THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Overview

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Symbol key

- Teacher guidance: instructions, information and support to help you run your lesson.

- Class resources to be handed out to pupils or put on your interactive whiteboard.

- Suggested timings for the session. These can be adapted for the age and skills of your class. The ‘Hands on’ activities can be extended into projects.

bbc.co.uk/history
Learning outcomes:

I understand what food the Normans ate and why.
I understand the difference between the food we eat today and the food from Norman times.
I understand the importance of feasting in the Norman era.
I understand what utensils were used at a Norman feast and why.
I have used planning and creative skills to build an element of a feast/make some Norman food.
I have worked collaboratively with my classmates to build an element of a feast/make some Norman food.

National Curriculum links
The activities within this set of lesson plans have been designed to offer a cross-curricular approach. They support the following areas of the curriculum across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales:

**England**
- History (The Norman Invasion)
- Art and Design
- Design and Technology
- Mathematics
- Music

**Activity**
- All Activities
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activities 1 and 2
- Hands on Activity 1

**Northern Ireland**
- The World Around Us – History
- The World Around Us – Science and Technology
- The Arts
- Mathematics and Numeracy

**Activity**
- All Activities
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activities 1 and 2

**Scotland**
- Social Studies (The Medieval Wars of Independence)
- Expressive Arts
- Design and Technology
- Mathematics
- Expressive Arts – Music

**Activity**
- All Activities
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activities 1 and 2
- Hands on Activity 1

**Wales**
- History – History (The Age of Princes)
- Art and Design
- Science
- Mathematics
- Music

**Activity**
- All Activities
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activity 1
- Hands on Activities 1 and 2
- Hands on Activity 1
A feast was an important event in medieval life. Cookery books informed people about the best recipes to cook and courtesy books told people how to behave. For example, one warned diners not to fart, scratch flea bites, or pick their noses. The most important task was to ensure the table was laid in the correct way. Important guests had to sit at the top table (board) which was often placed on a raised platform, the dais. Guests were not only given different food according to their position but they were also given different cutlery, bowls and glasses.

Below is a description of a feast by Bartholomew the Englishman written in the 13th century. Although written slightly later than the true Norman period, it is a great rare example of how the Normans influenced the way people ate and feasted.

“Guests sat with the lord in the chief place of the board (trestle table), and they sitt not down at the board before they wash their hands. Children are sat in their place, servants at a table by themselves. First knives, spoons and salts are set on the board, and the bread [these were large slices of stale bread called trenchers that nearly all classes used for plates] and drink and many different dishes... The guests are gladdened with lutes and harps. Now wine and dishes of meat are brought forth and divided. At the last comes fruit and spices, and when they have eaten... guests wash and wipe their hands again.”

At the king’s table, roasted peacocks were amongst the poultry served and many meats were accompanied with spicy sauces. The Royal Court had a special department called the ‘spicery’ to look after spices which were very expensive. Jellies and custards were dyed with bright colours by using sandalwood for red, saffron for yellow, and boiled animal blood for black. Sotiltees (sugar sculptures) made to look like things such as castles were placed in the middle of the table. People tended to drink wine or ale.

The nobility would be seated according to their title. They wore a coronet – crowns with a fixed metal ring with no arches. Each title had a specific design, details of the different designs are included in Hands on Activity 1.

A Lord of the Manor owned a variety of land which meant he had fresh fish, meat, fruit and vegetables. All fruit and vegetables were cooked because people believed it was dangerous to eat them raw. He could afford to use expensive imported ingredients such as cane sugar, almonds and dried fruits such as raisins. He drank ale and wine on special occasions.

Peasants found it difficult to get fresh meat and/or fish so they ate food that had been salted or pickled to preserve it. These included pickled herring and bacon. They often ate potage (thick vegetable soup) with bread if it was not too expensive. Many kept pigs and cows so they were able to have buttermilk and cheese. Peasants tended to drink ale.

Feast days often marked the important events of the Christian calendar as well as days such as May Day, Midsummer’s Eve and completion of the harvest. In large houses travelling acrobats, jesters or players (actors) were often hired. Minstrels would sing and play from a raised gallery above the great hall where the feast would take place. Drums were often played after the feast to accompany dance music or the acrobats. Drums were brought to England by men returning from the crusades. The small drums or nakers were like the Middle Eastern naqqara. The drums played were a kind of kettledrum with a curved body made of wood covered with animal skin stretched very tightly over the top and tied in place. The drums were often hung in pairs on a belt.

On the next page is an original Hands on History illustration showing how a Norman feast may have looked. You can use this image on your interactive white board or as a hand-out to introduce the subject.
MEDIEVAL
Feasting
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Introductory Activity

Directions
1. Introduce Norman feasting using the Background Information included in this pack.
2. Lay out a selection of foods from different cultures and countries of the world.
   You may want to choose countries that reflect the variety of cultures in your class.
3. Encourage pupils to taste a selection of food, particularly things they haven’t tried before.
4. Discuss with the children what the food tastes like, what it looks like and where the food may have come from. What can we learn about the countries from the food?
5. Display the Medieval Menu on your interactive whiteboard, or hand it out to the children as a worksheet.
6. As a whole class, discuss what we can learn about the Normans from the food they ate.
   Points for discussion could include:
   – Why were some of the courses not offered to peasants?
   – How is the medieval menu different to the food we would eat at a modern-day party?
   – What sort of food from the different food groups did they eat? Point out that their diet consisted of a great deal of meat.
   – What medieval food would the class like to eat and what would they not like to eat?
     Point out the particularly unusual items, such as eels and peacocks and how the later courses contained many spices (see Background Information about the importance of spices).
   – What can we learn about the Normans from what they ate?
     (See Teacher Guidance sheets for ideas.)

Did you know?
Although this menu may seem indulgent, the majority of people in Norman times were peasants who could not eat most of the food included, so the menu reflects the divisions in society at the time.
Introductory Activity –
Class resource – Medieval Menu

First course
Potage
A thick soup of meat and vegetables, boiled together to form a thick mush

Eel Broth
Eels boiled for 20 minutes in water and vinegar, mixed with boiled carrots, onions, milk and the yolk of one egg

Pandemayne
White bread

Second course*
Stuffed Peacock
A large peacock, stuffed with a goose, stuffed with a pheasant, stuffed with a hen, stuffed with a wild duck, stuffed with a partridge, stuffed with a quail, stuffed with a squab, stuffed with a snipe, stuffed with an ortolan, stuffed with a fig pecker, stuffed with an oyster and roasted over an open fire

Capoun or Gos Farced
Roasted chicken or goose stuffed with eggs and pork seasoned with pepper, ginger, cinnamon, saffron and grapes

Third course*
Roasted Wild Boar
A whole wild boar, roasted to perfection and served with its head on and an apple in its mouth

Roast Venison (deer)
Deer that was skinned, part boiled and then put on a spit over the fire and brushed with red wine and ground ginger sauce. It was recovered with the skin and head to be carried into the great hall on the spit and carved.

Fourth course*
Sugared Milk

Pears cooked in red wine
Halves of peeled pears cooked in a saucepan of red wine

Fifth course*
Sugared Almonds
Shelled nuts

*These courses weren’t available to peasants
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Hands on Activity 1
Prepare a Medieval Feast

Directions
1. Explain to the class that they will be creating a medieval feast day celebration
together (see Teacher Background notes for the Feasting lesson plans for more
information on Norman feasts).
2. Divide the class into four groups and explain that each group is in charge
of preparing one element for the feast.
3. Hand out the Preparing the Feast Instruction Cards to each group:
   – Group 1: Trenchers and Spoons
   – Group 2: Goblets
   – Group 3: Crowns and Coronets
   – Group 4: Drums
4. Allow each group one hour to make their offering for the feast. If you think they
will lose focus during a long period, get pupils to rotate their groups so that
everyone makes something at each table.
5. Once each group is finished, lay out the desks to form a medieval banquet table(s).
6. Ask groups one and two to describe what they have made to the class and then
lay it on the table.
7. Ask group three to describe what they have made and then hand out the coronets
for everyone to wear. They will need to explain why designs vary.
8. Ask group four to describe what they have made and then to beat a rhythm
on the drums to set the scene. You may also want to play some Medieval Music –
you’ll find some here: bbc.co.uk/radio3/earlymusicshow/pip/fiqxf
9. Invite the children to eat their packed lunch at the feasting table.
10. Over lunch discuss the similarities and differences between feasting in Norman
times and how we eat today. Points for discussion could include:
   a. Do we ever feast in the same way the Normans did?
      – Think about modern celebrations.
   b. When would we wear crowns and coronets?
   c. How is the cutlery we use today different to that used by the Normans?
11. End the feast by giving everyone the chance to beat a rhythm on the drums.

Top tips
- Ask every pupil to collect and bring in a plastic tub, plastic drink bottle
  and sticks the week before running the session.
- Remind the groups to make enough of each element of the feast for
each child in the class.
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Hands on Activity 1
Prepare a Medieval Feast

Some information and top tips to use with each group:

**Group One: Spoons and Trenchers (Plates)**
- This is the simplest task so if you have a group requiring a less complicated role, assign this task to them.
- To ensure you have a range of trenchers to discuss (silver/wood/bread), ask the group to divide the number of people in the class by three to find out how many of each design to make.
- If you want to explore Norman social class divides with your pupils, allow the group to lay out the range of trenchers randomly around the table. Once everyone has taken their seat, ask Group One to reveal that some class members have silver trenchers which were for nobility while others have wood and some people simply have old bread, as a peasant would.

**Group Two: Goblets**
- You may need to explain how radius is measured and how to use a compass.
- Some pupils may need help making the cone in point 8.
- Remind the group that the type of goblet they are making was normally only used by the wealthy as the poor would have had simple wooden cups.

**Group Three: Coronets**
- This is the most complicated of the tasks, ideal if you have a group you’d like to give a real challenge.
- Ask the class to make several of each design so that there is a mixture of crowns for the class to wear at the feast.

**Group Four: Drums**
- With a younger class, cut the tea towel into little pieces before the activity starts.
- When playing the drums you can get the class to tap the drum with their right and then left drum stick. When they get the hang of this, vary it with two right taps followed by one left etc. in order to create different rhythms.
- See the Teacher Guidance Notes for more information about drums.
Preparing the Feast Instruction Cards

Group One
Trencher and spoon

Equipment needed
Cardboard
Foil
Brown paper
Play dough
Sticks
Rulers
Scissors

How to make a medieval spoon
1. Take a piece of play dough and mould the top of the spoon. See picture above.
2. Take a stick and insert into the play dough to make the handle.
3. Cover some with foil to represent metal for the nobility and the others with brown paper for the poorer people and peasants who would have had wooden spoons.
4. Remember to place the spoon face down once made, as medieval people believed putting it on the table facing upwards would let the devil into your life.

How to make a trencher (plate)
1. Take a large piece of card/cardboard.
2. Draw a rectangle that is 40cm long and 30cm wide.
3. Cut out the rectangle.
4. Cover the rectangle with foil for the nobility (metal), brown paper for the poorer guests (wood) and yellow paper for the peasants who would have eaten off stale bread!
Group Two
Goblets

Equipment needed
Plastic drink bottle
Toilet roll
Sticky tape
Card
Ruler
Compasses
Gold, silver and brown paper
Felt-tip pens
Scissors

How to make a goblet
1. Take an empty plastic drink bottle. Screw the lid on tightly and place sticky tape around the edges of the lid to prevent leaks.
2. Turn upside down and measure 8cm from the lid up the length of the bottle. Discard the end of the bottle, keeping the left-over part with the lid. You now have a watertight cup for the top of your goblet.
3. Place the bottle upside down in a toilet roll tube.
4. Use sticky tape to fix the two together.
5. Cut a circle from cardboard that has a radius of 6cm.
6. Stick the circle of card to the bottom of the toilet roll tube to make a base for your goblet.
7. Draw a circle on some card with a radius of 12cm, or bigger if you are making a larger goblet.
8. Cut out the circle. Cut a line half-way to the centre and twist the card to make a cone shape. Hold the cone together with some sticky tape and place on top of the goblet to make a lid.
9. Cover the goblet you have made with gold, silver or brown paper (or use paint).
10. Decorate the goblet using red and blue colours to represent jewels and painted decoration.
**THE NORMANS**

– Feasting: Hands on Activity 1

Preparing the Feast Instruction Cards

**Group Three**

**Coronets**

**Equipment needed**
- Stiff card
- Yellow paint
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Felt-tip pens
- Squares of shiny coloured paper
- Red tissue paper
- Glue
- Cotton wool
- Black markers

**How to make a coronet**

1. Get into pairs.
2. Place a piece of card around your partner’s head to measure the length of card you will need for your band, and mark with a pencil. Add an extra 2cm to your measurement to make sure you have enough card to stick the two ends together later. Make another pencil mark. Cut your card to length.
3. Measure 10cm for the height of the crown and carefully cut the strip to the correct height (you should now have a strip of card 10cm high and long enough to fit around your partner’s head).
4. Now it’s time to design the pattern for your coronet. Coronets had ‘triangle points’ with either strawberry leaf shapes or round balls on them. Draw and cut out the decoration for all the levels of the nobility in the Norman period (see box below for examples).
5. ‘Paint your coronet yellow to look like gold. Use coloured pens and the shiny paper to add ‘jewels’ and decorations.
6. Stick the band together in order to make a circle.
7. Place red tissue paper (a red velvet cap was originally worn) inside the coronet to cover the wearer’s head. Use sticky tape to stick the two together.
8. Stick cotton wool around the bottom of the coronet and add black dots to it. Originally this was made of ermine (a small mammal with spotted fur).
9. Now measure the heads of others in the class and make enough coronets for everybody.

Each member of the nobility wore a coronet with a special design:

- Dukes – wore coronets decorated with eight strawberry leaves stuck on triangular points around the band.
- Marquis – wore a coronet decorated with four strawberry leaves and four silver balls on triangular points around the band.
- Earls – wore coronets decorated with eight strawberry leaves and eight silver balls on triangular points around the band.
- Viscounts – wore coronets decorated with 16 silver balls stuck straight onto the top of the band.
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Hands on Activity 1
Preparing the Feast Instruction Cards

Group Four
Drums

Equipment needed
Plastic tub (round, plastic tubs work best)
Baking paper
Sticky tape
Scissors
String
Sticks
Ruler
Cotton wool
Old tea towel
Cotton

How to make a medieval drum
1. Take a plastic tub without a lid and place upside down on a sheet of baking paper.
2. Draw around the edge.
3. Add a 3cm boarder to your drawing.
4. Cut out the shape on the baking paper – be careful as it can tear easily.
5. Place tightly over the top of your tub and fix to the tub with sticky tape.
6. Tie a piece of string around the edge for decoration and to use to carry.

How to make a drum stick
1. Cut out a 5cm square of cloth.
2. Take a cotton wool ball and place inside the small piece of cloth.
3. Place on the end of a stick.
4. Tie it into place using cotton.
5. Repeat so you have two per drum.
6. Work out a rhythm to play to the rest of the class.
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Hands on Activity 2
Make a Medieval Snack

Materials needed per group
Individual mixing bowls
Dessert spoons
2 small plastic drinking glasses – one for breadcrumbs and one for honey water.
2 small bowls containing a little ground ginger and cinnamon
Baking paper or cake cases
Baking tray or plates
Aprons

Preparation in advance
Do this first part outside the classroom.
1. Pour boiling water into a large bowl/jug and add six tablespoons of honey.
2. Allow to cool before taking to the classroom and then add to the individual cups.
3. Pupils can then add more honey to the sweet water.
4. Make sure they write their name on their cake cases/baking trays.

Directions
1. Divide the class into pairs.
2. Explain to pupils that they will be making a medieval snack.
3. Hand out worksheet 2: Gingerbread recipe.
4. Support children to make the recipe.
5. As a class, sit down and eat the gingerbread together.
6. Discuss how the gingerbread tastes in comparison to the cakes and biscuits we have today.
Quick Gingerbread

Medieval Gingerbread was very different to the modern version. It was much more like a sweet and was eaten by people as a treat. It was moulded into beautiful shapes in a variety of colours before being presented to guests. It was also eaten by the rich as it contains a number of expensive spices that only the wealthy could afford.

**Ingredients:**
- A mug of warm honey water
- 3 tablespoons of honey
- A mug of breadcrumbs
- A pinch of ground ginger
- A pinch of cinnamon

**Method:**
- Pour the honey water into a mixing bowl.
- Quickly stir in the three tablespoons of honey.
- Add the ginger and cinnamon spices and stir.
- Stir in the breadcrumbs a dessert spoonful at a time.
- Keep going until you have sticky dough that can be moulded into balls.
- Take out small balls of the mixture and using your hands mould them into squares, circles or rectangles that are about 5cm thick.
- Place the shapes onto baking paper or in cake cases.
- Leave them to stand for at least 10 minutes while you clear up.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon and serve.
THE NORMANS
– Feasting: Evaluation

• Ask the class to think about the food they eat today and the food from the Norman era.
• Hand out sticky notes and ask pupils to write down three things they would like to try from the Norman menu, as well as three of their favourite modern foods.
• Ask them to place their sticky notes on the wall/whiteboard.
• Invite a volunteer to read out the class's thoughts.