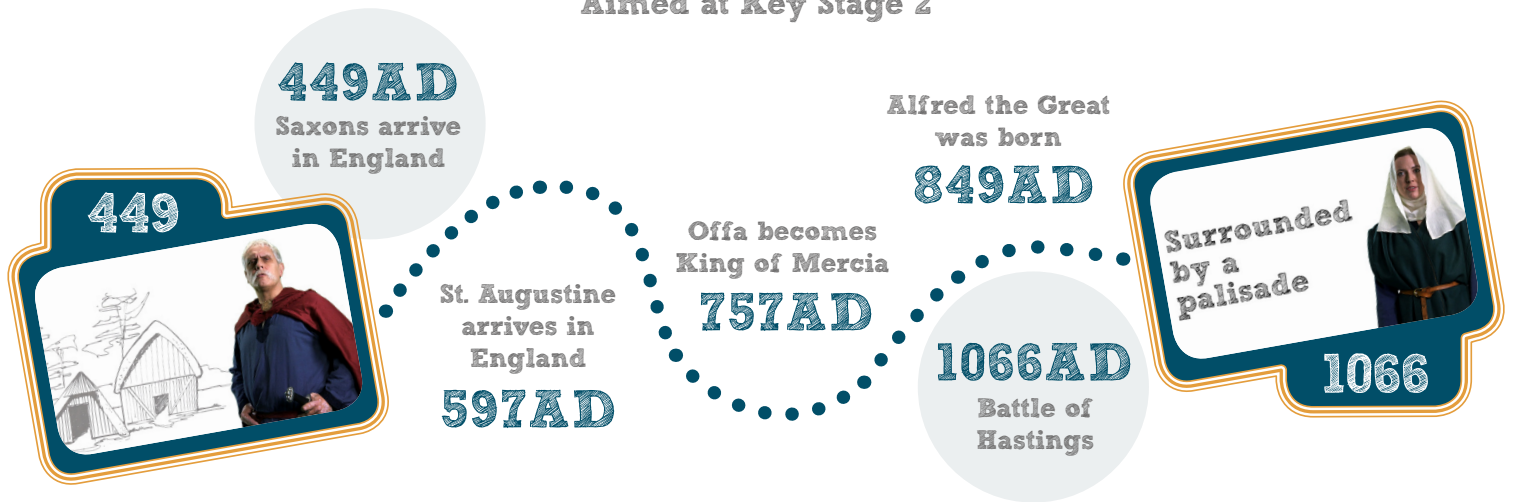


Anglo-Saxon

Aimed at Key Stage 2



National Curriculum subject links

Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots

- Anglo-Saxon invasions, settlements and kingdoms: place names & village

Coverage and links

The Anglo-Saxons make a fascinating subject for a historical enquiry partly because, chronologically, they come between two sets of invaders who arguably left a bigger mark. The Romans stayed for 400 years and built roads, towns and temples, but then left. The Normans came and stayed, causing perhaps the biggest turning point in our history for 1000 years. And yet, more quietly and with less fanfare, Anglo-Saxon society changed England in several significant ways, as pupils will learn during this short sequence of lessons. The focus of this enquiry is on the evidence we have of Anglo-Saxon life in Britain, on the artefacts, the writing and the settlements they have left behind, from which historians piece together their story.

In the first lesson, pupils will learn what is meant by the term 'Anglo-Saxon', and will do some work on developing their mental timeline by learning about when we mean when we talk about Saxon Britain. They will learn about the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and something of their ways of fighting.

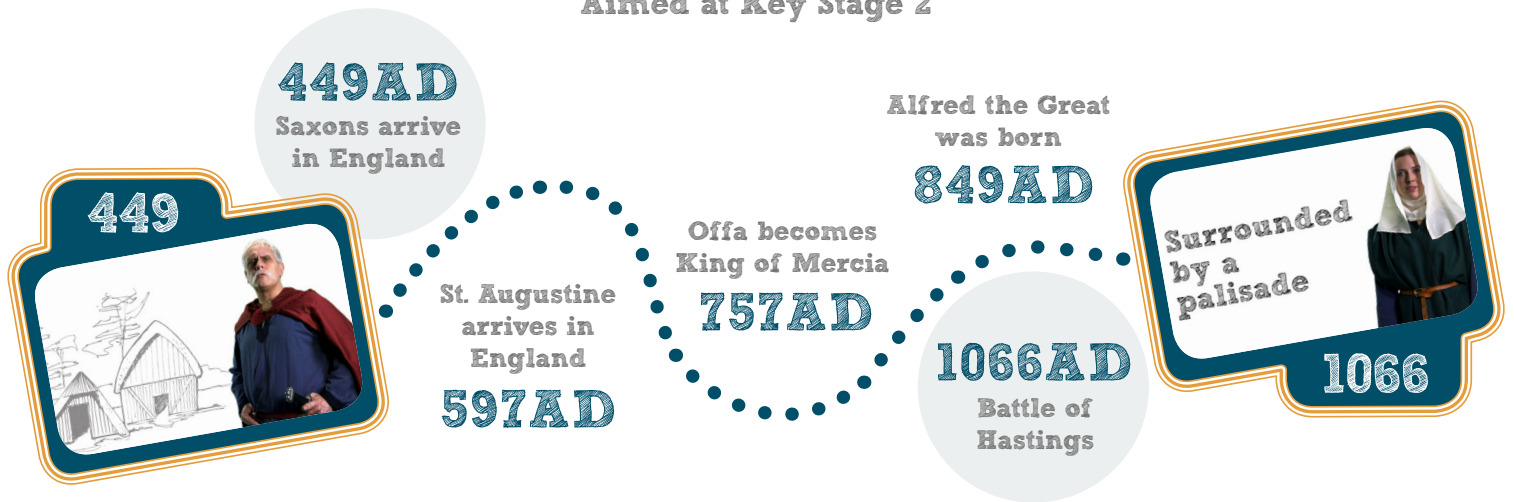
In the second lesson the focus is on day-to-day life in an Anglo-Saxon village, looking at houses and farming.

Finally, they look at some of the lasting impact of the Anglo-Saxon world. It would be useful, though not essential, for pupils to have done some work on the Romans in Britain before studying this unit. If not, then in the first lesson it will be important to guide pupils as to when the Romans occupied Britain.

Whilst this might be the only unit of work you do on the Anglo-Saxons, it could certainly form the first part of a wider study that investigates the story of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom in more detail, looking especially at Alfred the Great and King Athelstan, the first king of a united England.

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Suggested learning outcomes

By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...

- Place the Anglo-Saxons on a timeline
- Give examples of some of key features of Anglo-Saxon life in Britain
- Talk with growing confidence about the types of primary sources available to historians

Pre-lesson homework

It would be useful to prepare for this unit of work by revising work on the Romans, certainly by looking at the dates of Roman Britain and by looking again at their towns and cities.

Lesson 1 – Who were the Anglo-Saxons?

Films to use

- **How the Saxons arrived**
- **Saxon armour and weapons**

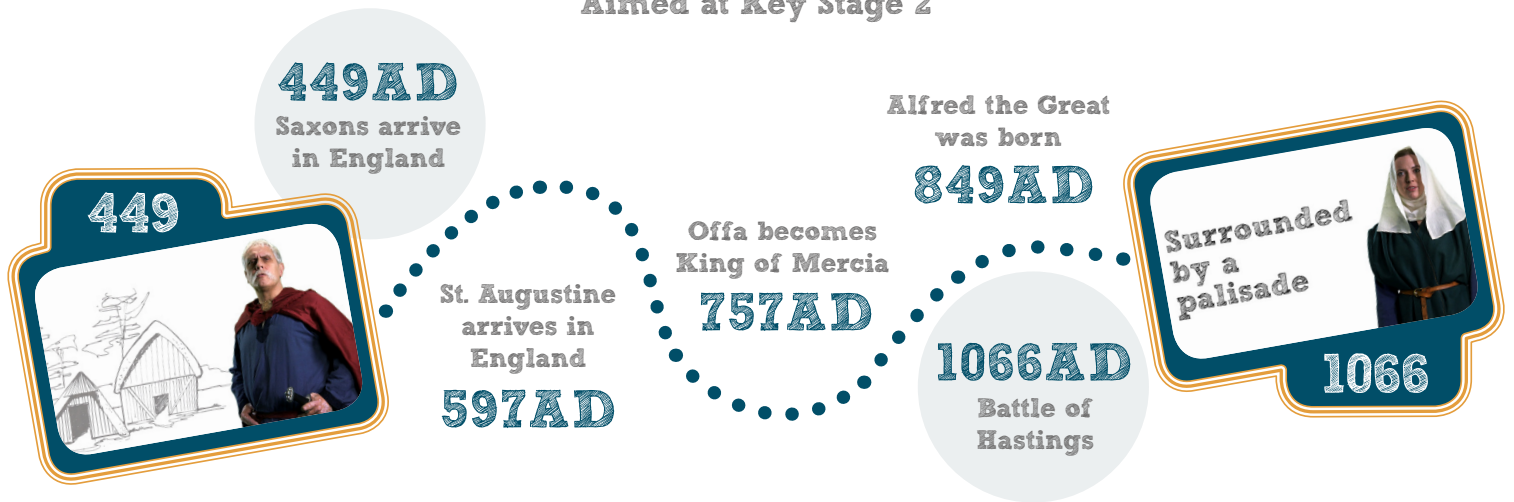
Begin the lesson by showing the picture of the helmet found at Sutton Hoo (fig 1). Ask pupils:

- **What they think it might have been for?**
- What might it be made from?
- **Who might wear it?**
- How is it similar or different to other helmets they might have seen?

Then tell them that this helmet was found at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, and when the site was dug up by archaeologists in 1939 it was one of the most important finds ever made in this country. The helmet and all the other artefacts found with it transformed historians' understanding of the Anglo-Saxon people, because this is a period of history that it is very difficult for us to find out about. This is due to the fact that there are very few written records of the time, and from what little may have been recorded, much has been lost. All we really have to go on are the artefacts that we find. You will return to this helmet later in the lesson...

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Lesson 1 – Who were the Anglo-Saxons? ...continued

At this point, you need to introduce the Anglo-Saxons and the enquiry question: ‘How can we find out about the Anglo-Saxons?’ The first activity for pupils is to plot the dates onto a timeline and whilst this could, of course, be done on a class timeline, it is likely that pupils will have a timeline that they update regularly as they start new history topics. If not, now could be the time to start one!

The first Anglo-Saxons arrived in the early 5th century, perhaps around the same time that the Romans finally left in 410AD. After that has been marked on, we mark the end of Anglo-Saxon England in 1066, the date of the Norman Invasion. After pupils have marked up their timelines, ask about the length of time here; is Anglo-Saxon Britain longer or shorter than Roman Britain? If today were the end of Anglo-Saxon Britain, how long ago would the first settlers have arrived? Any questions that encourage pupils to think about the passage of time are useful here.

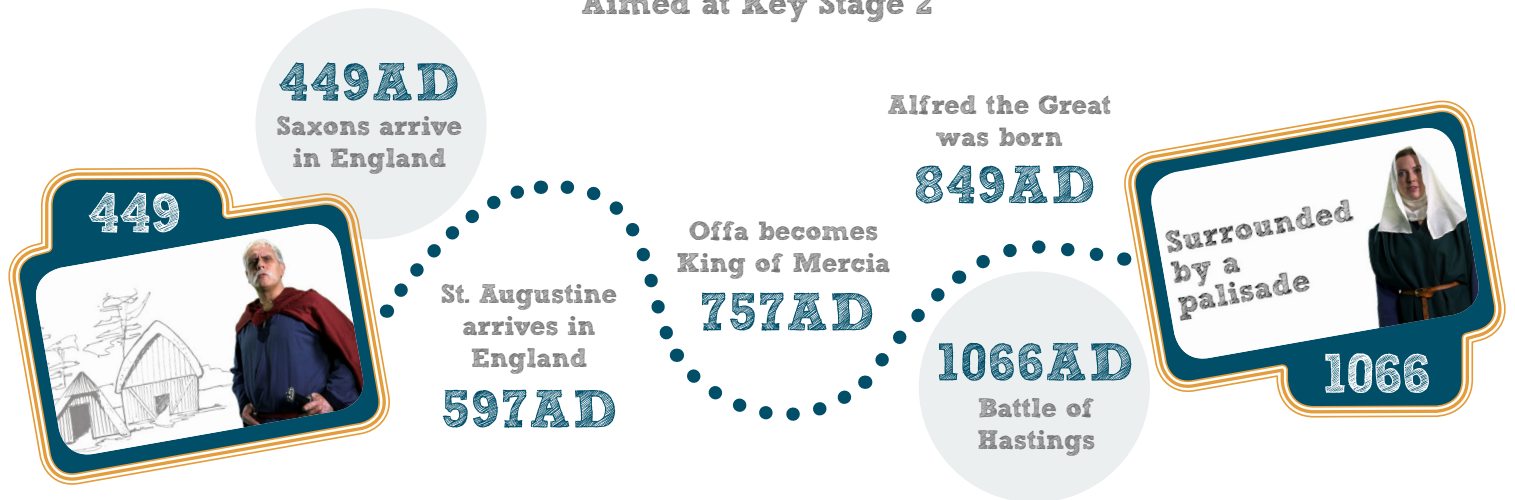
Now show the first film, **How the Anglo-Saxons arrived**. The Saxon Warrior in the film tells the story of how the Anglo-Saxons came to settle in Britain and he also tells us about some of the ways in which they changed Britain, through new settlements, church building and new laws. Pupils should make a note of these changes – they will return to them later.

Now show Saxon armour & weapons. This time the soldier talks about what makes him such a fearsome soldier. Pupils can also see in the background a drawing of that helmet from Sutton Hoo again. Now’s the time to return to it.

Show the picture again. Are there any new ideas? Now show them the second picture, that of the replica (figure 2). Now that your pupils can see what it might have looked like in all its glory, with decorations intact, does that change their view? Would something this beautiful really be used in battle?

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Lesson 1 – Who were the Anglo-Saxons? ...continued

Ask your pupils to imagine that they had the helmet there – you could give out copies of the pictures to help. After they've looked at the helmet(s) in more detail and, if possible, annotated pictures noting lots of the details they have already talked about, they need to write questions that they would like to ask:

- **An expert on the Anglo-Saxons**
- The person who made it
- **The person who was buried with it.**

After pupils have shared their questions with each other, the teacher or another adult could become the character and answer the questions that pupils pose.

The helmet was, in fact, found buried with a huge number of other artefacts that together suggest that the man they were buried with – Sutton Hoo was a burial site – was probably a King called Raedwald.

Lesson 2 – How did Anglo-Saxons live in Britain?

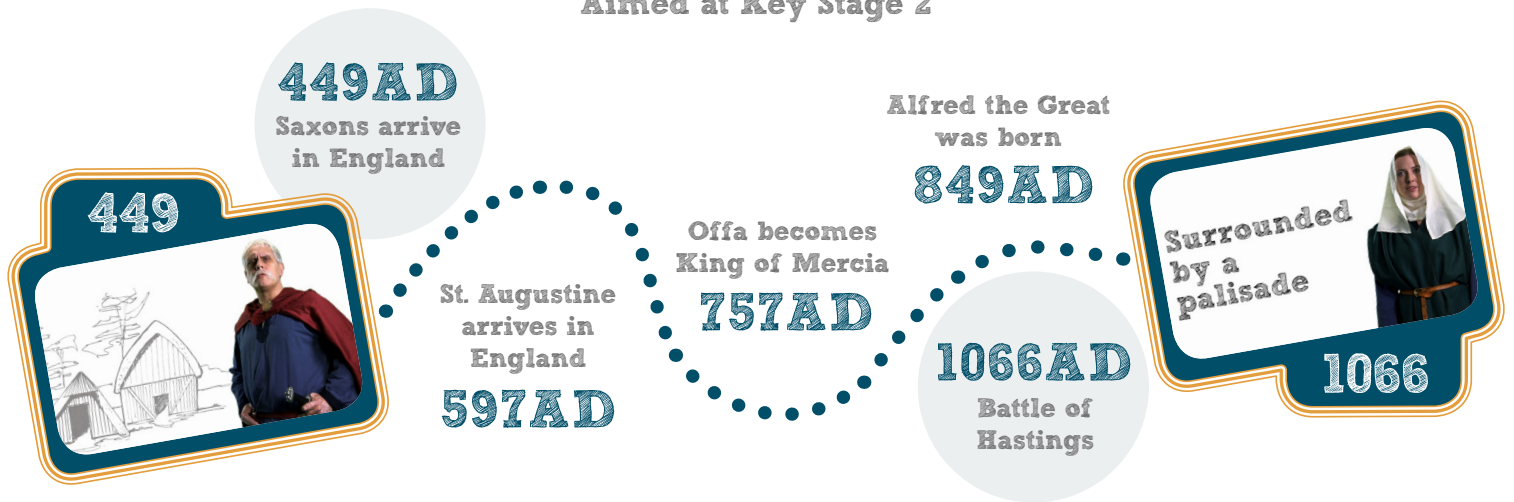
Films to use

- **Village life**
 - **part 1**
 - **and part 2**
- **Farming**
 - **part 1**
 - **and part 2**

This lesson is all about learning about day-to-day life in an Anglo-Saxon village and, by extension, Anglo-Saxon Britain. The films will be used to gather details of village life and as the starting point for a piece of writing. In the latter part of the lesson, though, pupils will again address the evidential problem here; how do we know all this?

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Lesson 2 – How did Anglo-Saxons live in Britain? ...continued

Start the lesson by referring to the last one. Ask pupils to consider why it might be easier to find out about kings and queens and other important people than it would be to find out about ordinary people. Hopefully you'll get back responses about artefacts and writing and so on. This is all good. Then introduce the subject of today's lesson – life in an Anglo-Saxon village.

In the middle of a page ask pupils to write 'Life in an Anglo-Saxon village' as the start of a mind map. They should label four big branches from the centre of the map – people, work, buildings, and interesting details. The task during the four films is to record details about life in the village - the more detail, the better.

Show Village life – part 1 and **Village life – 2**, in which the village chief's wife tells us about their house and some of the other houses in the village. She talks about how they are built and the fact that they have to share them with animals. There's a lot here for pupils to record, so keep talking about what they've seen. Ask them what's surprising or interesting about the village?

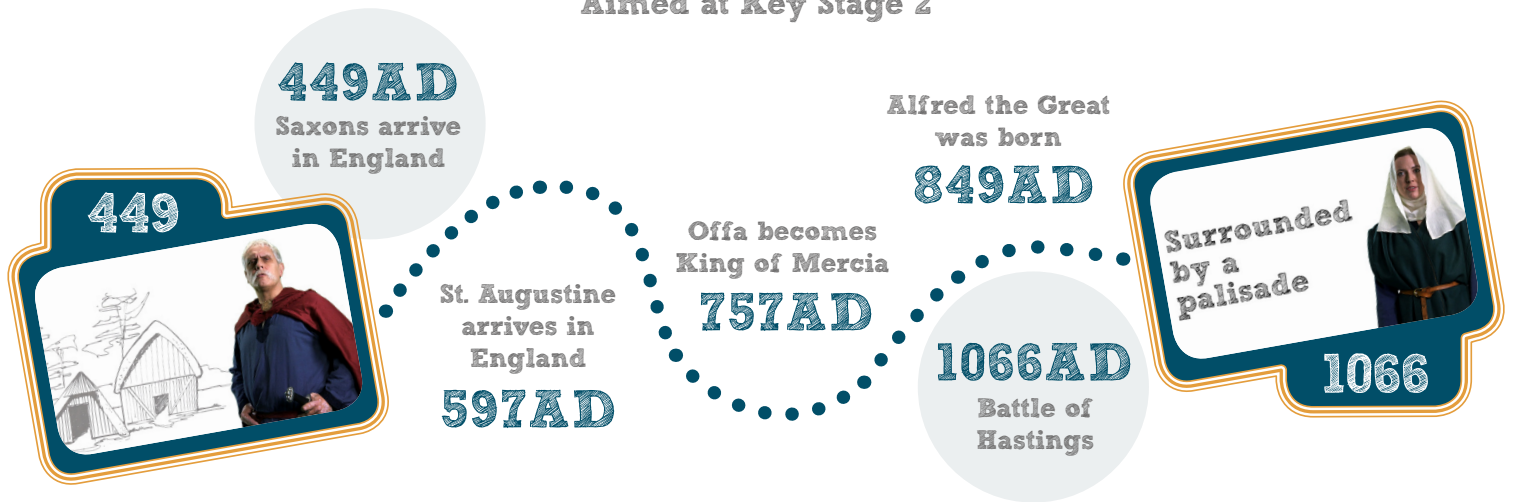
Then show **Farming – part 1** and **Farming – part 2**. Again, pupils will record detail about the people and the work they do. Ask some questions about the hierarchy of the village; we hear from the Chief – he's clearly in charge – and he talks about low-ranking ceorls and slaves. All of this detail could be useful for the next task.

Using their new knowledge on village life and farming, ask pupils to draw a map of an Anglo-Saxon village. They should show the different sizes of houses for different families and show the different fields they used for crop rotation. Alternatively, this could become a group task, with each group contributing a section of a map or one house/building to a huge class village put up on display.

As pupils finish their work on this, ask them a big question; how do we know all this? How can the people who made the films that we've been watching know? How do historians who write about Anglo-Saxon England know? Take some speculation here, but leave the questions hanging for next time.

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Lesson 3 – How can we find out about Anglo-Saxon Britain?

Films to use:

- **Place names**

It would be useful in this lesson to have some atlases or, even better, some maps of your local area with lots of villages on it – pupils are going to look for Anglo-Saxon place names. Extracts from Beowulf will also be needed. Michael Morpurgo has done a version for young readers and an extract is available for download on his website at michaelmorpurgo.com. Alternatively, there are some useful extracts gathered at earlybritishkingdoms.com

Start the lesson where you left off at the end of the last – how can we find out all this detail about village life? One way to find out, as we saw in the first lesson, is to dig up artefacts, but there are other things as well. Show your class **Place names**. In this film, the chief's wife talks about all the place names that have come to us from the Anglo-Saxons; Stow, Chester, Bury etc. Discuss with them that this is one way we learn about the Anglo-Saxons – from where they settled. Using whatever maps you have, either atlases of the country, or more local or regional maps, challenge your class to find as many Anglo-Saxon place names as possible. If you have a big map of Britain up in the classroom, pupils could each come and put a pin or flag in one of these towns or villages.

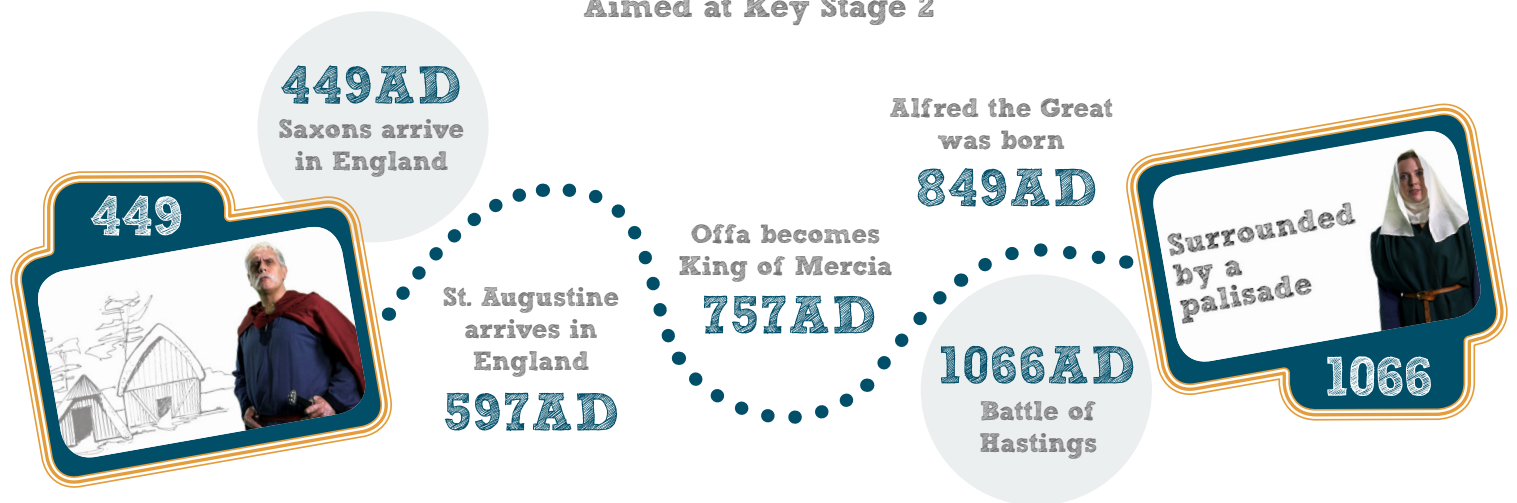
Now go back to the question; how can we find out? Hopefully, someone will say 'writing'. Whilst the Anglo-Saxons didn't write much down – most people were illiterate – there is some very useful literature that can tell us about how they lived. Introduce the poem, **Beowulf**, written down towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period but telling a story from much earlier.

Read the extracts together and then ask pupils to annotate copies with details about Anglo-Saxon life. They should especially look for details that support things that they've heard in any of the films. At the end, ask what else a long poem might reveal about, say, village life.

To end the unit, pupils will choose two sources that they think have been useful in finding out about the Anglo-Saxons. They could be ones used in the unit, or to challenge some pupils they could find a new source, perhaps an artist's impression of a village or even pictures of an archaeological dig, such as the one done at West Stow in Suffolk. They could then be photographed with their sources to make a final class display.

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Differentiation, assessment and reflection

Extension

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- They could be given some more challenging sources in the first and last lessons. They might, for example, try something from a 'harder' translation of Beowulf.
- They could also do a research homework on the other artefacts at Sutton Hoo, thinking about what made it such an important find.

Scaffolding

- Try asking more targeted questions about the helmet from Sutton Hoo.
- In the second lesson they might be given a map of a village ready drawn to add labels to.
- Finally, they might read a shorter extract from Beowulf or be asked to draw only a few pieces of evidence from it.

Formative assessment opportunities

- In the first lesson, talk to pupils about their timelines to get a sense of their understanding of the period in question.
- The mapping exercise in lesson 2 offers a chance for pupils to show their current knowledge and thinking. Problems could be remedied here with reference to transcripts of the films.
- Throughout the sequence, short answer quizzes, either written or spoken, would be useful to test and cement key pieces of factual detail.

Reflection

To finally conclude the topic, ask pupils to think about what we haven't learned about the Anglo-Saxons? What questions do they still have? What do they suppose that historians will never be able to know?

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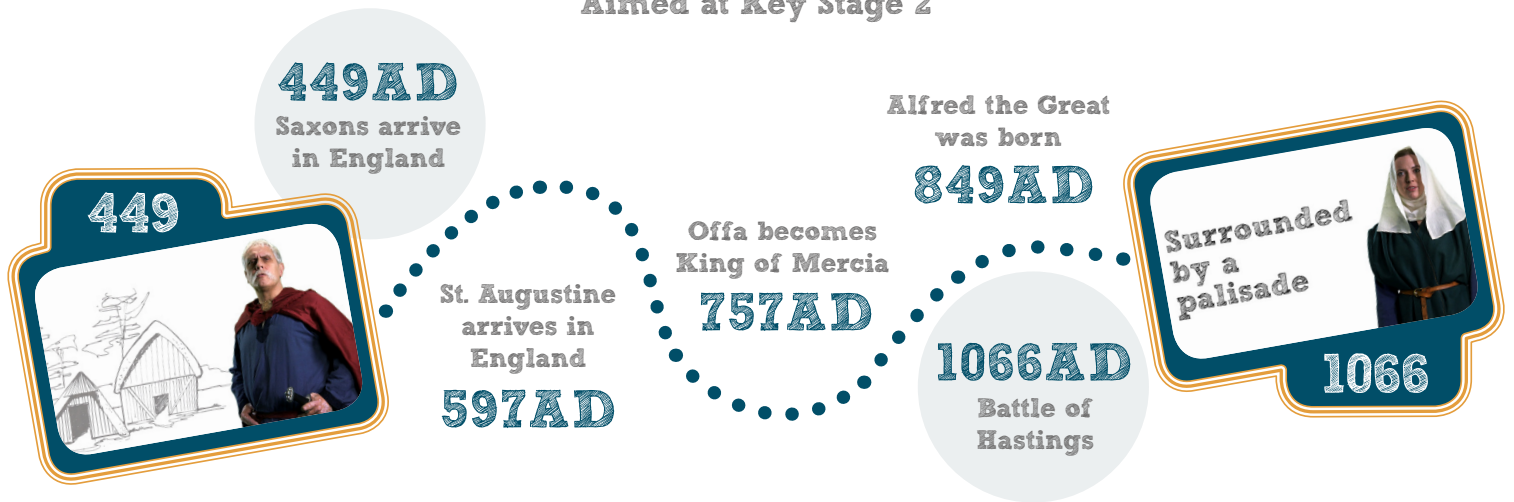


Figure 1 – The Helmet dug up at Sutton Hoo.



source Wikipedia: **Sutton Hoo helmet**

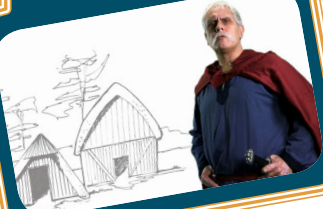
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449AD

Saxons arrive
in England

449



Alfred the Great
was born

849AD

Offa becomes
King of Mercia

757AD

St. Augustine
arrives in
England

597AD

1066AD

Battle of
Hastings

Surrounded
by a
palisade

1066



Figure 2 – Replica of the Sutton Hoo helmet in the British Museum.



source Wikipedia: **Sutton Hoo reconstructed helmet**