

The long view



Canterbury Cathedral has been at the centre of some very important events during its long history. Some of the most dramatic events are listed here.

Can you arrange these events in order?

a. A fire destroys the Anglo-Saxon Cathedral.

b. Baedeker Raids destroy large parts of Canterbury and the Cathedral is damaged but survives thanks to the bravery of its Firewatchers.

c. A great plague – later called The Black Death – sweeps the country. The city's burial ground has to be enlarged to take the dead but most of the monks survive.

d. A Viking called Thorkell the Tall and his army besiege Canterbury and kidnap the Archbishop, Alphege. The city and Cathedral are plundered and burned.

e. Saint Augustine is sent by Pope Gregory the Great to re-establish Christianity in England. He establishes his cathedral on this site and becomes the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

f. Archbishop Thomas Becket is murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by four of King Henry II's knights. He is buried in the Crypt and soon after his death, numerous healings and other miracles are reported. He is later made a saint. Canterbury Cathedral becomes an important and very popular place of pilgrimage.

g. Archbishop Lanfranc – the first Archbishop after the Norman Conquest, orders the Cathedral to be rebuilt in the Norman style.

h. Geoffrey Chaucer begins writing the Canterbury Tales, a series of stories shared by a group of pilgrims as they travel together from London to Saint Thomas Becket's Shrine in Canterbury Cathedral.

i. In the 1530s King Henry VIII breaks with the Pope... Canterbury Cathedral's monastery is dissolved by royal command during the English Reformation and its monks are forced to leave. It is the last monastery to close.

j. The Cathedral's interiors are damaged and 'blasphemous art' destroyed by the Puritans during the English civil Wars from 1642 to 1643.

k. The North West Tower of the Cathedral is built. The Cathedral building now looks much like it does today.



Now pick which event you think of as the most important. You can discuss this with others, but you must be able to explain and present why you made this choice.

1.E 2.D 3.A 4.G 5.F 6.C 7.H 8.I 9.J 10.K 11.B