might write three or four paragraphs that tell the story from early 1066 to the death of King William in 1087. Others might take a single event, like the Battle of Hastings, or the Battle of Stamford Bridge, and write a narrative account, highlighting preparations and tactics. Pupils could even be encouraged to write a narrative that takes a certain point of view, different, perhaps, to that of the Bayeux Tapestry.

Pupils should plan out their narratives. The table below at figure 1 could be one way to start the planning. At this planning stage, pupils will want to gather more details to illustrate their writing, so having a range of books or websites available to them will be important.

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### Differentiation, assessment and reflection

#### Extension

More able pupils could be given another narrative account of the conquest as a comparison, either by a historian or perhaps from a textbook.

#### Scaffolding

Some pupils might benefit from having a target to write only one part of the story, such as the Battle of Hastings.

#### Formative assessment opportunities

- There are many opportunities for pupils to compare their work with each other and to comment on their own writing and thinking.
- To check that students have learned the outline of the story, ask them to make a quick and simple timeline from memory. This could be repeated in different lessons.

#### Reflection

The final narratives, whether completed in class or at home, should be shared as much as possible. At the end of the sequence, discuss with pupils the difficulties in writing an account of an event in the past? What have we learned about what historians do? What could we do next time we are asked to write a piece of narrative, to tell a good story?

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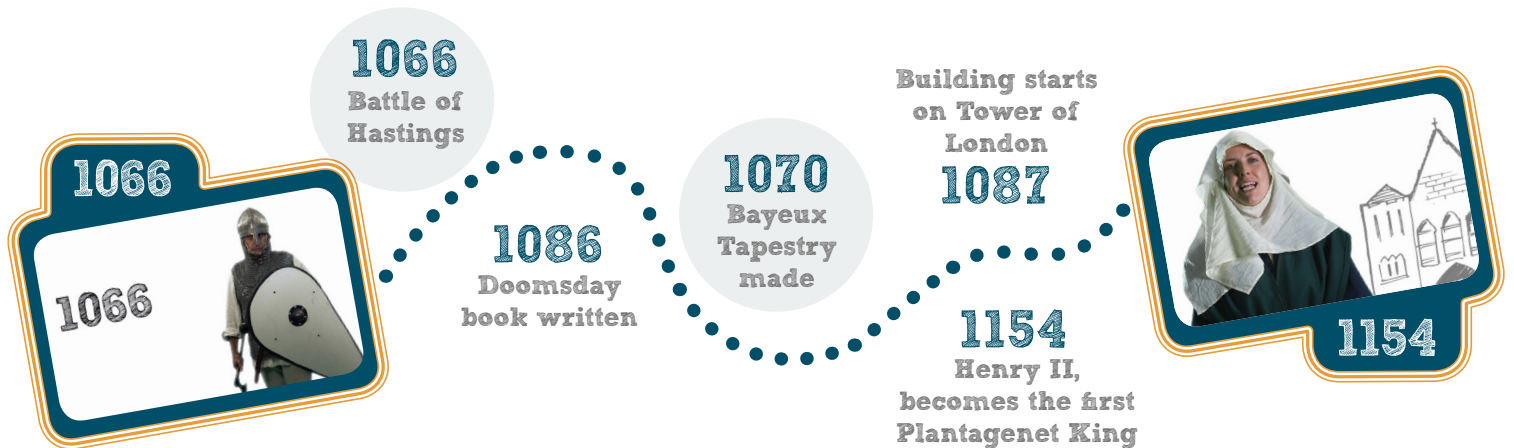


Figure 1: Narrative planning table

Which part of the story are you writing about?

E.g. The Battle of Stamford Bridge

What are the main points?

e.g Norwegian King Harald invades. King Harold marches to Yorkshire in four days  
Starts with a discussion but ends in battle. And/or Harald is killed, his army is defeated and they return to Norway with only a handful of ships.

What interesting details could you use to write your narrative?

E.g. Harald is shot in the throat with an arrow. This a bit like Harold later being shot in the eye. And/or Story of the Viking soldier holding the bridge single-handedly.

What ideas for descriptions or other phrases have you got?

e.g 'The soldier looked like a giant to the Saxon army as he swung his mighty battle axe, taking out one Englishman after another.'