

‘The Norman conquest was a good thing for the Anglo-Saxons’

A self-guiding trail for GCSE and A-level history students

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

About this enquiry

This is a self-guided historical enquiry designed to support visits by GCSE and A-level history students studying the Normans.

The enquiry challenges and supports students to develop their **historical argument skills** by asking them to independently explore and test a contentious proposition: ‘The Norman conquest was a good thing for the Anglo-Saxons’.

A varied range of authentic physical, written and illustrative sources are provided as stimulus. Students are supported to investigate and evaluate this evidence for themselves as a part of forming their own view about the proposition.

The trail provides perfect preparation for a lively plenary where students can compare, debate and exchange views and arguments.

Curriculum relevance

The trail has been designed to **fit with GCSE and A-level exam board specifications**. We hope a visit to the Tower that includes this self-guided experience can reinforce and bolster the broader enquiries students are undertaking while studying the Norman conquest at GCSE and A-level.

The trail also supports students to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of Anglo-Saxon and Norman England
- evaluate interpretations and primary accounts
- critically investigate the proposition and make a historical claim supported by a range of physical and written sources in their historical context
- develop their understanding of and practice making judgements about historical significance
- organise and communicate their findings

Guidance for group visits

- It may be advisable to timetable your visit so different groups start the trail at staggered times. The Tower of London is a very busy and popular site and some areas can become very crowded.
- If working in groups, please remind students to find an appropriate place to stop on the trail, away from other visitors, and to take particular care not to block entrances and exits.
- The staircases within the White Tower are very steep and narrow so groups will need to be reminded to take particular care with these.
- The Chapel of St John in the White Tower is an active place of worship. Please remind your group that cameras shouldn’t be used here and noise levels should remain respectful.

Suggested activities and timings

The trail is designed to support **1 - 1.25 hour explorations**, depending on the elements or classwork emphasised.

Pre-visit discussion ideas

1. Review or ask students to think about the concept of historical significance. What criteria can be used to assess a historical event’s (eg, the Norman conquest) significance?
2. Review useful questions for evaluating primary evidence and sources.

At the Tower

See the chart (reverse) for ideas for how to use the trail and its activities on-site.

activities	guidance	support & ideas	time
1. Review existing knowledge	A chance to explore students' existing knowledge and establish a common starting point for less knowledgeable students.	Trail intro 'The Norman conquest comes to London' can help establish a basic narrative. Information bank contains a range of graphics and facts about England before and after 1066.	5-10 minutes
2. Consider the proposition	Encourage students to reflect on the proposition and choose a side / record their initial reaction. Opportunity to reinforce idea that their position should/can be tentative. Use 'Register your first thoughts' on the trail's back cover.	Use 'Register your first thoughts' on the trail's back cover. With teacher? Agree or disagree: vote by show of hands. Share initial position via twitter or social media using a shared class hashtag, eg, #Normanconquestagoodthing? #firstthoughts Challenge group to prove the opposite of their hypothesis. Can they make a convincing case?	5 minutes
3. Explore the Norman Tower and gather information	Students explore Tower independently or in small groups. Trail offers a choice of stops, data and themes. Students don't necessarily have to do every activity or visit every stop in trail in order to develop their historical argument. Reminder to follow visit guidelines.	Each trail stop has an enquiry question and sources associated with its theme. Reconsider position/hypothesis after each trail stop or activity. Use of phone for photographing site as way of collecting evidence students find persuasive or to teach about significance, photograph your 'most ...' piece of evidence Divide up trail tasks/stops among students. Assign certain groups to explore particular stops, eg, inside vs outside White Tower	40 minutes
4. Think about evidence and build an argument	Students will need to leave time for this phase: to reflect on findings and formulate an argument or outstanding questions. Chance for students to draw a tentative conclusion, based on the evidence they considered.	'Space to think' chart provides a space for recording or visualising persuasive evidence, claims or ideas. Plus/Minus/Interesting as a way of helping students get started in their analysis. 'Opposite worldview' - once they've decided a position, challenge students to try to prove the opposite to clarify their thinking and identify weaknesses in argument	10-15 minutes
5. Plenary: share your thinking / review hypothesis	Bring group together on-site or back in the classroom to share findings and tentative conclusions. Debates highlight and reinforce that measuring or evaluating significance is based on individual judgements.	Encourage peer-to-peer sharing before or as an alternative to a whole group plenary. Use twitter or social media to share tentative conclusion and reasoning Agree or disagree: vote by show of hands. Take turns justifying why views changed or stayed the same.	15+ minutes