

Norman england "feudalism"



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

LESSON SEVEN — NORMAN ENGLAND AFTER THE CONQUEST The reason why the Norman Conquest was so significant is that it changed the entire way England was run. It introduced a new set of rulers, a new ruling system, a new language and a new culture. FEUDALISM One of the most important changes was to do with the ownership of land. William introduced a system of land ownership that was called feudalism. Firstly, William seized by force the land belonging to important Anglo-Saxons and claimed it all as his own. However, it was hard for him, as one man at a time when transport was slow, to effectively control all of that land. So he gave land to important people who had helped him to conquer England. These people were called lords or barons. However, they didn't truly 'own' the land. They were allowed to pass it down to their sons when they died, and they were allowed to farm it and build on it, but if they offended the king he could take it back off of them. On the left is a picture of Richard Fitzgilbert, one of William's most important barons. William gave him most of Kent, and Richard built the castle of Tonbridge, which you can still see today. BARONS AND SERFS In return for getting this land, the barons promised to give their king a certain amount of military service. That is, they would go into battle with him in a foreign war, or they would protect a place in England for him for a certain amount of time per year. The barons would then run the land they had been given. They would allow peasants to farm the land, but they would demand the peasants gave them a certain amount of the produce each year. They would also demand that peasants would serve in the army with them. The peasants were not quite slaves. Their barons didn't own them in the way that Roman slave owners owned slaves. They couldn't buy and sell the peasants, and they couldn't kill them. But they could, and did, forbid the peasants to leave

the land. In effect, these peasants were 'tied' to the land. If their lord of the manor changed, they stayed on the land. These sorts of peasants were called serfs, or villeins. THE PYRAMID STRUCTURE As you can see from this, feudal societies were organised a bit like a pyramid. At the top was just one man — the King. Beneath him came a small number of barons. And then beneath them came a very large number of serfs. You might also have realised that in this society, land was the most important thing. The more land you had, the more important and powerful you were. Money didn't matter nearly as much as it does nowadays. As well as this, towns and cities were much less important. Most of Britain was made up of farms and countryside, and there were very few towns. However, towns were outside the laws of feudalism. If a serf ran away from his lord's land and escaped to a town, then if he remained there without being captured for a year and a day, he would be free for life. The feudal system was at its peak in the 11th and 12th centuries. When it did start to become less important, it was because money, towns and cities started to become more important — and they were all outside the feudal system. LESSON SEVEN — NORMAN ENGLAND. QUESTIONS. Answer these questions in full sentences! 1. What was the word for the system of land ownership William introduced? 2. What did William do to land that belonged to Anglo-Saxons? 3. What was the name of William's most important supporters? 4. What did he give them as a reward for supporting him? 5. What did the barons have to give him in return? 6. What two things did the peasants have to give the barons? 7. What are the two words for a peasant in the feudal system? 8. What shape best describes the organisation of society at this time? 9. What parts of

Britain were not organised by feudalism? 10. When was the feudal system at its peak?