

## The Struggle for Power

For centuries, the Anglo-Saxons had shaped life in England. They were Christian, spoke Old English, and were organised into kingdoms such as Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. Their monasteries were centres of learning and beautiful craftsmanship.

The Viking Age began dramatically in AD 793 when Norsemen — warriors from Scandinavia — attacked the holy island of Lindisfarne, destroying the monastery and terrifying the local population. Over the following decades, Viking raids became more frequent and brutal. Eventually, a great Viking army arrived in England in AD 865, known as the Great Heathen Army, with the intention of conquest rather than simply raiding.

The Viking forces captured large parts of England, and it seemed the Anglo-Saxons might be completely overwhelmed. However, King Alfred of Wessex refused to surrender. After regrouping secretly in the Somerset marshes, he rallied his forces and defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Edington in AD 878. A treaty called the Peace of Wedmore followed, dividing England into Anglo-Saxon and Viking territories.

Despite their conflicts, the two cultures gradually blended together. Vikings converted to Christianity, settled as farmers, and their language influenced English enormously. Many everyday words we use today — such as "sky," "egg," and "window" — come from Old Norse.

## Questions

1. Name three Anglo-Saxon kingdoms mentioned in the article.
2. What were Anglo-Saxon monasteries used for?
3. When did Vikings attack Lindisfarne, and what did they do there?
4. What was the Great Heathen Army?
5. When did the Great Heathen Army arrive in England?
6. Where did King Alfred hide and regroup his forces?
7. What was the name of the battle where Alfred defeated the Vikings?
8. What did the Peace of Wedmore do?
9. Give two examples of everyday English words that come from Old Norse.
10. Why do you think King Alfred is remembered as a great leader, even though England was divided after his treaty with the Vikings?



Text C Quiz



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