

LO: Alfred the Great and the Danelaw

Success criteria:

- Find out more about Alfred the Great and why he was an important Anglo-Saxon king.
- Know what the Danelaw was and how it was created.
- Know how place names can tell us about Viking settlements.



Task Overview

Alfred and the Danelaw:

- Watch these videos about Alfred the Great and the creation of the Danelaw. Read the texts below.
- **Task 1: Answer the questions on the worksheet**

Viking settlements:

- Watch the video and read the information below
- **Task 2: Locate**

Alfred The Great and the Danelaw

Watch this video about Alfred:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/history-ks2-anglo-saxons-alfred-the-great/zmwbbdm>

Then read the following text about the Danelaw and Alfred before answering questions on the worksheet.

Time to make some cash

Over the next few years, the Vikings rampaged around the country, fighting anyone who got in their way. One tactic appears to have been to fight a battle, agree to be paid to go away, and then to move on to the next place!



These coins are from a **hoard** found in **London**.

The hoard dates back to AD 871-872. It's thought to have been buried by an Anglo-Saxon living there at the time of a Viking attack.



Why do you think the person who owned these coins might have buried them?

How do you think this person might have felt about the Viking attacks?

Victory at last?



In AD 871, Alfred became king of Wessex and made peace with the Vikings. Alfred managed to pay off the Vikings and keep the peace for five whole years — but in AD 876 a new leader of the Danish Vikings attacked Wessex. This new leader was called Guthrum.

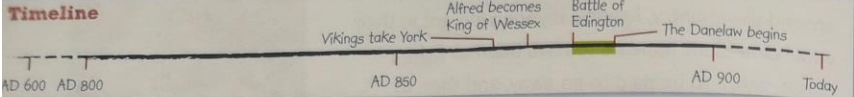
Alfred fought against Guthrum for two years, but in early 878, the Vikings attacked Alfred at Chippenham and killed many of his men. Alfred ran away to Somerset and it seemed as if the last Anglo-Saxon king had been defeated.

*Do you think Alfred was right to give the Vikings money?
Do you think he thought the peace he bought would last?*

The Vikings drove a hard bargain...

...and often went back on their word. By 878, only one man stood between them and controlling all of England: Alfred, King of Wessex. Alfred would later become known as Alfred the Great. Let's turn over and find out more about him...

Alfred the Great



In 878, the Anglo-Saxons were on their knees. All the kingdoms except Wessex had either been defeated, or had given in and paid the Vikings for peace. Alfred, King of Wessex, was hiding in the Somerset marshes. This picture shows the place Alfred was hiding.

Can you think why Alfred might have chosen this as a place to hide out?



Why is Alfred known as Alfred the Great?

You can't keep a great man down

Alfred didn't stay defeated for very long. After a short time in the marshes, he raised an army and beat the Danish Vikings at the Battle of Edington in May 878.

Alfred and Guthrum, the leader of the Danes, made a treaty. As part of the treaty, Guthrum had to be baptised as a Christian. Guthrum then had to leave Wessex and retreat to East Anglia. England was safe from Viking raids — for a while.

This is a picture of Guthrum being baptised.



Why do you think Alfred might have wanted the Viking Guthrum to become a Christian?

The Vikings had proved themselves untrustworthy. Maybe Alfred hoped that being a Christian would make Guthrum keep his promises. He was wrong!

The Vikings go back on their word... again



Peace lasted in Wessex until 884, when Guthrum attacked again, but was defeated by Alfred. Alfred forced Guthrum to sign another treaty.

Mercia was split, with Alfred taking the south and west, and the Danish Vikings taking the east and the north.

The Danes now owned an area of Britain, which they ruled from York. This area was called the Danelaw.

Alfred ended up giving a large area of land to the Vikings even though he beat them. Why do you think he did this?

Alfred really was great...

Alfred re-organised the army, and changed battle methods so that it was easier to fight the Vikings. He built longships to fight the Vikings at sea and he won many sea-battles against them.



...and not just in battle

Alfred valued learning. Education in England at the time was very poor because of the Viking attacks.



How do you think the Viking attacks might have affected education in England?

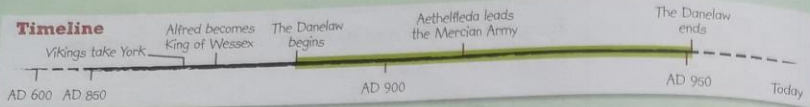
Viking attacks destroyed the monasteries where people were taught. To help, Alfred had books translated from Latin, which he sent to the bishops, so they could use them to teach.

He also set up his own school and he ordered the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to be written about the history of the Anglo-Saxons.

Alfred – a king deserving of his nickname?

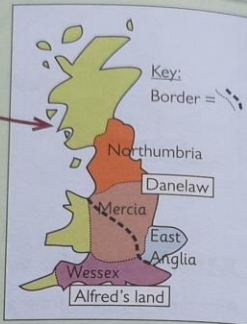
Alfred did a lot of great things to help England. He defeated the Vikings in several battles and managed to keep part of England under Anglo-Saxon control. He also did a lot to help the English people themselves — especially in terms of education.

The Danes and the Danelaw



By AD 886, Danish Vikings were in control of the **Danelaw**. The map shows how the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were split between King Alfred and the **Danes**.

What do you think happened to the people who had lived in the Danelaw before the Danes came? Do you think the area was peaceful?



Peace at last? Not likely...

Even after the Danelaw was made, **fighting** went on between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes for many years. Both sides made **raids** across the border. Anglo-Saxon Mercia, which bordered the Danelaw, was not a peaceful place to be.

Defence against the Danes

King Alfred's eldest daughter, **Aethelfleda**, helped to defend Anglo-Saxon land from the Danes. She was married to the leader of Anglo-Saxon Mercia, **Aethelred**. After her husband became ill, **Aethelfleda** led the **Mercian army**. Aethelfleda kept the Danes out of English Mercia, and after her husband died in AD 911, she took charge of its **defence**. Aethelfleda **fortified** Mercian towns against the Danes and built many **fortresses**.

This is an artist's impression of Aethelfleda leading the Mercian army.

How do you think the Vikings might have reacted to seeing a woman leading an army? Why do you think this?

Dishing out the Danelaw

Loyal Viking warriors were **rewarded** with grants of land in the Danelaw. This meant they were allowed to throw out Anglo-Saxon landowners, and **take over** the land for themselves.

Working for a new leader

The **ordinary people** living in the areas of Britain that became the Danelaw had no say in who ruled them. Danish leaders replaced Anglo-Saxon leaders, but **farming** had to go on, or no-one would eat. When the lands were split up by the war leaders, people who worked on the land just went on ploughing and sowing. The leaders changed, but hard work didn't!

What about the women?

Some Viking women came to Britain to settle in the Danelaw. We know this because of objects that have been found in graves.

Here are some objects that were found in a Viking grave in Yorkshire.

What do you think they are?*



Many Vikings would have settled down and taken a **wife** from among the **Anglo-Saxon women**. As soon as Vikings started settling down, the people began to mix.

Life would have been hard for a woman whose male relations had died, as she would have had difficulty supporting herself. She would have had to live and work with her conquerors or starve.

How do you think these Anglo-Saxon women might have felt about marrying Vikings?

Time for some new leaders...

Life around the border between the Danelaw and England probably wouldn't have been very calm, as there was a lot of fighting over who owned the land. For ordinary people though, life went on. Wessex and Northumbria would have been quieter places to be!

Viking Settlements

Place names can tell us a lot about the past

Going places

Three main groups of people settled in Britain – the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. All left their mark on the country and we can still tell where they lived by the names of towns and villages.

Roman place-names often include...

- Strat-, Stret-, Streat-, Strad-, Street-, Sturt-, -chester, -cester and -caster



Anglo-Saxon place-names often include...

- burg, borough, den, ham, head, holt, ing, ley, mere, sted, stow, wald and worth



Viking place-names often include...

- often include thorp, by, holm, beck, dale, wick, thwaite and toft



Viking Settlements

- Watch this clip:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0115hyw>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0QnGvl3rJo&feature=emb_logo

Then read the information below...

How can you tell where Vikings lived?

Most of the buildings the Vikings built were of wood. Over the centuries these have rotted away. Their remains have only been found in a few places such as Viking York (Jorvik) where the foundations of the building have been preserved by the waterlogged mud.

We mainly know where Vikings lived because they named the places they founded, and these names have survived down the centuries.

Viking words used to make the names of places

beck	stream
by	early Viking settlement
garth	enclosure
keld	spring
ness	headland
thorpe	settlement or farm
thwaite	small homestead
toft	farmstead
vik	creek
wick	bay

A map showing some of the places that were most likely founded by Vikings.

Ugthorpe

Netherby

Threkeld

Amplethwaite

Kettlebeck

Sandwich

Alfness

Mossgarth

Orvik

Did you know... ?

- When the Vikings came to England they quickly gave up runes and learned English (Anglo-Saxon) writing.
- Vikings could not speak some Anglo-Saxon words, so they changed them to make them easier to say. For example, Shipton became Skipton.
- A name ending with -by (meaning village) is a sure sign of a very early Viking place (for example, Whitby).
- The local laws called byelaws come from the Viking meaning 'law of the village'.
- A place ending in -thorpe is newer than a place ending with -by, and was founded when the original village became too large (for example, Scunthorpe).

The main areas that the Vikings settled in was called the Danelaw. We know where it was by looking at the names of places today. Anything ending in -by, -thorpe, -toft, -thwaite, -holm, and -ness will have been founded by Vikings. The same words can also be used to tell of Vikings in Scotland, for example, Caithness.



Are there any places founded by Vikings near where you live?

VIKING PLACE NAMES

-thorpe: secondary settlement (but in the Midlands could be Old English *Throp* meaning settlement). Example Copmanthorpe

-thwaite: originally thveit, woodland clearing. Example Slaithwaite (Huddersfield)

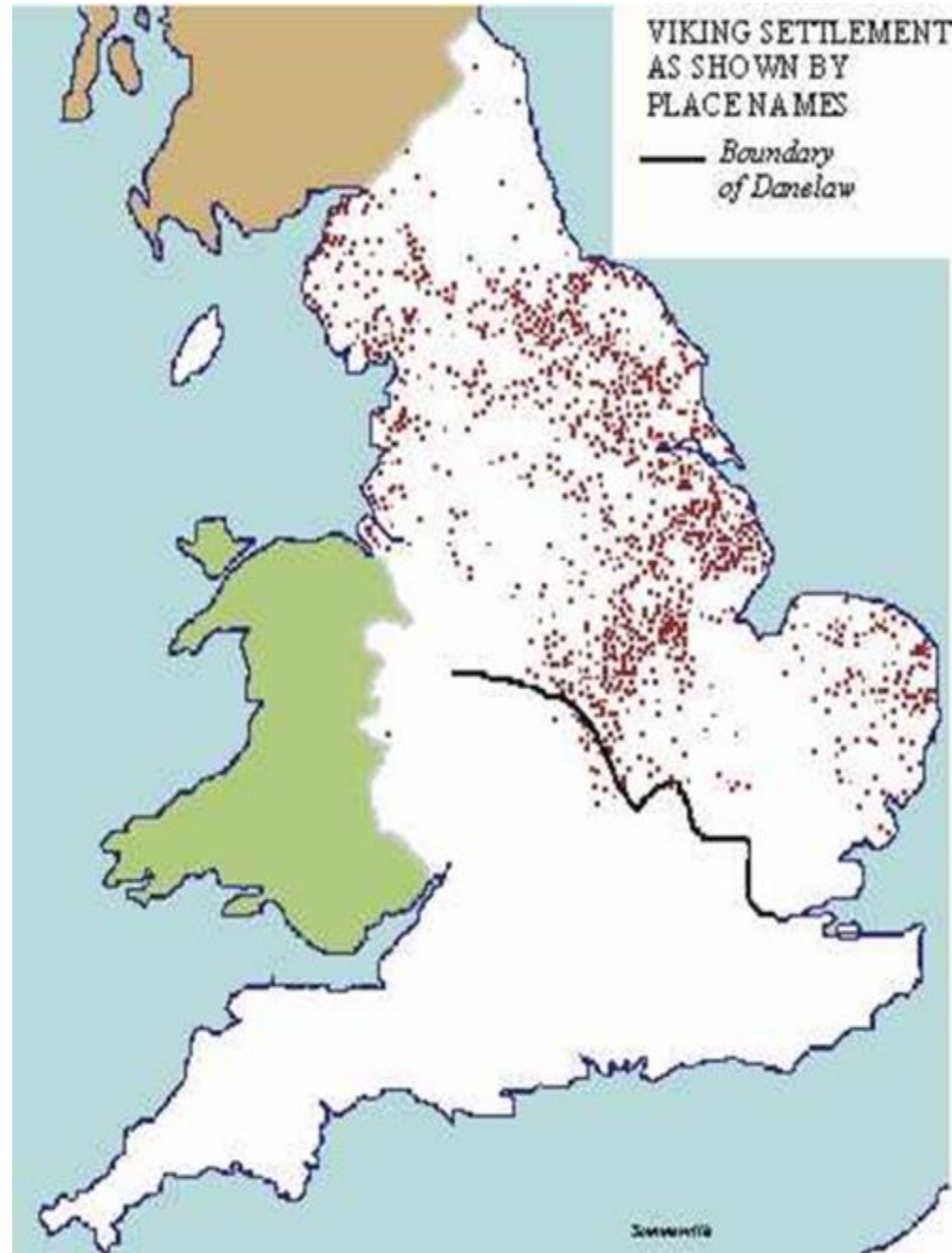
-toft: site of a house or building. Example Lowestoft, Langtoft

-keld: spring. Example Threkeld

-ness: promontory or headland. Note: Sheerness is Old English; Inverness is Gaelic (meaning mouth), Skegness is Old Norse

-by: farmstead, village, settlement. Example Selby, Whitby

-kirk: originally kirkja, meaning church. Example Ormskirk



Task2: Use an atlas or Google Earth.

On your map can you find and mark:

1.

- Jorvik (York)
- Scunthorpe
- Whitby
- Selby
- Skegness

2.

Find 3 other Viking place names of your choice and mark them on your map

