



# William I: England's Conqueror (Penguin Monarchs)

Marc Morris

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On Christmas Day 1066, William duke of Normandy was crowned in Westminster, the first Norman king of England. The ceremony was a disaster: Norman soldiers, mishearing English shouts of acclamation as treachery, torched and looted the surrounding buildings. To chroniclers who wrote with the benefit of hindsight, it was an omen of catastrophes to come. During the reign of William the Conqueror, England experienced greater and more seismic change than ever before or since. The old ruling elites were swept away, while rebellion was met with overwhelming force, laying waste huge swathes of the country. Society was reordered, hundreds of castles constructed across the kingdom and every major abbey and cathedral torn down and rebuilt. The map of England itself was redrawn, giving greater power than ever before to the king. Towards the end of his reign, when William attempted to assess the scale of this transformation by launching a great survey, his subjects compared it to the last judgement of God: the Domesday Book.



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