



Year 3

Anglo-Saxons, the Scots and the Vikings Reading Booklet

Spring Term 1 & 2

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Name: _____

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Lesson 1 - Anglo-Saxon England

The Anglo-Saxons were migrants who came to England from Europe after the departure of the Romans. During the Anglo-Saxon period, there were seven main kingdoms in England and two in Scotland. In the north of England there was a kingdom called Northumbria. South of that in the middle of England was the kingdom of Mercia.

The kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia both had great power at different times. In the south of England was also the kingdom of Wessex. These were the three largest kingdoms. Many Anglo-Saxons were farmers who owned small areas of land. Anglo-Saxon farmers grew wheat, barley, oats and beans. They would also raise animals such as pigs, cows, goats and sheep. Children did not go to school but helped on the farms.

Before the spread of Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons were pagans and worshipped many gods. They worshipped Gods of the natural world; Gods for family, crops, the weather, love and wisdom.



Lesson 2 - The Picts and the Scots

The Picts were some of the first settlers in Scotland. They left few written records, so much of what we know about them comes from Roman or Greek accounts, from what they left behind - in particular the designs and symbols they left on large stones, and from stories that were passed down through word of mouth.

While the Romans successfully invaded Britain, they were unable to defeat the Picts. After the Romans left, the Pictish army attacked and destroyed cities built by the Romans in Britannia. The Pictish tribes united under one king who ruled Pictland. They put up large Pictish stones with symbols. Historians use the Pictish Stones to

find out about the Picts, and still disagree today about the purpose of the stones. Some historians believe that they represented each tribe, with different tribes having their own symbols.



Lesson 3 - Anglo-Saxon Settlements

Historians believe that the Anglo Saxons were skilful administrators. While Anglo Saxons are often portrayed as living in farming communities, where people worked harmoniously together - in reality there was a caste system. The king and the ealdorman (who were responsible for administration and justice) were at the top, below them were the soldiers - thegns, and below them were the Ceorls. People were also enslaved in Anglo Saxon society and it is believed that people could sell themselves and their families into slavery in times of famine.

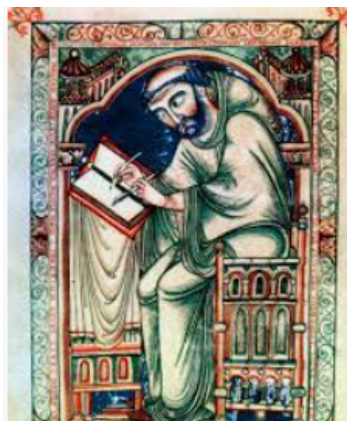
There was a massive gulf between the rich and the poor. The average life expectancy was 30 years old and infant mortality was very high. Most people worked in farming but there were other specialisms such as glassmakers, stonemasons, carpenters and sailors. Anglo-Saxon farmers grew wheat, barley, oats and beans. They would also raise animals such as pigs, cows, goats and sheep. Anglo Saxons would also hunt for food and used trained hawks and dogs to help them to catch ducks, wild birds, deer and wild boar. Anglo Saxons weaved wool from sheep and goats to make cloth. Clothes were made from woollen cloth or animal skins.



Lesson 4 - Anglo-Saxon Culture and Religion

The Anglo Saxons were skilled craft workers and made jewellery, musical instruments and toys and games. They would gather together in feasting halls and tell stories, sometimes accompanied with music. Although few Anglo Saxons could read or write, stories were passed down by word of mouth, such as the story of Beowulf, a heroic prince, who battled a fierce man-eating monster called Grendel.

Before the spread of Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons were pagans and worshipped many gods. They worshipped Gods of the natural world; Gods for family, crops, the weather, love and wisdom. Meanwhile in Rome, the Pope decided to send a missionary to England to tell all of the pagans about Christianity. As the word spread, churches and monasteries were constructed all over England. Some of these buildings were adorned with gold crosses and contained valuable manuscripts such as illuminated (decorated) copies of the Bible.



Lesson 5 - The Vikings: Ocean Sailors

The Vikings came from the area we now call Norway, Denmark and Sweden, or Scandinavia. They were very good ship builders and their boats were made from planks of wood. The Vikings would use tar from pine trees to coat the wood and make it waterproof.

Viking warships were called long ships and the Vikings would row them upstream, through narrow rivers, to attack inland locations. The Vikings wanted to trade with other people and also find new places to live. They travelled to many different places around the world, taking fur and slaves to trade for spices and silks. There is evidence that their ships reached as far North as Greenland, as far west as America and to Baghdad in the

east. Unlike how they are popularly portrayed, there is no historical evidence that Vikings wore horned helmets.



Lesson 6 - Viking raids and Invasion

Around 789, some Anglo-Saxons living on the Wessex coast noticed three long ships sailing near to the shore. When a local official went down to meet the visitors, the men from the ships killed him. The men were Vikings. After that, in their long ships, the Vikings raided other places, killing people and stealing valuables.

The monasteries were very attractive and easy targets for the Vikings; they had little in the way of defence but contained many valuable items. Many monasteries were attacked, including on the island of Lindisfarne in Northumbria. The Monks were killed, books were burned and anything valuable was stolen.

After the Viking raids had continued for many years, some Vikings decided to conquer Britain and stay for good. They attacked the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and ruled over Northumbria, East Anglia and Mercia, creating Viking settlements.



Lesson 7 - Viking settlements and Danelaw

When the Vikings came to Britain, the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms stopped fighting against each other because they now had the same enemy. The Anglo-Saxons fought the Vikings for many years. Some Anglo-Saxons paid what was known as 'Danegeld' to the Vikings to persuade them to stop attacking, but often the Vikings attacked regardless.

Eventually the Vikings settled in the north and the east of England and the area became known as the Danelaw. People who lived in the Danelaw lived like Vikings, following Viking laws and Viking customs. Like Anglo-Saxon settlements, in Viking settlements, most people lived on farms. The Vikings grew wheat, oats and barley so they were able to make flour for bread, porridge and ale. Vikings also kept animals on their farms such as pigs, sheep, goats, cows and chickens. The houses that the Vikings built were made from woven sticks covered in mud. The woven sticks are called wattle, and the mud covering is known as daub. A fire would often be lit in the middle of the house to cook from. Houses would have openings in their thatched roofs to allow the smoke from the cooking fire to escape. Viking houses were often rectangular, with people living at one end and animals living at the other. There were no toilets, but pits were dug in the ground for people to use.



Lesson 8 - Alfred the Great

One important Anglo-Saxon was King Alfred the Great. King Alfred ruled the kingdom of Wessex and fought back against Viking dominance in Britain.

He managed to stop the Vikings invading the south of England for many years. At one time, the only major kingdom that was not under Viking rule was Wessex. Some of the other Anglo-Saxon leaders joined together with King Alfred to fight against the Vikings. There is a story about King Alfred being left to watch some cakes (small loaves of bread) cooking in a fire. He dreams about defeating the Vikings and leaves

the cakes to burn.

In 878CE King Alfred gathered an army and defeated the Viking forces, led by Guthrum. This was an important victory for Alfred. Guthrum surrendered and the two sides made an agreement, a peace treaty, that established trade rules and land boundaries.



Lesson 9 - Viking Religion

The Vikings believed in many gods and goddesses. Their Old Norse religion is known as a pagan religion. In Viking religion, Odin was the ruler of all the gods; he was the god of magic, poetry and war. Thor, the god of thunder, ruled the skies. He rode a horse drawn chariot and carried a hammer that was said to have the power to destroy mountains. Freja is a Viking Goddess representing love, beauty, fertility, war and gold. Loki is a mischievous god who can change his shape.

As the Vikings began to settle in the British Isles, many began to convert to Christianity. Sometimes this was done to help ensure relationships between groups were peaceful. The Vikings settled and married into Anglo-Saxon Christian families, children of these marriages were then raised as Christians.



Lesson 10 - King Cnut the Great and Edward the Confessor

Eventually the Anglo-Saxons defeated the Vikings and Danelaw returned to English rule. In later years, the Vikings came back again and England was ruled by the Viking called King Cnut (also known as King Canute). He had a large Viking empire that included Norway and Denmark. There is a famous story about King Canute that tells of him showing his followers the limits of his power. Canute had heard that his followers thought he was all-powerful. He was a religious King, but also a very clever King. He knew the dangers of overestimating one's own powers. He took his followers down to the shore and sat on his throne. He commanded the tide to stop coming in. When the waves continued to reach further, seemingly ignoring his command, he explained that even though he was King, he had no power like God's power.

A few years after the death of King Canute, England had an English King called Edward. He built the original Westminster Abbey which was finished in 1065. He died in 1066 and was buried in the abbey. Many years after he died, he was made a saint because people believed he could perform miracles. He was given the name Edward the Confessor. He left no clear heir to the throne. He had strong connections to Normandy, where William, Duke of Normandy had plans to take the English throne.



Lesson 11 - The Norman Invasion

1066 is a famous year in British history. It was in this year that Britain was successfully invaded for the last time. After the death of Edward the Confessor, no one knew who would rule next. At this time the throne was given to the person who had the strength to maintain stability in Britain, it was not automatically inherited. A group of leaders decided to give the throne to Harold Godwinson who was a noble from Wessex. Another claim to the throne came from the King of Norway, Harald

Hardrada. He wanted to be King of England as well, but he was defeated by Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire.

Shortly afterwards, William, Duke of Normandy also invaded Britain with his sights set on the crown. As soon as Harold Godwinson had defeated Harald Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, he heard news that William, Duke of Normandy, had invaded Southern England. Harold marched his battle-weary army south to meet the invading forces. The two armies met near Hastings on 14th October 1066.

Initially, although tired from the previous battle, Harold's armies held strong. They were positioned in an advantageous location, at the top of a hill looking down on the invaders. After some time, William told his army to feign defeat and pretend to run away from the scene. The English soldiers chased them, leaving their hilltop positions and leaving themselves vulnerable. William's army capitalised on this mistake and William was victorious. He was later crowned King of England. The Bayeux Tapestry details the whole story from the death of Edward the Confessor to the Battle of Hastings.

