THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND
Mr. Hardin

Big-Picture Idea
The Norman Invasion of England brought the French language, Norman court, land reforms, and castle-building to England. It laid the foundations for modern England through the intermarriage of Norman and English populations, the fusion of the two languages into Medieval and Modern English, and the importation of Norman governing ideals.

Key Terms
Royal Court – The extended household and allies of a ruler who helped him/her run the kingdom.
Normandy – A region in Northwest France settled by Vikings in the early 900s. Edward the Confessor’s mother was the sister of the Duke of Normandy.
Mead Hall – A large, single-room feasting hall where the local noble and his company would gather, eat, drink, and govern.
Castle – A large, fortified building with thick walls, towers, defenses, and often a moat used to defend towns and nobility.
Fyrd – An army of freemen temporarily drafted from the shires or earldoms in proportion to population and farmland who provided their own weapons and fought for a King.
Housecarl – A personal soldier or group of soldiers of a king or noble.

The Actors
William of Normandy – Cousin of Edward
Harold II of England – Cousin of Edward
Edward the Confessor – King who died childless
Edwin, Earl of Mercia – Ally of Harold II
Morcar, Earl of Northumbria – Ally of Harold II
Harald III of Norway – Claimed throne through treaty

Major Events
Death of Edward the Confessor (January 5, 1066) – Edward was King of England, son of an English King descended of both Norwegians and Anglo-Saxons (Harald’s connection) and the sister of the Duke of Normandy (William’s connection). He died childless and set off a succession crisis.
Battle of Fulford (September 20, 1066) – Fought between Harald III of Norway, who invaded England to take the throne from Harold II, and Edwin and Morcar (supporters of the English crown) in which the English were defeated. This caused Harold II to have to rush his army to the north to push back Harald III and repel his invasion.
Battle of Stamford Bridge (September 25, 1066) – Fought between Harald III of Norway and Harold II of England. Harold II emerged victorious, killing 5,000 of Harald III’s 15,000 men (after 1,000 died at Fulford) and losing 6,000 of his own 10,000 men. This severely weakened him as he prepared to head south and meet William at Hastings.
Battle of Hastings (October 14, 1066) – Fought between William of Normandy and Harold II of England. William’s army was victorious after Harold II was killed in battle, and approximately 4,000 of the 7,000 English soldiers were killed. The Normans lost approximately 2,000-3,000 of their 10,000 soldiers in the battle. William was crowned King of England after the battle upon his arrival in London and the surrender of the English nobility, although revolts would continue to breakout for years.

The Impact
The Norman Conquest of England radically changed the political and cultural fabric of England. William the Conqueror brought his own court with him, and this had large consequences. He changed ownership of most of the land in England from the old English aristocracy to his own supporters and Norman aristocracy. Additionally, the Normans brought castle building and wine drinking with them; before the Norman Conquest there were hardly any castles in England and the mead hall had been the place of gathering (think Beowulf and almost a more “Viking” feel). Most importantly, the French language was imported to England (this is not modern French or English, but instead old French and English). French names like William, Robert, and Henry replaced old Anglo-Saxon (the two Germanic tribes who populated England) names like Aethelred, Godwin, and others. Eventually, old French and old English would combine in England to make Medieval and then Modern English.