

Add a title for each paragraph



Task 1: In one colour highlight key information about Harold's term as king

### Harold Godwinson's succession as King of England

Make notes of the main events of Harold's reign



When Edward the Confessor died in 1066, the Witan, England's high council, met and decided who should be the next King of England. They chose Harold Godwinson, a leading member of the council.

Harold Godwinson was a powerful individual in England. He was son of Earl Godwin of Wessex, and he became Earl of Wessex when his father died in 1053. He was also brother-in-law of King Edward the Confessor and was trusted by King Edward to control affairs in England in the 1060s. He and his brothers controlled most of the key provinces of England before 1066. The Witan believed that Harold was the best person to defend England against threats from outside, like the Normans and Vikings in 1066.

After Earl Godwin's death in 1053 his second son Harold became Earl of Wessex. This gave him control over all of Southern England. Harold's younger brothers Leofwine and Gyrth controlled London and East Anglia. Harold had a good relationship with King Edward the Confessor. Edward realised that Harold was a much more honest leader than his father. Earl Godwin had tried to control Edward, but Harold Godwinson appears to have been a loyal follower.

The Witan was a council made up of the most powerful men in England. Their priority was to ensure England remained safe from civil war and foreign attack. Because Edward died just after Christmas, and just after the consecrations (blessing) of his huge cathedral in Westminster, a large number of the witan was already gathered at Edward's palace. Edward died on 6<sup>th</sup> January and the Witan met on the same day to elect Harold as king. Harold had proved himself to be a strong leader with great military and diplomatic ability having spent many years ruling England on Edward's behalf. The Witan believed that the one blood claimant, Edgar Atheling, who was only a teenager at the time, was too young to bear the challenges of the kingdom.

Harold was crowned King in Westminster Abbey on the same day as Edward's burial. The Witan encouraged the powerful men of England to support Harold against the external threats from Norway and Normandy in 1066. Harold went straight to the North of England when he became king. He married the sister of the two powerful northern earls, Edwin and Morcar. He faced potential problems from his old rivals, including the earl in Mercia, as well as the potential of Northumbria hating him as Tostig's brother. Harold's alliance with the Northern earls meant that he did not have to worry about civil war and could concentrate on building up forces to fight William of Normandy.

To deal with potential problems, straight after his coronation Harold went to York, the chief city of Northumbria. This was to meet to members of the Witan who had not been present in London to ensure their support. He then gathered the largest army England had ever seen. This army was positioned along the south coast of England to defend against potential invasion from William. He also stationed a large fleet on the south coast.

Tostig remained a threat during the next few months. Whilst he tried to break through the defences, attacking from Flanders, he found England's defences were too strong, so fled to Scotland where he began plotting with Harald Hardrada. Maintaining a defence in England was expensive, and due to the lack of a substantial invasion attack, Harold was forced to stand down his army and refit the fleet, leaving England vulnerable once again.

**Create a storyboard of the reign of Harold Godwinson**
