Anglo Saxons vs Vikings

The Vikings came from Norway, Denmark and Sweden, then known as the Norse countries. They were feared across much of Europe.

Longboats
The Norse countries had long coastlines, so boats were a fantastic way to get around. Vikings developed longboats, which were faster, more stable versions of narrow boats. Longboats often had a dragon carved into the prow of the boat, these dragon ships were a sight which terrified many.

Lindisfarne
In 793CE, the Vikings launched their first invasions on Scotland and England. Lindisfarne was one of the first and most famous attacks. The monastery of Lindisfarne was home to a holy order of peaceful monks and nuns. The Vikings saw the building as an easy target, it contained wealth but the monks would not resort to violence to defend it. The Vikings stole anything of value and murdered the monks.

Divisions of England
Under Anglo Saxon rule, England was divided into seven kingdoms. Initially, the Vikings would raid parts of Britain and return home, but eventually they began to settle. They wanted to take control of Anglo Saxon land.

Danegeld
Alfred the Great was the King of the strongest Anglo Saxon kingdom, after suffering a humiliating defeat on home ground and realising his army was tired and shrinking in number he came up with a plan. He offered the Vikings the Danegeld agreement. The Vikings agreed to leave Wessex alone if King Alfred paid them a large sum of money. This agreement lasted five years before the Vikings invaded Wessex, King Alfred had built a strong army in this time and defeated the Vikings. The two sides did not wish to fight so agreed to the Treaty of Wedmore. Under this treaty the Viking King Cuthmore converted to Christianity. He was allowed to keep certain parts of England under Danelaw, the rest of England was to be ruled by Alfred.
What made Alfred Great?

- He built fortified towns ‘burhs’.
- He built a fleet of battle ships.
- He thought about his soldiers – ensuring they had six months away from battle to tend to their land.
- He was intelligent and wanted to improve the education of the English people.
- He translated texts from Latin into the language his people understood.
- He introduced new laws to unite the English and wrote those laws in English.

Viking Life

Vikings were not all bloodthirsty fighters: some came to Britain to live peacefully. Families settled in villages. They had jobs: there were farmers, who kept animals and grew crops, and skilful craft workers, who made beautiful metalwork and wooden carvings. Everyone, including animals, lived together in a large home called a longhouse. The Norse people were not Christians, like the Anglo Saxons, they worshipped many gods and loved to tell stories for entertainment.