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Matilda and the English Crown

You are going to watch a BBC documentary about Early Queens of England.

EARLY ENGLISH QUEENS - MATILDA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuP8tEqlZko

Activity 1

First, here's a set of captions regarding the main characters and locations associated with Queen Matilda and the events of 1141. Which, im your opinion, may be most relevant for the topic?



1 Matilda, Daughter of Henry I

At 39 years old, Matilda sat at Westminster in 1141 preparing for a banquet celebrating her planned coronation as Queen of England. Despite being the daughter of King Henry I and granddaughter of William the Conqueror, she never officially wore the crown. Her claim led to nearly 20 years of civil war, and history remembers her as a strong and controversial figure who challenged the assumption that only men could rule.

2 King Henry I of England

Henry I ruled England for just over 50 years after the Norman Conquest. His hopes for the future of his dynasty were dashed when his son and heir, William, died in a shipwreck. Henry's grief was profound—he collapsed in anguish upon hearing the news—leaving his daughter Matilda as his only legitimate heir.

William, Son of Henry I

William was the male heir to the English throne and Henry I's son. In 1120, he died tragically when the White Ship sank off Barfleur harbor in Normandy. This disaster removed the natural successor and sparked the succession crisis that followed.

4

William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy

William the Conqueror was Matilda's grandfather and the Norman duke who famously conquered England in 1066. He set sail from Barfleur harbor, the same port where the White Ship tragedy would later occur, founding the Norman dynasty that ruled England for decades.

5

The White Ship

The newly fitted White Ship carried William and a large group of young noblemen in November 1120. Although the waters were still, the passengers were intoxicated, and the ship struck a rock at the harbor mouth near Barfleur. It sank quickly, leading to the deaths of nearly all aboard in freezing waters.

6

Barfleur Harbor, Normandy

Barfleur was once the greatest port on the Norman coast and the departure point for William the Conqueror's invasion of England. This sleepy village witnessed the tragic sinking of the White Ship, an event described by chronicler William of Malmesbury as the greatest disaster England had suffered by sea.

Activity 2

Watch the first part of the video and, while watching, fill in the blanks in the text on your worksheet:

Matilda was the
the Conqueror, but you won't find her on the role-call of
2 monarchs. A faint manuscript image is the only contemporary
throw the
and destructive woman, perceived by
because she
9 the English crown.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS:

William the Conqueror, but you won't find her on the roll-call of English. 2 monarchs. A faint manuscript image is the only contemporarypicture. 3 of her that survives. Her attempt to claim the crown was to throw the ... country. 4 into almost 20 years of catastrophic civil ... war... 5 . Matilda herself has gone down in history as a ...domineering...6 and destructive woman, perceived bymen.....7as a she-wolf simply because she ...dared... 8 to challenge the assumption that only a man could wear... 9 the English crown.

Activity 3 Watch the second part of the video and, after watching, arrange the events in the correct order. Write the number of each sentence in the box below the text:

- 1. It happened when he and their father were returning from their territory across the channel in Normandy.
- 2. It took only minutes to sink.
- 3. No one noticed the rock at the harbour mouth.
- 4. But when the White Ship slipped out into the dark water, everyone on board was roaring drunk.
- 5. There was no hope of rescue in the freezing November waters.
- 6. The Norman fleet set out from Barfleur to cross the Channel.
- 7. The king set sail first at twilight, to be followed by William and his company of ebullient young aristocrats.
- 8. At its head was the King of England, Henry I, in his great dragon-headed long ship, and behind him, in a newly fitted-out vessel called the White Ship, was his son and heir, William, with a large party of young noblemen.
- 9. It was November, late in the year for what could be a treacherous crossing.
- 10. Matilda's bid for the throne began with a tragedy, the death of the male heir, her brother William.
- 11. But the water in Barfleur harbor was still and glassy, and there seemed no need for concern.
- 12. But no one could mistake the sickening jolt as the ship struck.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS:

10	1	6	8	9	11	7	4	3	12
2	5								

Activity 4 Watch the third part of the video and, after watching, decide if the sentences below are true or false.

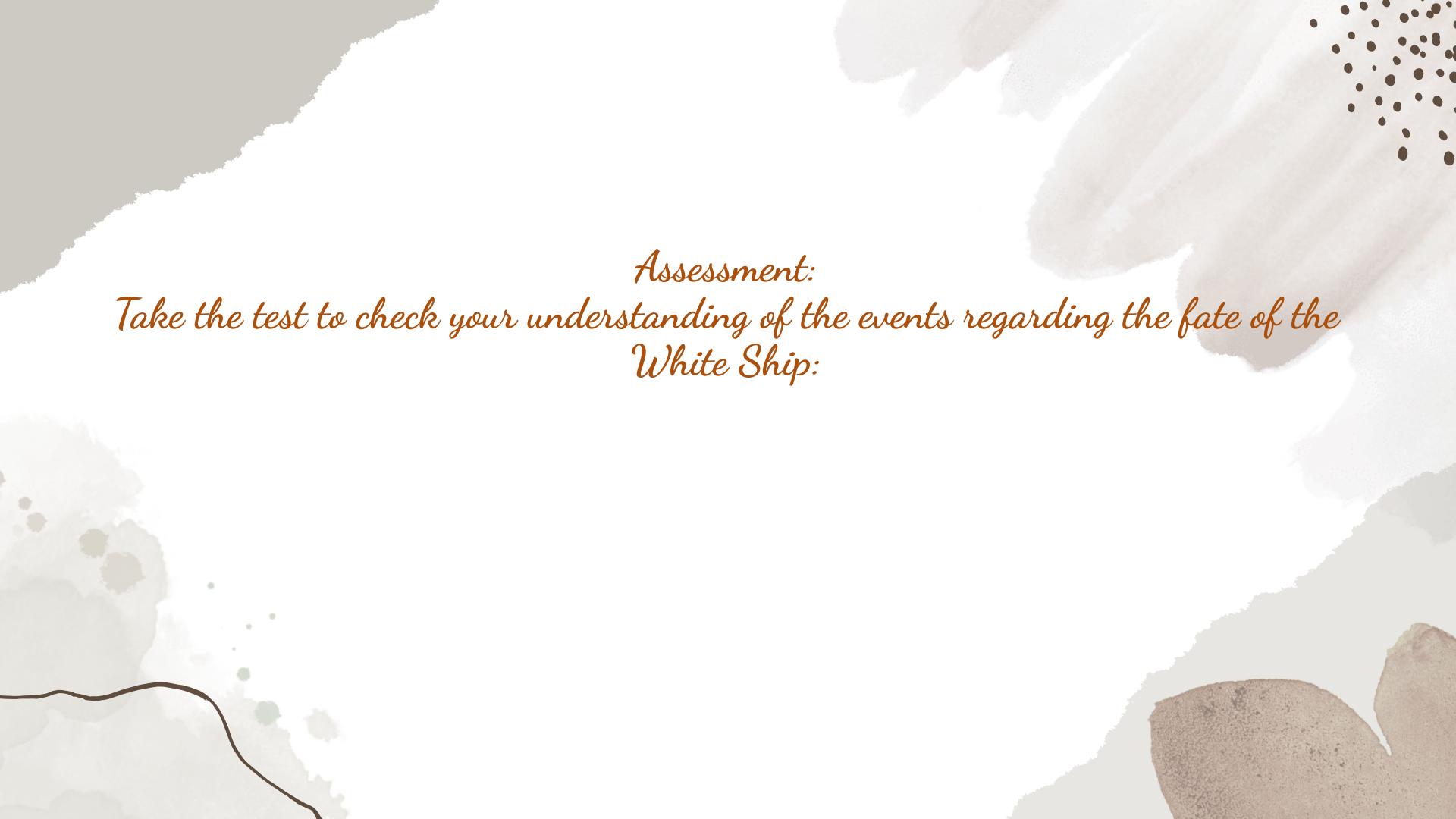
- 1. Matilda left England at the age of eight to marry the king of Germany.
- 2. Her husband died when she was 23, so she remained there to reign as his successor to the throne.
- 3. Matilda's second husband, Geoffrey, was so handsome and athletic that he was nicknamed "Geoffrey the He-Wolf".
- 4. Her cousin Steven, a powerful man and an effective soldier, helped her to keep the crown.
- 5. According to chronicles, Matilda "had brought the greater part of the kingdom under her sway and on this account she was mighty puffed up and exulted in spirit."
- 6. On coronation day, thousands of armed Londoners drove Matilda into the capital.
- 7. While Matilda had been fighting in England, her son Henry had grown up in France.
- 8. Stephen died in October 1154, and two months later, exactly 19 years since Matilda's father had died, her son was crowned King Henry VIII.
- 9. Matilda died in Normandy at the age of 65 on the 10th of September 1567.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS:

- I. TRUE
- z. FALSE
- 3. FALSE
- 4. FALSE
- 5. TRUE
- 6. FALSE
- 7. TRUE
- 8. FALSE
- 9. FALSE

Comment upon the following: (50-100 words):

Back then, there was no question about the order of God's creation in contemporaries' minds. Men ruled, and their women obeyed. In fact, the Anglo-Saxon word for 'queen' didn't mean a female king; it meant the wife of a king. As a king's wife, a queen could only advise her husband or even represent him, but her authority always depended on his.



- Question 1. What were the key circumstances surrounding the sinking of the White Ship in Barfleur, including its date, location, and the primary cause of the disaster?
- (A) The White Ship sank in July 1115 in Barfleur due to a sudden storm that caught the crew off guard, leading to a navigation error.
- (B) The White Ship sank in October 1120 in Barfleur due to overcrowding, which caused the ship to become unstable and capsize in rough waters.
- (C) The White Ship sank in November 1120 in Barfleur due to a mechanical failure in the ship's engine, leading to a loss of control during the crossing.
- (D) The White Ship sank in November 1120 in Barfleur due to the inebriated condition of its passengers, leading to a navigation error.
- (E) The White Ship sank in December 1121 in Barfleur due to the captain's negligence in monitoring the weather conditions, leading to a collision with another vessel.

- Question 2. The White Ship disaster not only resulted in the tragic loss of life but also had significant implications for the English monarchy and the line of succession. Which of the following best describes the long-term consequences of this event on the monarchy?
- (A) It led to the immediate unification of rival factions within the monarchy.
- (B) It resulted in a strengthening of the royal family's influence over the nobility.
- (C) It prompted a period of economic prosperity and stability in England.
- (D) It had a positive impact on the monarchy, enhancing its legitimacy and support.
- (E) It resulted in a succession crisis that contributed to instability in England.

- Question 3. Which of the following statements accurately reflects the significance of the White Ship and its passengers, including William Adelin and the young noblemen, in the context of the tragic events surrounding its sinking?
- (A) The significance of the White Ship and its passengers lies in their representation of the future of the English monarchy, the resulting political implications of their loss, and the broader themes of leadership and responsibility that resonate through history.
- (B) The significance of the White Ship and its passengers is primarily in their role as a fleet of traders, whose successful journey would have strengthened commerce between Normandy and England.
- (C) The significance of the White Ship and its passengers stems from their representation of the social elite, whose reckless behavior was deemed acceptable during times of political stability and prosperity.
- (D) The significance of the White Ship and its passengers is found in their demonstration of military prowess, showcasing the naval strength of Norman forces against potential threats from France.
- (E) The significance of the White Ship and its passengers revolves around their mission to establish a new colony in North America, which was seen as a key opportunity for expansion at the time.

- Question 4. Which of the following statements best captures the historical significance of the White Ship disaster in relation to Henry I's reign and the Norman dynasty?
- (A) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it prompted Henry I to implement strict maritime regulations that ultimately protected the Norman dynasty and ensured a smooth succession in England. (B) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it led to the establishment of a new line of
- (B) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it led to the establishment of a new line of succession that favoured Henry I's distant relatives, thereby enhancing the stability of the Norman dynasty in
- (C) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it resulted in the strengthening of Henry I's claim to the throne, ensuring stability for the Norman dynasty and preventing a succession crisis in England.
- (D) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it caused an immediate alliance among the noble factions in England, reinforcing the power of Henry I's lineage and securing the future of the Norman dynasty.
- (E) The White Ship disaster was historically significant as it resulted in the loss of Henry I's heir, destabilizing the Norman dynasty and triggering a succession crisis that contributed to civil strife in England

- Question 5. Considering the events following the tragic sinking of the White Ship and the subsequent impact on English monarchy, which of the following best illustrates how the disaster influenced Matilda's claim to the throne and the ensuing conflict known as The Anarchy?
- (A) The sinking of the White Ship solidified Henry I's control over the throne, preventing any conflict over succession.
- (B) The disaster of the White Ship resulted in Matilda being immediately crowned queen, leading to a stable reign without conflict.
- (C) The sinking of the White Ship prompted a swift resolution to the succession issue, uniting the nobles behind Matilda's claim.
- (D) The tragedy of the White Ship led to a peaceful transfer of power, with Matilda quickly gaining support from all factions.
- (E) The sinking of the White Ship created a power vacuum that influenced Matilda's claim to the throne and led to The Anarchy.