**The Battle of Hastings**

The Saxons were in a good position at the top of a hill and formed a shield wall. The battle began when Duke William rallied his army and made a rousing speech. The Anglo-Saxons shouted at the Normans and drummed on their shields. The Normans shouted back. Legend suggests that William’s minstrel, Taillefer, started the battle by riding forward singing a popular tune, the ‘Song of Roland’, juggling his lance. He defeated an English challenger and then charged at the English battle lines where he was immediately killed.

Duke William ordered his archers to shoot arrows into the shield wall to weaken the Anglo-Saxons. This did not have much impact and so William ordered archers to the side of the battlefield and infantry forward uphill to engage: fierce fighting took place. The English fyrd threw stones and axes at the infantry. Then hand-to-hand combat took place. The Saxon shield wall stood firm. Realising the infantry were not having much effect, William ordered the cavalry to charge uphill with lances and swords. The Norman cavalry were beaten back and failed to penetrate the shield wall.

Then, the left-hand side of the Norman cavalry began to break off from attacking the shield wall, as a rumour went round that William had been killed. They retreated back down the hill and this started panic among many of the Normans on the left-hand side of the battlefield. The Anglo-Saxon fyrd on that side of the field decided to leave the shield wall and chase after the retreating Norman. William saw the panic and raced around in front of his men. He galloped past his army and, raising his helmet, shouted ‘Look at me! I am alive and will be the victor with God’s help!’ The Anglo-Saxon soldiers raced downhill after the retreating men and were suddenly surrounded and cut down by the Normans.

William ordered further cavalry charges up hill. He decided to order at least two false retreats, where the Norman cavalry pretend to run away to get the Saxons to follow them.

William then ordered his archers to shoot arrows high over the front of the shield wall onto the English soldiers nearer the back. During these volleys an arrow possibly struck Harold in the eye. He was then cut down by three Norman knights. The English army was broken and began to flee pursued by the Normans. The Normans were victorious on the field. Many bodies lay around the battle ground and the victors, the Normans, started taking weapons, jewellery and armour from the dead.