

History Subject Knowledge Bank

Year 5: The Viking and Anglo Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England

<u>Vocabulary</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Raid	A rapid surprise attack
Legacy	Long lasting impact of a person or event
Revolt	To take violent action against
Resistance	The refusal to accept something
Peasantry	Low status people who worked on farms
Ancestry	The origin of someone
Perspective	A particular point of view.
Danelaw	The law as stated by the Vikings
Pagans	Someone who holds beliefs different from organised religion

What happened in 1066?

- 1042 saw a new king of England called Edward. He was the last king from the House of Wessex. He successfully defended his kingdom against invasions. He had no children so it was unclear who would become king next.
- After Edward died, the English Witan (council of Anglo-Saxon kings) chose Earl Harold of Wessex as the next king.
- Duke William of Normandy and Harald Hardrada, the King of Norway, were not happy that Harold became king. They both believed they had a claim to the throne.
- In 1066, England was invaded twice. First, a Norwegian army led by Harald Hardrada landed in the north.
- King Harold killed Harald Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.
- Three days later William's Norman army landed in the south of England. William and Harold's armies fought at the Battle of Hastings.
- The Normans won, King Harold was killed and William became king. This brought an end to Anglo-Saxon and Viking rule. A new age of Norman rule in England had started.

How and when did the Vikings invade?

- Many Vikings left Scandinavia and travelled to Britain. Some came to fight but others came peacefully to settle.
- The first Viking raid recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was around AD 787. It was the start of a fierce struggle between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings.
- The Vikings were pagans, not Christians, they did not think twice about raiding a monastery. Christian monasteries in Britain were easy targets for the Vikings.
- In AD 865 an army of Vikings sailed across the North Sea. They wanted to conquer land rather than just raid it. Over several years the army battled through northern England, taking control of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia and most of Mercia.
- By AD 878, almost all the kingdoms had fallen to the Vikings. All except for Wessex, which was ruled by Alfred the Great. King Alfred beat the Viking army in battle but wasn't able to drive the Vikings out of Britain.

Who was the most powerful and the weakest Anglo-Saxon kings?

- The most powerful Anglo-Saxon king was Edgar. Anglo-Saxon England reached its peak during Edgar's reign.
- Ethelred the Unready was thought of as a weak king of England, he gave the Vikings gold and land to stop them invading. This money was called Danegeld. But it didn't work – the Vikings took the gold and attacked anyway. Ethelred's soldiers killed many Viking families in the Danelaw.
- This made King Sweyn of Denmark angry. He invaded England and Ethelred fled to France. Sweyn's son Cnut became king of England. Cnut was a strong ruler and England became part of his Viking empire, later along with Denmark and Norway.

What did King Alfred do?

- In AD892 over 300 Viking ships invaded Britain to fight King Alfred.
- Raids, ambushes and battles went on for five years, until AD897. Alfred made laws and believed education was important. He had books translated from Latin into English, so people could read them.
- To help protect his kingdom from Viking attacks, Alfred built forts and walled towns known as 'burhs'.
- King Alfred stopped the Vikings taking over England. He agreed to peace with them and some Vikings settled in their own area of eastern England, called the Danelaw. There were three main areas where Vikings lived in England, Northumbria (which included Yorkshire), East Anglia and The Five Boroughs (Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Stamford and Lincoln). He built warships to guard the coast from raiders and organised his army into two parts.
- While half the men were at home on their farms, the rest were ready to fight Vikings Alfred died in 899 and was buried at his capital city of Winchester.

What happened after Alfred the Great?

- In 892-93 they renewed their attacks on the midlands and south-east
- After Alfred, Anglo-Saxon kings took the Danelaw territories back from the Vikings.
- Alfred's grandson, Athelstan, pushed English power north as far as Scotland and was the first king to claim to be 'King of all England'.
- In AD954, the Anglo-Saxons drove out Eric Bloodaxe, the last Viking king of Jorvik (York). Later, when Eric was killed in battle, the Vikings agreed to be ruled by England's king

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