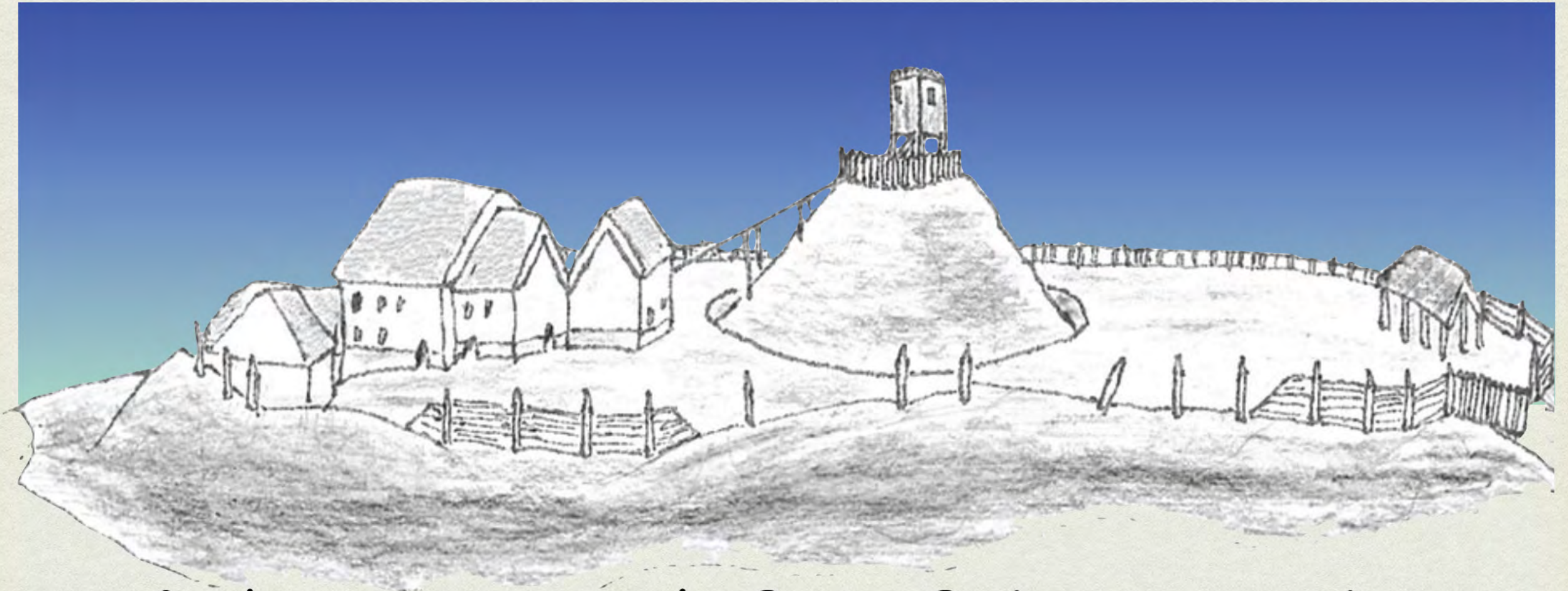


# THE NORMAN CONQUEST



A bitter and fateful struggle  
that illustrates many aspects  
of medieval Europe



# Aspects of the Medieval World...

## (as shown by the Norman Conquest)

### Point 1:

An orderly succession to the monarchy was crucial to stability.





# Aspects of the Medieval World...

## Point 2

Disputes were resolved through **violence and blood-letting**. Diplomatic solutions were not typical.





# Aspects of the Medieval World...

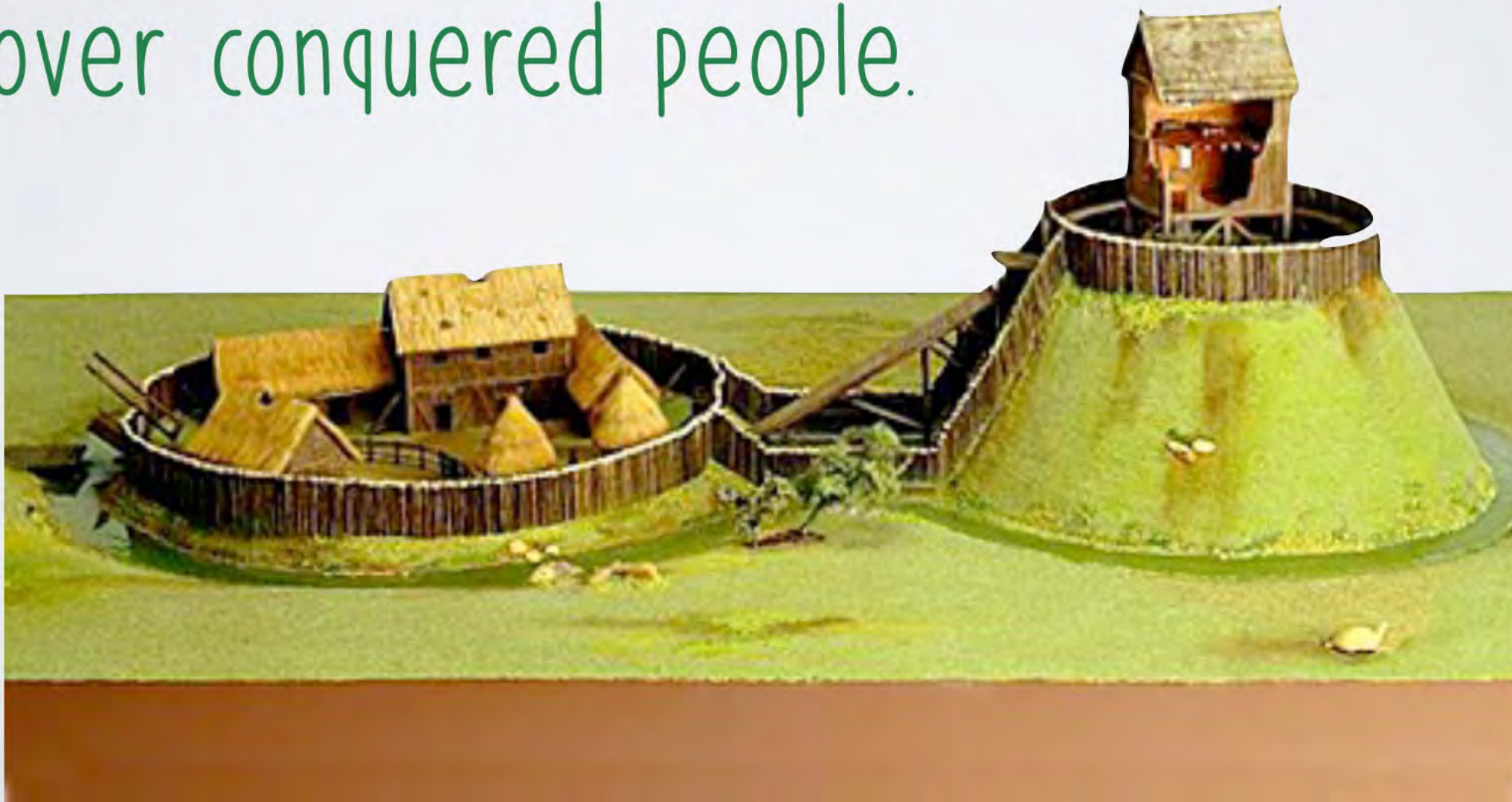


**Point 3:** The perception of God's will was influential. God was assumed to determine the fate of kings.



# Aspects of the Medieval World...

**Point 4:** A conquest began with victory in battle, but the leaders of a conquering army took other measures to gain control over conquered people.





# Aspects of the Medieval World...

## Point 5:

The victor told the story and influenced how history was recorded.





# Quick Vocabulary Check 1

- a The accepted sequence for inheriting a position or title
- b A form of government with a king or queen at the head
- c The invasion and subjugation of another country
- d Another word for “destiny”
- e Adjective meaning “Middle Ages”
- f A noun meaning “order” or “a firmly established structure”
- g Relating to international relations that are based on discussions rather than war



conquest • diplomatic • fate • medieval •  
monarchy • stability • succession



# Quick Vocabulary Check 2

Which verb fits into each phrase?

a to  a dispute

b to  stability

c to  to the throne

d to  the fate of kings

e to  power

f to  measures in order to control a  
conquered people

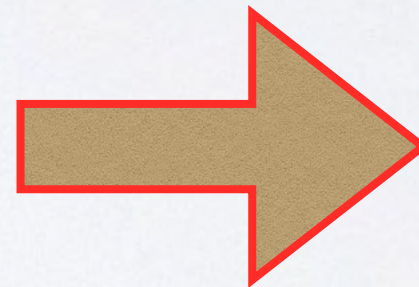


determine • maintain • resolve •  
seize • succeed • take



# Point 1: Succession to the Monarchy

Edward the Confessor, King of England, died early in 1066 - without an heir.



No son. Not even a daughter.



When a king died without an heir in medieval times, there was general instability and conflict.



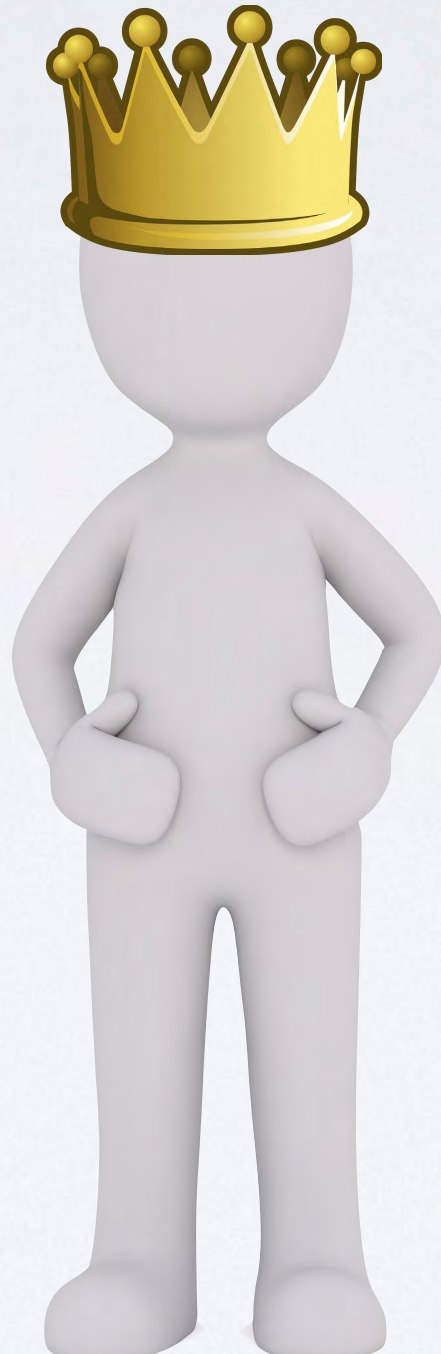


A power struggle was likely to ensue.

Without a clear heir (pronounced “air”), the crown was up for grabs. Three powerful, ambitious men became rivals for it.



**Harald Hardrada**

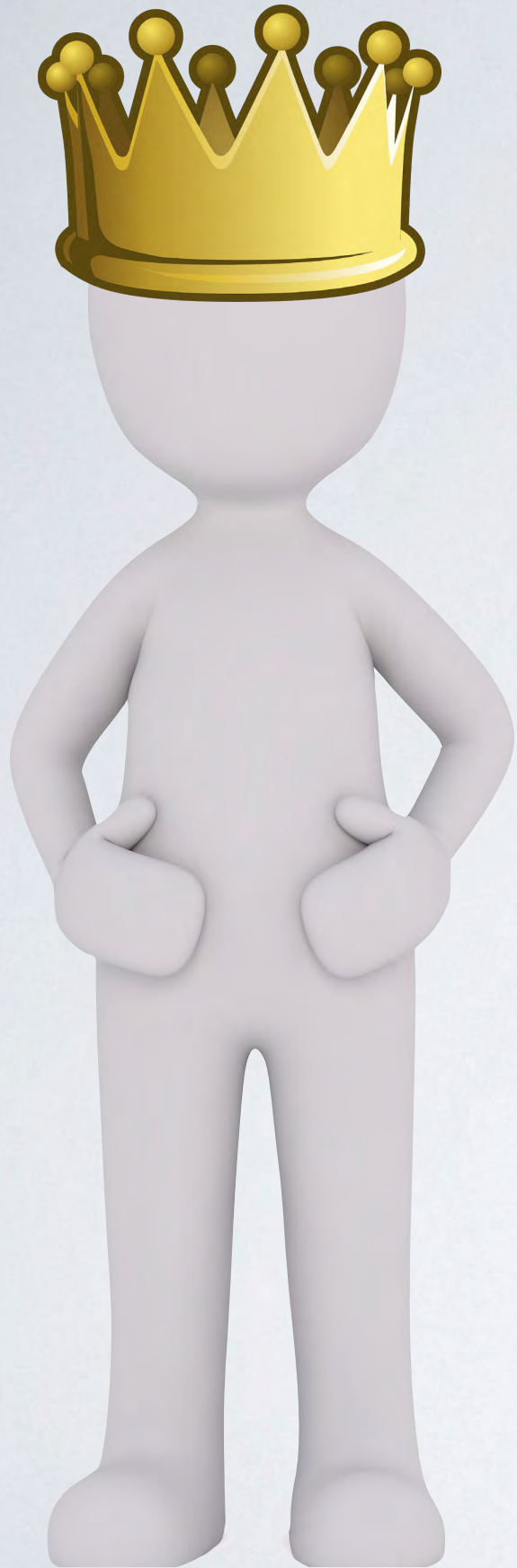


**Harold Godwinson**



**Duke William of  
Normandy**





# Rival 1: Harold Godwinson

- Most powerful noble in England
- Disliked by Edward the Confessor
- Claimed that the dying Edward had touched his hand to identify him as heir to the throne
- Was crowned King shortly after Edward's death



# Rival 2: William, Duke of Normandy

- Had been friendly with Edward the Confessor
- Claimed that Edward had promised him the throne
- Asserted that Harold Godwinson had sworn allegiance to him and was therefore an oath-breaker





# Rival 3: Harald Hardrada

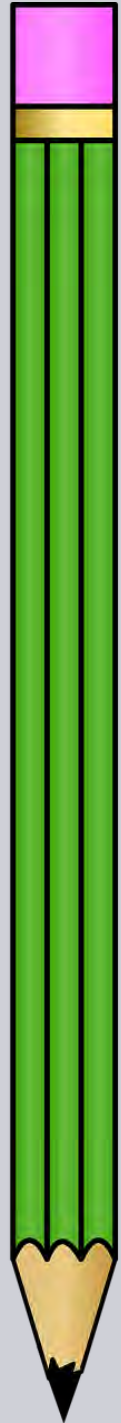


- King of Norway
- Flimsiest claim to the throne
  - Based his claim on being related to a Viking king of England, Canute (or Knut)
- Joined forces with Harold Godwinson's brother Tostig, whom Harold had banished



# Quick Fact Check 1

Which detail goes with which claimant to the throne?



- a Referred to (by detractors) as “the Bastard”
- b Most powerful noble in England
- c Related to Canute, former Viking king of England
- d King of Norway
- e Disliked by Edward the Confessor
- f Duke of Normandy
- g Denounced by the Normans as an oath-breaker

● Harold Godwinson ● William  
● Harald Hardrada

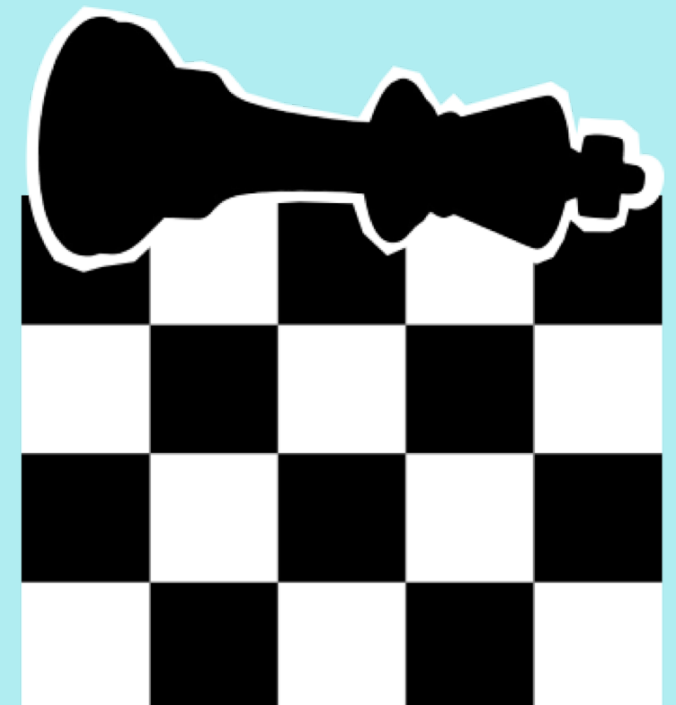


# Advantages and Disadvantages

**advantage** - plus, positive, benefit, good point  
**disadvantage** - minus, negative, downside, drawback

Which points below are **genuine advantages** of a clearly defined succession to the throne? Find 3.

- a** Reduced likelihood of violent conflict
- b** Greater social equality
- c** Ensures a high-quality monarch
- d** Greater political stability
- e** Power struggles less likely to take place
- f** Easier for people with a flimsy claim to usurp the throne





**Point 2:** Disputes were resolved through violence and blood-letting. Diplomatic solutions were not typical.

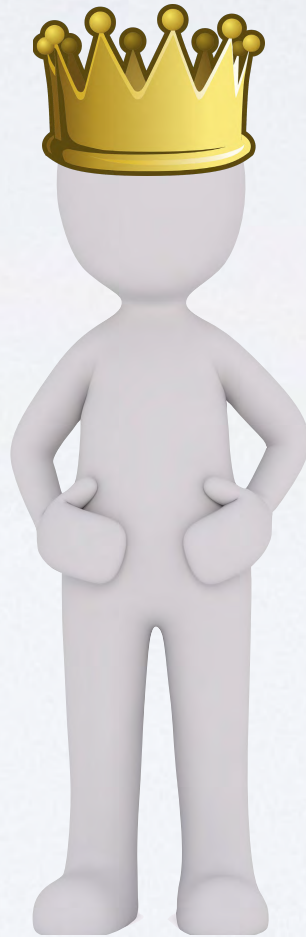




In this situation, the three rivals didn't discuss matters or send ambassadors and emissaries in order to avoid unnecessary violence. Rather, they prepared their armies for battle.



**Harald  
Hardrada**



**Harold  
Godwinson**



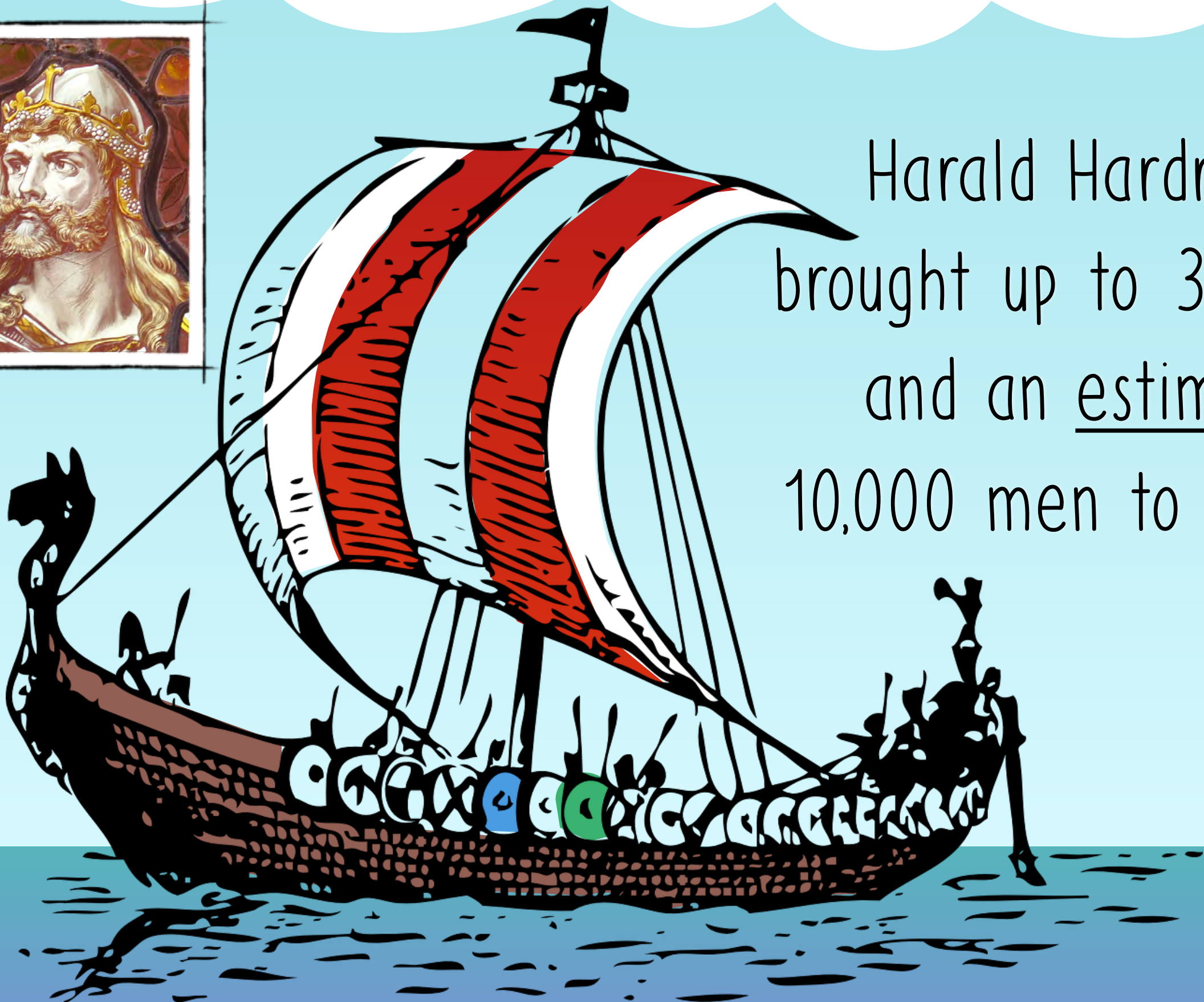
**Duke William  
of Normandy**



# Serious Preparations 1



Harald Hardrada  
brought up to 300 ships  
and an estimated  
10,000 men to England.





# Serious Preparations 2



William of Normandy brought at least 700 ships, about 7,000 men and 2,000 horses.







**Battle of Fulford** - Harald Hardrada and Tostig are victors. (20 September)

**Battle of Stamford Bridge** - Harald Hardrada and Tostig suffer a devastating defeat. Both are killed. (25 September)

**William crowned**, 25 December 1066

**Battle of Hastings** on 14 October. William's army triumphs.

**William lands here** on 28 September.



# Quick Fact Check 2

Which detail goes with which claimant to the throne?

- a Victor at the Battle of Fulford
- b Brought 2000 horses across the Channel
- c Only 25 of his ships returned to Norway
- d Victor at the Battle of Stamford Bridge
- e Triumphed at the Battle of Hastings
- f Died at the Battle of Hastings
- g Crowned King on Christmas Day, 1066
- h Later nicknamed “the Conqueror”



• Harold Godwinson • William, Duke of Normandy  
• Harald Hardrada, King of Norway





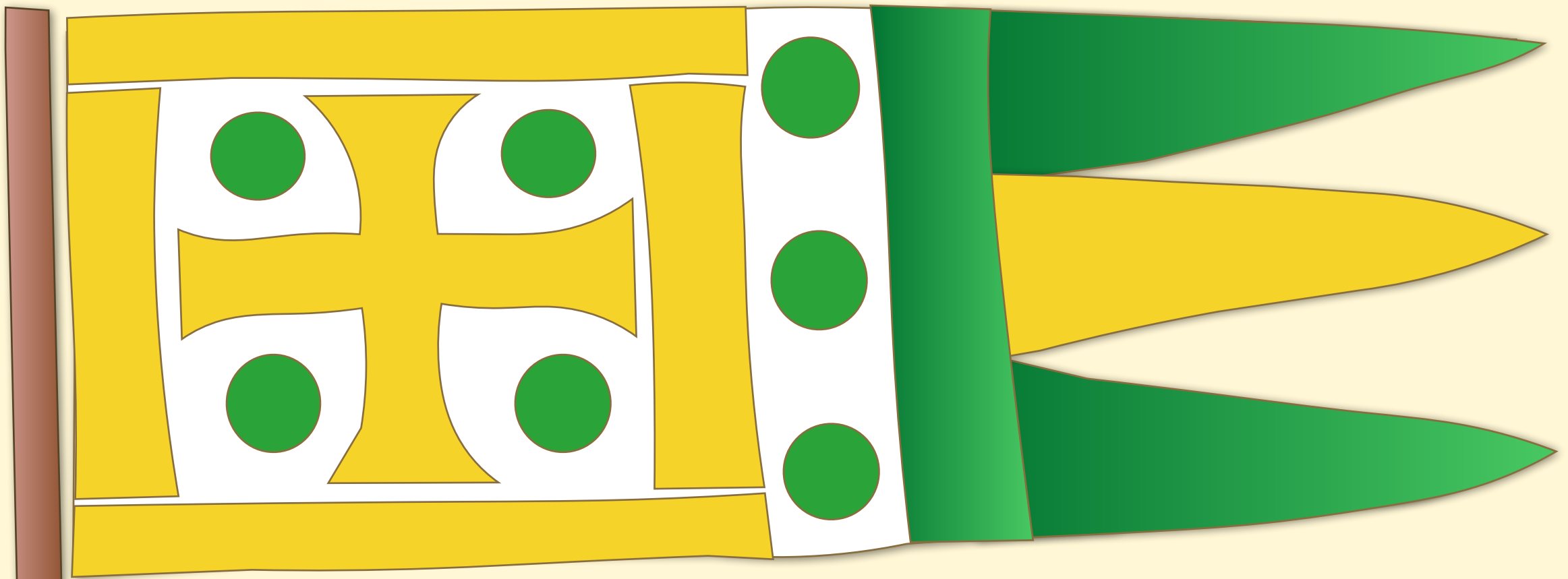
**Point 3:** God was presumed to be a factor in who gained power.





If someone became king or won an important battle, this was often presented by the victor or viewed by the people as a sign of God's will.





For this reason, William Duke of Normandy gained the Pope's support. He was given a papal banner to show that he was supposedly fighting a "holy war". Although this was absurd, it was powerful medieval propaganda.



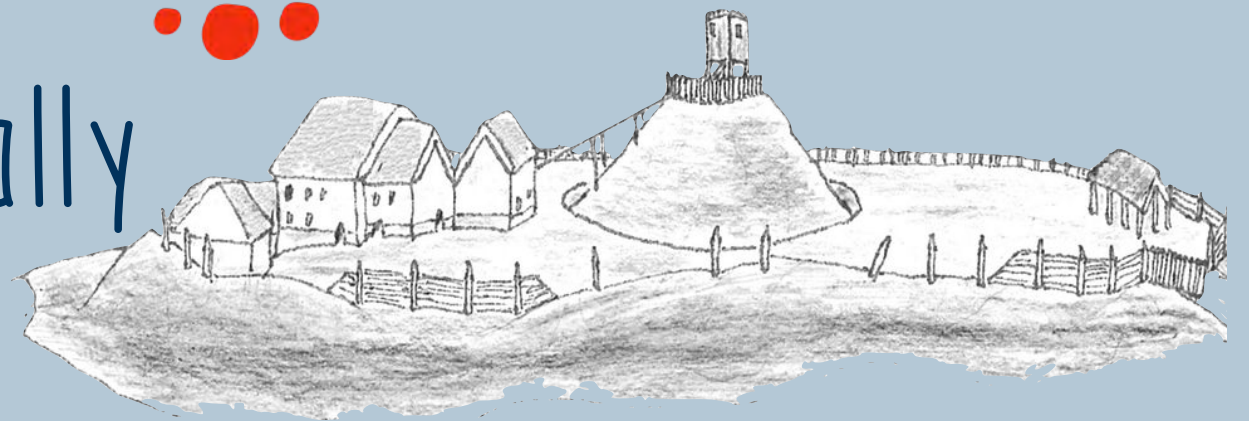
**Point 4:** After winning a battle, the victor wanted to secure his victory by subjugating the people.

William employed (at least) three strategies in order to achieve this:

- crushing rebellions



- building strategically placed castles



- data collection





# Strategy 1: Crushing Rebellion

William the Conqueror violently put down rebellions in the north of England. He and his knights destroyed all in their path, burning crops and causing lasting famine. Tens of thousands are believed to have died.



# Strategy 2: Castles and Surveillance



Motte and Bailey Castle

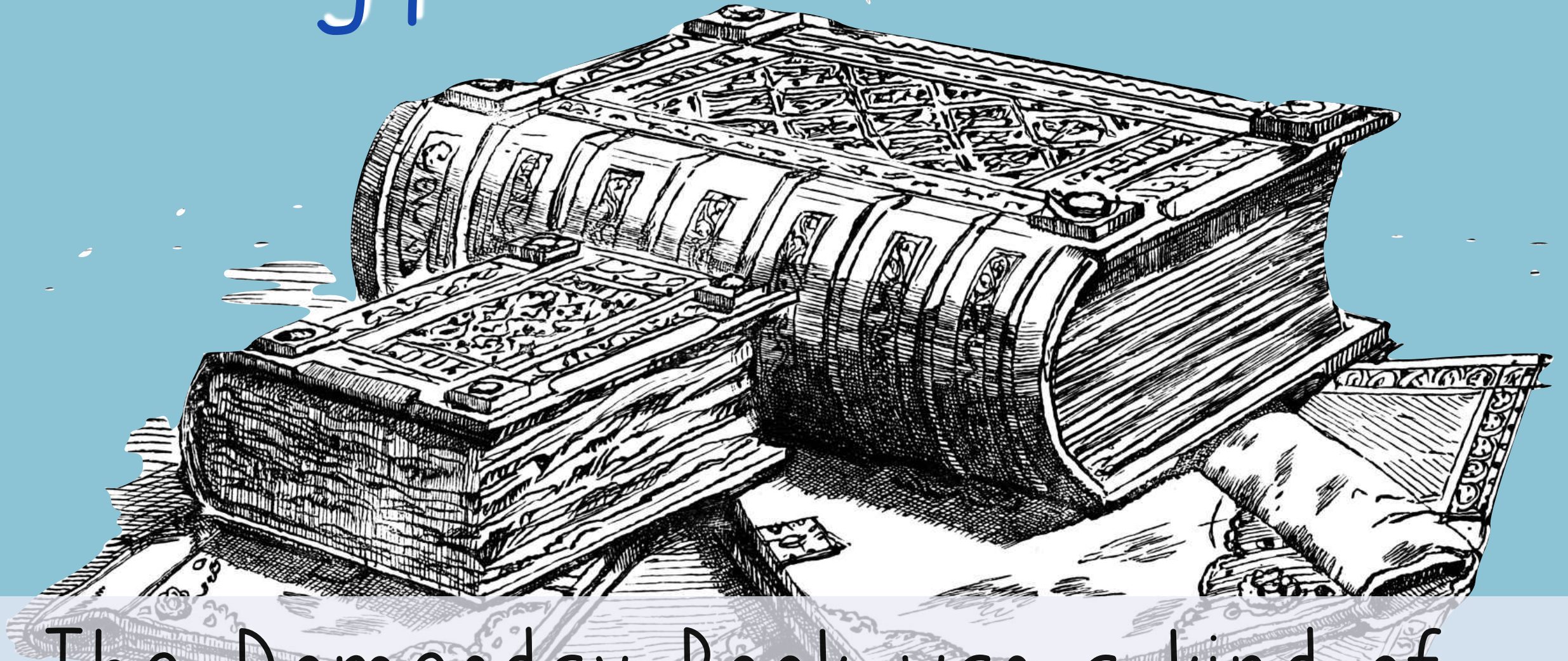


Stone Keep at York

The first castles were motte and bailey castles, relatively quick to build but harder to defend than the later stone castles.



# Strategy 3: Data Collection



The Domesday Book was a kind of medieval database that ensured the new King knew what was happening in his kingdom and could tax his subjects.



# Quick Fact Check 3

Which explanation (a-g) matches each element in the motte?

- a Widespread food scarcity
- b Ideal for surveillance and intimidation
- c An act of political and religious propaganda
- d Easiest type of castle to build
- e A kind of medieval database
- f Type of castle that requires more time to build, but is easier to defend
- g A method for subjugating people and eliminating dissent

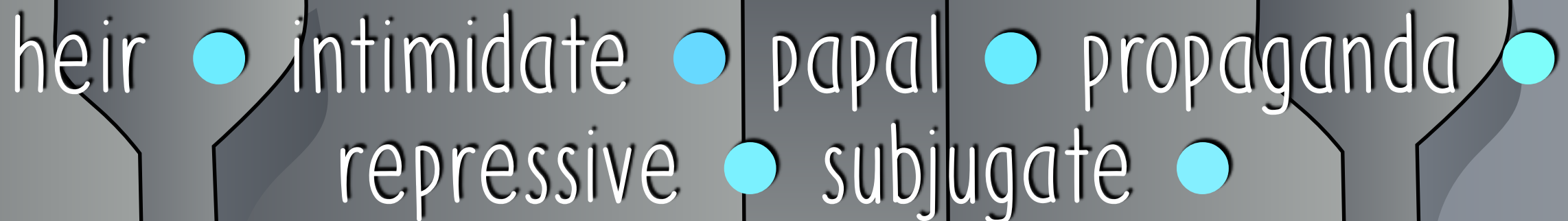
castles generally ● crushing rebellions ●  
famine ● Domesday Book ● gaining the Pope's support  
and banner ● motte and bailey castles ● stone castles



# Quick Vocabulary Check 3

Place each word below in the appropriate sentence.

- a** Building castles in his conquered territory allowed William I to keep people under surveillance and so \_\_\_\_\_ them.
- b** Crushing rebellions and burning crops were cruel and \_\_\_\_\_ measures through which he planned to \_\_\_\_\_ rebels and others.
- c** When a king dies without an \_\_\_\_\_, uncertainty over the succession can lead to conflict.
- d** By fighting with a \_\_\_\_\_ banner to show the Pope's support, William exercised a form of powerful medieval \_\_\_\_\_.



heir • intimidate • papal • propaganda •  
repressive • subjugate •



## Point 5:

The victor tells the story and places himself in a positive light.





According to one estimation, William the Conqueror and his knights were responsible for the deaths of 100,000 people.





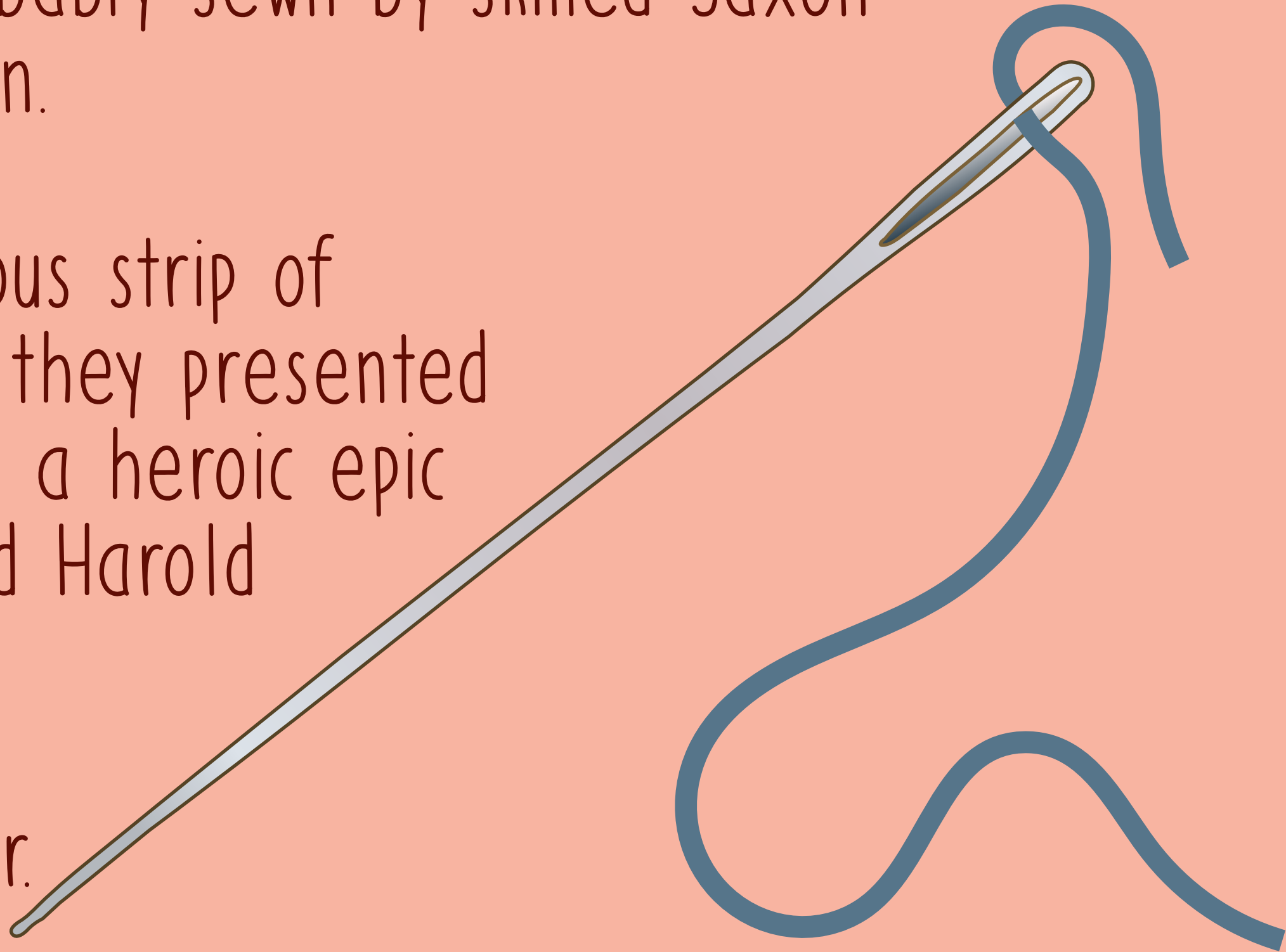
By any reckoning, that is a cruel and horrific legacy. Yet since William won the Battle of Hastings, he had every opportunity to make his invasion seem just and legitimate.



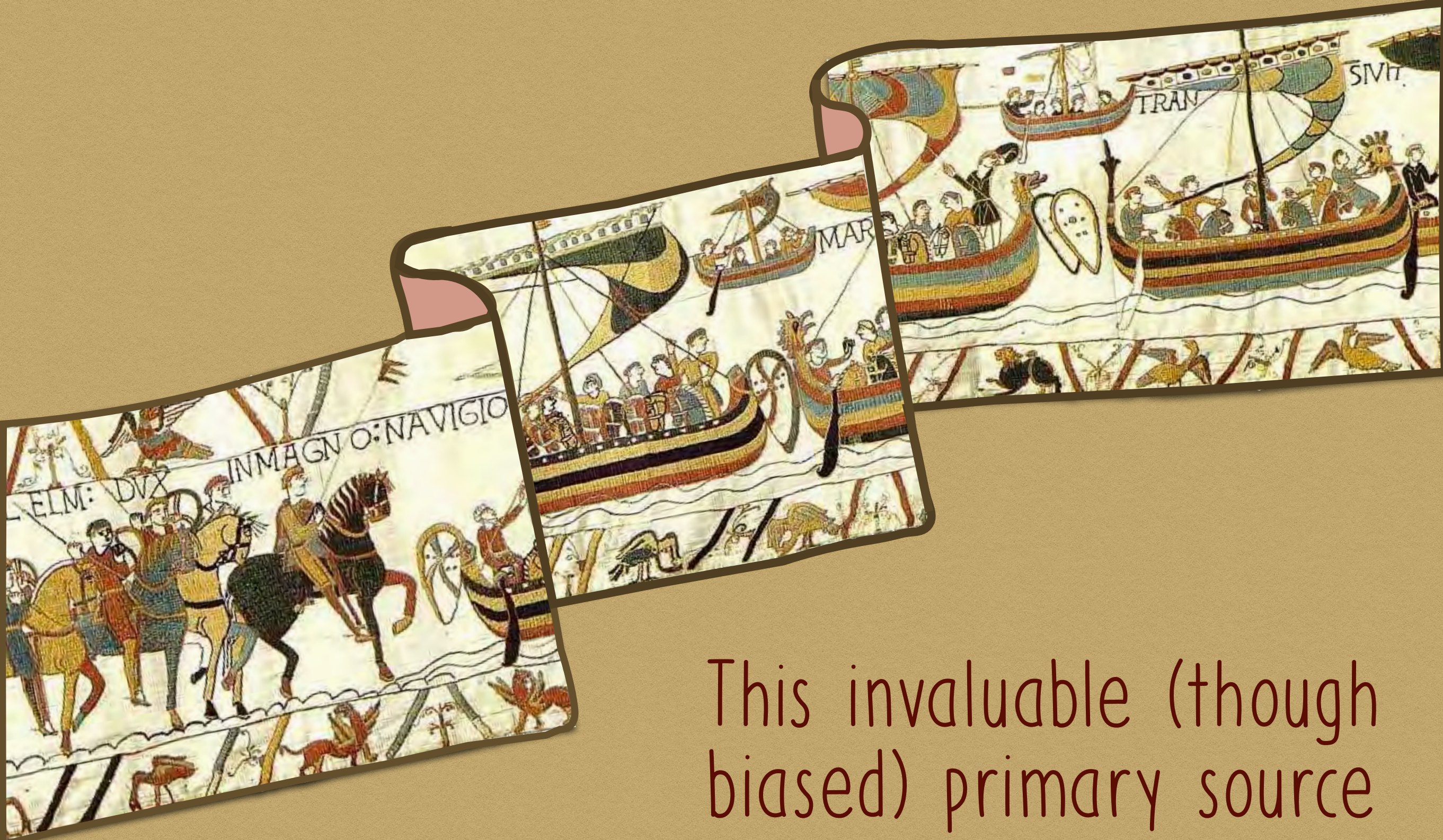


For example, the Normans commissioned a 70-metre long embroidery of their exploits, probably sewn by skilled Saxon needlewomen.

In this famous strip of propaganda, they presented the story as a heroic epic and depicted Harold Godwinson as an oath-breaker.







This invaluable (though biased) primary source came to be known as the Bayeux Tapestry.





The Normans go  
to battle





Harold is killed  
by an arrow



# Think it over...

1 The designers of the tapestry hoped to present...

☐ a the Norman view of events. ☐ b the Saxon view of events.

2 Harold Godwinson is therefore depicted as...

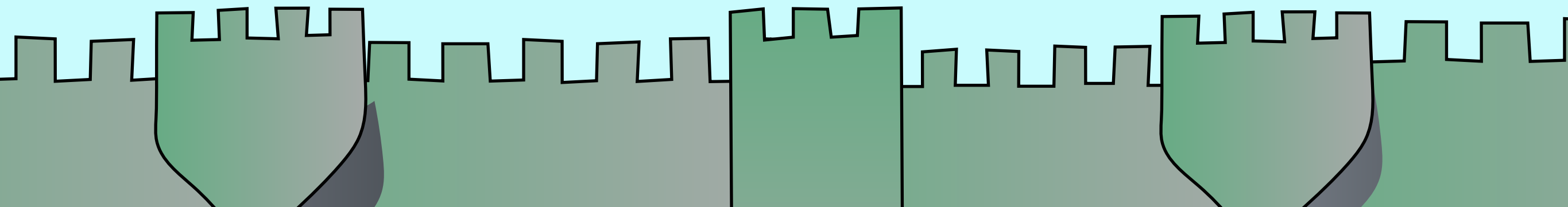
☐ a the rightful King of England. ☐ b an oath-breaker who deserved to be overthrown.

3 William I of England is consequently represented as...

☐ a a righteous hero. ☐ b a brutal usurper.

4 The actions of the Normans are therefore characterised as...

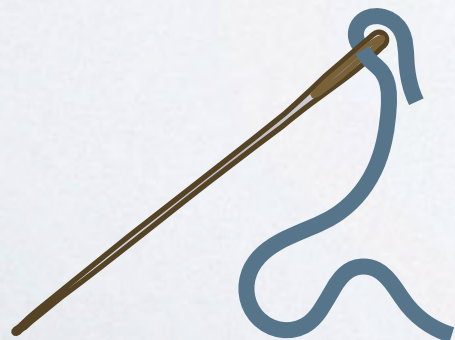
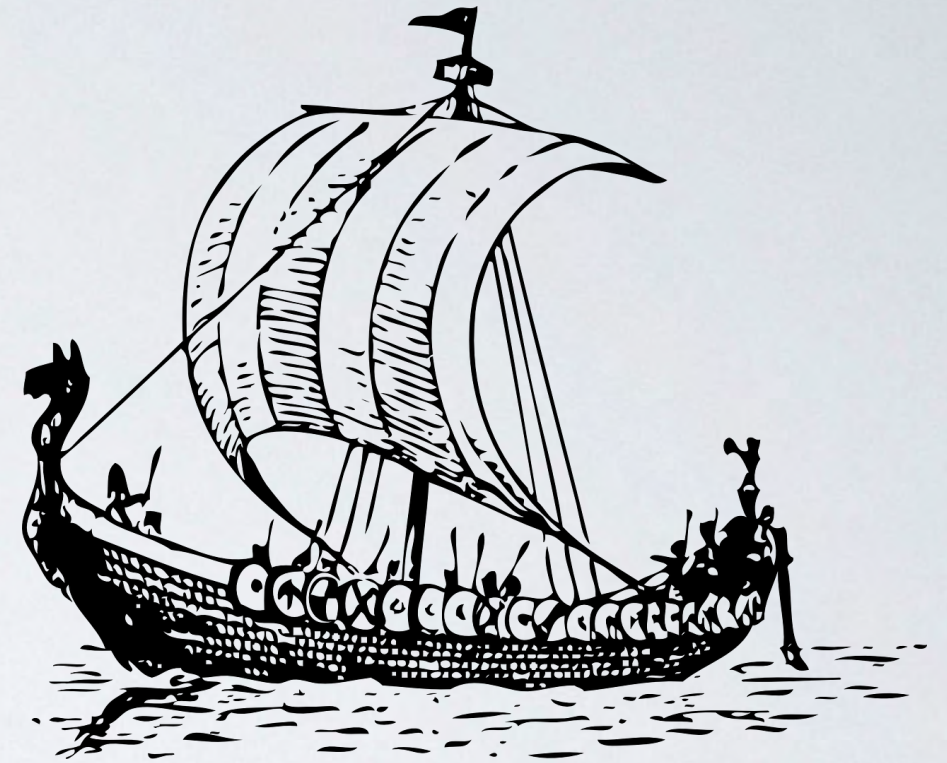
☐ a cruel and oppressive. ☐ b brave and irreproachable.





# Some Recommended Websites

- BBC Bitesize on the Norman Conquest
- BBC Bitesize on the Domesday Book
- The Domesday Book Online
- Battle of Stamford Bridge
- History.com on the Battle of Hastings
- A Straightforward Summary
- Historyextra.com - 10 surprising facts about the Norman Conquest
- The whole tapestry with translations of the Latin
- Summary - Includes the Text of William's Final Confession





# Some Recommended Videos

- The Battle of Stamford Bridge
- BBC: The Battle of Hastings
- BazBattles: The Battle of Hastings
- An Animated Version of the Bayeux Tapestry
- The Norman Conquest of England in 3 Minutes
- How the Normans Changed the History of Europe

