

Saxons and Vikings (The Dark Ages c500 – 1066 AD)

1. Who were the Anglo-Saxons?
2. Who were the Vikings?
3. Alfred the Great
4. Kings of all England
5. The Vikings return
6. Edward the Confessor and 1066

Draw a map of Britain on which will be added the names of Anglo Saxon Kingdoms and main towns in about 600AD Make a timeline showing 500- 1066. Mark on any important dates as you come to them

1. |Who were the Anglo-saxons?

- Make a chart giving some information about the **Angles, the Jutes and the Saxons**. Where did they come from and which parts of Britain did they take over? Where does the name 'England' come from?
- Try to find out about **Hengist and Horsa**
- At this time there was no single king of all England - there were seven small kingdoms (a '**heptarchy**', meaning seven rulers): East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Mercia, Sussex, Wessex and Northumbria (you might see this last divided into Bernicia and Deira).

2. Who were the Vikings?

- Where did the Vikings come from? What were they like?
- When did they first come to Britain and what did they do?
- Finally, they decided to settle here. How did they go about it? By 878 they had taken over much of England. Read the story of **Saint Edmund the martyr**, King of Anglia
- Fighting went on for many years between the Vikings and Saxons. Read about **Ivar the Boneless** and his **Great Heathen Army!** Read about the Battles of **Englefield, Reading and Ashdown**).

3. Alfred the Great

- **Alfred** became King of Wessex in 987, when his brother King Ethelred died. He wanted to reclaim the land from the Vikings. Read the story of Alfred's Christmas battle with the Viking leader **Guthrum**. How did Alfred finally defeat Guthrum? What did the Catholic King Alfred demand of the Viking leader?
- What was the '**Danelaw**'?
- Alfred was a great scholar. Find out about some of the things he did when he was not busy fighting the Vikings (for example, he encouraged reading and translated several important books from Latin into Anglo-saxon and encouraged the teaching of reading to more people).

4. Kings of all England

- Alfred was succeeded by his son Eadward, who expanded the Kingdom of Wessex. Eadward's

son **Athelstan** finally defeated the Vikings and became the first king to call himself King of England in 927 AD. Read the story of Athelstan and **Saint Dunstan at Glastonbury**.

- For the next 50 years, England was ruled by Saxon kings whose names all started with 'E': Edmund, Eadred, Edgar, Eadwy, Edward the Martyr and Ethelred the Unready. Read the story of **the murder of Edward**, and how Ethelred came to the throne when he was just ten years old.
- The Vikings (or the Danes as they are known at this point) were launching daring raids on England and Ethelred felt under increasing threat. On 13th November 1002, he ordered the massacre of all Danes living in England. Read about the **Brice's Day Massacre** (why did Ethelred have to rebuild the cathedral in Oxford after this massacre?)

5. The Vikings return

- The leader of the Dane's, **Svein (or Sweyn) Forkbeard** wanted revenge, partly because his sister Gunhilde had been killed in the massacre. Over the next few years the raids increased until finally, in 1013, Svein successfully took over England and Ethelred fled to Normandy. Ethelred only returned when Svein died the following year.
- Svein's son **Canute (or Knut)** tried to declare himself king but was defeated. When Ethelred's son **Edmund Ironside** became king in 1016, he and Canute agreed to divide the kingdom between them. Why did Canute become King shortly after this? Who did he marry? How did he divide England up? Who did he make leader of the old Kingdom of Wessex?

6. Edward the Confessor and 1066

- Though Canute's sons Harold and Harthacanute reigned briefly, the throne returned to the English with **Edward the Confessor**. Who were Edward's parents? Where was he born? Whose daughter did Edward marry? Why is he called '**Saint Edward the Confessor**'
- Edward and his wife had no children, so Edward named an heir: who was this?
- Unfortunately, when he was dying, Edward seemed to change his mind and name someone else as his heir. Who was this?
- The next part of England's history is the story of what happened when these two men fought for the throne.... in the famous year **1066**.