

## History at Gordano: A Year 7 travel chronicle

When you enter this classroom in September, you will be transported back in time to over 40,000 years ago, when hunters roamed the British Isles, spears in hand, searching for prey. You will see them start to find new forms of food, such as grain – which needs to be farmed and harvested. The hunters will start to settle into villages, no longer travelling for their food. Soon enough, visitors will arrive in Britain, many who do not come peacefully. Romans will fight the native Celts and Britons for control over the land, and Britain will become a part of the Roman Empire (for a while anyway). Soon they will be replaced by Vikings from Scandinavia, and Anglo-Saxons from Central Europe. The changes from when you first arrived will be dramatic; new roads and aqueducts have appeared; language has changed over the centuries, and by the year 1066, the British Isles will have some elements that we can still see today. Time is a funny thing. Sometimes in a few months more change can happen than previous decades. Three challengers for the English throne will battle one another throughout the year 1066, and the consequences of those battles will shape life in England for generations.

William of Normandy and his descendants will rule Britain without challenge for almost 400 years, after William invaded England in 1066. Why did he feel that ruling England was his right? And how did his people, the Normans, transform England? How much did ordinary Englishwomen and men experience this change?

Travelling the British Isles is not enough, however. You will visit the crossroads between Europe and Asia; travel the Silk Roads from Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) all the way to distant cities in China. Smell the spices and feel the new fabrics as you journey across Central Asia and meet powerful figures such as Genghis Khan, and awesome intellectuals such as Avicenna. The Silk Roads don't just transport goods and people; you will learn about mathematics, language, and the development of new technologies, all of which travel along the Silk Roads too.

You will see that the English crown will not always be worn by men, however; Medieval queens rule England as well, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, who transformed the idea of what women could do in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Eleanor and her sons will also take part in the major conflict of the Middle Ages – the wars for control of the Holy Land. You will experience the force with which Medieval people believe in God, and how far they are willing to go to do what they believe is God's will. One of Eleanor's sons you will meet in particular – John. His challenges as king (and there will be many) will lead to England adopting the first written laws that restricted the power of the English monarch. The Magna Carta (or Great Charter) can still be seen today in cathedrals as close as Salisbury.

King John will not be the only English king you meet with problems. The famous Henry VIII and his revolving door of wives might be a familiar story to you already, but you will see how much Henry transformed religion in England, and how we still live with those changes today. His descendant, King Charles I, will follow in Henry's footsteps in changing English religion, but this time the opposition will be too great and England will break down into civil war. Will the country recover from this fracturing over religion and ideas? Could one person, a king or someone else, bring England back together?

By the time you leave this classroom in July, the British Isles will have transformed over the centuries, from wild landscapes and groups of travelling hunters, to large cities and towering cathedrals, with people willing to die for their beliefs.