

anglo saxons facts for kids

Anglo Saxons Facts for Kids

The Anglo Saxons were an important group of people who lived in England from the 5th to the 11th centuries. They played a crucial role in shaping the history and culture of England. In this article, we will explore various facts about the Anglo Saxons, including their origins, daily life, government, religion, and more. This comprehensive guide will provide you with a better understanding of who the Anglo Saxons were and how they contributed to the development of England.

Who Were the Anglo Saxons?

The Anglo Saxons were a mix of different tribes that came from what is now Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. They began arriving in Britain after the Romans left around the year 410 AD. The main tribes that made up the Anglo Saxons included:

1. Angles - Named after Angeln, a region in modern-day Germany.
2. Saxons - From the region of Saxony, also in present-day Germany.
3. Jutes - Originating from the Jutland Peninsula in Denmark.

These tribes settled in different parts of Britain, primarily in what is now England, and eventually formed several kingdoms.

The Anglo Saxon Kingdoms

The Anglo Saxons established several kingdoms in England. Some of the most notable kingdoms included:

- Wessex - Located in the south, it became one of the most powerful kingdoms.
- Mercia - Central England, known for its wealth and military strength.
- Northumbria - In the north, it was a major cultural and religious center.
- East Anglia - Located in the east, known for its agriculture and trade.
- Kent - In the southeast, it was one of the first kingdoms to adopt Christianity.

Each kingdom had its own king and laws, and they often fought against each other for power and territory.

Daily Life of the Anglo Saxons

The daily lives of the Anglo Saxons varied depending on their social status, but here are some common aspects of their lives:

Housing

Anglo Saxon houses were typically made of wood and had thatched roofs. They were built to keep the cold out and the warmth in. A typical house would have:

- A central hearth for cooking and heating.
- Separate areas for sleeping and storage.
- Animal pens attached to the house for livestock.

Food

The Anglo Saxons had a diverse diet. Here are some common foods they ate:

- Grains - Such as barley, wheat, and oats, used to make bread and porridge.
- Vegetables - Including onions, cabbage, and peas.
- Meat - From animals like pigs, cows, and sheep. They would also hunt for deer and rabbits.
- Fish - Caught from rivers and the sea.
- Dairy products - Such as cheese and butter.

They cooked their meals over an open fire and often enjoyed feasting on special occasions.

Clothing

The clothing worn by the Anglo Saxons was made from wool, linen, and animal skins. Clothing styles varied by gender:

- Men wore tunics, trousers, and cloaks, often fastened with brooches.
- Women wore long dresses with a belt, and they often covered their heads with a scarf or veil.

Jewelry was popular among both men and women, and they often adorned themselves with intricate metalwork.

Education and Language

The Anglo Saxons spoke Old English, a language that has evolved into the modern English we speak today. Education was not widespread, but the wealthy could afford to send their children to learn reading, writing, and religious studies. Monasteries played a significant role in education, preserving knowledge through manuscripts.

Religion and Beliefs

Initially, the Anglo Saxons practiced paganism, worshiping multiple gods such as:

- Woden (the chief god)
- Thunor (the god of thunder)
- Tiw (the god of war)

However, with the arrival of Christian missionaries, many Anglo Saxons converted to Christianity. The conversion brought about significant changes in their culture and society. Churches and monasteries became centers of learning and community life.

Government and Law

The Anglo Saxon government was organized around a system of kings and local leaders. Kings ruled their kingdoms with the help of nobles and advisors. Important decisions were made in gatherings called "witen," where wise men would advise the king.

Legal System

The Anglo Saxons had a system of laws that were often unwritten in the early years. However, as time went on, laws began to be documented. Some aspects of their legal system included:

- Wergild - A system of compensation for wrongs done to individuals.
- Tithings - Groups of ten men who were responsible for each other's behavior and reporting crimes.

This laid the foundation for the legal systems we have today.

Art and Culture

The Anglo Saxons were skilled craftsmen and produced beautiful art and artifacts. Some notable aspects of their culture include:

- Illuminated Manuscripts - Handwritten books decorated with elaborate designs.
- Metalwork - Intricate jewelry, weapons, and tools made from gold, silver, and bronze.
- Poetry and Stories - Oral traditions played a significant role in their culture, with famous works such as "Beowulf" capturing their heroic tales.

Legacy of the Anglo Saxons

The Anglo Saxons had a lasting impact on England's history and culture. Some of their legacies include:

- Language - Old English laid the groundwork for the English language.
- Place Names - Many towns and cities in England have names derived from Anglo Saxon origins.
- Legal System - Their ideas about law and governance influenced future legal practices.

Conclusion

The Anglo Saxons were a remarkable group of people whose influence can still be felt in modern England today. From their rich culture and art to their complex social structures and governance, they played a pivotal role in shaping the nation. Learning about the Anglo Saxons not only enriches our understanding of history but also connects us to the roots of our language and society. Whether it's through their fascinating daily lives, their contributions to education, or their lasting legacies, the Anglo Saxons remain an essential part of England's story.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who were the Anglo-Saxons?

The Anglo-Saxons were a group of people who lived in England from around the 5th century to the 11th century. They were made up of different tribes, mainly the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who came from what is now Germany and Denmark.

What language did the Anglo-Saxons speak?

The Anglo-Saxons spoke Old English, which is a Germanic language. It is quite different from modern English, and many words we use today have their roots in Old English.

What was life like for children during the Anglo-Saxon period?

Children in Anglo-Saxon times learned skills from their parents, such as farming, crafting, and household chores. Boys often learned to fight and hunt, while girls were taught to manage the home.

What type of homes did the Anglo-Saxons live in?

Anglo-Saxons lived in homes made of wood with thatched roofs. These houses were usually one room with a central hearth for cooking and heating. Wealthier families had larger, more elaborate homes.

Did the Anglo-Saxons have a written language?

Yes, the Anglo-Saxons developed a written form of their language using runes and later the Latin alphabet. They wrote important texts, including religious works and poetry, such as the epic poem 'Beowulf.'

What is an important legacy of the Anglo-Saxons?

One important legacy of the Anglo-Saxons is the foundation of the English legal system. They established local governance and laws that influenced the way justice is administered in England today.

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