



The Norman Conquest



Learning Objective:

To know about the Battle of Stamford Bridge and the Battle of Hastings

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Which of these three men was chosen by the Witan to become King of England after the death of Edward the Confessor?



William, Duke of Normandy



Harold Godwinson



Harald Hardrada

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Harold Godwinson was crowned on 6th January 1066, and became **King Harold II**.



**William, Duke
of Normandy**



**Harold
Godwinson**



**Harald
Hardrada**

How would you have felt if you were one of the other two men? What would you have done?



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William, Duke
of Normandy

Harald Hardrada and William, Duke of Normandy were far from happy with this decision, and both decided to invade England and take the throne for themselves.



Harald
Hardrada

King Harold was well aware of the possibility that both men would attack.



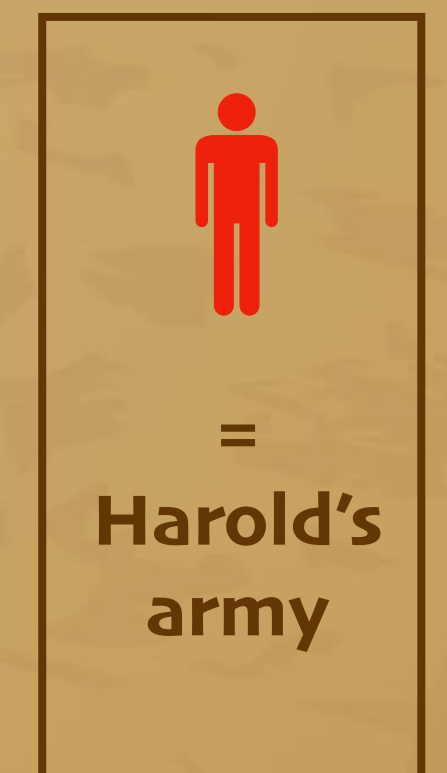
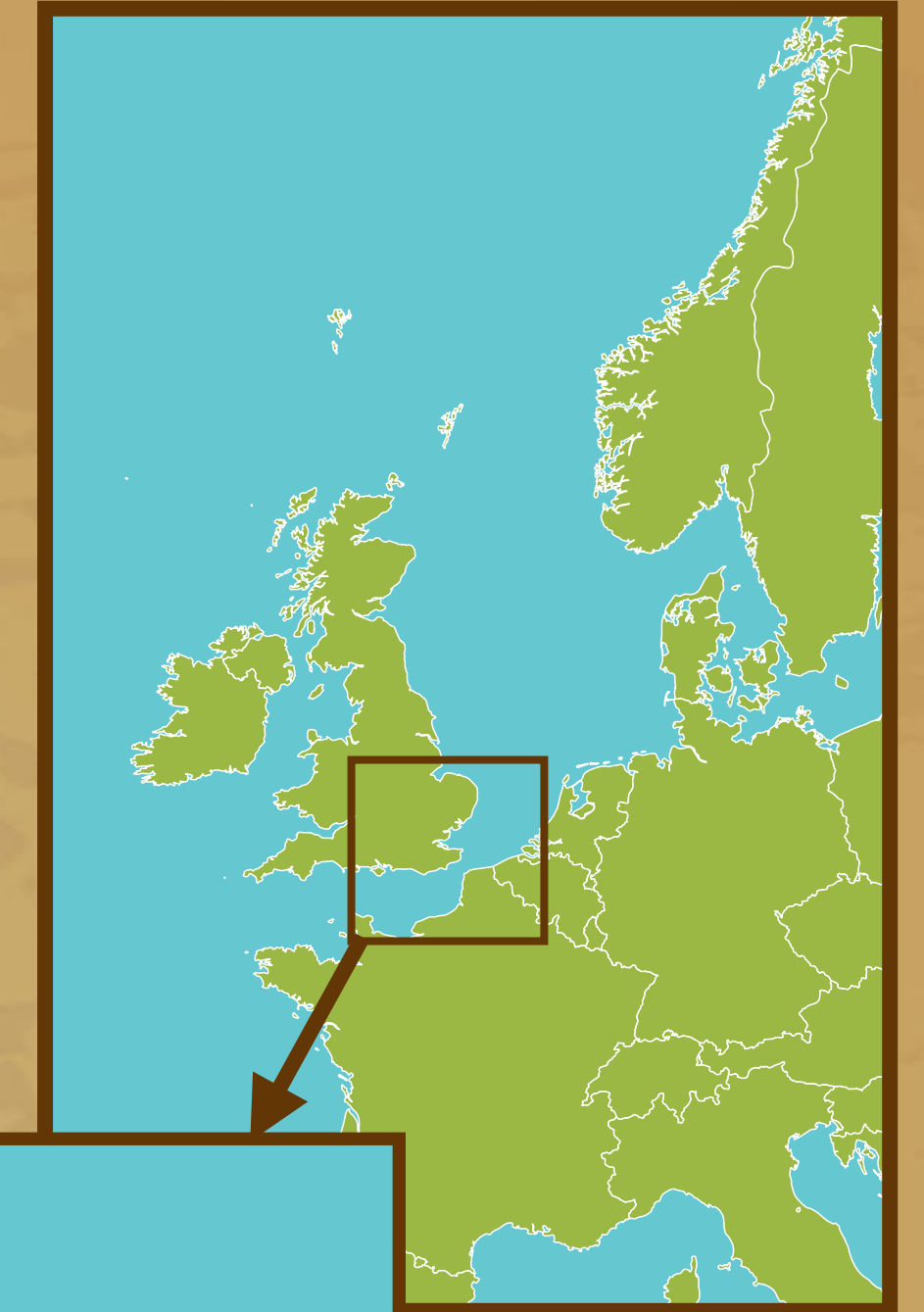
If you were Harold, what would **you** have done?
Which man would you have seen as the **biggest threat**?

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King Harold thought that William, Duke of Normandy was the biggest threat, and so positioned his army on the south coast of England, ready for an attack from Normandy.

He waited all summer. No attack came. Eventually, in September, with supplies running out, he had to let his army go home. However, not long after this, King Harold heard news of an invasion...



Who do you think it was?

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Hardrada and King Harold's brother, Tostig, had landed on the north-east coast of England and captured the city of **York**. They had demanded supplies and hostages, whilst they camped in the nearby village of **Stamford Bridge**.

When King Harold heard about this, he had a decision to make - stay and wait for the Duke of Normandy to invade, or go and fight off the Viking king.



What would you have done?

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King Harold made a decision – he and his army travelled the 185 miles from **London to Stamford Bridge** in just four days. He caught the Viking king and his men by surprise. (Remember – they were expecting supplies and hostages, not a battle just yet!)



What do you think happened?

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When King Harold arrived on 25th September, the Vikings were not ready for a fight. Many did not have their armour on, and they were spread across both sides of the bridge. A fierce fight began. Eventually, both Hardrada and Tostig were killed. It is said that the Viking king was killed by an arrow in his throat.



This is an artist's impression of the Battle of Stamford Bridge.
Can you tell the difference between the Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons?
Can you identify Harald Hardrada?

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King Harold had secured a huge victory. Out of the 300 Viking ships that sailed to England, only 24 were needed to sail the remaining survivors back to Norway. However, although King Harold had won, he had lost a third of his men, and they were exhausted after the extremely long march and intense battle.



How do you think King Harold and his men felt?



How do you think the remaining defeated Vikings felt?

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However, only a few days later, King Harold heard the news that on 28th September, William, Duke of Normandy had landed in **Pevensey Bay** on the south coast of England with his army. Harold and his men were still in the north of England.

If you were Harold, what would you be thinking and feeling?



What would you do now?

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King Harold began to march back down south with his exhausted army. Along the way, he left behind some of his men who could not keep up. He tried to surprise William as he had done with the Vikings, but the Normans saw his army approaching. On 14th October, King Harold took up a defensive position on top of Senlac Hill near the town of Hastings. The battle was about to begin...



Why do you think Harold chose a hill as a defensive position?

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Before the battle begins, let's have a look at both Harold and William's armies...

There are no accurate figures of the number of soldiers who took part in the Battle of Hastings. Historians have had to make estimates:

Harold's army  = 5,000 - 13,000 men

This army will have been made up of:

- **Housecarls** (well-trained, experienced fighters who were full-time members of the army)
- **Fyrd** (untrained peasants who were called up to defend their king and country)

William's army  = 7,000 - 12,000 men

This army will have been made up of:

- **Infantry** (well-trained, experienced men who fought on foot)
- **Cavalry** (highly trained fighters who rode warhorses)
- **Archers** (men skilled with a bow and arrow)

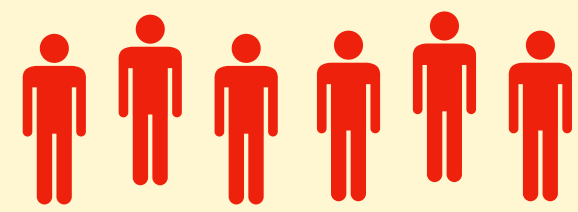
Who do **you** think has the best army?

Think, pair, then share your opinions.

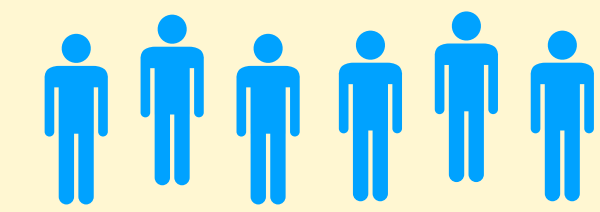
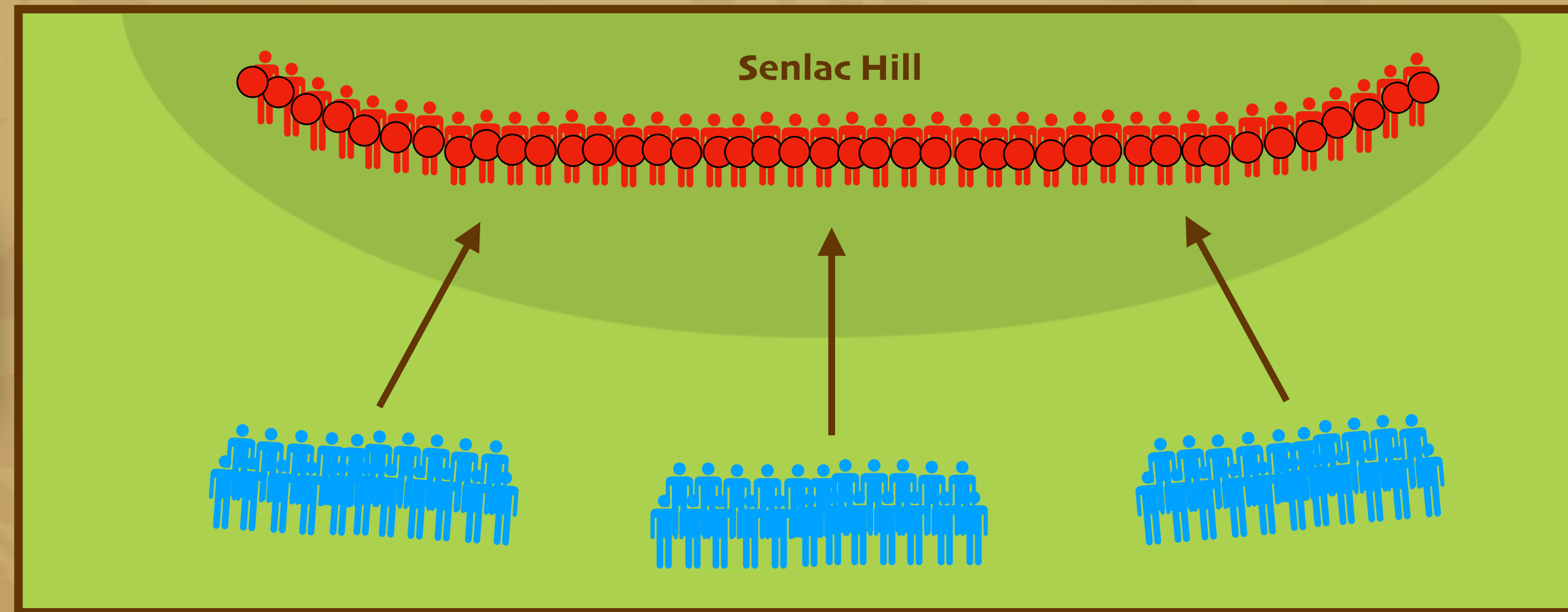
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On top of Senlac Hill, Harold's army made a **shield wall** (a wall of shields held by soldiers standing close together). William ordered his **archers** to fire, but the shield wall prevented any damage. He also sent his **infantry** up the hill to attack, but it was hard to charge uphill, and they were forced back down by the shield wall. A rumour began to spread among the Normans that William was dead, and some of his soldiers began to retreat. William had to take off his helmet to show his men he was still alive.



Harold's army



William's army

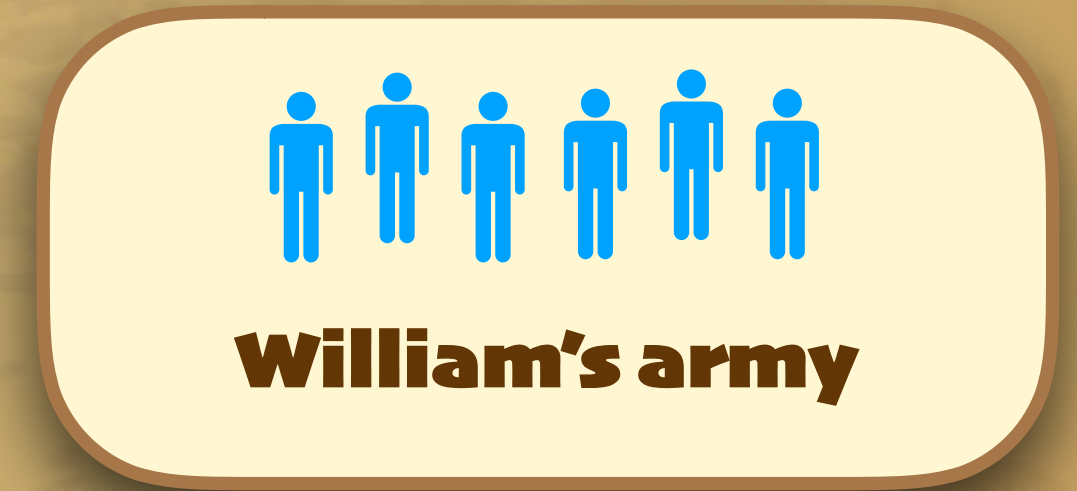
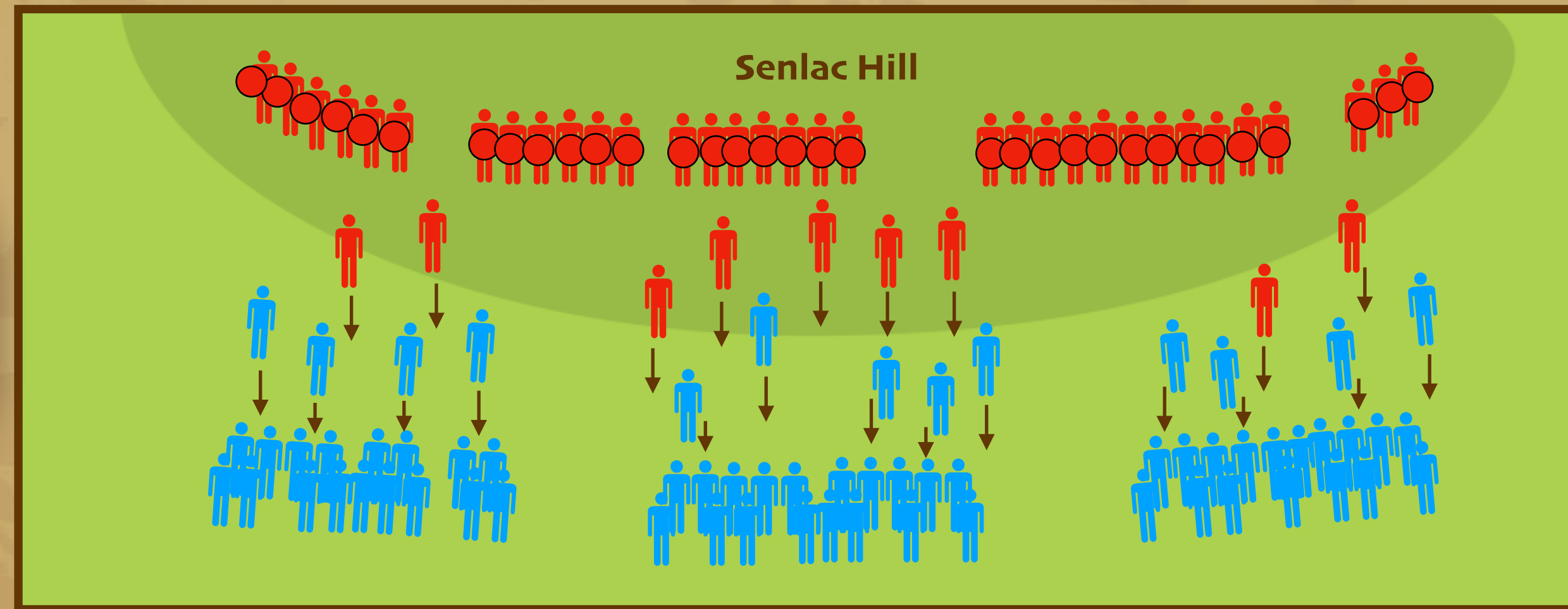
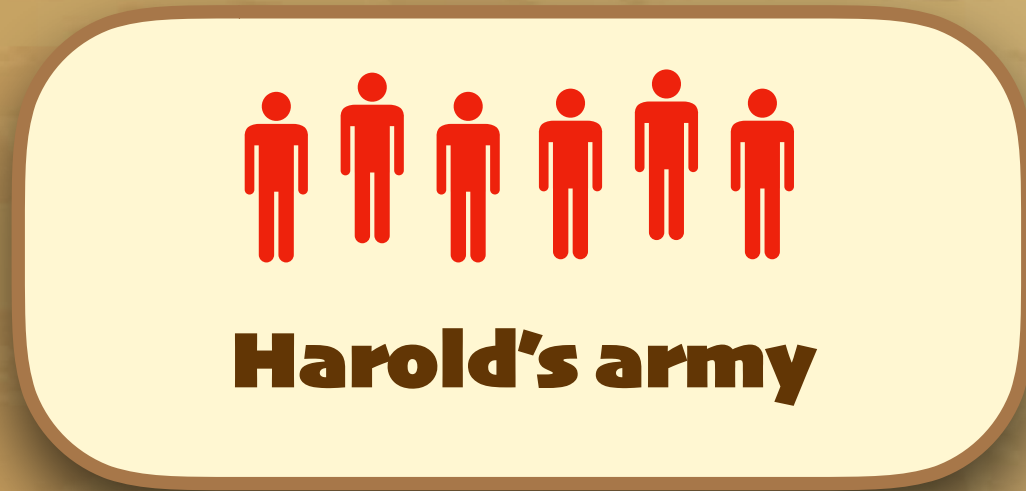
How do you think **Harold** was feeling right now? Why?

How do you think **William** was feeling right now? Why?

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William tried a different tactic - he sent his **cavalry** up the hill to Harold's army, but then made them **feign** a retreat (pretend they felt defeated and run away). This made some of the less-experienced men in Harold's army break away from the shield wall and run after the Normans to attack them. William repeated this trick two more times. By then, Harold's shield wall had large gaps in it, allowing the Normans to attack more easily.



How do you think **Harold** was feeling right now? Why?

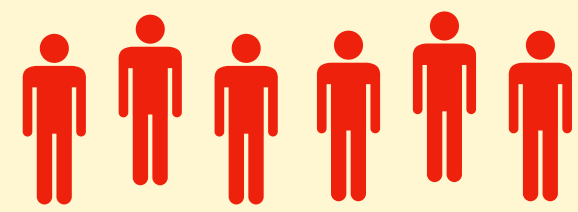


How do you think **William** was feeling right now? Why?

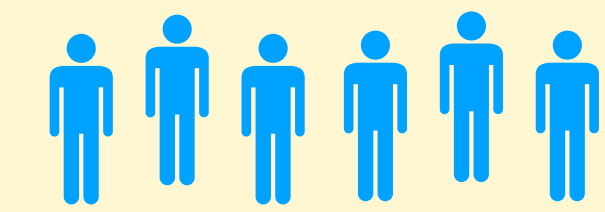
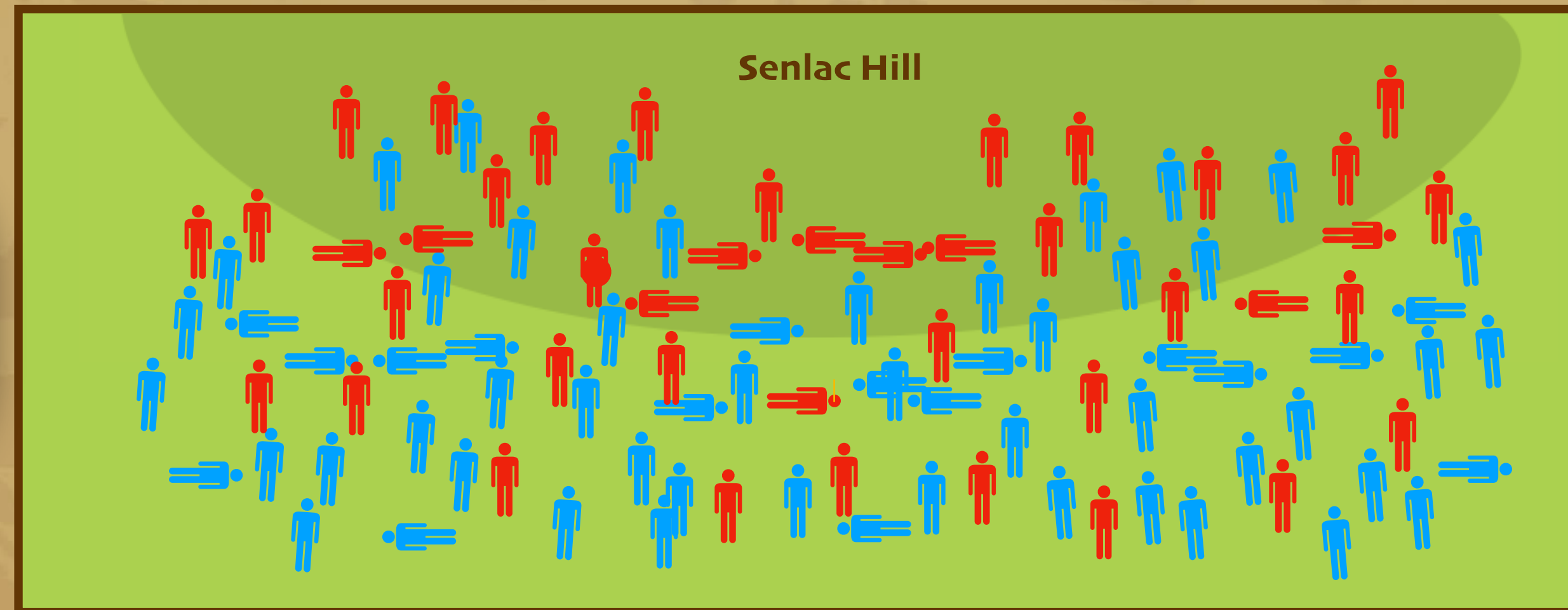
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By the late afternoon, Harold's shield wall had broken down, and he was fighting on foot alongside his men. They had been fighting for several hours. Then, disaster struck for the English army – Harold was killed. No one can know for sure, but it has been said that he was hit by an arrow which pierced his eye. Once they heard of their king's death, the rest of the English army fled or were killed.



Harold's army



William's army

**William, Duke of Normandy,
had won the Battle of Hastings.**

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William's victory changed the course of history. It was the end of the Anglo-Saxon rule, and the beginning of **Norman England**.



This is an artist's impression of the moment when King Harold was killed.

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Now it is time to see what you
have learnt about these
important events in history!



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Plenary:



Imagine you are an Anglo-Saxon living in England. You have just heard the news that King Harold II has been killed by William, Duke of Normandy, who is now claiming the throne of England for himself.

**How do you feel? What do you think might happen now?
Explain your answers.**

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