A Crown Contested

Trace the causes and consequences of the Norman Conquest.

9-12.WC.28 "Analyze the causes and consequences of the Norman Conquest of England."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline claims that led to conflict, circle events that helped William take power, and number two lasting changes caused by his rule.

How a Disputed Crown Changed England

1 In January 1066, Edward the Confessor died without a child to inherit England's throne. English nobles chose Harold Godwinson as king, but William, duke of Normandy, said Edward had promised him the crown. William also claimed Harold had sworn to support his right to rule, though the circumstances of that oath remain disputed. Across the North Sea, Harald Hardrada of Norway claimed the throne through an earlier royal agreement. These competing claims made a succession dispute into a threat of invasion. Each claimant needed more than a story about inheritance: armies and powerful supporters would decide who could hold England.

2 Hardrada and Harold's exiled brother Tostig invaded northern England in September 1066. Harold rushed north and defeated them at Stamford Bridge on September 25. Soon afterward, William landed in the south with a Norman army, forcing Harold to march back. The marches and battles may have exhausted some English troops, but historians cannot measure exactly how much that affected the next fight. On October 14, William's forces defeated Harold's army at Hastings, where Harold was killed. Victory did not instantly secure the whole kingdom. William was crowned on Christmas Day, then faced resistance as he extended his rule.

3 To hold conquered territory, William replaced many English landholders with Norman followers who owed him service. They built castles that helped control routes and towns, turning military victory into lasting authority. In 1086, William ordered the Domesday survey, which recorded landholdings and resources useful for assessing taxes and obligations. Norman French became the language of much royal and noble business, while most people continued speaking English. Over time, French words entered English. Yet the conquest did not erase every earlier practice: William kept parts of England's existing system of local government. The conquest changed who wielded power more quickly than it changed everyday speech.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Edward's death without an heir help turn a dispute over the throne into a threat of invasion?

2. How might Harold's campaign against Hardrada have affected the battle with William? What does the passage say historians cannot know for certain?

3. How did replacing landholders and building castles help William turn a battle victory into lasting rule?

4. Why did the conquest change the language of royal business faster than it changed the language most people spoke?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a paragraph arguing which mattered more in reshaping England: the disputed succession or William's redistribution of land. Trace a cause-and-effect chain using at least two details from the passage, and explain why the other factor still mattered.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline claims that led to conflict, circle events that helped William take power, and number two lasting changes caused by his rule. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Edward's death without an heir help turn a dispute over the throne into a threat of invasion?	**With no child to inherit, English nobles chose Harold, while William and Hardrada also claimed the throne. Their competing claims led to threats of invasion.**
2	How might Harold's campaign against Hardrada have affected the battle with William? What does the passage say historians cannot know for certain?	**Harold's troops had to march north, fight, and march south, which may have exhausted some of them. Historians cannot measure how much that affected Hastings.**
3	How did replacing landholders and building castles help William turn a battle victory into lasting rule?	**William gave land to followers who owed him service. Their castles helped control routes and towns as he extended his authority.**
4	Why did the conquest change the language of royal business faster than it changed the language most people spoke?	**Norman French became common in royal and noble business because Normans held power, but most people continued speaking English.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The redistribution of land mattered more for reshaping England because it turned a battlefield victory into lasting control. William replaced many English landholders with Norman followers who owed him service. Their castles helped secure routes and towns, so his authority could extend beyond the battlefield. This shift in power also helps explain why Norman French became the language of much royal and noble business. Still, the disputed succession mattered: Edward left no child, and rival claims brought armies to England. Without that crisis, William might not have had the chance to win the throne.

Accept either choice in Part 3 if the student supports it with an accurate causal chain, at least two passage details, and an explanation of the other factor's importance. For question 2, do not accept exhaustion as a certain cause of William's victory.