The Birth of Britain
Map of modern England, Scotland, and Wales
Ancient Britain

First known inhabitants of Britain were a nameless people shrouded in mystery

All that is known about them is pieced together from archeological sites. They created long ships and giant earth mounds.

Their greatest accomplishment was the stone structure called Stonehenge, which later peoples claimed was built by a giants under Merlin the wizard’s orders.
Diagram of Stonehenge: Exactly how Stonehenge was constructed and for what purpose is still a mystery.
Celtic Tribes

Celtic tribes that originated in Germany and the Netherlands invaded Britain, claiming the island for themselves.

In 387 B.C. the Celts easily conquered the simple people of Britain. Then the two peoples mingled into one.

Celtic warriors used horse-drawn vehicles, chain mail, long swords, bucklers, and well-crafted helmets in the shape of beasts.
Celtic Religion

Druids (the Celtic holy men) believed that the secrets of their religion should never be written down. Because of this, very little is known of their beliefs.

The Celts performed human sacrifice. Enemies of the Celts, along with their women and children, would be placed in large, wicker constructions and burned alive as offerings to the gods.
Celtic Religion

The Celts built Dolmens, dwelling places for the dead, all around Britain.
Roman Invaders

In 54 B.C. Julius Caesar became the first Roman to attempt to conquer Britain.

Eventually conquered by the Romans, the British were ruled by the Roman Empire for 400 years.

When they finally left Britain, the Romans had made THREE significant changes to the country:

Roman Roads across Britain

Christianity and Latin

Established City Sites (London, etc.)
Roman Era Woodcarving
Roman Era Woodcarving
Anglo-Saxon England

Wild, pagan tribes from the mainland (Angles, Saxons, and others) started to pour into Britain and plunder what the Romans have left behind, burning churches and killing priests.

With them these invaders brought their Nordic gods (Woden-Odin, Thor, Frigga, Tyr, etc.) for which the days of the week are named.

The historical King Arthur is said to be a war leader who resisted this pagan invasions.
Barbarian Invasions
Anglo-Saxon England

Soon the invaders and the invaded mingled. The people of Britain became known as Anglo-Saxons. The pagans accepted Christianity.

The area known as “Brittania” under the Romans became known as “Ang-land” after the new Anglo-Saxon people.

The Anglo-Saxon kings began to build wooden forts called motte-and-bailey castles (the forerunners of the traditional stone castle).
Anglo-Saxon burial mound:
A lord was buried lying in his ship

A Roman Coin

An Anglo-Saxon Shield
Anglo-Saxon Helmet
Anglo-Saxon Armor
Anglo-Saxon Helmet
Anglo-Saxon Buckle
Anglo-Saxon Chess Pieces
Anglo-Saxon Chess Pieces
Anglo-Saxon Longsword
Preserved “Bog Person” from the Anglo-Saxon Era
Preserved “Bog Person” from the Anglo-Saxon Era
The Mead Hall

Anglo-Saxon leaders or lords were expected to entertain their followers with feasts. A lord gave his men gifts in return for their loyalty—treasure after a victory in battle, perhaps, or a roasted boar after a successful hunt. The feast was held in the lord's great hall. They ate roast meats, bread and fruit. They drank ale or mead, a strong drink made from honey. People often drank too much, so feasts were often noisy and sometimes ended in fights!
Stories and Poems

Anglo-Saxons liked to gather in the lord's great hall listen to songs and stories while they feasted. They loved tales about brave warriors and their adventures.

The storyteller played music to accompany the songs and poems on a small harp or on another stringed instrument called a lyre.
Only monks (educated and isolated in their abbeys) possessed the knowledge of reading and writing. When they heard the ancient and entertaining Anglo-Saxon tales, they wrote them down, but added Christian elements in place of the old pagan gods.
The language of the church (the language monks wrote in) was Latin, but the illiterate people spoke a language we call Anglo-Saxon or Old English.
BEOWULF

An epic poem, written down between 600—800 A.D.

The story of the hero Beowulf, the earliest heroic poem in Northern Europe

One of the earliest writings in the English language (Old English or Anglo-Saxon)