THEBAYEUXTAPESTRY.COM

Scene-Spotting Guide

A free 24-page activity booklet for schools and families



Short descriptions of all 58 scenes

Space for notes and observations

KS2-friendly activities and glossary

This book belongs to:

.....

Suitable for Key Stage 2

Free to print and copy within your school

How to Use This Booklet

Look first. Then make the booklet your own.

This is an observation companion, not a picture book.

Each entry gives a short description of one of the Bayeux Tapestry's 58 scenes, a box to tick when you have found it, and space for your own notes. The scene images are deliberately not reproduced on these pages.

1

At a museum or exhibition

Take the booklet with you while viewing the real Tapestry, a reproduction, or a travelling display. Find each scene, tick it off, and record what catches your eye.

2

Alongside a book

Use the booklet beside a book containing photographs of the Tapestry. The short descriptions help you locate each scene while the note space lets you make your own observations.

3

Online or in the classroom

Use thebayeuxtapestry.com or another trusted image source to explore the scenes on screen, then discuss what you notice and what questions the embroidery raises.

Useful tip

Do not try to write everything. A few words about a face, gesture, animal, border detail, colour, weapon, ship or building can be enough to remind you what you noticed later.

Suitable for Key Stage 2. Free to print and copy within your school.

A Note for Teachers

A flexible companion for Key Stage 2 history

Where it fits

This booklet is suitable for Key Stage 2 history, particularly work on Anglo-Saxon England, Edward the Confessor, the events of 1066 and the transition to Norman rule. It can be used before or during a museum visit, alongside a classroom topic, or with a book or website showing the Tapestry.

The emphasis is observation.

The descriptions tell pupils what scene to look for, but the blank note space is there for what they notice for themselves.

Ideas for using it

- Choose six scenes for a focused museum visit rather than trying to complete all 58 at once.
- Ask pupils to record one visual detail and one question for each chosen scene.
- Compare two pupils' notes afterwards. Did they notice the same things?
- Use the final Scene 59 activity to discuss how historians distinguish evidence from imagination.
- Free to copy and distribute within your school.

Who's Who

Meet four key figures in the story of 1066



Harold Godwinson

Earl of Wessex, later King of England

Harold was the most powerful nobleman in England. After Edward's death, the English nobles chose him as king. Years earlier he had sworn a solemn oath while in Normandy, an oath the Normans later used in support of William's claim. Harold defeated a Viking invasion at Stamford Bridge before facing William at Hastings on 14 October 1066.



King Edward

King of England, 1042-1066

Edward the Confessor ruled England for more than twenty years and was closely associated with Westminster Abbey. He and Queen Edith had no children. When Edward died in January 1066, the question of who should succeed him became central to the crisis that followed.

Who's Who

Meet four key figures in the story of 1066



William

Duke of Normandy, later King of England

William became Duke of Normandy as a child and grew into a formidable ruler. He believed he had a claim to the English throne. After Harold became king, William built an invasion fleet, crossed the Channel and defeated Harold at Hastings. He was crowned King of England on Christmas Day 1066.



Bishop Odo

Bishop of Bayeux, William's half-brother

Odo was William's younger half-brother and Bishop of Bayeux. He appears prominently in the Tapestry and is shown rallying Norman troops at Hastings. He has often been suggested as a possible commissioner of the embroidery, although the identity of the commissioner is not known for certain.

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 1 to 6 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

1 King Edward

Old King Edward on his throne, talks quietly with Harold, setting the whole story in motion.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

2 Harold Rides to Bosham

Harold rides for the coast, hawk perched on his wrist, hounds running on ahead.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

3 Bosham Church

Harold prays for safe passage, then feasts in the hall, before boarding his ship.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

4 Harold Sets Sail

Men wade out to the ships, tunics hitched up high, and set off for France.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

5 Lands in Ponthieu

Harold's ship goes off course, landing in the wrong territory, that of Count Guy.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

6 Harold Ashore

Harold steps onto the beach, still clutching his hawk. Armed men are waiting.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 7 to 12 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

7 Guy Seizes Harold

Count Guy takes his prisoner, England's most powerful earl, a remarkable stroke of luck.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

8 Taken to Beaurain

Guy leads Harold inland, to his own stronghold. A rider glances back.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

9 Harold and Guy Talk

The two men sit and talk, likely discussing a ransom. Guy holds his sword upright.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

10 William's Messengers Arrive

William's messengers reach Guy's court, demanding Harold's release. The mysterious Turold holds their horses. ■

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

11 Messengers Ride Fast

A dramatic flashback scene, messengers gallop at full speed, hair and trees streaming behind.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

12 News Reaches William

William hears of the capture, seated on his throne, his first appearance in the story.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 13 to 18 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

13 Guy Delivers Harold to William

Guy hands Harold over, pointing back at his prisoner, like passing over a parcel.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

14 Arrival at the Palace

William and Harold arrive together, at the ducal palace. Harold gestures as he speaks.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

15 The Mysterious Ælfgyva

A priest touches a woman's face, the caption trails off unexplained. Still a mystery today.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

16 March to Mont-Saint-Michel

William marches his army out, Harold rides along too, passing the famous island abbey.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

17 Crossing the Quicksand

Soldiers blunder into quicksand. Harold hauls two men free, a genuine moment of heroism.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

18 Conan Flees Dol

The Normans reach the town, Conan of Brittany flees, escaping down a rope.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 19 to 24 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

19 Attack on Dinan

Cavalry storm the castle, attackers hold flaming torches, to the timber walls.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

20 Conan Surrenders the Keys

Conan finally gives up, passing over the town's keys, on the tip of a lance.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

21 William Arms Harold

William presents Harold with arms, helmet, sword and armour, a gift that quietly binds him.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

22 Arrival at Bayeux

The company reaches Bayeux, Harold still travelling with William, Bishop Odo's own home city. ■

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

23 Harold's Oath

Harold swears a sacred oath, one hand on each relic box, the pivotal scene of the story.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

24 Harold Returns to England

Harold sails for home, released at last. A lookout watches from the cliff.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 25 to 30 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

25 Harold Reports to Edward

Harold stands before the king, Edward raises a lecturing finger. No words are recorded.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

26 Edward's Funeral Procession

The king's body is carried, towards the new abbey, a workman still finishing the roof.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

27 Edward's Deathbed

The dying king reaches out, touching the hand of Harold. His wife Edith weeps nearby.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

28 The King Has Died

Edward's body is prepared, shown just below his deathbed, a living king above, a dead one below.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

29 Harold Offered the Crown

Nobles offer Harold the crown, along with a royal axe. The coronation follows almost at once.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

30 Harold Enthroned

Harold sits crowned in majesty, orb and sceptre in hand, a king for just 282 days.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 31 to 36 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

31

Archbishop Stigand

The controversial archbishop stands by, excommunicated by five different popes, casting doubt on the coronation.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

32

Halley's Comet

A blazing comet streaks overhead, seen as a terrible omen, one of the earliest images of it.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

33

Harold Told of the Comet

A messenger brings the news, Harold twists nervously on his throne, ghostly ships float in the border.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

34

English Ship Brings News

A single ship crosses the sea, carrying news to Normandy. Harold has taken the crown. ■

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

35

William Orders Ships Built

William gives the order, to build an invasion fleet, Bishop Odo advising at his side.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

36

Ships Hauled to Sea

Finished ships are dragged, down to the water, using ropes and log rollers.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 37 to 42 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

37 Loading Arms and Wine

Men carry weapons to the ships, mail shirts slung on poles, and a huge barrel of wine.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

38 The Fleet Sets Sail

The invasion fleet crosses overnight, decks packed with men and horses, landing unopposed at Pevensey.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

39 Horses Unloaded

Warhorses leap from the ships, splashing ashore onto the beach, a difficult and risky undertaking.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

40 Soldiers Seize Food

Knights ride out to forage, stripping the local countryside, deliberately provoking Harold to march.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

41 Here Is Wadard

A named figure appears, supervising the foraging party, later traced in the Domesday Book.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

42 Cooking the Feast

An open-air camp kitchen, meat cooked over the flames, shields used as a makeshift table.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 43 to 48 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

43 The Feast and Blessing

Bishop Odo blesses the meal, seated at the table's centre, posed just like the Last Supper.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

44 Odo, William and Robert

The war council gathers, William flanked by two brothers, three sons of one mother.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

45 Digging the Castle at Hastings

Labourers pile up an earth mound, building a castle in days. Two workmen brawl with their shovels.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

46 William Hears of Harold

A scout brings urgent news, Harold's army is close, after a brutal forced march south. ■

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

47 A House Set on Fire

A house is put to the torch, a mother flees with her child, the tapestry's only civilian scene.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

48 Riding Out to Battle

Norman knights ride out, lances raised, gathering speed. Harold is still called king here.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 49 to 54 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

49 William Asks Vital for News

William questions a scout, asking if he has seen Harold. A third mystery cameo appears.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

50 Harold Warned of William

An English scout reports back, matching news for King Harold. Both sides know the fight is close.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

51 William Addresses His Troops

William gives his famous speech, telling his men to fight, bravely and wisely, he says.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

52 Death of Leofwine and Gyrth

Harold's own brothers fall, fighting with axe and spear, three brothers lost in one day.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

53 English and French Fall Together

Chaos grips the battle, horses tumble into a ditch. Both sides fall together, says the text.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

54 Odo Rallies the Troops

A rumour spreads that William is dead. Bishop Odo charges forward, rallying the wavering young soldiers.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

Scene-Spotting Guide

Scenes 55 to 58 - look at the real image, then write what you notice

55 William Lifts His Helmet

William proves he still lives, tipping back his helmet, showing his bare face to the army.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

56 Count Eustace and the Banner

Count Eustace points to William, holding aloft a banner, possibly blessed by the pope himself.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

57 Death of Harold

The most famous image in English history, an arrow, a sword, one king. Exactly what happened is still debated.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

58 The English Flee

The English army breaks and scatters, pursued into the gathering dusk. And here the tapestry simply stops.

spotted ☐

My notes / observations:

The Missing Scene 59

What happened to the ending?

The Bayeux Tapestry, as it survives today, ends abruptly. The last scene shows the English army breaking and fleeing after the Battle of Hastings, and then the linen simply stops, its story cut short. For an embroidery that otherwise tells its tale so completely, this has puzzled historians for centuries.

Nobody knows for certain why the ending is missing. It may have been damaged and lost through ordinary wear over the centuries, the outer edges of old textiles are usually the first parts to suffer. It may have been deliberately cut away at some point in its long history, though no record survives of when or why. What we do know is that the tapestry was probably always meant to be longer. By comparing the surviving length with the pacing of the story so far, and with the way the tapestry opens, historians estimate that somewhere between one and six metres are missing from the end.

The leading theory

So what would it have shown? Most historians agree on the leading theory: the coronation of William as King of England, crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066. This would create a satisfying mirror with the very first scene of the tapestry, which shows the old King Edward enthroned. Ending with William enthroned in his place would complete the story exactly as it began, one king replaced by another. It is only a theory, but it is the one most experts find the most convincing.

Historians estimate the missing length by working out roughly how much linen each scene takes up on average, then asking how many more scenes a satisfying ending would need. A coronation scene alone would likely need several metres, room for the abbey itself, the assembled nobles, and Archbishop Ealdred performing the ceremony, all in the tapestry's usual unhurried style. Not everyone agrees it stops at the coronation, though. A handful of historians have suggested the original ending went further still, showing William beginning to reward his followers with English land, the process that would reshape the whole country in the years that followed.

There is one more twist. The final caption visible today, reading roughly "and the English turned in flight", is not original at all. Early copies of the tapestry from the 1730s show no such caption in that spot, and it was most likely embroidered on by restorers around 1814, centuries after the tapestry was made. Even the ending we can see has been altered. Whatever the real final scene once showed, it has been gone for a very long time, and unless a lost fragment is ever discovered somewhere, we may never know for certain.

Next page: design your own Scene 59.

Design Your Own Scene 59

The Bayeux Tapestry ends at Scene 58, so the whole story is not finished. Can you imagine what might happen next? Use the space below to design your own extra scene for Scene 59.



My caption:

.....

.....

.....

.....



Who is in your scene?

.....



What is happening?

.....

Why did you choose this moment?

.....

The Journey South

The traditional story

Harold Godwinson defeated a Viking army at Stamford Bridge, near York, on 25 September 1066. Two days later William's fleet landed on the Sussex coast. The traditional account has Harold turning south and marching his army towards Hastings before the battle on 14 October. This exhausting journey has often been used to help explain the English defeat.

The traditional route:



Harold's overland route from Stamford Bridge to Hastings, alongside William's Channel crossing.

A New Theory Emerges

A 2026 reassessment challenges the old story

In 2026, historian Professor Tom Licence presented research suggesting that the famous forced march may not have happened entirely on foot. He argues that Harold's fleet may still have been available and that part of the army could have sailed south from the Humber towards the Thames, perhaps continuing towards Hastings. The proposal remains an interpretation rather than a certainty, but it is a useful example of how historians test familiar stories against surviving evidence.



Why this matters

History is not a fixed list of facts. New questions, better comparisons and fresh readings of old sources can change how we understand the past. The historians who make those discoveries may be sitting in classrooms today.

Glossary

Useful words for exploring the Tapestry

Housecarl

A professional, highly trained soldier who fought for the English king.

Fyrd

The English part-time army, made up of ordinary landholders called up to fight when needed.

Mail

Armour made of thousands of interlocking metal rings, worn as a knee-length shirt by knights and housecarls alike.

Shield wall

A defensive line of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder, shields overlapped, the backbone of English infantry.

Kite shield

The long, pointed shield carried by Norman cavalry, protecting the leg while riding, a shield built for mobility.

Round shield

The smaller, sturdier shield carried by English foot soldiers, built to interlock tightly and hold the shield wall firm.

Boss

The raised metal dome at the centre of a round shield, protecting the fist and doubling as a weapon to punch an opponent off balance.

Motte and bailey

A type of early castle: a mound of earth (motte) topped with a tower, next to a walled yard (bailey).

Relic

An object, often a bone, believed to have belonged to a saint. Oaths sworn on relics were considered unbreakable.

Oath

A solemn promise, often sworn on holy relics. Breaking one was considered one of the worst things a person could do.

Earl

A powerful English nobleman who governed a large region on the king's behalf. Harold was Earl of Wessex before he became king.

Duke

A powerful nobleman who ruled a duchy on behalf of a king. William was Duke of Normandy before he became King of England too.

Coronation

The ceremony crowning a new king. Both Harold and William were crowned in Westminster Abbey, less than a year apart.

Embroidery

Stitching a design onto existing cloth. The Bayeux Tapestry is technically an embroidery, not a woven tapestry.

Titulus

The short Latin caption stitched above each scene of the tapestry, naming who is who and explaining what is happening.

My Observations

Details I noticed while looking at the Tapestry

Questions and Ideas

Things I want to find out later

My Favourite Details

Sketch, describe or compare anything that caught your attention

A detail I want to remember

A question I still have

My Observations

Details I noticed while looking at the Tapestry

About This Guide

Independent, free and made for curious observers

This scene-spotting guide was created by thebayeuxtapestry.com, an independent educational website about the Bayeux Tapestry and the Norman Conquest of 1066. It is designed to be used with the real Tapestry, museum displays, reproductions, books or trusted online images.

Continue exploring online

For the full scene-by-scene guide, Latin inscriptions and translations, articles on Harold, William and the Battle of Hastings, and visitor information, visit:

thebayeuxtapestry.com

Scan for the full scene-by-scene guide

Free school use

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