**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

**William the Conqueror** **(Questions & Answers)**

<http://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans2.htm>

This commentary is based on the classroom activity: [William the Conqueror](http://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans2.htm)

Q1: (i) Select passages from this unit that praise William the Conqueror. (ii) Select passages from this unit that criticise William the Conqueror.

A1: (i) [William of Poitiers](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDpoitiers.htm) claims that [William the Conqueror](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDwilliam1.htm) "excelled both in bravery and soldier-craft." He adds that he "dominated battles, checking his own men in flight, strengthening their spirit, and sharing their dangers." [William of Jumieges](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDjumieges.htm) also praises William's bravery. He argues that he was "moderate in drinking" and a "persuasive speaker". William of Jumieges was also impressed with his regular attendance at church services. [Pope Gregory VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gregory_VII) also approved of William's strong religious faith. He argues that "he neither destroys nor sells the churches of God" and "he bound priests by oath to dismiss their wives".

(ii) The [Anglo-Saxon Chronicle](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDchronicleAS.htm) claims that "William and his chief men loved gold and silver and did not care how it was obtained". William is also accused of not caring about the "illegal acts" committed by his men. [Ordericus Vitalis](http://spartacus-educational.com/NORvitalis.htm) points out that William treated people harshly when they were defeated in war. During the English rising in 1069, Ordericus Vitalis claims that William "commanded that all crops and herds... and food of every kind" should be destroyed "so that the whole region north of Humber might be stripped of all means of survival." William supports this criticism with his own comments just before lie died. William admitted that lie was "stained from the rivers of blood I have shed."

Q2: Give reasons why different authors had different opinions on William the Conqueror. It will help you to read about the authors by following the links.

A2: [William of Poitiers](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDpoitiers.htm) and [William of Jumieges](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDjumieges.htm) were both Norman supporters of William the Conqueror. They both benefited from the Norman invasion of Britain and had good reason to be grateful to William the Conqueror. [Pope Gregory VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gregory_VII) was leader of the Christian Church. As he points out in source 6 he was pleased with the way William attempted to implement Church policies such as the rule that priests should not have wives.

Source A was written by an English monk. He would probably have been a supporter of [Harold of Wessex](http://spartacus-educational.com/MEDharold.htm) and had good reason to be hostile to the Norman invaders.

[Ordericus Vitalis](http://spartacus-educational.com/NORvitalis.htm) was a Norman monk but he was willing to be critical because William had been dead for forty years when he wrote his book.