**Overview:**

The *Domesday Book* is the record of the great survey of England completed in 1086, executed for William I of England, or William the Conqueror. While spending the Christmas of 1085 in Gloucester, William "had deep speech with his counselors and sent men all over England to each shire to find out what or how much each landholder had in land and livestock, and what it was worth" (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*).

One of the main purposes of the survey was to determine who held what and what taxes had been liable under Edward the Confessor; the judgment of the Domesday assessors was final—whatever the book said about who held the material wealth or what it was worth, was the law, and there was no appeal. It was written in Latin, although there were some vernacular words inserted for native terms with no previous Latin equivalent, and the text was highly abbreviated. The name *Domesday* comes from the Old English word *dom* (of which the Modern English *doom* is a descendant), meaning *accounting* or *reckoning*, with cognates in other Germanic languages. Thus *domesday*, or *doomsday*, is literally a day of reckoning, meaning that a lord takes account of what is owed by his subjects. Richard FitzNigel, writing c. 1179, stated that the book was known by the English as 'Domesday', that is the Day of Judgement "for as the sentence of that strict and terrible last account cannot be evaded by any skilful subterfuge, so when this book is appealed to ... its sentence cannot be put quashed or set aside with impunity. That is why we have called the book 'the Book of Judgement' ... because its decisions, like those of the Last Judgement, are unalterable."