The Middle Ages cover a long period of world history. There were so many changes in weapons, ways of fighting and ways of protecting fighters that it is difficult to make generalisations (to say that something is almost always true) about medieval warfare. In this unit we will look at some examples from different times during the Middle Ages. This should allow you to find out about other battles and fighters of the time. We will focus on two examples of warfare from the early part of the Middle Ages: the Viking invasions and the outcomes of the Battle of Hastings. You will investigate two questions. What were the reasons behind some of the battles of the early Middle Ages? What were their results?

**Expanding territory**

The Vikings would probably be the best-known warriors of the early part of the Middle Ages. From around 790 to the middle of the eleventh century, people from Scandinavia raided and settled in other countries. They sailed in long ships to places such as England, France, Turkey, Russia and even as far as North America. The Vikings were terrifying invaders. They believed that only men who died in battle would go to Valhalla (heaven). Some historians believe that before going to battle the Vikings chewed a certain type of toadstool to make them bolder or extremely aggressive. Some historians have said that the attacks carried out by the Vikings were part of a search for new lands for settlement. It is possible that a very fast rise in the Viking population meant that they simply did not have enough land. There was also a strong tradition of piracy in Norway. Those who lived along the coast often made their living by attacking passing ships. Once the Norwegians discovered the treasures that were held in the many undefended monasteries, they quickly took advantage of them. It is said that the Viking invasions widened the world of the early Middle Ages because they travelled so far from Europe.

**Social changes**

After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William of Normandy had successfully invaded England to become its king. The Normans (William’s followers) had to make sure that they could not be overthrown by the English, who hated them. The Normans built castles to protect themselves from rebel attacks. William was constantly guarded by an army of knights on horseback. The best way to ensure that this army was always ready to defend him was to have them living with him. His soldiers were given part of William’s lands in return for military service. This, of course, was known as the feudal system. Although the first result of William’s victory over the English was that he became the king, a longer-term result was the beginning of the feudal system in England.

**Castles**

When we think about wars and fighting in Medieval Europe, we usually think of knights and castles. Castles were an important way of defending land during the Middle Ages. The first castles in England were built by the Normans when they defeated the Anglo-Saxons in 1066. Castles were built all over England. They helped the small number of Normans to control the English because they were a