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# The Anglo-Saxons Learning Resource

## Teacher Notes

### KS2



# Overview

The Royal Armouries learning resources have been created for teachers to use in the classroom or for your pupils to access from home with strong teacher guidance. The Anglo-Saxons learning resources pack is specifically designed to assist your Key Stage 2 pupils in studying:

- Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons, the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England
- local history.

The Anglo-Saxons had a huge impact on British social, cultural, religious and military history and our resources focus on these. They will help pupils with their:

- chronological understanding,
- source knowledge and understanding
- development of historically valid questions.

The Royal Armouries collection is home to some fantastic Anglo-Saxon objects, including the famous Pioneer Helmet, seen on the front page of this booklet and included in our online Image Bank.

Below are notes intended to help you use our online resources and collection to bring this topic to life for your pupils.

# **General information**

## **the Anglo-Saxons**

The Anglo-Saxon period began in around 410AD when the Romans retreated from Britain and ended with the death of the King Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Anglo-Saxons consisted of many different peoples, hailing originally from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. Whilst they often fought one another, the separate tribes eventually settled in different areas of England, each with their own King. By 600 AD, five major kingdoms had emerged: East Anglia, Kent, Mercia, Northumbria and Wessex.

When not in battle, Anglo-Saxons were expert craftspeople, using wood and metal to make impressive armour, weapons, toys, trinkets and jewelry. They are known for their love of wordplay, stories and music. One of the most known Anglo-Saxon stories in the modern world is the Saga of Beowulf.

From 787 AD, Anglo-Saxon settlements were attacked by Viking settlers from across the North Sea. Britain once again became split, with the Viking controlled land, known as the 'Danelaw' - covering most of the North East of England, leaving the Anglo-Saxons living mostly in the South West.

# Key Terminology

**The Pioneer Helmet** One of only six Anglo-Saxon Helmets ever to have been found in England from the 7th and 8th centuries. A boar crested helmet like the Pioneer helmet is mentioned in the Beowulf saga. Boars were commonly associated with warriors by the Anglo-Saxons due to their attributes of fierceness and strength and the protection of the gods they represented.

**The Saga of Beowulf** An epic tale set in 6th century Denmark, composed between 700 and 750 AD. Throughout the poem, many forms of armour feature boar iconography, just like the Royal Armouries' Pioneer Helmet.

**Saex** A dagger that gets its name from the Old English word for 'knife'. The name 'Saxon' actually comes from the word 'seax'. They were used for everyday tasks like cutting meat, but also handy in battle if required.

**Dane Axe** Famously used by 'hausscarls', the bodyguard of the King of England and the only professionally trained warriors in a Saxon army. They were often taller than its user and required two hands to wield.

**Trelleborg Shield** A round shield with a central boss (metal dome protecting the hand). Primarily used for defence but could also be used as a weapon.

**Shield Wall** Rows of warriors overlapping their shields to create a strong defensive formation.

**Mail Shirt** Armour made from thousands of small interlocking metal rings used to make a shirt. Great for protecting against slashing attacks.

# The resources

## Beowulf Video

In this video, Beowulf recalls his swimming competition against his friend, Brecca. It is a great example of first person perspective in literacy structures. The video is designed to deliver the Beowulf story in a way that the Anglo-Saxons would recognise (verbally on an evening around a fire), and will inspire pupils:

- to create stories made to be delivered orally
- To increase oracy skills

## Time Travel Radio: Saxon Sagas

This fictional interview between Tina the Time Traveller and Grendel's mother is designed to show pupils how a story can change if told from a different perspective and opinion. This resource can assist pupils with their:

- Literacy composition skills
- Historical enquiry skills
- Understanding of historical sources

## Photo Bank

The photo bank has been compiled to assist your lessons in any way that you see fit. They are all original photographs or images of items in our collection. Please download them for educational use only. They would be great for increasing historical knowledge, building evidentially supported enquiries and historical source work.

Images will be added and updated on a regular basis.

We have added notes to each image; collections items are hyperlinked in the descriptions to our Collections Online, where you can get more images and technical information; and the asset numbers for our Image Library are given where relevant. If you would like any more information about any image, please contact [educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk](mailto:educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk) and we would be happy to assist.