

Beowulf

Anglo – Saxon Background

Brythons

- A group of Celts in Great Britain

Animism

- Latin for “spirit”
- “Spirits” had to be constantly satisfied (like Native American religions)

- Priests who acted as intermediaries
- They connected the Celts to their numerous gods
- Stonehenge – place of worship
- Closely related to what we know as “Paganism”

Druids



Celtics

- **Characteristics of Celtics:**
 - Strong women
 - Magic
 - Imagination
- “Arthur” – one Celtic hero

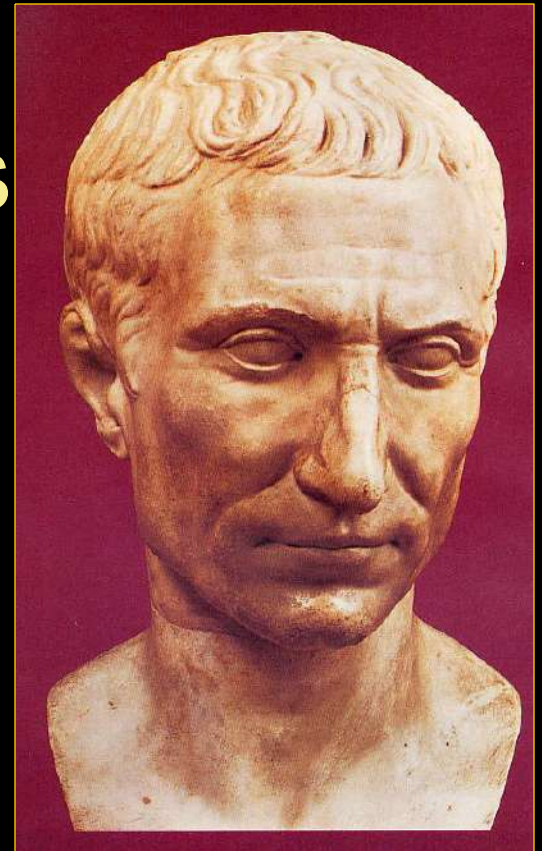


was deep
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted
him,
SIR-BEDIVERE, the last of
all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh
the field,
A broken chancel with a broken
cross,
That stood on a dark strait
of barren land.
On one side
lay the Ocean,
and on one
Lay a great
water, and
the moon
was full.



The Romans Invade Britain

- 55 B.C. – Julius Caesar invades
- Had huge armies
- Built roads



The Romans Invade Britain (cont'd)



- Built great defensive wall – “Hadrian’s Wall” – 73 miles long
- Separated Britain / Scotland



The Romans Invade Britain (cont'd)



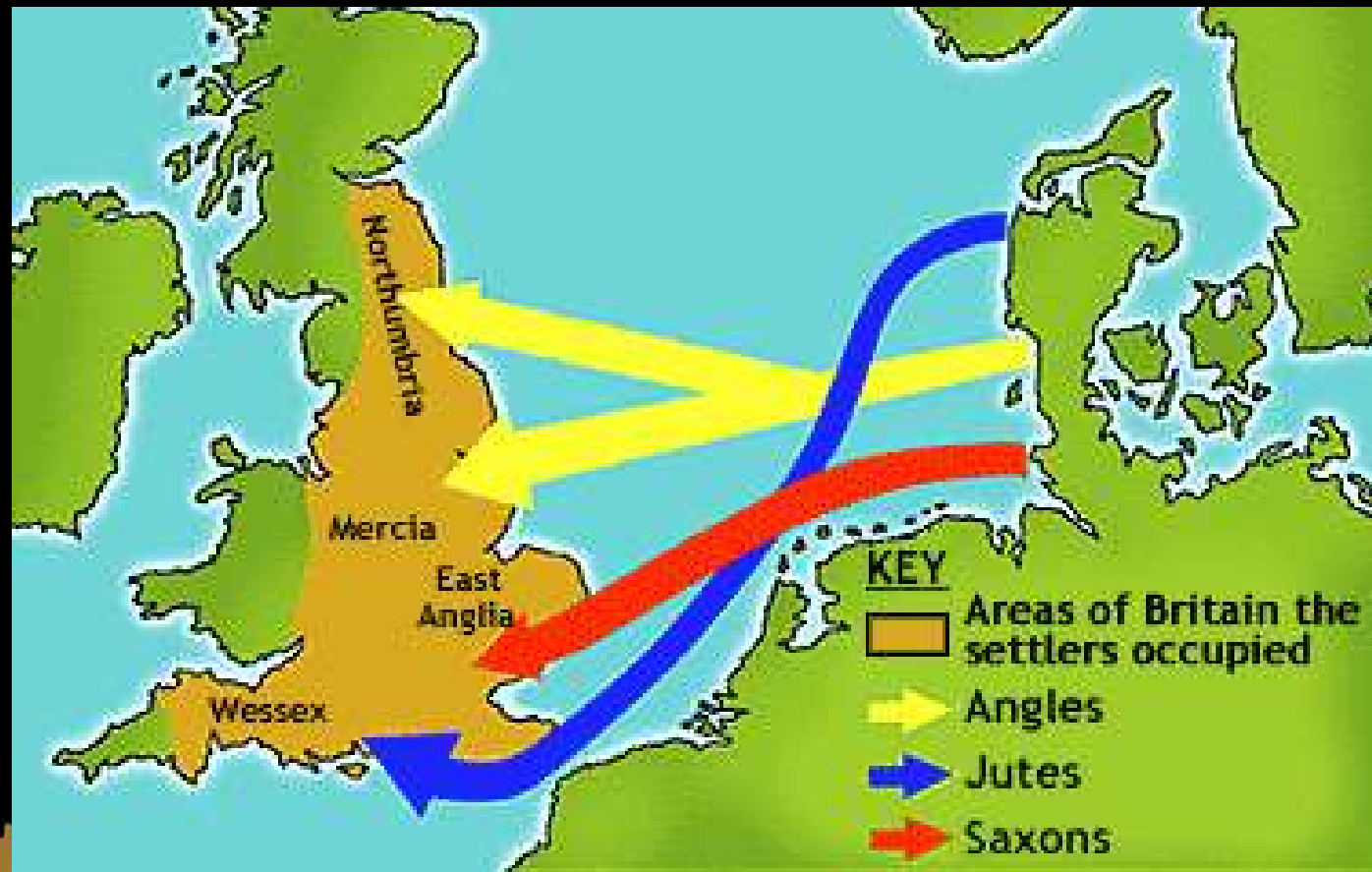
- Romans worshiped Christ
- Christianity took hold
- This meant that Celtic Religion (Paganism – worshipping many gods) began to vanish
- Romans spoke and worshipped in Italian (many English words have “Latin” roots)

The Romans Invade Britain (cont'd)

- Romans had to leave because of trouble at home
 - Left in 409 A.D.
- Britain was now a country of separate clans – EASY TO ATTACK!

Anglo Saxons (cont'd)

- **The Anglo Saxons invade Britain**
 - Angles and Saxons from Germany
 - Jutes from Denmark



Anglo Saxons

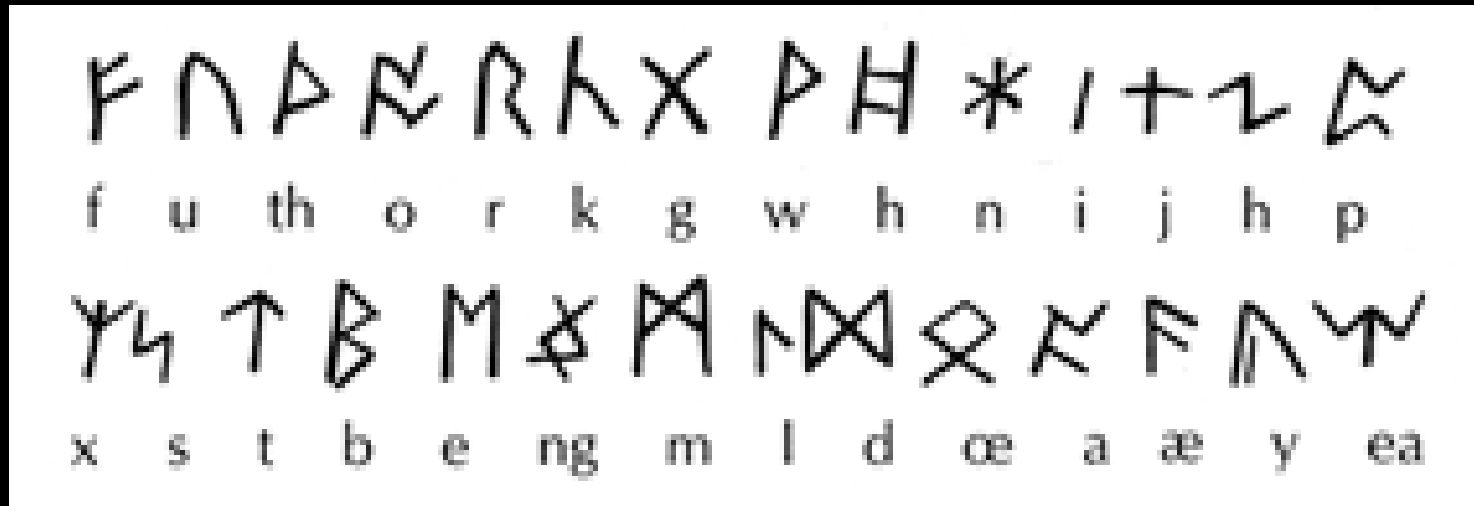
- Language of Anglo Saxons became dominant language



Anglo Saxons (cont'd)

- **Runes**

- Early Anglo-Saxons wrote using letters called “runes”. They believed runes had magical powers.





Anglo Saxons (cont'd)

- **King Alfred of Wessex**
 - “Alfred the Great”
 - Led attack against Danes (Vikings – Dragon Boats)
 - Helped unify Anglo Saxons using Christianity
 - Added morality and conduct
 - Linked England to Europe





Anglo Saxons (cont'd)

- Kinship groups led by strong chief
- Lived close to animals in single-family homesteads
- Had community discussion and rule by consensus (most everybody agrees)



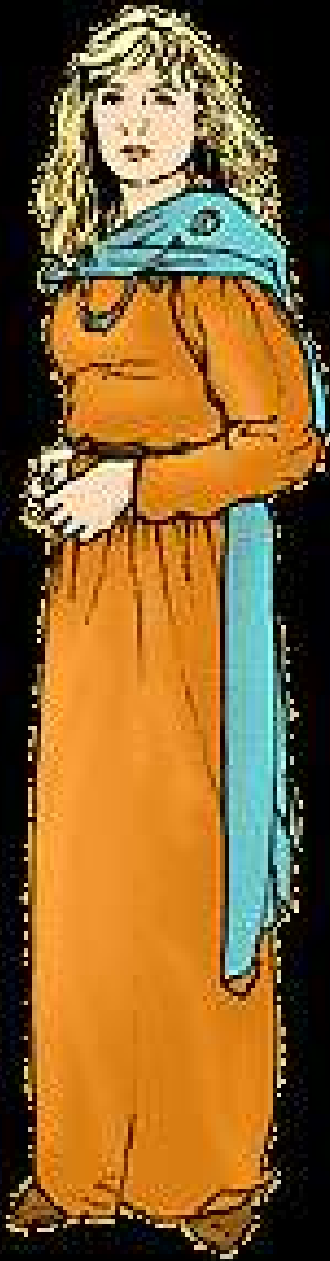
Anglo Saxons (cont'd)

- English gained respect as a written language

Vs.

- Churches – Bible was written in and worship was conducted in **Latin**

Anglo Saxons (cont'd)



- **Women**

- Able to hold land – even when married
- Husband had to offer gift of money and land
- Christianity offered opportunities for women

The Norman Invasion

- **The Norman Conquest**
 - 1066 William, Duke of Normandy (France), invaded Britain
 - Won at **Battle of Hastings**
 - Defeated King Harold



Influence of Norse Culture on Anglo Saxons

- **Norse Mythology**

- Odin
- Death
- Poetry
- Magic
- Anglo Saxon called him Woden
- WEDNESDAY



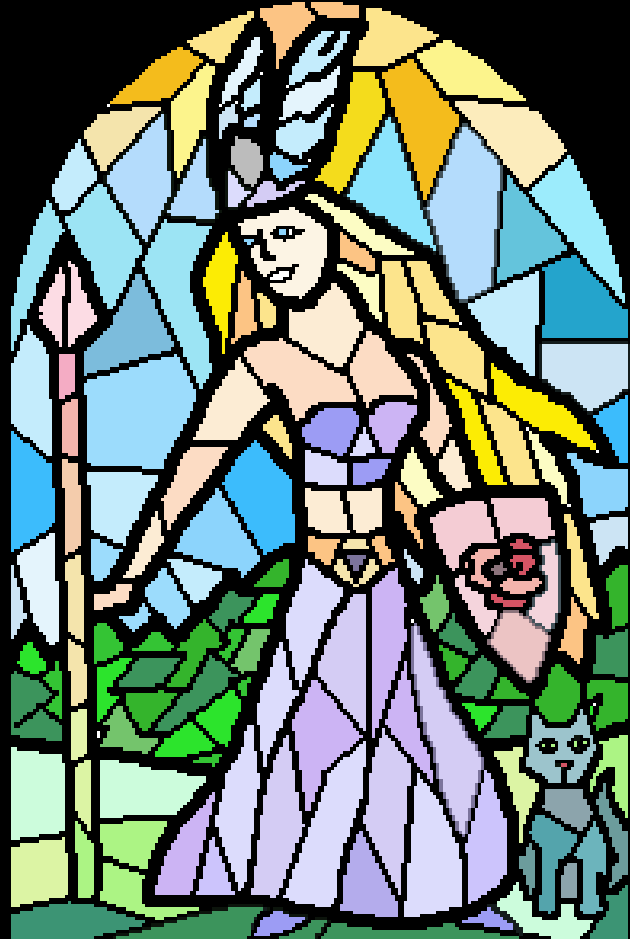
Influence of Norse Culture on Anglo Saxon



- **Norse Mythology**
 - Thor
 - Hammer
 - Anglo Saxon called him Thunor
 - THURSDAY

Influence of Norse Culture on Anglo Saxon

- **Norse Mythology**
 - Freya
 - Love and beauty
 - Queen of the Valkyries
 - FRIDAY



Influence of Norse Culture on Anglo Saxon

- **Dragons**
 - Protectors of treasures
- **Walhalla** –
“Heaven”



Characteristics of Anglo Saxons

- **Concerned with ethics over mysticism**
 - Bravery
 - Loyalty
 - Generosity
 - Friendship



More on Anglo Saxons

- **Bards**
 - Told stories and songs
 - "Scops"
- Creating **poetry** as important as being **warrior**
- Only fame and reverberation in **poetry** could provide a defense against death

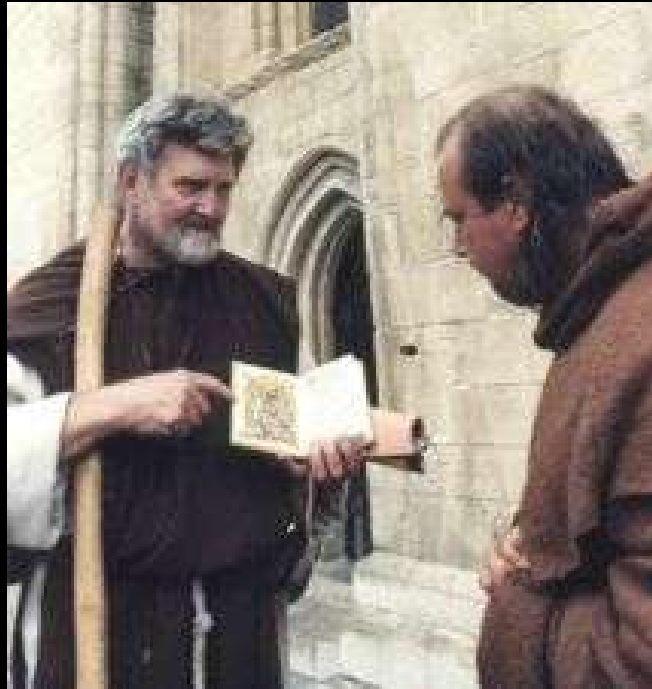


More on Anglo Saxons (cont'd)



- **Epic** – long narrative poem, usually about a quest
- **Hero** – man of high stature
 - Supernatural events, long time periods, distant journeys, good, vs. evil

More on Anglo Saxons (cont'd)



- Monks wrote copies of *Beowulf*

Hrothgar's Heorot

