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William the Conqueror



*c.*1027–1087

the first Norman King of England



I was 8 years old when my father died. My life was in danger and I had to learn to fight. When I invaded England, I was a very brave man. I conquered the whole country and kept it safe from attacks.



I was from Normandy in the north of France and my father was the Duke of Normandy. When my father died in 1035, the barons of Normandy didn't want me to rule because I was only 8 years old. Many barons wanted to kill me. For ten years, my life was in danger. Finally, in 1045, I began to rule Normandy with the help of some priests.

But a lot of barons were still against me. In 1047, a group of them tried to capture me, but I was able to escape during the night. I rode my horse to Poissy

to meet King Henry the First of France. ‘A rebellion against me will be the start of a rebellion against you,’ I said. The King’s army helped me to fight. We won a battle against the barons. After that, I fought many other battles. I conquered more land and I had a big army of soldiers.

I visited England and met King Edward. He had a lot of enemies – people who fought against him – and I had a strong army, so I offered him my help. He didn’t have any children, so he offered me the English throne in return for my help.

I also met Harold of Wessex, an English nobleman, who was captured in France. I talked to the King of France and asked him to free Harold. Then I met Harold and told him, ‘King Edward promised me the English throne.’ Harold was happy because he was free. He said, ‘I’ll help you to become King.’ But when King Edward died on 5th January 1066, Harold broke his promise and named himself King. I was surprised. I was Norman, but the English throne was mine!



Now it was time to prepare for another fight. I wanted to invade England and I had to plan my attack. I spent a lot of money on hundreds of new ships. I also trained a very large army of soldiers. In September 1066, my ships and soldiers were ready. We sailed across the English Channel on 27th September. The waves were high, but

the winds were blowing in the right direction. It was a very dangerous journey and we arrived at Pevensey Bay in the south of England on 28th September.

When we arrived in England, King Harold and his army were in the north. They were fighting other battles there. The King had other enemies – other people wanted the English throne too!

We got off our ships and waited. While King Harold and his army were quickly marching south, we were having a good rest. When the King arrived at Hastings to fight against us, many of his soldiers were tired and injured. After a good rest, my soldiers and I were strong, healthy and ready for battle.

It was 14th October 1066. King Harold and his army were in a better position because they were at the top of a hill. But they made a mistake when they decided to come down the hill to fight. Soon, we were in control and King Harold was killed. I became the new King of England on 25th December 1066.



My new job wasn't easy. I wasn't very popular among the English people and I had to stop several small rebellions. And I still had to conquer the rest of the country.

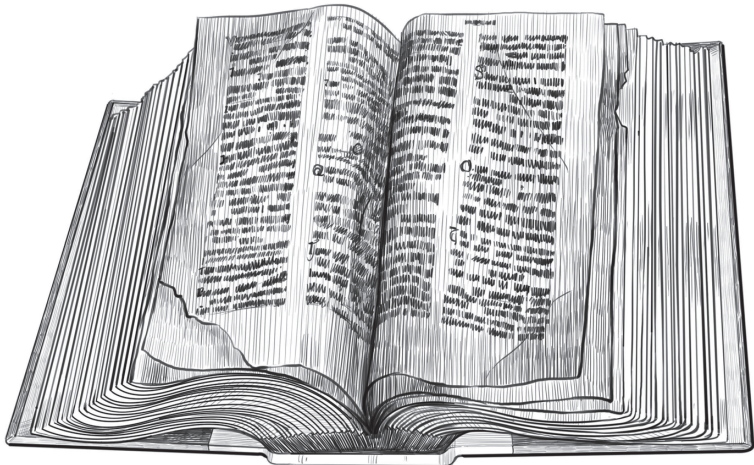
First, I took control of Dover, a port in the south, and London. I decided to rule England from London. I needed a castle to protect my position, so we began to build The Tower of London. Then, I asked my brothers

to rule my new land and I went back to Normandy to see my family.

When I returned to England, I conquered the west and then, the north. In 1072, the whole country was mine!

Soon there was a new way of life in England. There were Norman laws and there was a new language – French. The Normans became the rulers. I gave them lands, and the English people worked in their lands. I built a lot of castles across the country. I needed them to protect the country against invaders. I also asked my people to collect information on the number of people in England and the farms and animals that they had. All this information was written in the *Domesday Book* in 1085.

I died in Normandy in 1087. The next two Kings of England, William the Second and Henry the First, were my sons.



The Life of William the Conqueror

- c.1027 William was born in Normandy, France. He was the son of the Duke of Normandy.
- 1035 His father died. He became the Duke of Normandy. He was 8 years old.
- 1045 He began to rule Normandy with the help of some priests.
- 1053 He married Matilda of Flanders. They later had around nine children.
- 1064 King Edward promised him the English throne.
- 1066 King Edward died. Harold of Essex became King. William decided to invade England. William and Harold's armies met in the Battle of Hastings. King Harold was killed and William became King of England.
- 1067 He asked his brothers to rule England and returned to Normandy.
- 1068 Matilda became Queen of England.
- 1069 The King of Denmark invaded England. William stopped the invasion.
- 1071 William stopped a local rebellion.
- 1072 William invaded Scotland.

Amazing Leaders

- 1083 William's wife became ill and died.
- 1085 William collected information about the people and places in England. It was written in the *Domesday Book*. It's the oldest legal document in Britain.
- 1087 William died in France. He was 60 years old.

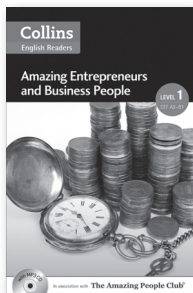
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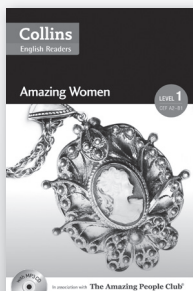
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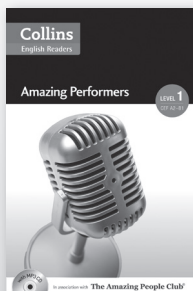
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