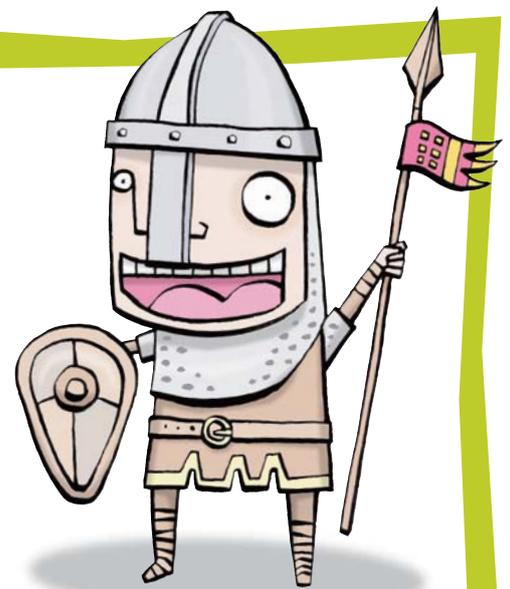


So you're in a Norman church.

How do you know it's Norman?



LOOK OUT FOR:



1. Small windows – with curved arches.



2. Thick walls and large stone building blocks – you can find out more about these below.



3. Big pillars inside – to strengthen the building and hold the heavy roof up.



4. Doorways with a round arch – many have patterns cut into the arch for decoration.



5. A carved stone font – this is where they kept water for baptising people. It's usually somewhere near the door.

Why do Norman churches have such thick walls?

Norman Lords made Anglo-Saxon peasants build their churches. The peasants didn't have the skill to cut fine-fitting bricks, instead they built two rough walls side by side with big stone blocks, and they filled the gap in between with rubble. So the walls are thick, and they look strong, but actually they aren't – they're just full of rubble! But it worked. These churches are a thousand years old, and they haven't fallen down yet.



6. Have you found stained glass or pointed windows? – these aren't Norman, they came later. Over the centuries the churches the Normans built were changed by those who came after; they rebuilt parts and added things on. You have to look carefully to try to spot the bits that are Norman.

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What was it like in a Norman church a thousand years ago?

It was dark

That was because of the small windows.

There were no pews

Everyone would have had to stand.

The priest talked in Latin

Although they would preach in English, priests conducted services in Latin, so a lot of the time most people couldn't understand a word they said!

Everyone from the town would visit

The church was a big part of everyone's life. The Normans believed that when you prayed for a good harvest, it was up to God to send you one or not. (And they thought that maybe if He didn't send you a good harvest, it was your fault because you'd done something wrong.)

Why did they build all these churches in the first place?

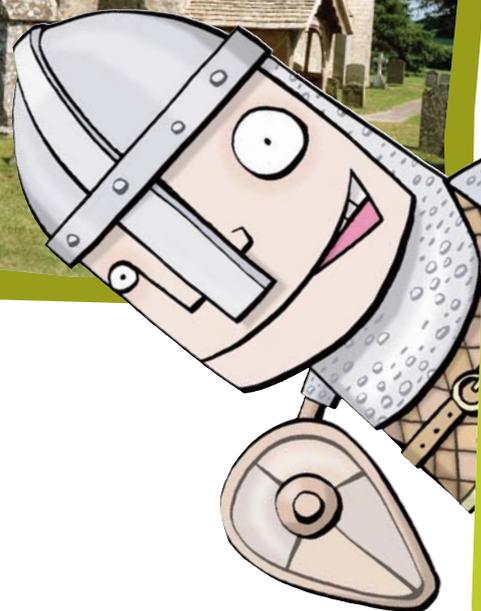
When the Normans conquered England, they thought that God was on their side (and they wanted to keep it that way!)

They wanted to glorify Him – and themselves – and show their gratitude for victory over the Anglo-Saxons. So they built lots and lots of churches and cathedrals all across Britain.

They even built one on the site of their great battle at Hastings – Battle Abbey – to commemorate their victory.

Imagine what it must have been like for the Anglo-Saxons to watch the stone churches and cathedrals going up. Most of the people at that time wouldn't have seen anything like it before – nearly all buildings were simple wooden structures, like huts, back then.

They must have been amazed and impressed and probably thought that the Normans really did have God on their side.



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