

HISTORY



YEAR 4

WHAT IMPACT DID THE ANGLO-SAXONS AND VIKINGS HAVE ON BRITAIN?

The Big Picture

After a couple of hundred years of relative stability, the kingdoms of Britain face a new threat in the form of viking warriors who have gone a-viking! Norse and Danes pour into the British Isles, just as Geats and Swedes invade Europe. The Viking Age has begun – and the British Isles will be changed forever. After the other kingdoms of the heptarchy fall before the great Viking army, King Alfred of Wessex is able to stop the advance and make peace with the Viking leader Guthrum. The Danelaw is created and decades of uneasy peace follow until Alfred's children and grandson fight back against the Vikings, eventually uniting the Anglo-Saxons under one king for the first time: Athelstan, King of the English.

Then, after 60 years of peace, the English nobility had grown complacent and greedy. The House of Wessex was in decline. Vikings have reclaimed the Danelaw. Young King Ethelred 'the Unready' is poorly advised and makes some terrible decisions. In response, the Vikings, supported by some of the Saxon nobility, seize the throne. What follows is years of fighting over the crown of England, which will only end when trouble comes in the form of the Norman Invasion and the end of the Anglo-Saxon Period.



End Point Knowledge

The Anglo-Saxons vs the Vikings

- The Viking raid on Lindisfarne in 793 AD is considered as the start of the Viking Age in Britain. Sailing their longships up to the monastery on Holy Island, the Vikings carried off the church's gold and took the monks as slaves.
- After winning a battle against the Viking leader, the Roman Road of Watling Street formed the border between Mercia & Wessex and the Danelaw.
- Athelstan fought back the Vikings to become the 1st King of England in 927AD.
- Athelstan's victory at the Battle of Brunanburh solidified a unified 'Angla-londe' as the dominate power in Britain.

The Twilight of the Saxon Age

- King Ethelred the Unready is thought of as a weak and selfish king who failed to stand up to Viking raiders.
- Due to the chaos in this period, several people felt like they deserved the throne of England. Edward the Confessor's death on 5th January 1066AD sparked a series of events that led to the Norman Invasion and the Battle of Hastings.
- We know about this period because of contemporary historians such as Bede and Gildas, as well as what has been written in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. We also have archaeological evidence, for example the ship burial at Sutton Hoo.

Key Vocabulary

heathen, Brunanburh, overlord, Englishness, genocide, Viking, Norse, Danes, danegeld, unified, witanegamot (witan), tribute, charity, bishop, church, monastery