

What can we learn from the Bayeux Tapestry

Source	What does the source tell us?	What other information can we get from the source?	Is the source reliable?	Does the source tell us why William won the Battle of Hastings?
Source A: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry.				
Source B: description of the Battle of Hastings by William of Malmesbury.				
Source C: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry.				

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Source D: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry.				
Source E: an extract from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.				
Source F: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry.				

Source A: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry



Bayeux Tapestry 1067: Battle of Hastings, 14 October 1066. The death of Harold II, last Anglo-Saxon king of England. Left, figure pulling arrow from eye and then being cut down by Norman knight. Armour Chain Mail Sword Axe Textile. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 20 May 2016. quest.eb.com/search/300_2285904/1/300_2285904/cite

Source B: description of the Battle of Hastings by William of Malmesbury from *The Deeds of the Kings of the English* written about 1140

William was a monk and an historian. His father was a Norman and his mother was English and has been described as 'perhaps the most intelligent man in Europe in the 12th Century'.

The courageous leaders mutually prepared for battle, each according to his national custom. The English, as we have heard, passed the night without sleep in drinking and singing, and, in the morning, proceeded without delay towards the enemy; all were on foot, armed with battle-axes ... The king himself on foot stood with his brother, near the Standard, in order that, while all shared equal danger none might think of retreating ... On the other side, the Normans passed the whole night in confessing their sins, and received the Sacrament in the morning. The infantry with bows and arrows, formed the vanguard, while the cavalry, divided into wings, were held back.

(The English) few in number and brave in the extreme... they fought with ardour neither giving ground, for great part of the day. Finding this, William gave a signal to his party, that, by a feigned flight, they should retreat. Through this device the close body of the English, opening for the purpose of cutting down the straggling enemy brought upon itself swift destruction; for the Normans, facing about, attacked them thus disordered, and compelled them to fly.

Harold, not merely content with the duty of a General in exhorting others, would strike the enemy when coming to close quarters, so that none would approach him with impunity; for immediately the same blow levelled both horse and rider first one party conquering, and then the other, prevailed as long as the life of Harold continued; but when he fell, his brain pierced by an arrow... One of the soldiers with a sword gashed Harold's thigh as he lay prostrate; for which shameful and cowardly action he was branded with ignominy by William and dismissed.

Tricky word	Meaning
Standard	A flag which showed royal coat of arms.
Sacrament	The bread and wine that are eaten and drunk during the Christian ceremony of Communion.
Infantry	Soldiers on foot
Vanguard	The group leading the way
Cavalry	Soldiers on horseback
Ardour	Great passion
Feigned flight	Pretend to run away
Facing about	Turned around and faced opponents
Exhorting others	Encouraging his men
Impunity	Without fear of punishment
Prostrate	Lying stretched out on the ground
Ignominy	Publicly shamed.

Source C: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry



King Harold's foot soldiers with spears and battle axes, Bayeux Tapestry, Normandy, France, Europe. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 20 May 2016. quest.eb.com/search/151_2530998/1/151_2530998/cite

Source D: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry

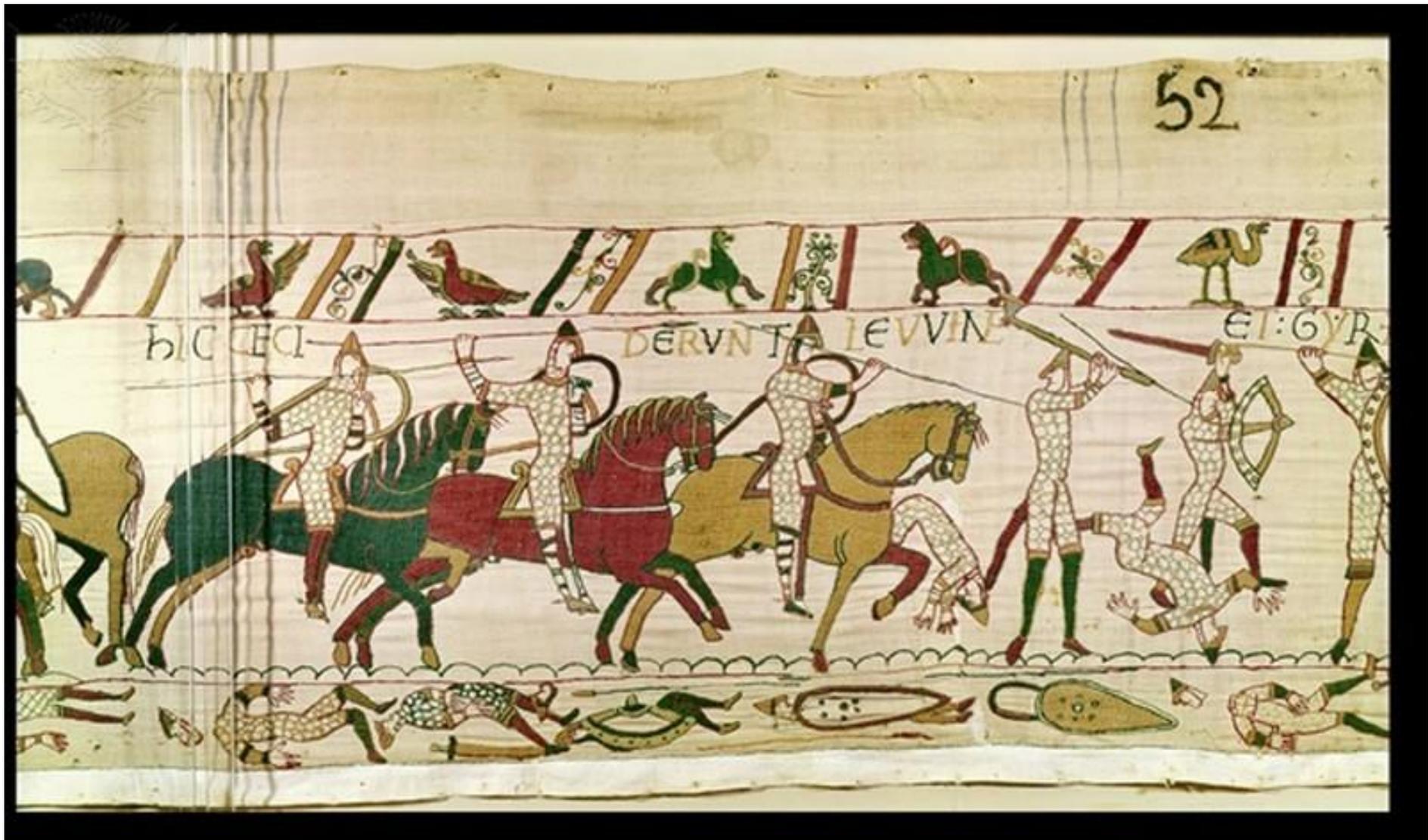


Here they cook the meat, detail from the Bayeux Tapestry, before 1082 . Fine Art. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 20 May 2016. quest.eb.com/search/108_236317/1/108_236317/cite

Source E: an extract from Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, dated 1066

Then came William, Duke of Normandy, into Pevensey... This was then made known to King Harold, and he then gathered a great force, and came to meet him at the estuary of Appledore; and William came against him unawares before his people were assembled. But the King nevertheless strenuously fought against him with those men who would follow him; and there was great slaughter made on either hand. There was slain King Harold and Leofwine the earl... and the Frenchman had possession of the place of carnage, all as God granted them for the people's sins.

Source F: a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry



Here fell the brothers of Harold: Gyrd and Leofwine, detail from the Bayeux Tapestry, before 1082 . Fine Art. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 20 May 2016.
http://quest.eb.com/search/108_216674/1/108_216674/cite

Factfile: the Bayeux Tapestry

- It was probably commissioned by Bishop Odo of Kent, who was William of Normandy's half-brother.
- It is most likely to have been made in Kent, England in around 1077.
- It shows the events leading up to and including the Battle of Hastings. It starts with Harold being sent to Normandy by Edward the Confessor. The Normans claim this was to promise the English throne to William.
- The writing on the tapestry is in Latin.
- It is almost 70 metres long (that is about the length of 3 swimming pools!).
- At some point after it was made, somebody changed the scene of Harold's death to show an arrow in his eye.
- It isn't actually a tapestry but is really an embroidery.
- The tapestry contains about 50 different scenes and one researcher has counted that there are 632 human figures in it, 202 horses, 55 dogs, 37 buildings, 41 ships, 49 trees and nearly 2000 Latin letters!

Teaching notes:

This resource was originally designed for a top set year 7 class as part of a wider scheme on 'Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?'

It is designed a group work activity. Each group needs a complete set of the six sources and a blank grid to complete. You could also give them the factfile, or talk this through in advance of the activity.

Students need to look at/read through each source. They should use the information in each source to answer the questions in the table. They need to be careful not to mix the first two columns up and ensure they are writing about the correct source in the correct box!