

GCSE



# WJEC GCSE

## History

Approved by Qualifications Wales

Guidance for Teaching: Unit 4 - A Changing Society

Example teaching pack

Medieval

Teaching from 2026

For award from 2028



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## GCSE History Unit 4: A changing society

**Example:** The impact of the Norman Conquest on the island of Great Britain c. 1060–c.1153

Historical topics selected per theme

<b>International relations</b>	The Anglo-Saxon succession
<b>Equality and inequality</b>	The Feudal System
<b>Peace and conflict</b>	Anglo-Saxon resistance to Norman rule, 1067–1070
<b>Culture</b>	The development of castles
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Jewish settlement after the Norman Conquest
<b>Religion</b>	Archbishop Lanfranc and Christianity in the British Isles, 1070–1089
<b>Society and economy</b>	Domesday Book
<b>Politics</b>	Henry I and the Charter of Liberties, 1100
<b>Sex, sexuality and gender</b>	Empress Matilda and the Anarchy

**Theme** International relations  
**Topic** The Anglo-Saxon succession

**Item 1** A blog entry entitled 'The death of Edward the Confessor and the conflicting claims to the English Crown' on the website of the British Government (2016)

Edward was the eldest son of King Æthelred ('the Unready') from his second marriage to Emma, the sister of Duke Richard II of Normandy. This marriage had been arranged as part of Aethelred's attempts to improve English relations with Normandy. But Æthelred had sons from his first marriage, and when he died in 1016, he did so in the midst of a battle for the throne between his eldest surviving son, Edmund Ironside, and Cnut the Great of Denmark. Edmund though died shortly afterwards, and at his death, Cnut succeeded to the kingdom of England.

At Cnut's death, another succession dispute erupted between the sons of Cnut's first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton, and those of his second wife, Æthelred's widow, Emma. In that dispute, Edward's brother, Alfred, was murdered, perhaps at the instigation of Emma. Only after seven long years did Edward eventually succeed to the kingdom of England in 1042, putting the line of Wessex back on the English throne.

**Theme** International relations  
**Topic** The Anglo-Saxon succession

**Item 2** William of Poitiers, the chaplain of Duke William II of Normandy (William I of England) in his *History of William the Conqueror* (c.1073).

King Edward loved William like a brother ... and had promised he would be the next king of England. He sent Harold over to Duke William to repeat the promise ... Harold swore an oath to be loyal and obedient to William. This solemn promise was made in the usual sacred Christian way.

**Theme** International relations  
**Topic** The Anglo-Saxon succession

**Item 3** Scene 25 of the Bayeux Tapestry: ET VENIT AD EDWARDUM REGEM [And came to King Edward], showing Harold's return to England from Normandy (1070)



**Theme** International relations  
**Topic** The Anglo-Saxon succession

**Item 4** Malcom Barber, a professor of History, outlines Harold Godwinson's actions between 1064 and 1066 (1992)

Whatever his previous plans, in 1064 Harold found himself pushed towards the Norman succession. Probably in that year he set out to cross the channel. The reasons for this journey are not known for certain, but most historians have assumed that he was sent by Edward to confirm William's succession, and that he had, by this time, accepted it as inevitable. If this is so, he arrived in Normandy by a circuitous route since, apparently because of adverse weather, he landed in Ponthieu, was captured by Count Guy, and then ransomed. Once in Normandy he took an oath of fealty to William and apparently agreed to do all in his power to establish William on the throne after Edward's death. These curious events meant that, when Edward died in January 1066, both Harold and William could put their own construction on them, for Harold could argue that promises had been made under compulsion, while William could allege that Harold's seizure of the throne was the act of a perjurer. William's version was more widely accepted, partly because he was represented at the papal court and Harold was not.

Moreover, as Harold must have been acutely aware, William was not the only other claimant. On 20 September 1066 a great army led by Harold Hardrada, king of Norway, and Tostig, the deposed Earl of Northumbria and Harold's own brother, defeated an English army near York and took the city. Harold Hardrada claimed the throne on the basis of an agreement with Harthacnut, Cnut's son and successor in England until his death in 1042, and Magnus, King of Norway, who died in 1047. Harold therefore marched north, although he knew very well that William was only awaiting a favourable opportunity to invade in the South.

**Theme** Equality and Inequality  
**Topic** The Feudal System

**Item 5** A description of the feudal system in the textbook *The Medieval Realms* (1991)

Once William had become King of England, he had to decide how he was going to govern the country. He didn't want the old English nobles to keep their estates, because they would be too powerful and might try to overthrow him. Anyway, they had to make room for William's supporters who had been promised land in return for helping him.

William was very careful not to just give land away. His supporters were rewarded, but they had duties to perform as well. This system of duties and rewards was called the feudal system. In Normandy when barons or bishops were given land, they had to swear an oath of loyalty to the Lord who's given it. This was called doing homage. The barons or bishops then became tenants-in-chief and agreed to provide knights to guard castles or fight in wars for their lords. The more land the Baron was given the more knights he had to provide.

**Theme** Equality and Inequality  
**Topic** The Feudal System

**Item 6** 'The Rime of King William', the 1087 entry of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, copied into the Peterborough Chronicle in the early twelfth century.

He ordered the poor to build castles.  
 This was very hard work.  
 The king was a tough man  
 And he took many gold coins from his people  
 And many more hundreds of pounds in silver ...  
 This was most unfair, and he did not really need the money ...  
 He marked out a huge area for deer, and made laws about it.  
 Anyone who killed a hart or a hind  
 Was to be blinded ...  
 He loved the stags as dearly  
 As though he had been their father ...  
 The rich complained and the poor wept,  
 But he was too merciless to care if everyone hated him,  
 And they just had to obey him.  
 Otherwise, they lost their lives in their lands  
 And their goods and their king's friendship.

**Theme** Equality and Inequality  
**Topic** The Feudal System

**Item 7** An extract from the history website *Medieval Chronicles* [[www.medievalchronicles.com](http://www.medievalchronicles.com)], explaining the origins of feudalism in Europe and its spread into England in the eleventh century.

Feudalism in Europe emerged somewhere around the ninth century and continued to exist as a dominant social structure until the fifteenth century. It began when mounted soldiers started establishing landholdings of their own, essentially a result of the decentralization of the power in the Empires. This led to vast land holdings in the hands of these soldiers who eventually became the nobility, and the land was further subdivided into smaller land holdings which were called 'fiefs'.

Feudalism in Western Europe arose in the area under the Frankish Empire during the ninth and tenth centuries. It arose because after Frankish armies and soldiers settled down, they were able to secure landholdings. Since previous social structures as were present during the Roman era had crumbled in Western Europe, feudalism emerged as a viable alternative for the new social circumstances. This is why it rapidly spread to other parts of Europe as well.

Feudalism was brought to England by the French Duke of Normandy after his Norman conquest in 1066. After the invasion, William replaced the prevalent Anglo-Saxon aristocracy with a Norman-French nobility and this nobility began using feudal practices. After the conquest, William had claimed all of the lands in England and then divided it between his own soldiers and barons. In the feudal set-up, peasants were given land holdings that they could cultivate and live on in return for the provided labour to landowners.

**Theme** Equality and Inequality  
**Topic** The Feudal System

**Item 8** A medieval illustration of serfs harvesting wheat with reaping-hooks or sickles under the supervision of a reeve (c. 1310).



**Theme** Peace and conflict  
**Topic** Anglo-Saxon resistance to Norman rule, 1067–1070

**Item 9** An extract from the historical novel *Hereward, Last of the English* by Charles Kingsley, an Anglican priest, historian and novelist (1866)

When the men of Wessex, the once conquering race of Britain, fell at Hastings once and for all, and struck no second blow, then the men of the Danelaw disdained to yield to the Norman invader. For seven long years they held their own, not knowing, like true Englishmen, when they were beaten; and fought on desperate, till there were none left to fight. Their bones lay white on every island in the fens; their corpses rotted on gallows beneath every Norman keep; their few survivors crawled into monasteries, with eyes picked out, or hands and feet cut off, or took to the wild wood as strong outlaws. But they never really bent their necks to the Norman yoke; they kept alive in their hearts that proud spirit of personal independence.

**Theme** Peace and conflict  
**Topic** Anglo-Saxon resistance to Norman rule, 1067–1070

**Item 10** An extract from Part 5 of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 1052–1069.

A.D. 1067. This year came the king back again to England on St Nicholas's day; and the same day was burned the church of Christ at Canterbury. Bishop Wulfwy also died, and is buried at his see in Dorchester. The child Edric and the Britons were unsettled this year, and fought with the castlemen at Hereford, and did them much harm. The king this year imposed a heavy guild on the wretched people; but, notwithstanding, let his men always plunder all the country that they went over; and then he marched to Devonshire, and beset the city of Exeter eighteen days. There were many of his army slain; out he had promised them well, and performed ill; and the citizens surrendered the city because the thanes had betrayed them. This summer the child Edgar departed, with his mother Agatha, and his two sisters, Margaret and Christina, and Merle-Sweyne, and many good men with them; and came to Scotland under the protection of King Malcolm, who entertained them all.



**Theme**  
**Topic**

Peace and conflict  
Anglo-Saxon resistance to Norman rule, 1067–1070

**Item 11**

An illustration from a twentieth-century picture book depicting the Norman invasion of Britain.



**Theme**  
**Topic**

Peace and conflict  
Anglo-Saxon resistance to Norman rule, 1067–1070

**Item 12**

An account of the resistance to Norman rule by the English Monk and Historian, Orderic Vitalis, in his chronicle *Historia Ecclesiastica* [History of the Church] (1141).

The fortifications called castles by the Normans were scarcely known in England and so the English – in spite of that courage and love of fighting – could put up only weak resistance to their enemies.

**Theme**  
**Topic**Culture  
The development of castles**Item 13**

An extract from the Second Continuation of the Peterborough Chronicle (1132–1154).

1137

When the King Stephen came to England, he held his council at Oxford; and there he seized the Bishop, Roger, of Salisbury, and Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, and the chancellor Roger, his nephew; and threw them all into prison until they gave up their castles. But when these nobles, supporters of Matilda, understood that Stephen was a mild man, and soft, and good, and did not execute harsh justice they became forgetful of their pledge to him. They filled the land full of castles and they cruelly oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle building, and when the castles were made, they filled them with devils and evil men. Then took they those who they thought had any goods, both by night and by day, and threw them into prison for their gold and silver. Never were any martyrs tortured as they were. Some were hung by the feet and smoked with foul smoke. Some were hung by their thumbs, others by their head, with coats of mail hung on their feet. They tied knotted strings about their heads and twisted them till they went to their brains. They threw them into dungeons that had snakes and toads and so killed them. Some they placed in a chest that was short and narrow and undeep and put sharp stones in and crushed the man inside and broke all his limbs. In many of the castles were heavy shackles – fetters and nooses – that were so heavy two or three men could only just carry one. They were fastened to a beam; and a sharp iron was placed around the man's throat and neck, so that he could turn in no direction, not sit, not lie, not sleep, just bear all that weight. Many thousands they killed with hunger. I cannot nor may I tell all the horrors and all the pains inflicted on the wretched men in this land. This lasted for nineteen winters while Stephen was king, and ever it grew worse and worse.

**Theme**  
**Topic**Culture  
The development of castles**Item 14**

A twenty-first-century photograph of Chepstow Castle on the cliffs above the River Wye in Monmouthshire. Building of the castle commenced in 1067, and it was the most southern of the castles built across the marches as a Norman defence against attacks from the Welsh.

**Theme**  
**Topic**Culture  
The development of castles**Item 15**

A twenty-first-century reconstructed view of the Tower of London, Norman Castle with Roman Walls, c.1100.



**Theme** Culture  
**Topic** The development of castles

**Item 16** A description of the building of square keep castles in the textbook *The Medieval Realms* (1991).

Motte and bailey castles had weaknesses. They were built out of wood, which rooted easily and could be set on fire by enemy soldiers. They were also cramped, drafty and uncomfortable. Since the beginning of the conquest the Normans had built some important castles, like the White Tower in London, out of stone. After 1100, many more stone castles were built and they were usually square in shape

**Theme** Ethnicity  
**Topic** Jewish settlement after the Norman Conquest

**Item 17** An article entitled 'England's Jewish Population' introducing visitors to Clifford's Tower, York on the *English Heritage* website (early twenty-first century)

After the Norman Conquest of 1066, a number of Jews came to England from Rouen in France. The early Norman kings needed to borrow money to build castles and secure their kingdom, but money-lending was forbidden to Christians. It was, however, permitted to Jews. These French-speaking Jews were protected by the Crown, and in time established communities in most of the principal cities of England. In the later 12th century, members of the Jewish community in Lincoln settled in York.

However, there was growing hostility towards the Jewish population in England. This was in part due to public disagreements in theology between Jewish scholars and Christian churchmen. In the mid-12th century several vicious stories were spread accusing Jews of murdering Christian children. Such slanders, now known as the 'Blood Libel', strengthened anti-Semitic sentiment in England.

**Theme** Ethnicity  
**Topic** Jewish settlement after the Norman Conquest

**Item 18** Extracts from the Great Roll of the Pipe for the fifth year of the reign of King Henry II, 1158–1159. The amounts contributed by each Jewish community to the tax (donum) levied in c. 1159 shows the location of these settlements.

Northamptonshire	The same sheriff renders a calculation of 15 pounds of the Jews of Northamptonshire
London and Middlesex	The same sheriff makes a calculation of 200 marks per Jew.
Worcestershire	The same sheriff makes a calculation of 2 marks per Jew.
Oxfordshire	The same sheriff makes a calculation of 20 marks per Jew
Gloucestershire	The same sheriff makes a calculation of 5 marks of the Jews.
Lincolnshire	The same sheriff makes a calculation of 40 pounds per Jew.
Norwich	The same sheriff makes a sum of 43 pounds and 6 shillings and 8 pence of Norwich Jews.

**Theme**  
**Topic**Ethnicity  
Jewish settlement after the Norman Conquest

**Item 19** An account of the alleged killing by Jews of William of Norwich, a twelve-year-old apprentice in Norwich in 1144. The account was written by the monk, Thomas of Monmouth, in his biography *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, sometime between 1149 and 1172.

But on the next day, which in that year was the Passover for them, after the singing of the hymns appointed for the day in the synagogue, the chiefs of the Jews assembled in the House of the Jew aforesaid suddenly seized hold of the boy William as he was having his dinner and in no fear of any treachery, and ill treated him in various horrible ways. For a while some of them held him behind, others opened his mouth and introduced an instrument of torture which is called a teazle, and, fixing it by straps through both jaws to the back of his neck, they fastened it with a knot as tightly as it could be drawn. After that taking a short piece of rope of about the thickness of one's little finger and tying 3 knots in it at certain distances marked out, they bound round that innocent head with it from the forehead to the back, forcing the middle not into his forehead and the two others into his temples, the two ends of the rope being most tightly stretched at the back of his head and fastened in a very tight knot. The end of the rope were then passed round his neck and carried round his throat and his chin, and there they finished off this dreadful engine of torture in a fifth knot ...

Having shaved his head, they stabbed it with countless thorn points, and made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made ... Some of those present adjudged him to be fixed to a cross in mockery of the Lord's passion, as though they would say "Even as we condemned the Christ to a shameful death so let us condemn the Christian".

**Theme**  
**Topic**

Ethnicity  
Jewish settlement after the Norman Conquest

**Item 20**

A late-medieval woodcut from the workshop of the German artist Michel Wolgemut, in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (c.1493). It depicts the crucifixion of William of Norwich by Jews.



**Theme**  
**Topic**

Religion  
Archbishop Lanfranc and Christianity in the British Isles, 1070–1089

**Item 21**

A *BBC Bitesize* article on Lanfranc's reforms of the English Church (early twenty-first century).

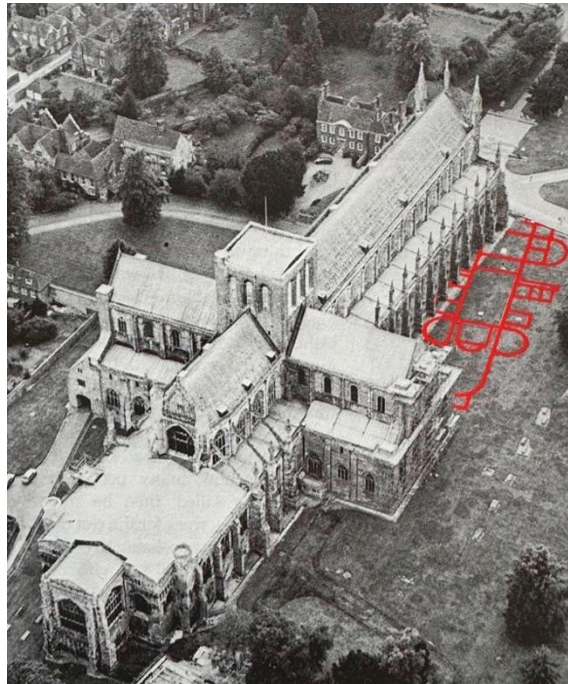
[The English church under Archbishop Lanfranc - The Church in Norman England - BBC Bitesize](#) - Section under the heading 'Lanfranc's reforms of the English Church'.

**Theme**  
**Topic**

Religion  
Archbishop Lanfranc and Christianity in the British Isles, 1070–1089

**Item 22**

An aerial view of Winchester Cathedral, founded in 1079. The Cathedral is sited upon an original Saxon church, which is outlined in red.



**Theme**  
**Topic**

Religion  
Archbishop Lanfranc and Christianity in the British Isles, 1070–1089

**Item 23**

An extract from the entry on Lanfranc in the *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (c.1910)

Lanfranc had been elected to the Archbishopric of Rouen in 1067, but had declined it; now, however, the Conqueror fixed on Lanfranc as his choice of a successor to Stigand (Archbishop of Canterbury from 1052 until 1070) ... [He] was consecrated at Canterbury on 29 August, by the Bishop of London. He entered on the duties of his high station with advantages of name and learning and experience of the world such as few men have ever brought to a similar office. The king's ecclesiastical policy, which he now, as chief counsellor, largely moulded, was without doubt beneficial to the kingdom; for the civil and ecclesiastical courts were separated, and regular synods were held, wherein regulations tending to better discipline were enacted and enforced. The Normanizing of the Church further tended to bring the native ecclesiastics into closer touch with the learning and practice of the Continent; and this was affected by replacing nearly all the Saxon bishops and abbots with Normans, on pretexts grave or slight. Whilst the insularity of the native clergy was thus beneficially broken down, much on the other hand of local practice, laudable in itself, was swept away.

**Theme**

Religion

**Topic**

Archbishop Lanfranc and Christianity in the British Isles, 1070–1089

**Item 24**

The abstract of the article 'Liturgy against history: The competing visions of Lanfranc and Eadmer of Canterbury', by the US historian Jay Rubenstein, in the medieval periodical *Speculum* Volume 74, Number 2.

The Anglo-Saxon saints, like the Anglo-Saxons as a whole, once seemed to have suffered immensely because of the Norman Conquest. Respected historians, among them David Knowles and Frank Stenton, left colorful images in the historical imagination of bigoted Norman churchmen treating with contempt the old English saints who rested in the communities over which they took charge. But now, in large part because of the work of Susan Ridyard (a professor of medieval British and European History), our perceptions have altered dramatically. Norman churchmen now appear to have accepted readily, rather than to have condemned suspiciously, their new saints.

**Theme**

Society and economy

**Topic**

Domesday Book

**Item 25**

The entry for Patcham in the hundred of Preston and the county of Sussex in *Domesday Book*. The entry indicates the land held by William of Warenne in 1086.

In PRESTON Hundred

William holds PATCHAM himself, in lordship. Earl Harold held it before 1066. Then it answered for 60 hides; now for 40.

Land for 80 ploughs. In lordship 8 ploughs;

163 villagers and 45 smallholders with 82 ploughs;

A church; 6 slaves; 10 shepherds; meadow, 84 acres;

woodland, 100 pigs; 26 sites in Lewes at 13s.

Richard holds 7 hides of this land; and a man-at-arms of his 1/2 hides.

In lordship they have 2 ploughs, with

2 smallholders.

Total value before 1066 £100; later £50; now £80.



**Theme** Society and economy  
**Topic** Domesday Book

**Item 26** A *BBC Bitesize* video explaining why William needed Domesday Book (early twenty-first century)

How successful William's conquest of England had been was revealed in a survey, conducted in 1086.

With the constant threat of rebellion, he needed to know how much tax he could raise to fund an army. Norman commissioners held public inquests in towns and villages right across England. They questioned who held the land now, and who had owned it in 1066. They wanted to know everything, from how many freemen and slaves there were, to how many ploughs and pigs.

The English people called it the Domesday Book, the day of judgment. It revealed William possessed about 20% of the wealth of England, his barons 50%, and the Church had 25%. The surviving English nobles had a meagre 5%.

The Anglo-Saxons had been totally overpowered. William had conquered, and secured the power of England, and the Normans had completely taken over.

**Theme** Society and economy  
**Topic** Domesday Book

**Item 27** The entry for Hereford in the hundred of Cutestornes in *Domesday Book*.

Land of Hereford (St Mary), bishop of

Households	Households: 3 villagers. 6 smallholders. 2 slaves. 3 female slaves. 5 boors.
Land and resources	Ploughland: 10 lord's plough teams. 5.5 men's plough teams.
Valuation	Annual value to lord: 7 pounds 6 shillings and 12 pence in 1086; 2 pounds in 1066.
Owners	Tenant-in-chief in 1086: Hereford (St Mary), bishop of. Lords in 1086: Hereford (St Mary), bishop of; chaplains, two; man-at-arms, one. Lord in 1066: Hereford (St Mary), bishop of.

**Theme** Society and economy  
**Topic** Domesday Book

**Item 28** An extract from a book by the popular historian Phillipa Gregory on the role of women in history entitled *Normal Women: 900 years of making History* (2023)

Domesday book – a snapshot of England at the moment of Williams invasion – listed 16 667 male landowners and 479 women. Among these were some extremely wealthy women: Gytha Thorkildsdottir, Countess of Wessex, mother of King Harold, owned massive estates in southern England stretching over 11 modern counties. Harold's influential and wealthy wife Edith Swan Neck held vast lands. Two of the greatest women landowners of 1086 were not even named in Domesday Book – they are referred to as the *wife* of Hugh, son of Grip, and the *mother* of Robert Malet.

A woman named Asa, a small landowner in Yorkshire, appeared in the Domesday records claiming her lands after separating from her husband. The jury in the case followed the old Anglo-Saxon law: Asa won and held her land in her own right. She was lucky to come under Anglo-Saxon law – the new Norman laws would rule that no wife could own land or keep it after marriage without a specific settlement. No woman would another marriage or divorce without permission from the church courts or parliament for the next eight centuries.

**Theme** Politics  
**Topic** Henry I and the Charter of Liberties, 1100

**Item 29** A biography of Henry I from the website of the Royal family (c.2024). He was crowned three days after his brother's death, against the possibility that his eldest brother Robert might claim the English throne on his imminent return from the Crusade.

After the decisive battle of Tinchebrai in 1106 in Normandy, Henry completed his conquest of Normandy from Robert, who then (unusually even for that time) spent the last 28 years of his life as his brother's prisoner in various castles in England and Wales.

An energetic, decisive and occasionally cruel ruler, Henry centralised the administration of England and Normandy in the royal court, using 'viceroys' in Normandy and a group of advisers in England to act on his behalf when he was absent across the Channel.

**Theme** Politics  
**Topic** Henry I and the Charter of Liberties, 1100

**Item 30** Clause 1 of the *Charter of Liberties of Henry I* (1100)

Know that by the mercy of God and the common counsel of the barons of the whole kingdom of England I have been crowned king of said kingdom; and because the kingdom had been oppressed by unjust exactions, I, through fear of God and the love which I have toward you all, in the first place make the Holy Church of God free, so that I will neither sell nor put to farm, nor on the death of archbishop or bishop or abbot will I take anything from the Church's demesne [estate] or from its men until the successor shall enter it. And I take away all the evil customs by which the kingdom of England was unjustly oppressed.

**Theme** Politics  
**Topic** Henry I and the Charter of Liberties, 1100

**Item 31** An image from John of Worcester's Chronicle of England, depicting one of the nightmares or visions of Henry I (c.1130). The image is thought to be the first depiction of revolting peasants in England.



**Theme** Politics  
**Topic** Henry I and the Charter of Liberties, 1100

**Item 32** A blog entry entitled 'The Peasants Are Revolting: The Coronation Charter of Henry I' on the website of the British Library [[www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)] (2015)

Some of Henry's contemporaries levied accusations of avarice, cruelty and severity against him. Seeing Henry as having failed to honour his oath to maintain good laws and to abolish all iniquities throughout his kingdom, the chronicler John of Worcester recounted a series of dreams Henry experienced in 1130. The three broad classes of society (peasants, knights and clerics) visited Henry successively. Each group in turn threatened Henry with weapons appropriate to their position, the peasants with their scythes and spades, the knights armed with their swords and shields, and the clerics with their croziers. Shortly after these terrifying nightmares, Henry was caught in a storm at sea which only abated once he made three promises: not to collect the Danish tax for 7 years, to go on pilgrimage to Bury St Edmunds, and always to preserve justice throughout England.

**Theme** Sex, sexuality and gender  
**Topic** Empress Matilda and the Anarchy

**Item 33** An extract from a book by the popular historian Phillipa Gregory on the role of women in history entitled *Normal Women: 900 years of making History* (2023)

Matilda was the first Norman woman to inherit the English throne, and forced to be the first queen militant – raising her own army and leading into battle for two years of skirmishes, until her victory at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141. She imprisoned the pretender Stephen and ignored a demand from his wife, Queen Matilda of Boulogne. Matilda of Boulogne then mustered her own army to plunder the country around London, persuading Londoners to ally with her against the empress, who moved her forces to Winchester and besieged the bishop's castle. Matilda of Boulogne pursued Empress Matilda and defeated her. For six years Empress Matilda led her own troops, her own vassals and knights, and paid mercenaries to follow her into battle. Eventually Stephen acknowledged his defeat and made peace, but even then he did not hand over the throne. He named Matilda's son as heir, and the boy became Henry II.

**Theme** Sex, sexuality and gender  
**Topic** Empress Matilda and the Anarchy

**Item 34** From the First Continuation of the Peterborough Chronicle (1127)

1127 At Christmas in this year King Henry held his court in Windsor. King David of Scots was there and all the chief men, both learned and laymen, who were in England. And then he got the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls and all the noble men who were there to swear that his daughter, Æthelric [Matilda], who had previously been the emperor of Germany's wife, [should have] England and Normandy after his time.

**Theme** Sex, sexuality and gender  
**Topic** Empress Matilda and the Anarchy

**Item 35** An account of the sinking of the White Ship, carrying the sons of Henry I back to England from Normandy, by the English Monk and Historian, Orderic Vitalis, in his chronicle *Historia Ecclesiastica* [History of the Church] (1141)

Two planks were shattered by the crash and the ship, alas! filled and went down. At this fearful moment the passengers and crew raised cries of distress but their mouths were soon stopped by the swelling waves and all perished together, except two who seized hold of the yard from which the sale was set ...

Thomas, the master of the vessel, managed to recover his senses after his first plunge into the sea and raising his head above the water he cried out, "What has become of the King's son?" The two men clinging to the yard-arm replied that he and all the others had perished. "Then," said Thomas, "it is misery for me to live any longer." And he abandoned himself to his fate in utter despair, preferring to meet it at once rather than face the rage of the king or drag out his days in a dungeon ...

Berold, who was the poorest man of all the company and wore sheep-skin clothing, was the only one out of so many who survived to see the dawn of another day.

**Theme** Sex, sexuality and gender  
**Topic** Empress Matilda and the Anarchy

**Item 36** Adapted from '1066 and all that' in a study guide entitled *Presenting the Past-Topics: Medieval Women* by Henrietta Leyser, a professor and expert on the history of medieval women (1988)

A nun who left the convent of Wilton to get married was Matilda. She was a great-great-great granddaughter of Æthelred. Matilda had been taken to Wilton by her aunt. She hated it: "as soon as I was able to escape out of my aunt's presence I tore the nun's veil from my face and threw it on the ground and trampled on it". Whom did she marry? Henry I, of England William the Conqueror's youngest son. The wedding was soon seen as a sign of peace between the English and their new Norman rulers.

Matilda's marriage was front page news. But the fact is that every marriage between a Norman and an Englishwoman was important. It was these marriages which kept English alive as a language. Children learn how to speak, not from their fathers but from their mothers and from other women who looked after them. So they tended to learn English from their English mothers.

**Acknowledgements:**

1.	From <a href="#">The death of Edward the Confessor and the conflicting claims to the English Crown – History of government (blog.gov.uk)</a> [Accessed 10.04.2024]
2.	Rosemary Kelly, 1991, <i>A Separate World – Britain in the Middle Ages: 1066–1500</i> , p.3
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