

Did Harold make the correct choices in 1066?

**Dilemma:** A difficult choice where both options probably lead to something bad

**Now that the Witan have made me king and following my coronation at Westminster Abbey in January, I must now defend my country. Should I go north to prepare for the arrival of Hardrada, or south to await William? If I choose wrong it could be catastrophic!...**



## Harold's Dilemma

**Discuss with your partner, what would you do? Why?**

Harold knew that he would have to defend his new kingdom from both William and Harald Hardrada; and the spring and summer of 1066 were busy in Norway, Normandy and England as each side prepared for the coming clash. Harold had the most difficult task, for his enemies could choose the time and place for their attack, while he could only watch and wait. In April a shooting star, which we now know to have been Halley's Comet, was spotted in the sky. People took this to be a bad omen. Having gathered his army, Harold decided to remain in the South of England to guard against a possible attack from William and left two earls, Edwin of Mercia and Morcar of Northumbria, to defend against the expected Viking attack in the north. As the summer drew to a close, however, Harold was under increasing pressure to allow his soldiers to return to their farmlands to gather in the harvest. As for the attackers, there was still no sign of them.

Stick your copy of the story so far in your book and answer the following questions in full sentences:

**Who did King Harold Godwinson put in charge of defending the north against Hardrada?**

**What was seen as a bad omen for the people of England?**

**What are the problems for King Harold's part time soldiers?**

**What was King Harold Godwinson's dilemma?**



# What did Harold do?

King Harold knew that he would have a lot of difficulty holding onto England. He did not know which of his enemies would make the first move, but he assumed it would be William, so he stationed his troops on the **south coast**.

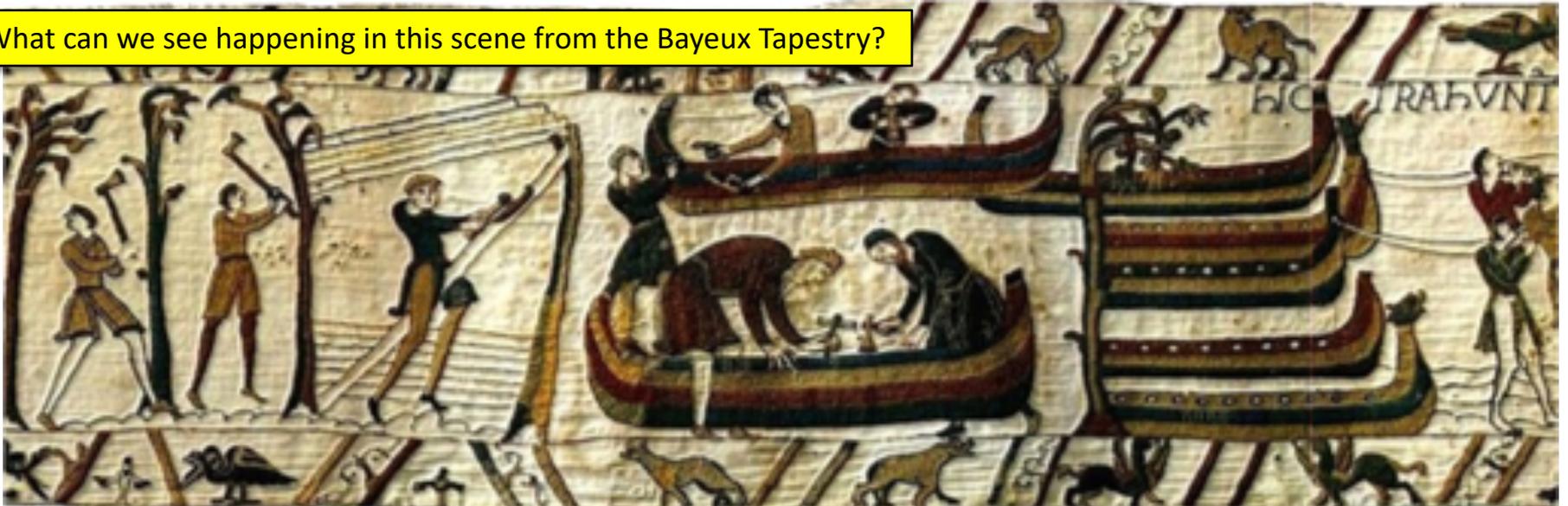


**Before we see what happened and whether King Harold made the right choices, let's see what was happening in Norway and France (If only King Harold had this option...)**



William had a number of major problems to solve before he could invade England. He had to win the support of his own reluctant barons, who were worried they might be attacked while William was gone. Despite the barons not wanting to risk all on the invasion, the pull of lands in England helped. William also persuaded Pope Alexander II (Head of the Christian Church) to support the invasion. This made it difficult for Normandy's neighbours to invade while he was gone, and risk upsetting The Pope.

What can we see happening in this scene from the Bayeux Tapestry?





As William prepared his invasion force, he planned carefully. Many armies in the Middle Ages depended up the area around them to provide their food, but William had enough supplies to last his force for many weeks. He did not strip Normandy of all its fighting men, but paid for troops from neighbouring areas such as Brittany. He had a mighty fleet of wooden ships made to take his army across the Channel to England but, when he gathered his army on the coast at Dives, the weather was against him. Without the right wind his fleet could not reach the English coast, so his army sat and waited.

*Answer in full sentences:*

**How did William ensure Normandy was still protected?**

**What happened that hindered William's careful planning and delayed the invasion?**



## Now over to Norway...

The wind that kept William penned in on the Normandy coast was perfect for blowing Hardrada and his fleet from Norway to England. In September 1066, he and his army landed in the north of England. He then defeated the defending English army under Earls Edwin and Morcar at Fulford on 20<sup>th</sup> September, and went on to capture York.



Upon hearing of this, what would you advise King Harold to do? Go up north? Stay and wait for William?

King Harold faced a critical decision in mid-September. His powerful army was stationed in the south of England, waiting to repel William. Was it more important to keep some of his kingdom and accept he'd lost the north? Or should a king defend his whole kingdom. One thing was clear, King Harold was a great warrior and had proven he could be daring too. King Harold took his army rapidly north, marching so quickly that he caught Harald Hardrada's invading Viking army by surprise near York.

*Answer in full sentences:*

**What happened on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1066?**

**Upon hearing of Harald's attack, what did King Harold choose to do?**





## Let's have a little chronology check up before going on to the first major battle of 1066, Stamford Bridge...

January 1066 – King Edward dies

January 1066 – King Harold Godwinson is crowned

Spring 1066 – William prepares to invade England

Spring 1066 – Harald Hardrada prepares to invade

Summer 1066 – earls Edwin and Morcar raise an army up north, King Harold raises an army to defend the south

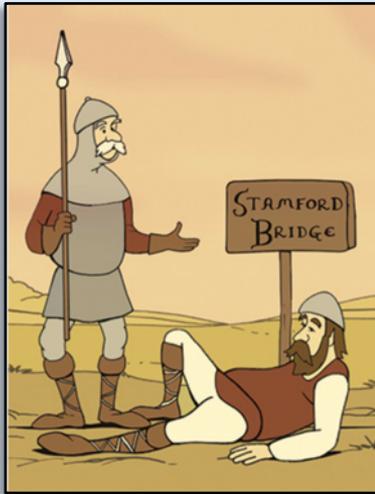
August 1066 – King Harold's army have been waiting all summer, he is running out of food and his part time soldiers need to go home for the harvest

September 1066 – William's army is ready but he stuck due to the weather

20<sup>th</sup> September 1066 – 500 Norwegian ships arrive, Harald Hardrada wins the Battle of Fulford

25<sup>th</sup> September 1066 – Battle of Stamford Bridge...

## Stamford Bridge – A critical turning point



On the morning of 25<sup>th</sup> September 1066, a cloud of dust was spotted by men in Harald Hardrada's army, who were waiting by Stamford Bridge for the citizens of York to deliver food and hostages. The cloud of dust was King Harold's approaching army.

The Viking army were thrown into confusion, they weren't ready and had left most of their armour and troops with their ships, nearly 9 miles away!

Hardrada led his army to higher ground across the river, leaving a few men to hold Stamford Bridge and slow the English army. Most of these men were quickly defeated but for a lone Viking warrior who bravely held off the English army just long enough for Harald to prepare a shield wall...



*Answer in full sentences:*

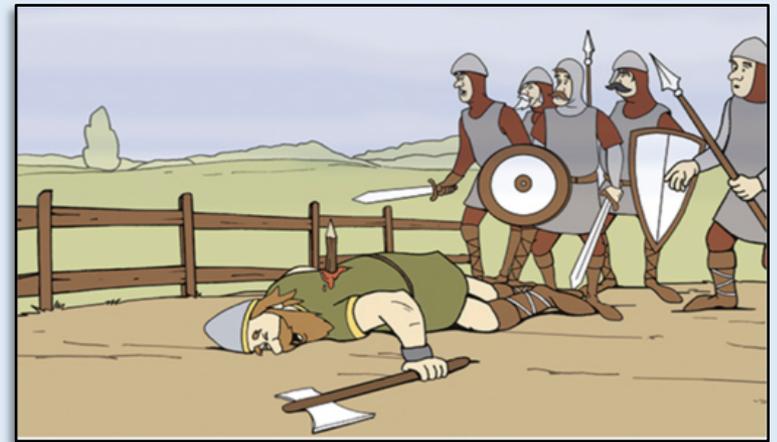
**What happened on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1066 and why was it a surprise?**

**How did the Vikings delay the English army crossing the bridge?**



## Stamford Bridge – A critical turning point

... Eventually the brave Viking was attacked from behind by an English soldier who had crossed the river and was killed. The English army could now advance easily across the bridge to face Hardrada's shield wall defence.



The English charged into the Viking shieldwall and in the fighting both Harald Hardrada and Tostig were killed. Even the arrival of more Vikings made little difference and the surviving invaders were chased back to their ships.



**Considering the Battle of Stamford Bridge, try to think about both positives and negatives in relation to King Harold's problems...**

Positives of Stamford Bridge

Negatives of Stamford Bridge

Clue: # of enemies

Clue: Tired / exhausted





King Harold had very little time to celebrate his victory. Within days of the battle he received news that William had landed on the South coast of England. The Normans arrived at Pevensey on 28<sup>th</sup> September and quickly build a Motte and Bailey castle.



William sent his men through the countryside, seizing food, plundering and burning. Not only did the Duke need supplies, but he knew if he could force the English army to fight quicker, with less recovery time from Stamford Bridge, he would have a much better chance of victory...

*Answer in full sentences:*

- What happened on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1066 and what followed?
- What did William hope would happen following his plundering and burning of the countryside?

## *What a year so far, what did King Harold actually do upon hearing of William's arrival?...*

King Harold's actions at this point have baffled historians for years. He had won an outstanding victory at Stamford Bridge but his forces were tired. He was also in the wrong place, nearly 300 miles away from the Normans, Harold decided to march south and reached London on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1066, having marched 190 miles in 8 days!

Harold was advised to delay in London in order to build up an overwhelming force to crush the Normans but he was in a hurry, perhaps concerned that William too would be reinforcing his troops. It is highly probable that he was angered too by William's plundering and burning of King Harold's lands. Harold may also have thought it would have been easier to defeat the Normans by the sea. He must have been feeling very confident following Stamford Bridge. The English led London and marched for three days to reach William's army late on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October. The next morning, England would change forever...



### *Answer in full sentences:*

- **How far did King Harold's men have to travel to get to Hastings and how long did it take?**
- **What route did Harold take? Why might this have appeared to be a mistake?**

## Did Harold make the correct choices?

### Possible layout: Intro -

General statement: (some background to the question)

Topic statement: (what were his choices)

Argument statement: (did he choose wisely or foolishly)

### Possible layout: Paragraph -

ATQ (answer the question) sentence:

Reasons why good choices

Reasons why bad choices

### Possible layout: Conclusion-

All things considered, it is clear that... this is because...

