

THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND THE EPOCH OF FEUDALISM IN ENGLAND

OBJECTIVES

This unit provides an outline of the history of England from the Norman conquest to the end of medieval order (1066 – 1485).

IN THIS UNIT, YOU WILL LEARN

- how the functions among English, Latin and French were distributed in Medieval England;
- about the collapse of English feudalism and the triumph of the English tongue;
- what kind of changes occurred at the end of the Middle Ages in England.

OUTLINE

- William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings.
- England as a trilingual country.
- The Great Charter and the first Parliament.
- The Black Death and the decline of French.
- Peasantry revolts.
- The Wars of the Roses.



RECOMMENDED READING

Textbooks

Башманівський О. Л., Вигівський В. Л., Моркотун С. Б. Лінгвокраїнознавство. Житомир : Вид-во ЖДУ ім. І. Франка, 2018. С. 10-13
McDowall D. An Illustrated History of Britain. Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex : Longman, 2006. P. 23-56.

Dictionaries

Online Etymology Dictionary. Douglas Harper, 2001-2021. URL : <http://ewave-atlas.org/languages> (дата звернення: 13.04. 2020).

Internet Resources

The Normans. Men from the North. Episode 1/3. BBC Documentary. 2021. URL : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUdgmрUHaHo> (дата звернення: 1.06. 2021).

The Royal Artists: Holbein, Eye of the Tudors (Art History Documentary). Perspective. 2020. URL : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWGvPjNPo1U> (дата звернення: 1.06. 2021).

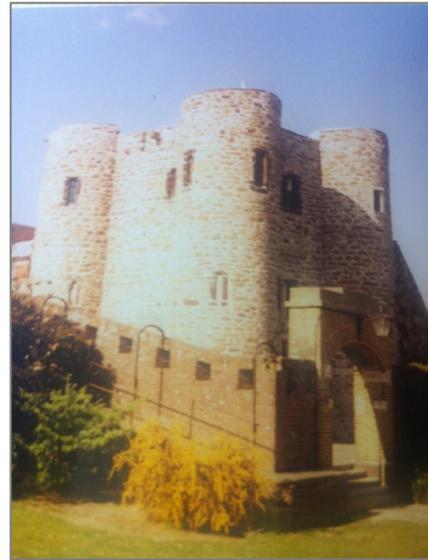


SYNOPSIS

The year of 1066 was a decisive external event for the history of England and the English language. A French-speaking dynasty came to the throne through military conquest, **the Norman conquest**. On October 14th Duke William of Normandy attacked the English forces laying Harold, Earl of Essex, and many members of the English nobility dead.



**The remains of Hastings castle,
East Sussex in the south of
England**



**Ypres Tower, Rye,
East Sussex in the south of England**

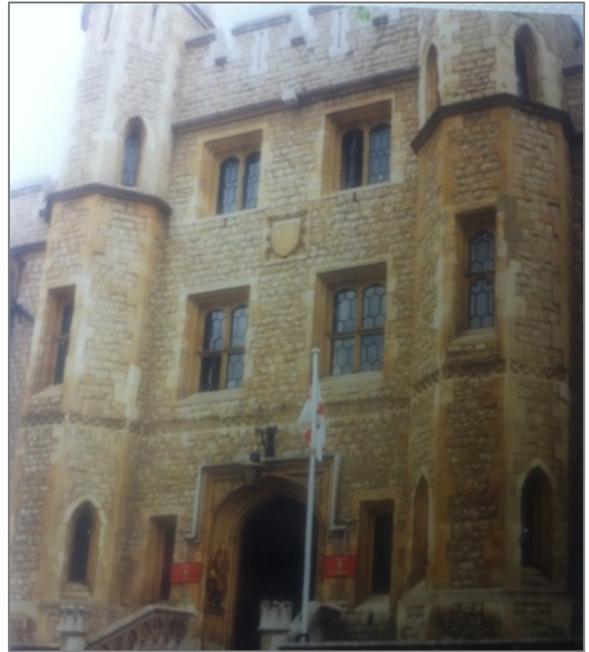
A few days after the battle of Hastings (September 1066) William the Conqueror ordered the fortification to be built as a mottle-and-bailey castle near the sea. The castle was rebuilt in stone in 1077.

In 1249, by the permission of Henry III Rye castle was built as the fortification against the frequent raids by the French. The Ypres Tower is considered to have been built in the early 14th century as a part of the town's defence.

Photos: Tetyana Kozlova (Sussex, England, 1997)

Tower of London

Built by William the Conqueror in 1066 as a timber fortification, the Tower of London was started with the White Tower, its strongest point military, to keep down the Anglo-Saxons and provide accommodation for the king and his representatives.



White Tower

Photos: Tetyana Kozlova (London, England, 1997)

One of the consequences of the Norman invasion was the so called ‘**Norman yoke**’. The introduction of a foreign French culture may be viewed in terms of decline, even threat to the native Anglo-Saxon one. For a number of reasons, the Norman epoch was a gloomy age of despotism in the history of England:

- the introduction of a new nobility and the delegation of power to the French-speaking lords who displaced the English nobles and dispossessed them of their estates;
- the imposition of a systematic feudalism based on tenancy of land as it was the king who owned the land;
- the Compilation of **the Domesday Book** (1086) that provided a detailed account of every **manor** and **fief**, their size, amount of value, and the number of **villeins**;
- administration of private courts in shires, and the absence of Common Law to the whole England;
- the absence of Parliament and no concentration of power in one place as William distributed estates in different parts of the country;
- the replacement of English Church chief officers by the Norman clergymen;
- the building of the **Tower of London** and other great castles for keeping down the English;

- the establishment of connections with the French court as the kings of England who ruled until the beginning of the 13th century simultaneously enjoyed their dukedom of Normandy;

- the attraction of English nobility to France where they spent much time being involved in business or military affairs, enjoyed the European luxury of tournaments, arts and learning;

- extreme poverty of the villeins.

The very few contributions of the Norman rule included the absence of unemployment, acceleration of building and enrichment of modest churches with carvings and stained glass windows. Apart from that, there were monasteries that managed to support learning.

The period of the French rule resulted in bitter rivalry between the English and the French. Later it also gave way to patriotism and the idea of Englishness.

Another consequence of the Norman conquest in England was its important impact on the linguistic situation in England and development of Modern English. That is mainly seen in the following:

- the enhancement of French for 300 years (the 11th – the 13th centuries);

- non-hostile attitude of the Normans to the English language and the establishment of English-French bilingualism by the 12th century;

- a continuous use of French as a means of everyday intercourse, in law courts, and in the army by the members of the Norman higher and middle classes (beyond the 12th century) and by the Englishmen interacting with the Normans under similar circumstances;

- the use of French as the language of literature;

- the fusion of the Normans and English in mixed marriages; creation of natural setting for the growth of French-English bilingualism and incorporation of the Norman French culture into the Anglo-Saxon cultural environment (for instance, French names given to children in English families);

- regular use of spoken English by the English on all occasions and sporadically by the members of the Norman middle class in the course of interaction with the English, for instance, by the members of an occupational group mediating between the English labourers and their Norman lords - **latimers** (c1200 < late OE *latimer* “interpreter” < OF *latimier*, a corruption of *latinier* (L. *latinarius*) “an interpreter, a speaker of Latin”);

- the growing prestige of French and the decline of English in the bilingual environment where equal competence in two languages was an exception rather than a rule;

- the adoption of French words into the English vocabulary which in particular cases could be treated in terms of social discrimination; Cf. the Anglo-Saxon words used to refer to the livestock grown in the fields by Anglo-Saxons villeins (*cow* < OE *cu* “a cow”, *swine* < OE *swin* “a pig, hog, wild boar” and *pig* < OE *picg* “a young pig”, *sheep* < OE *sceap*, *scep* “a ruminant mammal”, *calf* < OE *cealf* “a young cow”) and French loans applied to the flesh of those animals as it was carried to the manor house to feast a Norman nobleman (*beef* c1300 “an ox, bull, or cow; also the flesh of one when killed, used as food” < OFr *buef* “an ox; beef; ox hide”, *pork* c1300 “flesh of a pig as food” < OFr *porc* “a pig, swine, or boar”, *mutton* late 13th century “flesh of sheep used as food” < OFr *moton* “mutton; ram, wether, sheep”), *veal* late 14th century “calf meat as food” < Anglo-French *vel*, OFr *veel* “a calf”);

- the adoption of French words associated with new masters (*duc* “duke”, *countess* “countess”, *curt* “court”) and social conflict (*werre* “war”, *pais* “peace”), though not necessarily with concepts unknown or unusual to the English (e.g. *faith* < mid-13th century, *faith*, *faith*, *fei*, *fai* “faithfulness, trust or promise; loyalty to a person; honesty, truthfulness” < Anglo-French, OF *feid*, *foi* “faith, belief, trust, confidence; pledge”).

To sum up, England soon became a trilingual country where French was employed by the government and the nobility, Latin was the language of education, registration and religion, and English was spoken by the common Anglo-Saxons and served as a medium of daily communication.

The collapse of English feudalism was marked by the adoption of **Magna Carta**, or **the Great Charter** (1215), when the barons forced King John to sign the document they compiled in order to check the despotic power of the king and to acquire more privileges for the aristocracy and Church, not for the majority of the English people, the villeins.

The rudimentary parliament (1264) grew out of **the Great Council**. With no legislative or executive power, it consisted of lords and just debated state affairs (*parliament* < c1300 “consultation; formal conference, assembly” < OFr *parlement* (the 11th century) “a speaking, talk” < *parler* “to speak”). The Parliament also controlled the treasury and forced Henry III to get rid of his foreign advisers. Not before 1265 did ambitious **Simon de Montfort**, Earl of Leicester, summoned the first **Parliament** that for the first included the Lords (i.e. the super-rich) and the Commons (i.e. ordinary people like knights and burgesses). In 1275 King Edward I commanded shires and boroughs (towns) to send two representatives to his parliament. In the course of the 14th century the

Parliament took its present shape. From 1544 the collective name **the Houses of Parliament** united two Chambers (*chamber* c1400 “a legislative body” < c1200 “room” < OFr *chamber* “room, chamber, apartment”) – **the Chamber of Lords** and **the Chamber of Commons**.

The terrible plague, **the Black Death** (1348–1349) badly affected life in Britain:

- several natural disasters (plagues) before the Black death had killed sheep and other cultivated animals;
- there were years of famine as the land had been over-used in the strive to feed the growing population (by 1300);
- whole villages and some towns either disappeared or were almost deserted;
- land production catastrophically shrank;
- the population was reduced from 4 million to almost 2 million and it took until the 17th century before the population reached four million again;
- freemen demanded higher wages and villeins wanted freedom;
- the number of French teachers drastically fell and schools started switching to English making it the medium of instruction in almost every school by 1385; in the 15th century the popularity of French in private correspondence declined.

By the middle of the 15th century, not only did the English language emerge victoriously in both spoken and written types of interlocution, but it also foreshadowed the importance of Latin. The middle of the 15th century is marked by the re-emergence of **written English standard** which had no spoken correlate.

During 1337 – 1453 there was a series of conflicts with France, **the Hundred Years’ War**, waged by the House of **Plantagenet** (/plæn'tædʒɪnɪt/). It stimulated social and economic unrest, tremendous rise of taxes and led to **the Peasants’ Revolt**, 1381. **Wat Tyler**, the leader of the Kentish rebels, threatened King Richard II and demanded fair treatment of poor people.



**A crowned Tudor Rose,
the west side of King's College
Chapel**



**The King's college
of Our Lady and St. Nicholas
in the University of Cambridge, England**

The King's College of Our Lady and St. Nicholas was founded by King Henry VI who laid the first stone of *Collegio roial of Oure Lady and Seynt Nicholas* on Passion Sunday, 1441. The King's college chapel was started under Henry's patronage and was built in stages (1446 – 1515). Its story is closely intertwined with the Wars of the Roses



**Bridge of Sighs, St John's College, Cambridge
University
(Traditional punting on the river Cam in
Cambridge)**

Photos: Tetyana Kozlova (Cambridge, England, 1997)

The Hundred Years' War in France was over to be followed by the claimant for the English throne between 1455 and 1487, known as **the Wars of the Roses**. There were not more than sixty noble families controlling England in the middle of the 15th century. The nobility were divided by their loyalty to Henry VI, **the Lancastrians**, and the duke of York, **the Yorkists**. The conflict was resolved by the union of Lancaster and York when Henry VII married Edward IV's daughter Elizabeth. The reconciliation of the noble families was symbolized by **the Red and the White Rose of the House of Tudor, or the double Tudor Rose**.

The year of 1485 has been taken to mark the end of the Middle Ages in England.



SELF-STUDY INSTRUCTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Reading for this session on your own or partly alone, **it is important to give attention to the following issues.**

- In Middle English, the word *manor* was applied to the district including a manor house built apart from the village where the peasants lived.
- Manors were held by lords with certain rights and privileges in medieval England.
- Another type of property was referred to as *fief* which denoted the land held by a vassal of a lord for stipulated military service.
- The term *villein* was used to mean a serf with more rights than slaves, although tied to the land (see the picture of *Tamworth Castle* in Tamworth, Staffordshire, England at <http://www.castlesandmanorhouses.com/photos-england.htm>).



Assignment 4. Compile a list of the key terms. Add definitions in English and terminological equivalents in Ukrainian.



Assignment 5. Design a task or a test for the secondary school pupils. Focus on the topic *The Norman conquest and the epoch of feudalism in England*. Take into account the level of secondary education and the English language proficiency level (see CEFR).