

# NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



## SAXON SHIP BURIAL

### TEACHERS' NOTES

In the autumn term the class had investigated life in Roman Britain. A visit to Dewa Centre in Chester together with class lessons and individual study had given the pupils a good picture of life in Roman Britain. Part of the study had included the decline of Rome and the raids of the Angles, Saxons and other Germanic peoples.

In the spring term we moved on to the Anglo-Saxons. A previous lesson had focused on the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Ruin* and they had seen a cartoon of the Beowulf story. Pupils were aware of many differences between Roman Britons and Anglo-Saxon English.

#### **Year group/class**

Year 3, mixed ability, 22 in the class.

Grouped according to ability: 5 pupils working below L2 English, 6 pupils working at L3 English, 11 pupils working at L2.

#### **Teaching time** 1 hour

#### **Learning objectives**

- To develop the participation of lower ability children during whole class activities.
- To develop the observational skills of all pupils.
- To develop the questioning skills of all pupils.
- To develop the interpretational skills of all pupils.
- To develop the children's understanding of Anglo-Saxon life through the use of a picture – an artist's reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon Ship Burial.

- To use the picture as a source for descriptive words and phrases.
- To produce a piece of imaginative and descriptive writing based on the picture.

### Key question

Why did the Anglo-Saxons bury their dead the way they did?

### Resource

Artist's reconstruction of the Anglo-Saxon Ship Burial at Sutton Hoo.

### The teaching

#### Episode 1 *Focus: Who saw what (10 mins)*

The class are shown the picture for 30 seconds. Each group has ten goes to name something they saw. They get one point for each thing. During this episode I focused on the less able pupils in the class to develop their confidence. I scribed their ideas. Suggestions included:

shield spear sword armour ship house trees men buckets dog river sea wood grass helmets dying man harp woman crying overcast sky mud

The picture is again revealed and each group is given time to discuss what they can see. Each group has to give two possible explanations for what is happening. Suggestions included: building a house, a funeral, building a boat, and a battle.

#### Episode 2 *Focus: Pupil questions (10 mins)*

Pretending no previous knowledge I chaired a question and answer session. We focused on the following areas:

The dead man, the woman, the weapons, the crowd.

Through their questioning the class came to the following conclusions:

- The man was dead and he was important, a warrior or a king.
- The woman was his wife or possibly his daughter.
- The weapons were presents to show he had been a warrior.
- The crowd were mourners which showed that he was important.

I then acted as expert and attempted to answer the pupils' questions.

- The man was a warrior and king called Beowulf.
- The woman was his widow Alfwine.
- The man in blue was Wulfstan, Beowulf's friend and body guard.
- The man on the ship was Alfred, the king's servant.
- The spear-bearers were his warriors bringing the spears to show that Beowulf had been a great warrior.
- The crowd were invited guests.

### **Episode 3**

*Focus: Develop a bank of descriptive words from the picture (10 mins)*

We focused on each of the five senses and also the possible emotions being felt by the mourners.

**Sight:** dazzling, wicked, sharp, twinkling, glittering, sparkling, bloody, gloomy.

**Hearing:** Lapping water, crying, sobbing, wailing, screeching (gulls), howling (wolves), clinking (spears), squelching (mud).

**Touch:** cold (steel), biting (wind), itchy (clothes), sticky gooey (feet).

**Taste / Smell:** River / sea, food (from a feast), salty.

**Feelings:** sad, unhappy, miserable, worried, guilty, hurt, bad, scared.

### **Episode 4** *Focus: Guided writing (20 mins)*

While groups went about their independent tasks I worked with the lower ability group. I recapped what we knew about the picture then acted as scribe. We focused on the character Alfred and wrote a first person account of the funeral.

A second group worked independently at the same task (with the exception that they were allowed to choose their own character).

### **Episode 5** *Focus: Plenary (10 mins)*

Each group read out their work and the class asked questions and suggested other words that they could have used to describe the items in the picture.

## Learning outcomes

- Increased participation throughout the class – pupils normally difficult to motivate readily took part, contributing to whole class and group discussion.
- Active involvement of lower ability pupils, without reliance on the teacher to specifically draw them into the activity.
- An interest in and understanding of Anglo Saxon life.
- An adjective bank for class use was produced.
- The children produced written work, individually or as a group, based on the picture and subsequent discussion.

## Reflection

I was pleased with the response of all the children during the whole class sessions, especially that of the less able group, who often turn off during text sessions. I was surprised at their imagination and enthusiasm, which continued through to the writing session.

During guided writing it is important not to put words into the mouths of the children. I was only partially successful in this as I was tied up in the process of writing. None the less, most of the words and ideas were the children's and I felt happy about the amount of modelling I gave for the layout.

Having seen the cartoon version of Beowulf the children were more familiar with the Anglo-Saxon world than might otherwise have been expected.

The children had also listened to me read *The Hobbit* during the Autumn term and with hindsight I could see its influence in some of the writing. Not a bad thing.

As a follow-up in the next lesson we read and discussed an extract from Beowulf.

### Nuffield Primary History project

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