

Norman Crime and Punishment Knowledge Organiser

Keywords

poaching	Hunting an animal that does not belong to you, but instead belongs to the King.
freeman	Peasants that were free to move around and work the way they wished. The number of freemen in England was greatly reduced under Norman rule.
serf	A peasant that was not free to move around and had to work the land as his lord directed.
slave	The bottom tier of people. These slaves had no freedom in any way and could be bought and sold like livestock. 10% of English people were slaves.
knight	The nobles that ruled over the peasants on behalf of the King. Mostly Normans.

Key Dates

1066 - The Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest

1067 - Castles are built across England.

1087 - William II becomes king

1100 - Henry I becomes king



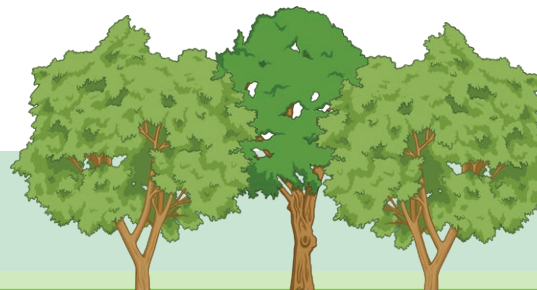
William I

William the Conqueror took control of England in late 1066. He ruthlessly stamped his authority on England by restricting the freedoms of the English and by attempting to centralise his government by making laws more uniform across the country.



Forest Laws

Much of the woodland of England, prior to the Norman conquest, was held as common land; it could be used by all people for collecting food or firewood. William I declared that most of this woodland was his to use for hunting. Anybody caught taking resources from the woods or **poaching** the king's animals would be executed. This meant that the freedom of **serfs** was damaged, and many people experienced hardship.



Crime

William I introduced many crimes that were new to the English. Freedom of **serfs** was greatly curtailed; they could not marry or move from their homes without their Lord's consent and inheritance of land or wealth was decided on by the Norman Lords rather than the wishes of the deceased.



Murdrum

William I replaced the system of paying wergild with fines that were paid to himself rather than the victim's families.

He also introduced the Murdrum Law, stating that if a Norman was killed, all members of the murderer's Hundred would have to pay a huge fine. This discouraged people from rising up against knights or barons as they would not wish their communities to suffer and protected the outnumbered Normans.



Courts

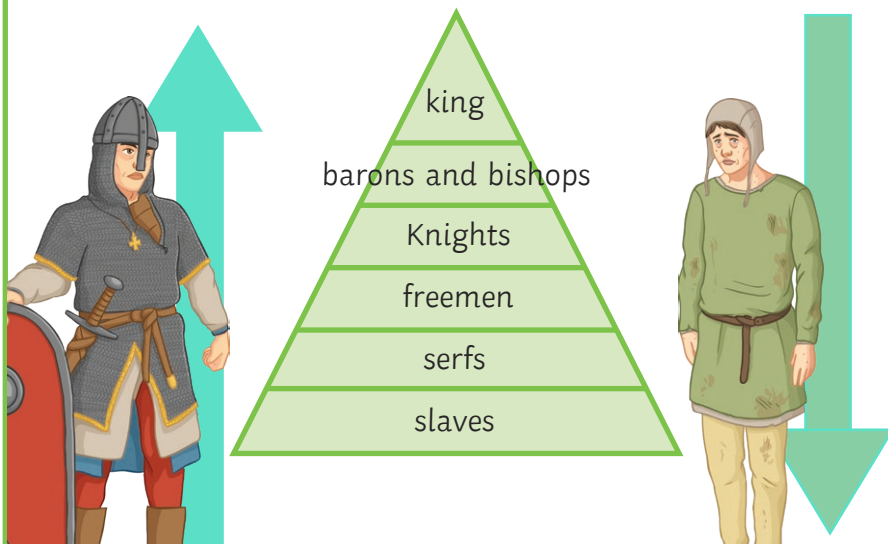
William I believed in continuity with the Anglo-Saxon court system. He thought that it would be best if people were familiar with the court system so kept the Shire, Hundred and Manor Courts.

He created a new type of court known as the Lord's court that was responsible for the purchasing of land, inheritance and ensuring that the other courts knew of the king's new laws.

Law enforcement was gradually stripped from communities as Shire Reeve positions were given to Normans rather than the English.

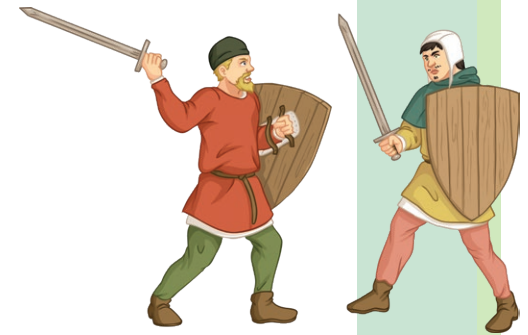
The Feudal System

The Normans changed the way people lived, making a strict hierarchy that put the English peasants firmly at the bottom.



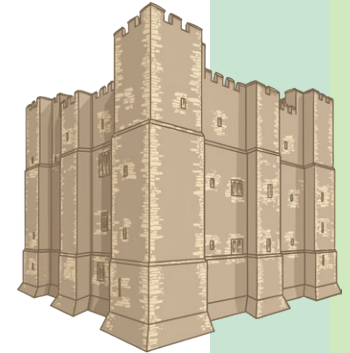
Trial by Combat

The Normans introduced a new type of trial by ordeal, trial by combat. Two parties that were at odds would fight with wooden swords or real weapons. The winner of the fight would be declared innocent as God must have helped them win. The loser would then be punished, if he was still alive!



Castles

William built castles across England to keep control over the English. These castles were great for defending a location, but they also had a subtler purpose. The peasants of England saw these structures as symbols of Norman power and control. If a person committed a crime, they knew that the baron of the castle and his knights would be ready to take action.



Punishment

Punishments remained much the same as in Anglo-Saxon times. Wergild fines were paid to the king rather than to the victim's family and the death penalty was used for **poachers**.

