**Q#1: How and why was the First Crusade a success, and how and why was it a failure?**

**Ans:**

**First Crusade:** The first crusade was a military expedition by European Christians to regain the holy lands and occurred in 1095. It was viewed as an unprecedented success by historians of the day and by contemporary historians. The reasons for this great success, if it can be named great at all, are numerous. From Pope Urban II’s fiery call to arms at the Council of Clermont, to the lack of preparation from the Turks, there are many reasons for this success. Indeed, the extreme faith displayed by the crusaders, the quality of their leaders, and the allies which they gained during their extensive journey were further factors which contributed to their success.

**Success of First Crusade:** One of the most important reasons for the success of the first crusade was the disunity within the Muslim nations in and around the holy land and their underestimation of the threat to which the crusaders posed. During the time of the first crusade, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were all under Muslim control. But they were politically and, to some extent, culturally fragmented and hence this would have certainly contributed to the success of the first crusade.

Faith is a powerful tool; it can make people push beyond their limits and to achieve unattainable goals, as is stated by Setton and Baldwin ‘without zeal and a burning faith it could never have been achieved’ and hence it was definitely a positive factor in helping the success of the crusaders. The First Crusade was successful in that Jerusalem was recaptured, but to ensure the Holy City stayed in Christian hands, it was necessary that various western settlements were established in the Levant (collectively known as the [Crusader States](https://www.ancient.eu/Crusader_States/).

**Failure of First Crusade:** There were so much support and desire for a crusade as to obey the call of the Pope to free the Holy City from the infidels and to provide pilgrims with access, to be forgiven for past sins, to see the world, to have an adventure and to prove their courage. The first crusaders were, in fact, undisciplined hordes of farmers from France and Germany who met with little achievement. The Muslims won the Holy Lands. The crusades, however, led in enhanced European trade and urban growth. The first crusade marks a significant turning point in Europe's history, marking the first significant war of conquest initiated since the decrease of the Roman Empire from Western Europe. Just before the crusade, the era saw the emergence of the Seljuk empire.

There were unforeseen or negative consequences to the First Crusade, notably the rupture in western-Byzantine relations and the Byzantines horror at unruly groups of warriors causing havoc in their territory. Outbreaks of fighting between crusaders and Byzantine forces were common, and the mistrust and suspicion of their intentions grew. It was a troublesome relationship that only got worse, and the ill-feeling and mutual distrust between east and west would rumble on and culminate in the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 CE.

Despite the continued recruitment drive in Europe and attempts to create permanent ‘colonies’ and kingdoms, it proved impossible to hold on to the gains of the First Crusade, and more campaigns were required to recapture such cities as Edessa and Jerusalem itself after its fall again in 1187 CE.

**Q#2: Which ruler-Alexius, William the Conqueror, or Louis VI was the strongest?  Why?**

**Ans:**

**Alexius Comnenus:** [Alexios I Komnenos](https://www.ancient.eu/Alexios_I_Komnenos/) (Alexius Comnenus) was emperor of the [Byzantine Empire](https://www.ancient.eu/Byzantine_Empire/) from 1081 to 1118 CE. Regarded as one of the great [Byzantine](https://www.ancient.eu/Byzantine/) rulers, Alexios defeated the Normans, the Pechenegs, and, with the help of the First Crusaders, the Seljuks to put the [empire](https://www.ancient.eu/empire/) back on its feet after years of decline. He would find the Komnenoi dynasty which included five emperors who ruled until 1185 CE. The emperor’s life was recorded in the Alexiad, written by his daughter [Anna Komnene](https://www.ancient.eu/Anna_Komnene/). Alexios came from a military family from [Asia Minor](https://www.ancient.eu/Asia_Minor/), and he had royal blood. Known for her piety, she was, nevertheless, as ruthless and able a politician as any male member of the court.

**Louis VI:** Louis VI, byname Louis the Fat, French Louis le Gros, (born 1081—died Aug. 1, 1137), [king](https://www.britannica.com/topic/king-monarch) of [France](https://www.britannica.com/place/France) from 1108 to 1137; he brought power and dignity to the French crown by his recovery of royal authority over the independent nobles in his domains of the [Île-de-France](https://www.britannica.com/place/Ile-de-France-region-France) and the Orléanais. Louis was designated by his father, [Philip I](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philip-I-king-of-France), as his successor in 1098 and was already effectively the ruler well before Philip’s death in 1108. His success won him the respect of his greater vassals and was crucial to later Capetian expansion. From his pacification program Louis developed several important concepts for future kings: for example, that the king was a [vassal](https://www.britannica.com/topic/vassal)of no man.

**William the Conqueror:** William the Conqueror was king of England and Duke of Normandy. Although, he was the illegitimate son of the Duke of Normandy Robert the Magnificent (also called “Robert the Devil”), after his father’s death in 1035, William was named his successor at only 8 years of age. In 1051 the king of England, Edward the Confessor, appointed William as his successor, but Edward died in 1066 leaving no direct heirs and the country threatened with invasion by two rival claimants, Harald Hardrada, King of Norway, and William, Duke of Normandy.

**Strongest ruler:** I think that Louis VI was the strongest of all because Louis usually had a good relationship with the church and clergy. He has been presented by some historians as the father of communes or towns, but in fact he recognized towns only out of circumstance rather than from principle. Louis supported [William Clito](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Clito), who became the successor; even though William was eventually toppled, Louis’s actions demonstrated the new strength of the monarchy. Louis VI was able to muster forces from many parts of France to counter a threatened invasion by the Holy Roman emperor [Henry V](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henry-V-Holy-Roman-emperor), identifying himself as the vassal of St. Denis, the [patron saint](https://www.britannica.com/topic/patron-saint) of France, whose banner he carried.

William the conqueror was not the strongest because William managed to survive the early years of chaos, both in his own life and Normandy, with the help of King Henry I of France. From 1046 onwards, he successfully dealt with rebels, troublesome Norman barons, all those who questioned the right of a bastard to succeed. Then with the support of Henry I he began to expand his territory.

Similarly, Alexius was not the strongest because a series of damaging military defeats shrank the empire and threatened even the capital [Constantinople](https://www.ancient.eu/Constantinople/). The [economy](https://www.ancient.eu/economy/) was also stuttering with Nikephoros forced to devalue the [gold](https://www.ancient.eu/gold/) nomisma, the main [coinage](https://www.ancient.eu/coinage/) of [Byzantium](https://www.ancient.eu/Byzantium/). The aged Nikephoros saw the [writing](https://www.ancient.eu/writing/) on the [wall](https://www.ancient.eu/wall/) and abdicated, later retiring to a monastic life. Encouraged by his mother and backed by an alliance of powerful aristocratic families, Alexios took the vacant throne on [Easter](https://www.ancient.eu/Easter/) Day 1081 CE and made Anna, his mother, his chief advisor, granting her equal powers with himself in an imperial edict. Moreover, achievements of these three rulers is also mentioned above according to which the strongest one is selected.