

# Anglo-Saxons

YEAR 5 | Autumn 1



## POLYTHEISM

The belief in or worship of more than one god.



## SYNECDOCHE

“Throne” and “crown” are examples of synecdoche, in which the part is made to represent the whole (or vice versa); in this case both mean the monarchy.



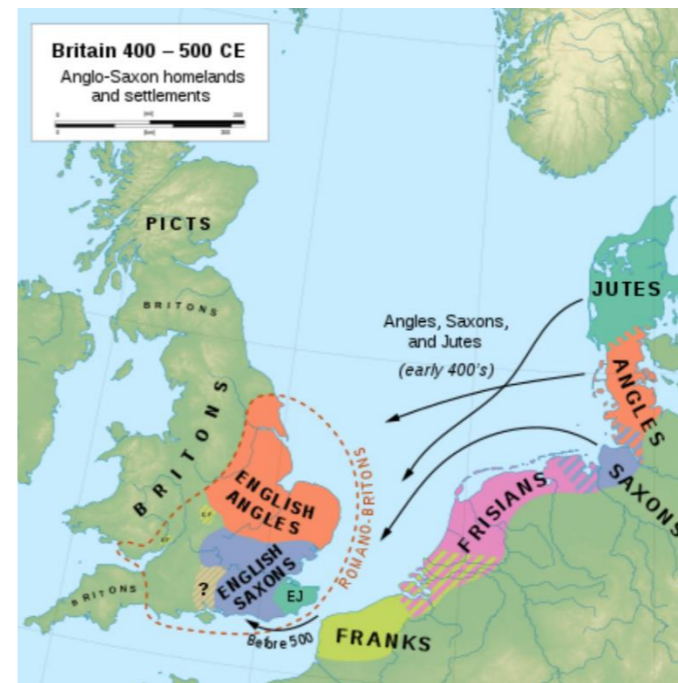
## MONASTERY

A building or buildings occupied by a community of monks living under religious vows.

## OVERVIEW

The Roman Empire successfully invaded and occupied Britain from 43 CE to 410 CE, after which Britain was left to defend itself. After the Romans withdrew their armies, at the beginning of the 5th century, tribes from the north called **Picts** and **Scots** intensified their raids on Britain. At the same time as this, tribes from continental Europe called the **Angles**, **Saxons**, **Jutes** and others began arriving in Britain from what is now Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, often coming into violent conflict with those living in Britain at the time; collectively historians refer to these settlers as Anglo-Saxons. Historians debate the reasons as to why the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain; it is likely they came for various reasons, including the good farmland in Britain, the lack of protection following the departure of the Romans and because some were invited to help defeat the invaders from the north.

It is hard to be sure about this period of time as less is written about it than other periods; for this reason it is sometimes known as the Dark Ages.



## KEY PEOPLE



### Egbert

King of Wessex from 802 to 839. Fought hard to defend Wessex from Mercia’s growing power. Briefly referred to as ruler of all territories



### Alfred the Great

Alfred was King of the West Saxons from 871 to 886 and went on to become King of the Anglo-Saxons from about 886 to his death in 899. He changed the armies, taxes, laws and schools of the country.



### Offa of Mercia

Offa was the Anglo-Saxon King of Mercia from 757 to his death in 796. Many historians believe he was the most powerful Anglo-Saxon ruler before Alfred the Great.



### The Venerable Bede

An English Benedictine monk born around 673, Bede was a teacher, scholar, and author. He is often called the ‘The Father of English History’,



### Aethelflaed

Known as the Lady of the Mercians, Aethelflaed, Alfred the Great’s Eldest daughter, played a major role in fighting against the Viking invaders during the 890s. In 911, Aethelflaed became the ruler of Mercia

## TIMELINE

c. 410 – the Romans left Britain, leaving it unguarded by armies and open to invasion by others

400

c. 586 - Anglo-Saxon England split into seven kingdoms (the heptarchy)

600

793 - the first Viking raids of Britain begin

800

865 - the Great Viking Army from Denmark invades England

1000

1066 - the Norman Conquest by William the conqueror

1200

c. 450 - Angles, Saxons, Jutes and other tribes begin arriving in Britain

595 - the Pope of Rome sends Augustine and other missionaries to convert the King of Kent to Christianity

829 - Egbert conquers Mercia and forces Northumbria to submit laying the foundations for an eventual united England

927 - Aethelstan conquers the last remaining Viking kingdom, York, and becomes the first king of a united England

## LIFE AS AN ANGLO-SAXON

- The British and Latin spoken language was gradually replaced by a Germanic language we call Old English, the direct ancestor of modern English
- Anglo-Saxons settled mostly along rivers and chose to not inhabit previous Roman buildings, preferring to build their own homes, except when Roman buildings were useful as forts
- Many cities and towns that still exist trace their names back to Anglo-Saxon words: bury - fortified place; ford - shallow river crossing; ham - village; stead - place; wick/wich – farm
- People in Anglo-Saxon Britain lived mostly as farmers – this was hard work; some people were also very skilled craftsmen, making tools and beautiful jewellery from metal and toys and games from wood.

## DIVISION OF ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN

By 586, the part of Britain that we now know as England (from land of the Angles) was divided into seven kingdoms, called the heptarchy: Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, Sussex, Essex, Kent and East Anglia. Each kingdom was ruled by a king, but the number of kingdoms and sub-kingdoms fluctuated as kings competed for supremacy



## CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

In 597, the Pope (the head of the Catholic Church in Rome) sent a monk called Augustine to convert King Aethelbert (the king of Kent) to Christianity; Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury; over the next century churches and monasteries were built as many Anglo-Saxons converted to Christianity.

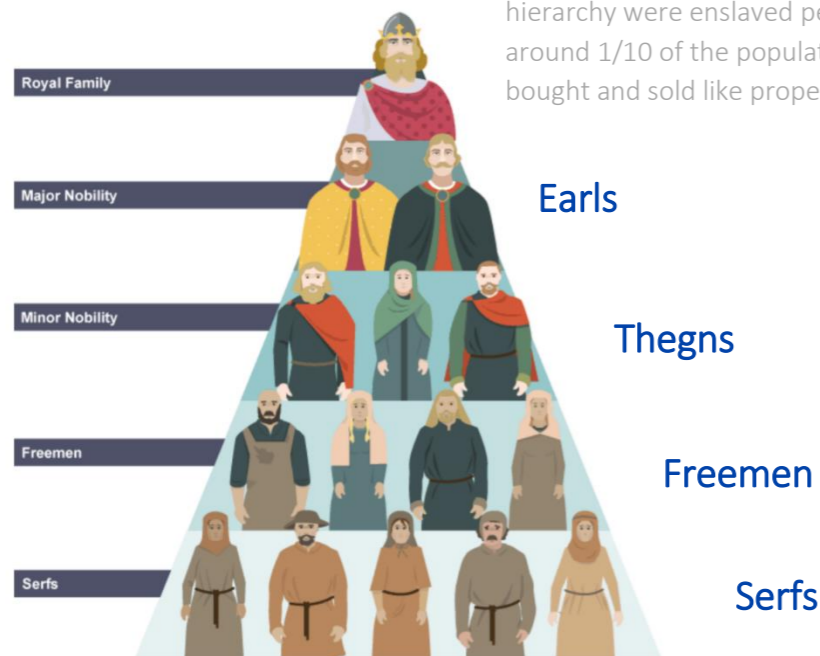
Monasteries were places where people could live lives of quiet prayer; some of these monasteries became renowned centres of Christianity and learning, including Lindisfarne and Iona.

Monasteries like Lindisfarne were home to precious treasures, including incredible works of art like the Lindisfarne Gospels that were created by monks. These were some of the most intricate artworks that had ever existed in the world at that point in time.



## SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Below the King and royal family were nobles, who owned large amounts of land. Serfs had to work on a given bit of land and give most of what they made to the local noblemen. At the bottom of the hierarchy were enslaved people who made up around 1/10 of the population and could be bought and sold like property.



A Tour around an Anglo-Saxon Settlement

A reconstructed Anglo-Saxon village in Jarrow, north-east England.



Anglo Saxons explained in 10 minutes

Youtube video taking you through the key moments



National Geographic: Facts

Extra information about the fierce Anglo-Saxons



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