

SIX BATTLES THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Session I

The Battle of Plataea Sept 478 BC

The Greek world

The Persian empire

The first Persian invasion 490BC

The Battle of Marathon Sept 12, 490BC

The second Persian invasion 480 BC

The Battle of Thermopylae

The Persians attack and destroy Athens,

 followed by the Battle of Salamis Sept 25, 479 BC

The Battle of Plataea Sept 478 BC

The Battle of Mycalle Sept 478 BC (same day as Plataea)

Afterward

The Battle of Tours Oct AD 732

The Muslims in Spain (from AD 712)

The Muslim invasion Summer 732

The conquest of Aquitaine

Charles Martel and the Franks

The Battle of Tours Oct AD 732

Afterward

Session II

The Battle of Hastings (Senlac Hill) Oct 14, 1066

Saxon England

Normandy

William, Duke of Normandy

England 1066: The year of 4 kings

Harold Godwinson is elected and crowned King of England, Jan 5, 1066. He prepares for the expected Norman invasion.

The Norwegian Vikings invade northern England Sept 1066

The Battles of Fulford Gate, Sept 1066, and Stamford Bridge, Sept 25, 1066

The Battle of Hastings (Senlac Hill) Oct 14, 1066

Williams is crowned King of England Dec 25, 1066

A five year campaign follows to complete the conquest of the remaining 2/3 of Saxon England to repel foreign invasions, and to suppress rebellions (Saxon and Norman).

Afterward

The Siege of Vienna July 17—Sept 12, 1683

The Ottoman Turks

Eastern Europe and Vienna

The Ottoman invasion of summer 1683 and the attack on and siege of Vienna

Relief and the defeat of the Ottomans Sept 12, 1693

Afterward

Session III

The Battle of Trafalgar Oct 21, 1805

Napoleon vs England

The Royal Navy, England's guardian

Napoleon's plans for England

Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson

Nelson's unorthodox battle plan

The Battle of Trafalgar Oct 21, 1805

Afterward

The Battle of Jutland May 31—June 1, 1916

The Royal Navy, still England's guardian

The rise of Germany and the German Navy

HMS Dreadnaught, 1906. The first modern arms race
1914: Looming world war. England and Germany on the eve of war.
The Royal Navy and German Navy's conflicting war plans
Neither the Royal Navy nor the German Navy does what the other side
expects. Back to the drawing board.
Revised war plans—surprisingly similar
The Battle of Jutland May 31—June 1, 1916
Who won?
Afterward

SIX BATTLES THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Plataea Sept 478 BC

Location North of Plataea—southeast central Greece

Combatants

Greeks

Commander Pausanias (Spartan)

Forces est. 38,700 Hoplite and 40,000 lightly armed

Persians

Commanders Mardonius

Masistius (cavalry)

Forces est. 100,000—150,000

Losses Unknown

Result Persian force collapsed upon the death of Mardonius. Most fled to the fortified camp as others fled north. Some of that group made it back to Persian territory. The fortified camp held out for 20 days and surrendered. This victory meant the end of the Persian threat and insured Greek freedom and the Greek golden age that followed.

Tours Oct AD 732

Location South of Tours in NW France

Combatants

Franks

Commander Charles Martel (the Hammer)

Forces est. 25,000 infantry

Muslims

Commander Abd al Rahm

Forces est. 50,000 cavalry

Losses

Franks est. 5,000
Muslims est. 30,000

Result Already in disorder, the Muslim line collapsed when Rahman is killed. Most flee to the fortified camp in the rear. Others flee to the south. The fortified camp is stormed and all Muslims are killed. The Muslims abandoned all areas they had captured and withdrew to Muslim-controlled Gascony in SW France. This battle was the highwater mark of Muslim conquests in Europe at that time. They were ultimately driven out of France. Europe would remain Christian.

Hastings Oct 14, 1066

Location Senlac Hill, 7 miles north of Hastings on the Channel coast

Combatants

Saxon

Commander King Harold II
Forces est. 7,000 infantry

Normans

Commanders Duke William of Normandy
Odo, Bishop of Bayeux
Forces est. 7,500 infantry, archers and cavalry

Losses

Saxon est. 2,500
Norman est. 3,000

Result After a number of attacks, the Normans break the Saxon line. Harold is killed and the Saxons flee to the north as night falls. This, the most important battle of the Norman conquest, was

the beginning of a 5 year campaign to conquer and maintain control of England. It wasn't until the 1080s that it could be said that William had firm control of England. The Normans, who ultimately numbered 20,000, had conquered a nation of 2,000,000.

Siege of Vienna July 17-Sept 12, 1683

Location Vienna, Austria

Combatants

Austria

Commanders Count Ernst Von Starlemberg
King Jan Sobieski of Poland
Charles V, Duke of Lorraine

Forces Starlemberg 16,000 (in Vienna)
Sobieski & Charles 80,000 man relief force

Ottoman Turks

Commander Vizier Kara Mustafa

Forces 150,000

Losses

Vienna & allies 5,500

Ottoman Turks 15,000+

Result Having suffered heavy casualties and with its outer defenses breached, Vienna was near defeat. On Sept 12, the relief force attacked the Ottoman besieging force which collapsed and fled. The allies pursued them and retook Hungary and other areas that were added to the Austrian Kingdom. This action was the high tide of the Ottoman presence in Europe and the last Muslim incursion into Europe.

Trafalgar Oct 21, 1805

Location Off Cape Trafalgar, SW of Cadiz, Spain

Combatants

Britain

Commanders Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson
Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood
Forces 28 ships of the line, 2,148 cannon, 18,500 men

France and Spain

Commander Vice Admiral Pierre Villeneuve
Forces 33 ships of the line, 2,632 cannon, 27,000 men

Losses

British No ships lost, 455 killed, 1,243 wounded
French & Spanish 4 ships sunk, 17 captured, 3,243 killed, 2,538
wounded, 7,000 captured

Result The crushing defeat of the French and Spanish fleet ended the threat of Napoleon invading England, a threat that had hung over England for years. Trafalgar is considered the greatest victory in Britain's long and illustrious naval history.

Battle of Jutland May 30—June 1, 1916

Location Eastern North Sea, NW of Denmark, west of the Skagarak

Combatants

Britain

Commanders Vice Admiral John Jellicoe
Vice Admiral David Beatty
Forces 28 Dreadnaught battleships
9 Battle cruisers
6 Heavy cruisers
20 Light cruisers

77 Destroyers
140

Germany

Commanders Vice Admiral Reinhard Scheer
 Vice Admiral Franz Von Hipper

Forces 16 Dreadnaught battleships
 8 Pre-Dreadnaught battleships
 5 Battlecruisers
 15 Light cruisers
 56 Torpedo boats
 100

Losses

British 3 Battle cruisers
 3 Heavy cruisers
 8 Destroyers
 14
 6,088 killed
 680 wounded
 177 captured
 6,945

German 1 Pre-Dreadnaught battleship
 1 Battle cruiser
 4 Light cruisers
 5 Torpedo boats
 11
 2,551 killed
 505 wounded
 3,056

Result The German fleet's failure to find the means to defeat the British fleet meant that Britain's blockade of Germany would continue and that Germany's downward spiral to starvation and defeat would continue.

