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| **Battle of Hastings** | | |
|  | **The original Tapestry is over 70 metres long and depicts 626 human figures, 190 horses, 35 dogs, 506 other birds and animals, 33 buildings, 37 ships and 37 trees or groups and trees, with 57 Latin inscriptions. Here are a few of the people that appear in the Tapestry.**    **The Three Kings**  **Edward the Confessor  King of England, 1042-1066**  **Edward was the Son of the Saxon King Ethelred (the Unready) and Emma, sister of Duke Richard II of Normandy. Emma later married Cnut, King of Denmark. Cnut became King of England and Edward went to live in exile in Normandy.**  **When Cnut died in 1042 his son Harthacnut was made King of England. But Harthacnut died without leaving an heir so Edward became King in 1042 and was crowned at Winchester in 1043. He ruled with the help of the powerful Saxon earls and married Edith, daughter of Godwin, earl of Wessex. Edward invited many of his Norman friends to come to England; he gave them important jobs and land. He ordered the building of Westminster Abbey.**  **Because Edward had no children, he had to choose someone to succeed him. There were many claimants to the throne. One was Harold, Earl of Wessex, Edward's brother-in-law: another was Harold Hardrada, King of Norway, and a third was William, Duke of Normandy.**  **Harold  King of England, Jan - Oct 1066**  **Harold had no hereditary claim on the throne - he was not of royal birth. He was the son of Godwin, in his time the most powerful Saxon earl. Harold's sister, Emma, was married to Edward the Confessor and had at least 5 brothers. The tapestry shows us that Harold had fought with William against the Duke of Brittany and shows him swearing upon holy relics. When Edward the Confessor died Harold was chosen to be King of England by the leading Saxon noblemen.**  **Right away Harold had problems. His brother Tostig accompanied Harold Hardrada King of Norway when he invaded England. Both Hardrada and Tostig were killed by Harold's army at the Battle of Stamford Bridge near York. At the same time William of Normandy had brought his army to England to claim the throne. Harold marched from Stamford Bridge to London then on to Hastings where William's army waited.**  **The English and Norman armies fought bravely, but Harold with his brothers Gyrth and Leofwine were all killed. The tapestry tells us "here King Harold has been killed" - struck down by the sword of a mounted Norman soldier. After the battle of Hastings Williams had an abbey built on the place where the battle had been fought, and the high altar is supposed to mark the spot where Harold was killed.**  **William of Normandy  King of England, 1066-1087**  **William's father was Duke Robert and his mother was Herleva who was a tanner's daughter. Duke Robert's great-great-grandfather was Rollo, a Viking who invaded France in 911. Although he was illegitimate William became Duke of Normandy when he was only seven years old - his father died on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. William's mother married the Viscount of Conteville and had two more sons - Odo and Robert.**  **William was a strong leader and wanted to become King of England. William led his army at the Battle of Hastings where Harold was killed and his army defeated. William then set about the conquest of England; he gave Norman barons pieces of land all over the country and in return they supported him in war and administered regions of England on the king's behalf.**  **During his reign William ordered the collection of information about the people in Britain and how much property they owned. This information was recorded in the Domesday Book. William died in 1087 after being injured when fighting in France.**    **What Happened After Hastings**  **After the Battle of Hastings, William still had to conquer England. He marched from Hastings, crossing the Thames at Wallingford and then on towards London. At Little Berkhamsted he received the surrender of the city. William took hostages to ensure that the surrender was kept.**  **William wanted to be crowned King as soon as possible. His Coronation took place on Christmas Day, 1066. It was held at Westminster Abbey, which had been built by Edward the Confessor. During the Coronation, as the people inside the Abbey shouted out their acceptance of William, the troops outside thought a fight had broken out. Fearing that William had been attacked they began to set fire to Saxon houses. As the Norman soldiers could not understand the language of the Saxons, and the Saxons could not understand the language of the Normans, it was difficult for them to communicate.**  **William kept the promises he had made to the barons who fought with him to give them English land. He gave them lands taken from the Saxons. In exchange, the barons had to be loyal to William and provide knights to fight for him when he needed them. They might also have to pay sums of money to the king. William made sure that the barons could not easily rise against him by giving them pieces of land in different parts of the country, which made it difficult to raise a private army in secret.**  **In their turn the barons granted land to their followers. The knights promised in return to be loyal to the barons, to fight for them when needed and to raise money when the barons demanded it.**  **The peasants had to work the land for the knights at certain times of the year, and pay the knights in produce which kept the knights' families supplied with food. Peasants were not usually allowed to leave their own villages. Every person owed his or her living to the people who had allowed them their land and was paid in service, money or goods. It was called the FEUDAL SYSTEM, and was the basis of society in the early middle ages.**  **William also gave lands to the Church because the Pope had supported William in his claim to the English throne. One of the first promises William kept was to build an Abbey to celebrate his victory. He chose the site of the Battle of Hastings and the abbey became known as Battle Abbey. It is said that the high altar was built at the place where King Harold lost his life.**  **William wanted to raise money in his new kingdom, so he made the Saxons pay taxes. In 1086 he ordered a survey and his men went all over the country writing down exactly what everyone owned in land, cattle, crops and tools so that he knew exactly how much people could pay. When all the information had been collected, it was written down and is known as the Domesday Book.**  **Life gradually returned to normal. Ordinary people lived in wooden buildings and these gradually rotted away, so that we cannot see exactly what they looked like. However, the barons wanted more permanent buildings than the hastily built timber castles put up soon after the Battle of Hastings. Soon castles, churches, cathedrals, abbeys and monasteries were being built in stone. Some of the stone was brought across from Caen in France. The Normans brought their own style of building and decorating with them too. Some of their castles and cathedrals took a very long time to build, but we can still see many of them today. The style of the building at that time is called ROMANESQUE.**  Illustration of a Noman Church  **We should remember that William the Conqueror was not only King of England, he also ruled Normandy and he spent a lot of time there. Barons and knights in England spoke French for many years, and most writing was in Latin or French. The ordinary people spoke in their own Saxon language, and the Chroniclers continued to write in it until the reign of William's grandson Henry II.** |  |