

Script

The children are arranged in their groups around the stage, dressed in character. 'Instrumental 3' is played (CD track 9) and two Angles, two Jutes and two Saxons enter from different directions, backing towards centre stage whilst nervously looking from side to side. They collide centre stage with exclamations and a brief show of strength.

- ANGLE 1 Hey, watch it! Hang on, something's changed round here!
- JUTE 1 No Romans bossing everyone around!
- SAXON 1 You mean they've left? Forever? Why?
- JUTE 2 Trouble in the Empire. They've gone back home to defend the Emperor.
- ANGLE 1 Great, that means that we Angles will take over. After all, we were the first to get here. We came all the way from southern Denmark.
- JUTE 1 *(Indignantly)* Oh no you won't! We Jutes from the north of Denmark have got more rights than you lot!
- SAXON 2 *(Forcefully)* Rubbish. I am a German-Dutch Saxon and right now I claim this land in the name of my people.
- ANGLE 2 *(Sarcastically)* Oh listen to you! I am sooooo scared! Actually, I don't know who got here first, but I do know that we Angles are more powerful than the rest of you lot put together.
- JUTE 2 *(Boastfully)* No way! Our Cyning is much more powerful than your Cyning. In fact, he should be made Bretwalda and be overlord of all of you.
- SAXON 1 *(Impatiently)* Look, we all came across the North Sea. We all want to stay.
- SAXON 2 Surely now that the Romans have disappeared we can take over and share out the land between us.
- ALL Well said!

They step back and the Fact Readers (Set 1) step forward.

- FACT READER 1 These invaders eventually settled down and became the Anglo-Saxons. The lands they settled in became Angle Land.
- FACT READER 2 At first, Angle Land was divided into lots of small kingdoms, often fighting each other, but by the 7th century they had joined together to form seven kingdoms called Mercia, Kent, East Anglia, Northumbria, Sussex, Essex and Wessex. *(These could be indicated on a map)*
- FACT READER 3 Each kingdom had its own king, or cyning. Anglo-Saxon warrior kings ruled for over 600 years. There were a lot of kings!

The Mercia king steps forward followed by the thanes, churls and thrawls.

MERCIA KING I am a Saxon 'Cyning' from Mercia and these are my people. Life works well for us because everyone has a place in life and everyone knows what I expect of them.

The following song should be sung with plenty of humour and gesticulation.

Song 1 **THAT'S THE ORDER HERE!** **CD Track 1/4**
(See p25 for lyrics / p24 for recorder part)

After the song the Fact Readers (set 2) step forward.

FACT READER 1 We know a lot about Anglo-Saxon life from discoveries like the burial ship at Sutton Hoo and the incredible Staffordshire Hoard.

FACT READER 2 Anglo-Saxon men not only had to be ready to fight, but they were also farmers, hunters, fishermen, potters, thatchers, carpenters, blacksmiths and metal workers who made weapons, armour and implements.

FACT READER 3 Anglo-Saxon women were in charge of their houses and did the cooking, tended hens and pigs and made fabric and clothing. Women had extensive rights concerning marriage, property and land ownership.

FACT READER 4 Anglo-Saxons had laws and punishments. A man was punished if he was dishonest or did not keep his word. The women often participated in legal proceedings as guarantors and witnesses of oaths.

FACT READER 5 Boys and girls learnt the skills of their parents. Many of their pastimes are still familiar today, but storytelling was a great favourite.

The Fact Readers (Set 2) step back and the storyteller(s) steps forward along with the musicians who perform during the instrumental sections. The dancers step forward during Instrumental 1. (See suggested choreography and percussion ideas on page 15.)

STORYTELLER(S) So, are you sitting comfortably? Let's begin! Here we are in the Thane's Great Hall. The feast is over...

1 I'll tell you the tale of Beowulf the Brave
Who feared no man nor beast,
So settle down before the fire
Well sated from your feast.

BEOWULF INSTRUMENTAL 1 **CD Track 7**

2 The Danish King cried loudly for help
When the monster Grendel struck,
This evil beast was feared by all
And always brought bad luck!
No man could help the fearful King,
But Beowulf heard his cry
And sailed across the ocean
'Neath a dark and stormy sky.

BEOWULF INSTRUMENTAL 2

CD Track 8

- 3 Beowulf fought with Grendel,
A long and fearsome fight,
'Til Beowulf tore off Grendel's arm –
The monster died that night.
Grendel's angry mother swore
To take up her revenge,
The one who took poor Grendel's life
Must also meet his end.
So Beowulf took his magic sword
To wait for her attack,
Then slew her with a mighty blow
That stopped her in her track.

BEOWULF INSTRUMENTAL 3

CD Track 9

- 4 And thus the name of Beowulf,
By the power of his sword,
Was talked about throughout the land –
They heaped him with rewards.
The Geats crowned Beowulf as their King,
He ruled for fifty years,
A fair and well-loved leader
Who allayed all strife and fears.

BEOWULF INSTRUMENTAL 4

CD Track 10

- 5 One year there came a dragon,
It terrified the town,
Old Beowulf bravely took his sword
And smote the creature down.
Yes, our hero killed the dragon,
But in doing so he fell,
Great Beowulf sadly died that night,
But we have his tale to tell!

BEOWULF INSTRUMENTAL 1

CD Track 7

During the last 'Instrumental 1', the storyteller(s), musicians and dancers walk forward and bow. The listeners clap. They all then step back and the Fact Readers (Set 3) step forward.

FACT READER 1 At first the Anglo-Saxons worshipped pagan gods and enjoyed pagan festivals.

FACT READER 2 People still use the names of Anglo-Saxon gods for the days of the week.
Mona – Monday
Tiw (*pronounced 'chew'*) – Tuesday
Woden – Wednesday
Thunor – Thursday
Frige – Friday
And Sunne – Sunday.

FACT READER 1 Did you spot the missing day? Yes, Saturday – the only day named after a Roman god. His name? Saturn.

FACT READER 3 Then Pope Gregory sent Augustine and his monks from Rome to tell them about Christianity. They landed in Kent and built the first Christian church at Canterbury.

This is an opportunity to showcase any topic work related to monasteries, illuminated letters etc.

FACT READER 1 Monks taught children to read and write words like these: (*Fact Readers 1 and 2 (FR1 & 2) point to a chart and read a selection of words and their meanings*)

(FR1) Fyrd

(FR2) Army

(FR1) Witan

(FR2) Advising body to the King

(FR1) Burh

(FR2) A fortified town

(FR1) Modor and Faeder

(FR2) Mother and father

(FR1) Danelaw

(FR2) That's the name for Viking territory.

FACT READER 3 Alfred the Great was responsible for the introduction of Danelaw. He became king of Wessex in 871.

The Fact Readers step back and King Alfred steps forward with his entourage of loyal followers (LFs).

KING ALFRED (*Jovially*) I am one of two kings in the history of our land to have the word 'Great' in their title, and yet the story that everyone remembers about me is when I allegedly did something not so great! Go on, my good people, I can see you are dying to tell the tale yet again!

ALL LFs (*Bowing*) With pleasure, My Lord.

The actors take their places for the drama in front of a fireplace. Modor and her daughters (Ethelind, Mildryth and Leola) wear aprons. Modor carries a tray of flat bread (cakes); the girls carry a drinking vessel, a bucket and a basket. King Alfred steps back and Scruffy King Alfred (S. King Alfred) steps forward.

LF 1 When Alfred became our king, the Vikings were getting out of hand!

LF 2 They had conquered every kingdom except for Wessex.

LF 3 Then they waged war on us. It was a long and fierce battle.

LF 4 One day the King was feeling battle-weary. He was on the run from the Vikings. He needed somewhere to rest and make new battle plans.

The loyal followers step back. There is a loud knock at the door.

MODOR Whoever can that be? Go and see who it is Ethelind.

ETHELIND (*Opening the door cautiously*) It's only a scruffy old beggar, Modor.

MILDRYTH *(Peering over her shoulder)* He's in a bad way though. Please, do come in.

S. KING ALFRED *(Limping in)* Thank you my good women. I am so worn and weary! I need to rest for a while. Will you let me sit by your fire?

MODOR *(Looking disgusted)* Well you can sit there for a while if you like, but don't go messing up my hearthstone – I'm about to set the cakes on there to bake.

S. KING ALFRED Thank you! Never has a hearth looked so welcoming.

Leola kindly hands Scruffy King Alfred a drinking vessel.

LEOLA Here, you look as if you need this.

S. KING ALFRED I cannot thank you enough.

MODOR *(Impatiently)* You can thank us in deeds, not words, old man. Watch these cakes of mine while we go out to do the jobs in the yard. Don't you let them burn though! *(She wags her finger at him)*

S. KING ALFRED You can trust me. *(The women leave and Alfred talks to himself)* That last battle nearly cost me my life. The Vikings can't be far behind me. I must think; I must make a new battle plan. I will NOT let them take Wessex from me. I will defend my people to the bitter end.

Modor rushes back in sniffing the air. The girls follow her.

MODOR *(Furiously)* You lazy, good-for-nothing beggar. I could smell those cakes burning from outside!

LEOLA *(Taking them from the hearthstone)* It's all right Modor, they are still edible.

MODOR That's not the point. He's too idle to watch the cakes, but I bet he's not too idle to eat them!

S. King Alfred hangs his head in shame. There is another knock at the door.

MODOR Not more lazy beggars, I hope.

MILDRYTH *(Opening the door and gasping with fear)* It's Viking soldiers, Modor!

LEOLA Oh no! Be careful!

VIKING 1 *(Roughly)* Let us in, girl. Who have you got in here?

ETHELIND *(Nervously)* Who are y...you expecting to find s...sir?

VIKING 2 Alfred, King of Wessex, that's who!

VIKING 1 He was seen heading this way over the marshes.

MODOR *(She is suddenly bold)* Well, maybe King Alfred would have been better at watching my cakes than this lazy beggar man, but sadly he gave us a miss. Now, if you don't mind, I've got to start baking all over again!

She bundles them out of the door.

S. KING ALFRED Thank you for saving my life!

MODOR I didn't. They were looking for the King, not a beggar, you old fool.

There is another knock at the door.

MODOR Now what?

MILDRYTH *(Opening the door)* More soldiers Modor.

The two Anglo-Saxon soldiers (A-S Soldiers 1 & 2) barge in and rush to Alfred, kneeling before him.

A-S SOLDIER 1 My Lord, thank goodness you're safe.

A-S SOLDIER 2 *(To the women)* God bless you all for giving sanctuary to King Alfred.

MODOR/GIRLS *(Astonished)* King Alfred?

MODOR *(Fussing round)* Well don't just stand there, daughters! Offer the King one of our freshly baked cakes. Sorry they're a bit burnt, My Lord. *(She curtsies)*

The actors step back and King Alfred and his Loyal Followers step forward.

LF₁ We drove the Vikings out of Wessex and won back Sussex, Kent and Mercia.

LF₂ Because of this victory, these kingdoms wanted to join up with us and have Alfred as their King.

KING ALFRED I made a peace deal with the Vikings. We agreed that they could have all the land in the east of the country on condition that they kept to their own territory. This territory was named 'Danelaw'.

LF₃ The Vikings were cunning, though, so Alfred had to agree to pay them Danegelt to make them keep their promise.

LF₄ It was things like this that made him great!

Each time the word 'Alfred' is sung in the following song, the cast punches the air.

Song 2 **ALFRED THE GREAT**
(see p26 for lyrics)

CD Track 2/5

KING ALFRED *(To the audience with an amiable shrug)* Oh well, you can only do your best and history will do the rest!

The Fact Readers (Set 2) step forward again, this time with a crown. With them are Edward the Elder and Athelstan. As Fact Reader 1 speaks, he places the crown on Edward's head.

FACT READER 1 King Edward the Elder was given the crown when King Alfred died. He reigned well and united all the kingdoms in the south of England.

ALL Long live the King!

FACT READER 2 *(Taking the crown back and placing it on Athelstan's head)* Then came King Athelstan, who, after long battles, united the rest of the country and became the first King of the whole of England.

ALL Long live the King!

FACT READER 3 The Anglo-Saxon period lasted from 410 until 1066. During that time there were many Saxon kings.

FACT READER 4 Some had interesting stories. Some had interesting names!

FACT READER 5 It's been impossible to name them all today, but we offer you a few now in no particular order.

Song 3 **SAXON KINGS**
(see p27 for lyrics)

CD Track 3/6

The whole cast bows.