

Ancient Civilisations: UKS2 – The Anglo-Saxons



Key vocabulary

territory	Land that is ruled by someone
scop	An Anglo-Saxon poet who either recited or sang their poems
estate	A large area of land belonging to a noble
churl	A free man, woman or child in Anglo-Saxon society
bloodletting	The act of draining blood from a patient to make them better
reared	Bring up and care for (an animal)
thane	A lord in Anglo-Saxon England
charms	Magical powers
embroidery	Cloth with patterns or figures sewn on it
cremation	The act of burning a dead body until it becomes ash



Overview

For the last 300 years of the Anglo Saxons, there were many ongoing wars and people lived in fear of Viking raids, especially if they lived on the sea or near a river.

The Anglo-Saxons created the first books; using animal skin parchment the pages were bound together and were only really read by nobles and kings.

There were a wide variety of outdoor sports including hunting, riding and the tug-of-war. Feasts were common and music including harps and pipes were enjoyed.

Most people were farmers and had to work very hard just to stay alive; food took a lot of effort to produce. Some others were craftsmen – Anglo-Saxons were expert metal workers.

Men were buried with their tools and weapons whilst women were often laid to rest with a bowl and a spoon. Rich Anglo-Saxons were sometimes buried in a boat or sometimes cremated as a hero.

There were few cities – instead most people lived in villages in small one roomed homes (which often included their animals) grouped around their thane's home.

There were few doctors, a few people knew Greek or Roman medicine. Herbs and ointments were used to treat most ailments and bloodletting was common.

Before converting to Christianity, as pagans many spells were also used including the ritual of a pregnant woman stepping three times over a dead man's grave to ensure a healthy baby.

Key dates

400 CE	Last of the Roman's leave Britain
449 CE	Angles and Saxons arrive by boat in South east Britain
540 CE	Invading Angles, Saxons and Jutes conquer England
585 CE	Five separate kingdoms form with each having its own king
664 CE	England begins to follow the Christianity of Rome
789 CE	First recorded Viking attack
865 CE	A large Viking force arrives and rampages across the country for 14 years.
878 CE	England is split between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes
937 CE	Athelstan (King of Wessex and Mercia) defeats the Vikings and rules over all of England
1066 CE	Anglo Saxon age comes to an end

Artefact 1: Combs



Combs were made from animal bones (from livestock that the Anglo-Saxons kept) or from the antlers of deer. Combs are very commonly found items suggesting that the Saxons cared about their appearance!

Artefact 2: Fuller Brooch



The Fuller Brooch was made in the 800s possibly in King Alfred's workshops. The different sections of the silver showcase the different senses.