

Year 7 History: Medieval Realms The Norman Conquest

By Mr Moorhouse

When Edward the Confessor died Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, was crowned King. Harold was a leading Saxon lord and had plenty of experience as a warrior and as a governor, so for him to be crowned in the absence of a royal heir to the throne was not too surprising.

Within 10 months though Harold was killed in Battle, the crown was in the hands of a foreigner and Saxon England was at an end.

You are going to try and establish why this happened.

Source A

“finally Edward sent Harold himself to Normandy so that he could swear to me in my presence what his father ...had sworn to me here... through his own hands he made himself my vassal and with his own hand he gave me a firm pledge concerning the kingdom of England.”

William of Poitiers

William of Poitiers was a biographer of William of Normandy, the source is written as though the Duke was speaking.

What reasons did William of Normandy have to be upset by Harold’s accession to the English throne?

Source B



Harold swears an oath

Harold shown in the Bayeux tapestry swearing an oath of allegiance and loyalty to William, Duke of Normandy.

What justification did William have for contesting the English throne in 1066?