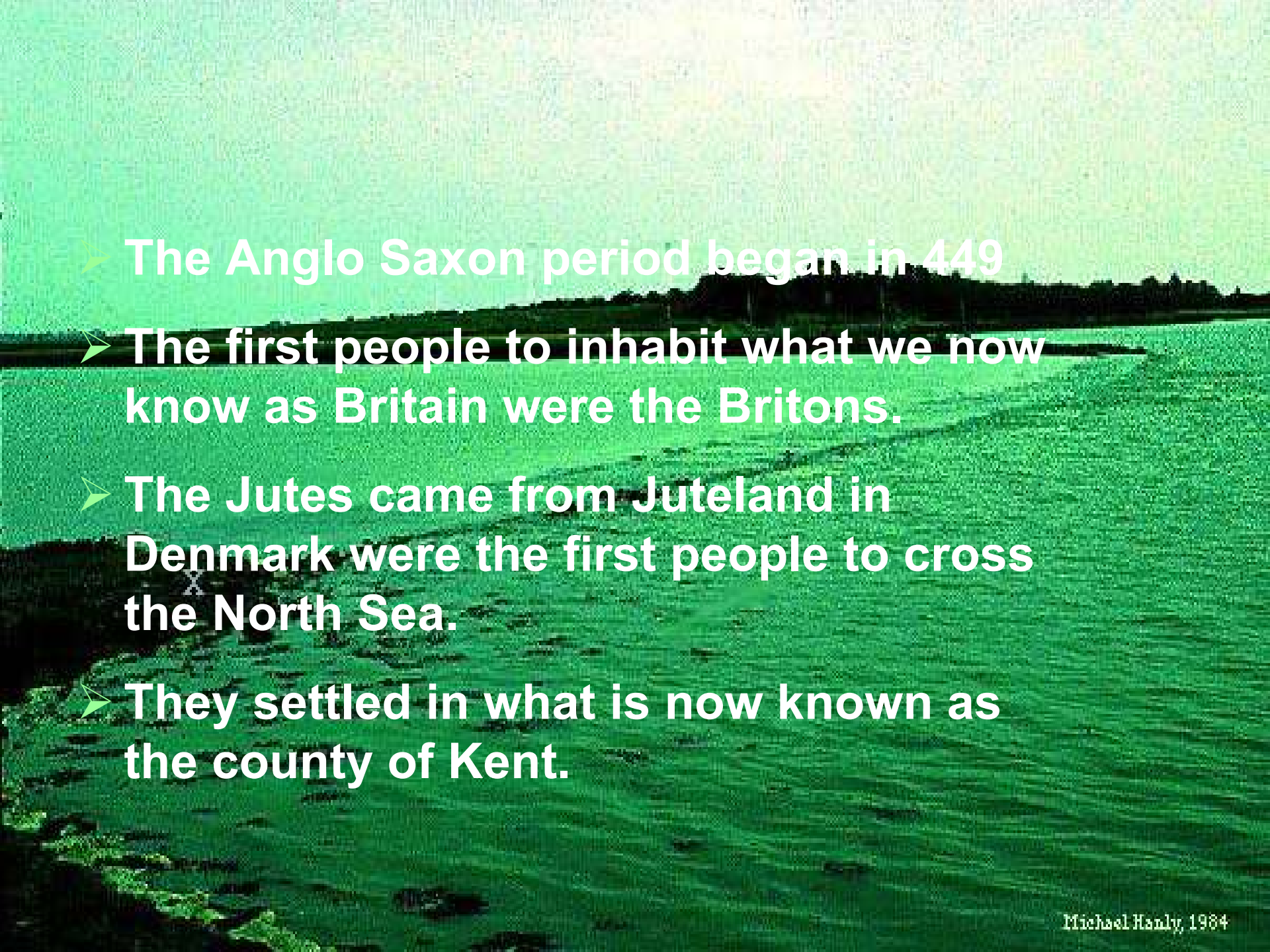


Introduction to the Anglo Saxon Period and Beowulf

Be sure to follow along and take notes

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- **The Anglo Saxon period began in 449**
 - **The first people to inhabit what we now know as Britain were the Britons.**
 - **The Jutes came from Juteland in Denmark were the first people to cross the North Sea.**
 - **They settled in what is now known as the county of Kent.**

- Another group of invaders were the Angles and the Saxons
- The Britons were no match for these invaders, but they did not give up without a fight.
- It is said that King Arthur may have been the leader of the Celtic people who were driven into Wales.



- These Germanic tribes brought with them a common language.
- Old English or Anglo-Saxon.
- Anglo-Saxon England (Angleland) was said to last until 1066.



During the Anglo-Saxon period
England was divided.

The most important areas were:

- Kent
- Northumbria
- Mercia
- Wessex

Anglo-Saxon England

(c) Matthew White 1996



- During the last century of this period the Anglo-Saxons were compelled to organize themselves to resist further invasion from the Vikings or Norsemen whom they called the Danes.
- King Alfred of Wessex (871-899) was able to unite his people and to force the Danes to the northeaster half of England.

Alfred the Great



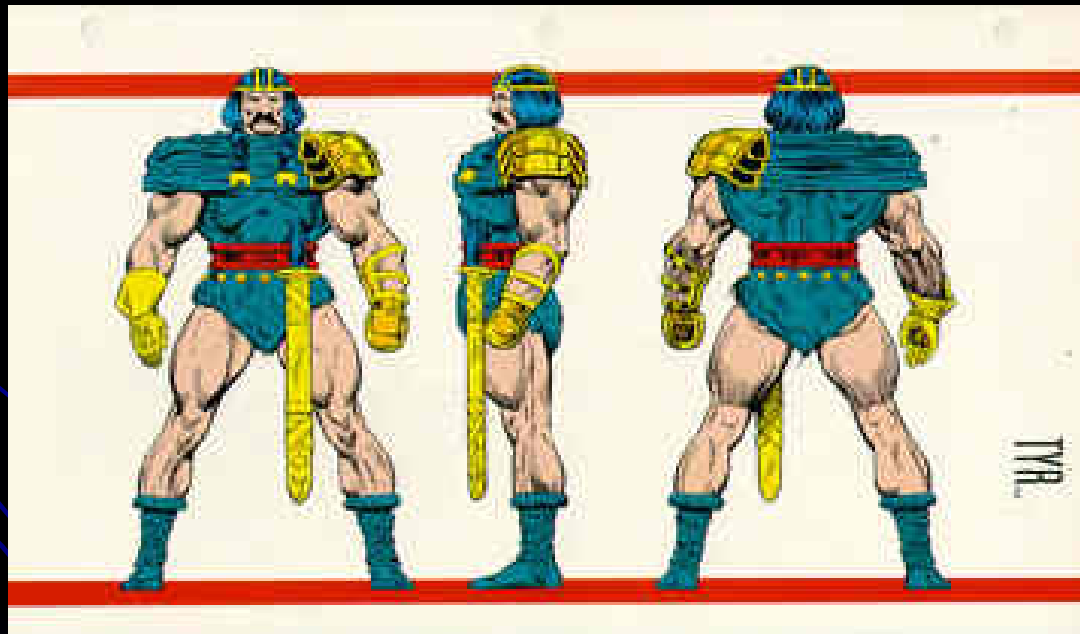
Although the Anglo-Saxons fought among themselves, they had a great deal in common.

- They used a common language
- They shared a heroic ideal
- They had a set of traditional heroes.
- They were loyal to their leaders and tribe.
- They held a belief of fierce personal valor.
- They admired men of outstanding courage.
- Persons of rank were received with grave courtesy.
- Rulers were generous to those who were loyal
- They had a democratic habit of mind.
- They were hardy and brave
- They had a passion for fine ornaments.



- Many basic American traditions in law, conduct, outlook, language and literature are from the Anglo-Saxons.
- One aspect of Anglo-Saxon civilization that survives today is the names of our weekdays.

Tuesday comes from Tiw, the god of war.



Wednesday comes from Woden, the chief Teutonic god.



Thursday comes from Thor, the god of thunder.



Friday comes from Frigga, the goddess of the home.

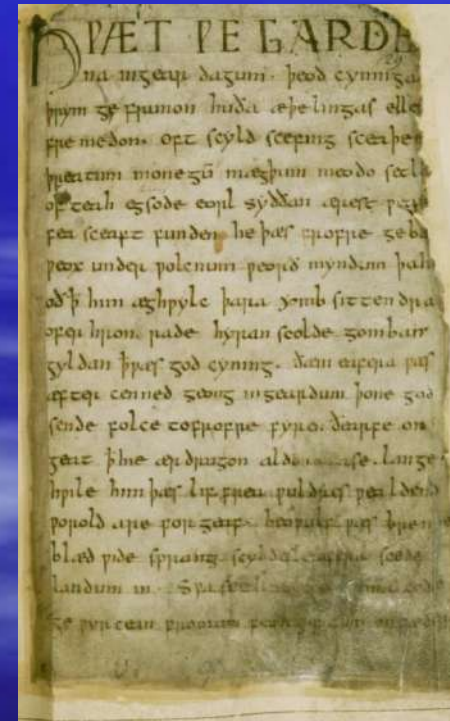


- Christianity came early to Britain.
- Saint Augustine, a famous missionary, came in 597 and established a monastery at Canterbury.
- He then became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.
- The Archbishops of Canterbury came to be regarded as the “Primates” of England.



- **Literature and the Arts began to evolve during this period.**
- **Anglo-Saxon poetry was an oral tradition.**
- **Caedmon was considered the first English religious poet.**

- An Anglo-Saxon poet was called a scop.
- He was the memory and historian of the tribe.

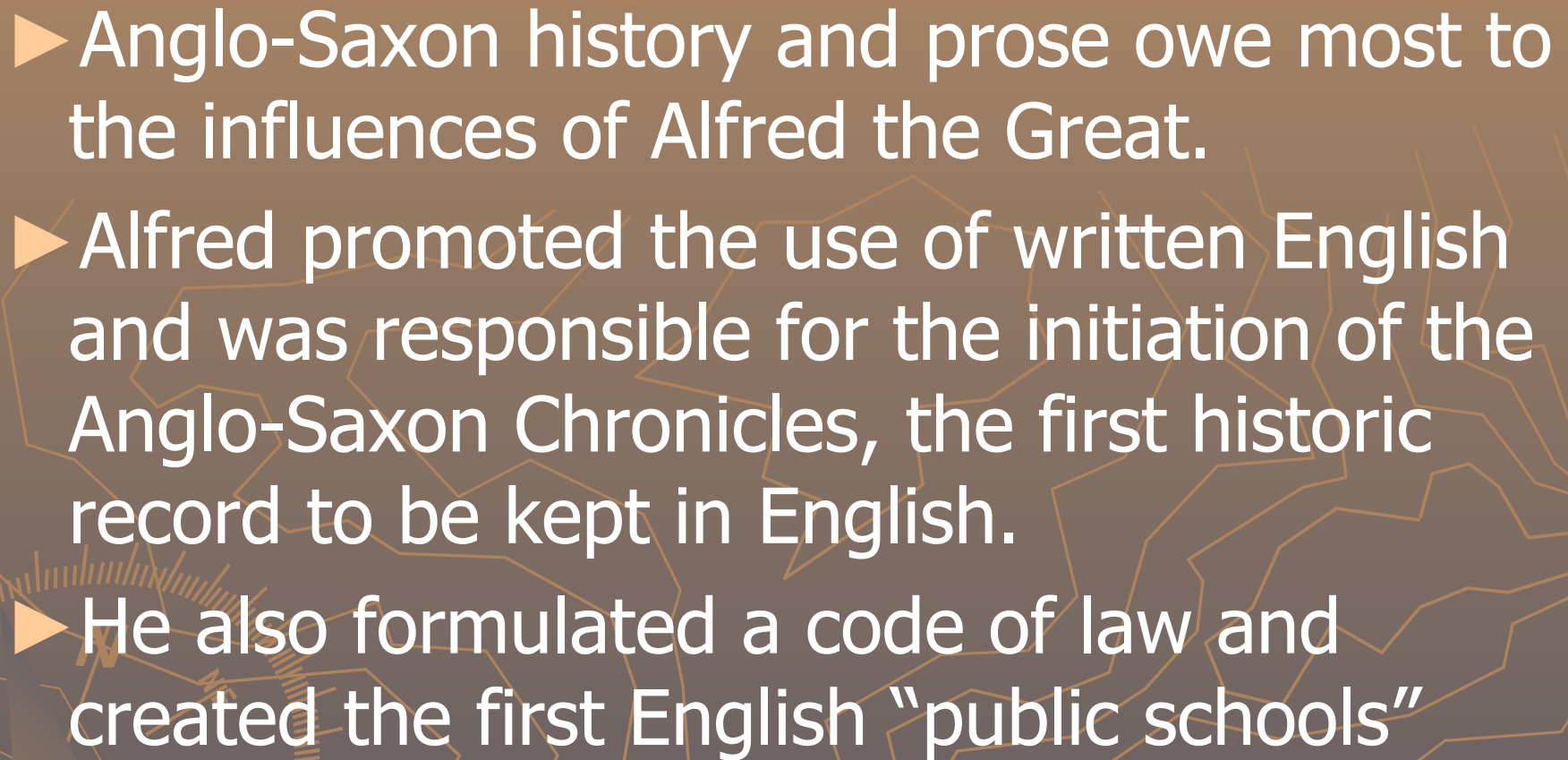


- The two most important traditions of Anglo-Saxon poetry were the heroic and the elegiac tradition.
- “The Seafarer” is a good example of an elegiac poem.
- The most important single poem from the Anglo-Saxon period is the epic *Beowulf*.

- The churchmen who wrote verse generally wrote in Latin.
- The earliest prose writers and chroniclers among the Anglo-Saxon churchmen also wrote in Latin.
- The greatest of these was Bede (673-735) who was the author of *A History of the English Church and People* (731).

Bede



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- ▶ Anglo-Saxon history and prose owe most to the influences of Alfred the Great.
 - ▶ Alfred promoted the use of written English and was responsible for the initiation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, the first historic record to be kept in English.
 - ▶ He also formulated a code of law and created the first English “public schools”

Although the Anglo-Saxon period was sometimes considered a violent period, they made many outstanding contributions to civilization.



