

Anglo-Saxon Society on the Eve of Conquest

You must be able to:

- Describe the structure of Anglo-Saxon society before the Norman invasion
- Explain the key features of Anglo-Saxon religion, culture, language and law.

Society – the Rulers

- England was divided into separate kingdoms, each ruled by a king (the head of the most powerful family within the kingdom).
- By the later **Anglo-Saxon** period the separate kingdoms had been united under the rule of one king. Kings then allowed earls to look after areas of England known as **earldoms**.
- Earls were responsible for providing justice and ensuring law and order was maintained.
- In 1042 King Edward the Confessor was king of England but he left much of the ruling of the lands to the powerful Earl of Wessex.
- **Thegns** were given land in return (and as a reward) for their loyalty to the king. Thegns were responsible for protecting the villagers under their control and providing military assistance to the king when needed.
- The **Witan** (king's counsel) would be called together to give advice to the king, but he did not have to listen to or act upon the advice.

Key Point

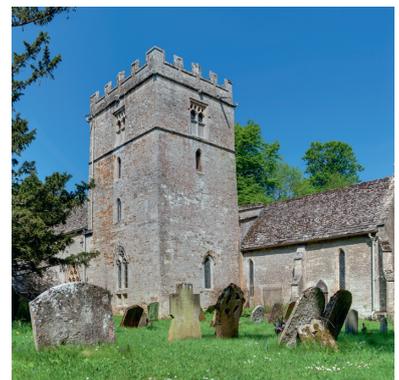
English society was an amalgamation of settlers from north-west Europe (tribes from the Angles, Saxons and Jutes).

Society – Ordinary People

- Most ordinary people in the kingdom were **ceorls** (freemen).
- People who were **thralls** (slaves) usually came from one of three groups:
 - Prisoners of war
 - Criminals who couldn't pay their fines
 - Descendants of the original British people who inhabited the island before the Saxon invasion.
- In times of hardship ceorl parents sold their children into slavery.
- Society was not completely rigid; ceorls could become thegns.

Religion

- During Anglo-Saxon times kings in England had converted to Christianity. The conversion began in AD597 when Pope Gregory I sent missionaries to spread Christianity.
- People within England believed in one God rather than the many of the Pagan beliefs.
- The Saxons stopped being superstitious and believing in charms and magic and started to listen to the Christian Church under the guidance from Rome.
- Religion became an important part of people's lives and the church held great power over them.



An 11th century church

- Kings in England recognised the authority of the Pope as the head of the Roman Catholic Church.
- During the second half of the 10th Century many independent church leaders were replaced with monks from the Christian church. This created deep divisions in England as some people did not like being told what to do by the monks who worked for the Pope.

Culture

- The majority of people's lives were based around the land.
- Each ceorl worked a **hide** of the thegns' land (the thralls also worked but as slaves). Ceorls paid food rent to the thegn.
- Some ceorls had specialised jobs such as shoemakers, bakers and merchants.
- For ordinary families, men and women had specific roles but both were considered important: boys would learn farming, fishing and how to hunt. Girls would learn skills centred on the home, for example, how to cook and brew ale.
- It was rare for girls to be taught how to read and write. The sons of kings or rich thegns might be taught by a private teacher.
- The only schools were run by the Christian Church in monasteries.



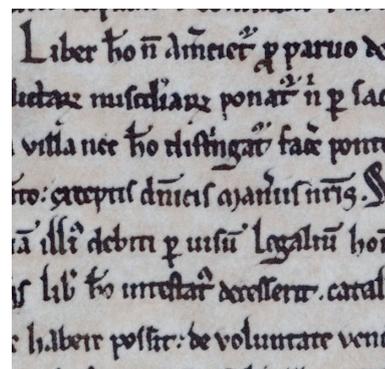
Anglo-Saxon farming tools

Language

- The language spoken was Old English.
- This comprised a mixture of West Germanic languages.

Law

- Kings would give powers to local officials who would listen to cases. These were known as 'hundred' courts.
- Courts were becoming more important in deciding innocence or guilt (rather than people being punished on the say so of the king).
- Entire families could be punished for the actions of one individual.
- The Anglo-Saxons placed a high value on the word of a person (their solemn oath).
- Trials by ordeal were used to decide whether someone was innocent or guilty. Trials by iron or water were the most common.
- Everyone had a **wergild**. If the money could not or would not be paid then the family of the victim could pursue a blood feud.



Old English writing

Key Point

For the majority of people, life was very much structured by God or the social hierarchy.

Key Words

Anglo-Saxon
 earldom
 thegn
 Witan
 ceorl
 thrall
 hide
 wergild

Quick Test

1. What religion were most people in England in 1066?
2. What were the most common trials to ascertain if a person was guilty of a crime?
3. Who usually received an education in Anglo-Saxon society?

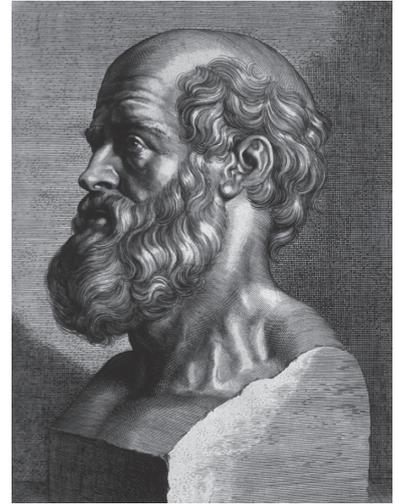
Medieval Medicine 1

You must be able to:

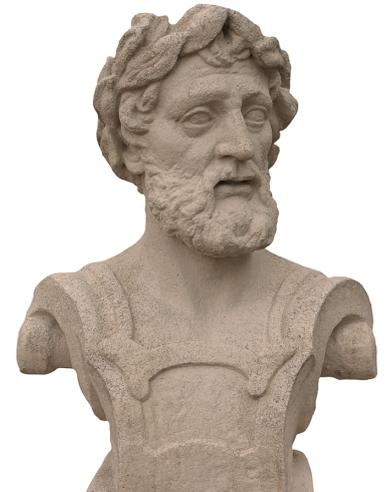
- Explain beliefs about the cause of disease and illness in the Middle Ages
- Explain the preventions and treatments used in the Middle Ages
- Analyse the main factors that led to regression in understanding about health in the Middle Ages.

Ideas About the Cause of Disease and Illness

- During the Greek period, **Hippocrates** devised the idea of **the four humours** – that the body was made up of four main elements, and in order to remain healthy these four humours should stay balanced.
- The four humours consisted of: black bile, blood, yellow bile and phlegm.
- During the Roman period, **Galen** developed Hippocrates' ideas, so alongside advocating the four humours, Galen devised the **Theory of Opposites**.
- The theory stated, for example, if a person felt cold, they should eat something hot to improve their health.
- It is widely argued that the influence of the Church in the Middle Ages caused regression in medicine.
- Because the Christian Church grew in this period, the main belief was that illness was caused by God and indeed it was widely believed that if you had sinned, you would be punished through ill health.
- Very little research went into the cause of illness; in fact, it was considered a crime to dismiss or question Galen's ideas!



Hippocrates



Galen

Medieval Doctors, Training, and Cures

- There were few trained physicians and doctors in the Middle Ages; the few physicians there were charged high fees and were available to only the extremely wealthy.
- By the 12th century doctors had to prove they had studied for a number of years before they could practise, however all training was controlled by the church and so revolved around Galen's ideas.
- There was no science as we know it today; instead alchemy (a mixture of philosophy, superstition and medieval 'science') was prevalent.
- Women would look after their families when ill and medicines would be herbal remedies such as honey or poppy juice.
- People would also visit barber surgeons who would bloodlet and amputate limbs. They had no qualifications, just sharp tools!
- Finally, people would visit **apothecaries** for herbal medicines.

Key Point

Some Roman ideas remained after they left, mainly from Hippocrates (Greek) and Galen (Roman) and these were only really understood by medical students.

Treatments

- The majority of treatments did not work. They included:
 - herbal remedies such as honey or poppy juice
 - praying
 - **bloodletting**, commonly through placing leeches on the skin, which would suck the blood from the patient
 - amputation
 - superstitions, such as using the positions of the planets to determine diagnosis.

Hospitals

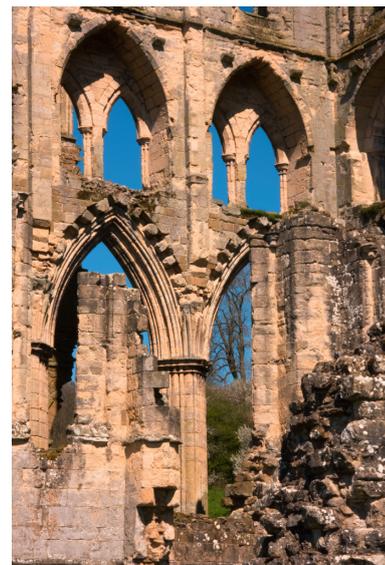
- At the beginning of the Middle Ages, there were very few hospitals.
- The Christian Church felt it was their duty to look after people in England and therefore more hospitals were created by them (although they were small and not at all as we would imagine a hospital today).
- The key idea for the existence of hospitals was 'care not cure'.
- They were run by monks and nuns and were really places of rest for the old or poor rather than people who were actually ill.
- People who were actually ill, especially those with contagious diseases such as leprosy, were banned from hospitals!
- Separate hospitals developed for leprosy sufferers – 'lepor houses'.
- Some of the most famous hospitals include St Bartholomew's in London and St Leonard's in York which focused on providing healthy food, rest and prayer to patients; the nuns would create herbal remedies for their patients and there would be no science in their treatments.
- Women were not permitted to attend university so the treatments they gave to patients were those passed down through family.
- For pilgrims during the Crusades, the **Knights Hospitallars** set up a hospital in Jerusalem to care for injured, poor and sick crusaders.

Arab Medicine

- While there were few Muslims in Britain at this point, Islamic beliefs in the field of medicine had a big impact elsewhere.
- Because Muslims also believed in Galen and Hippocrates' work, books written by Muslims influenced the way medicine was used in Britain and the rest of the Western world.
- The Quran taught Muslims that it was wrong to oppose Galen.

Quick Test

1. Name the four types of humour.
2. Give one reason why medicine and health regressed in the Middle Ages.
3. Give three examples of treatments used to cure illness in the Middle Ages.
4. Give one limitation of hospitals.



Ruins of a medieval monastery

Key Point

The Church controlled nearly all aspects of medicine. As people thought God caused illness, no research went in to finding the cause of disease. Therefore understanding regressed.

Key Words

Hippocrates
the four humours
Galen
Theory of Opposites
regression
apothecaries
bloodletting
Knights Hospitallars