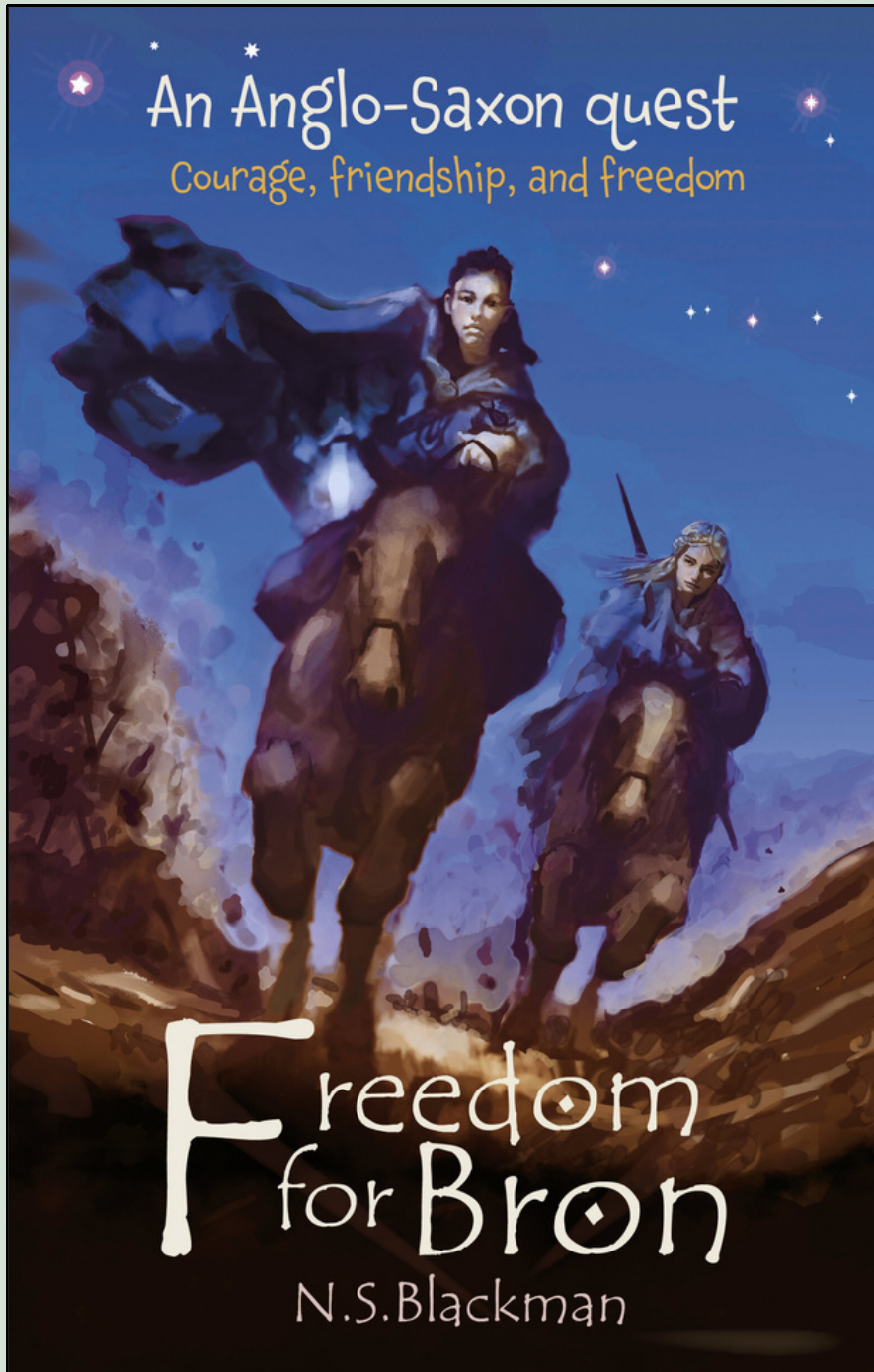


KS2 Anglo-Saxon Life

Freedom for Bron



Activity Sheets

- Creative writing
- Colouring
- History quizzes
- Discussion of Saxon life and themes prompted by the text

Introduction

Freedom for Bron brings history to life: it is an historically accurate adventure for KS2 readers, which immerses children in the Anglo-Saxon way of life - food, culture, communities.

The plot concerns an enslaved boy called Bron who meets a warrior girl called Sigwyn and her friend, a travelling lord and warrior. Together they prevent a potentially devastating war between two neighbouring kingdoms.

The story features a rich cast of female and male Anglo-Saxon characters (farmers, traders, warriors, healers and craftspeople). It brings to life many of the key themes of the Anglo-Saxon topic and can be used as a class reader, for extension work or read simply for pleasure.

You can see a KS2 teacher's video teacher review of the book [here](#)

The author, N.S.Blackman, is available for school author visits. Email info@dinosaurbooks.co.uk

This guide is split into three main elements:

1. **Historical context:** A brief summary of Anglo-Saxon history.
2. **Activity sheets** encompassing quizzes, creative writing, colouring and drawing.
3. **Outlines of key themes and discussion points** for KS2 Anglo-Saxon history with recommended sample passages from *Freedom for Bron* which can be used to prompt discussion about each theme.

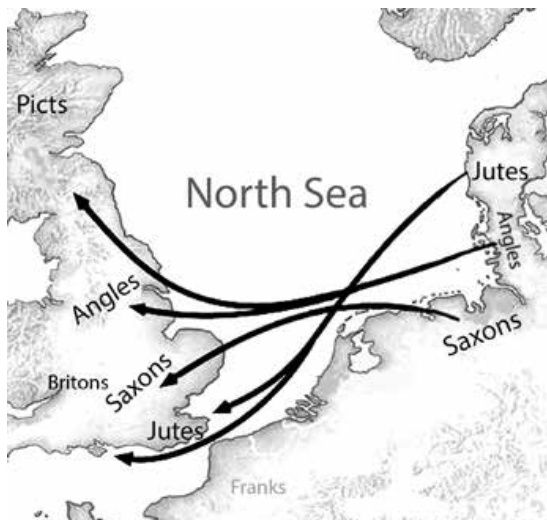


Click here for a guide to the characters/tribes that feature in the book

The Anglo-Saxons' place in history

After the Roman army left Britain (around AD 410) new groups of settlers arrived from northern Europe. There were three main groups, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, and in time they came to be called Anglo-Saxons.

These tribes settled in the south and east of Britain (in what became England) while the original Celtic/Romano-British population remained predominant in the north and west.



In this early period (AD400 - 600) the Angles, Saxons and Jutes were pagans whose belief system was probably similar in character to the Norse religions (for example, the Anglo-Saxon god Woden may be equivalent to the Norse god Odin). Widespread conversion to Christianity began around AD 600.

The migration phase was a turbulent and often dangerous time, with regular feuding between rival kingdoms.

The new settlers were mainly farmers. In many ways their way of life was less sophisticated than that of the earlier Romans. Instead of stone villas with fine mosaic floors they lived in simple thatched wooden houses. The Roman towns and infrastructure fell into disrepair, were abandoned or were gradually built over.

The early Anglo-Saxons were not a literate people, being unable to read – but they loved telling stories and listening to fireside songs. Their fine craftsmanship, particularly their metal work, is still impressive. Their language formed the root of modern English.

The themes of migration and tension between different tribes are explored in *Freedom for Bron* and have resonance today.

The book tells the story of a young girl and boy who help an old warrior to prevent a war between neighbouring tribes of Saxons and Jutes.

CONTENTS Activity sheets

Life on an Anglo-Saxon farm

Saxon settlers quiz - test your knowledge

Design a warrior costume

Write a Saxon story

Colour in a Saxon scene

CONTENTS Discussion Points

- Different groups living side-by-side
- Life After the Romans
- Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: slavery
- Settlers and traders
- Jewellery and costumes
- Kings and warriors
- Farm life
- Feasts and story telling

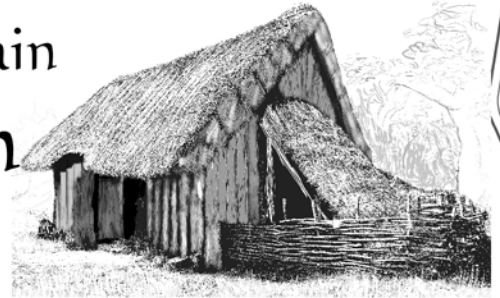
Activity Sheets

Freedom for Bron



Daily life in Anglo-Saxon Britain

Life on a Saxon farm



Imagine that you live on an Anglo-Saxon farm, just like Rowena and Wigstan in the story *Freedom for Bron*. Write a list of all the things that you can remember that Rowena and Wigstan had to do. Now imagine you are a farmer and list your most important jobs for today. What things are you hoping will go well? And what are you worried about?

Rowena's jobs and Wigstan's jobs...

Try to think of as many things as you can!

My jobs today...

After I finish working I am looking forward to...

I will ask the gods for luck - these are things that I hope don't happen...

Anglo-Saxon quiz

The new settlers arrive



How much do you know about the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons?

Try this quiz to see what you remember

Put a tick by the right answer

1. Who ruled much of Britain before the Anglo-Saxons arrived?

- (a) The Normans
- (b) The Vikings
- (c) The Romans

2. When did the Anglo-Saxons start to settle in Britain?

- (a) In the 1400s
- (b) In the 400s
- (c) After 1066

3. Where did most Anglo-Saxons live?

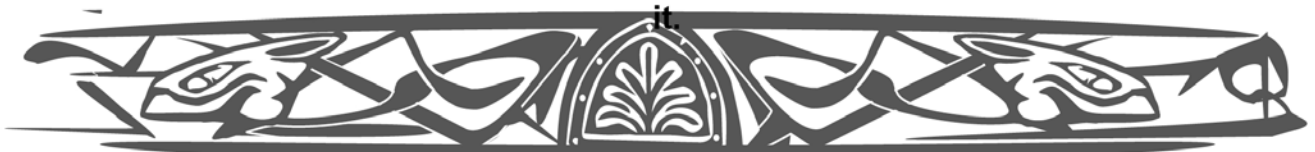
- (a) In country villas
- (b) In castles
- (c) In small farms
- (d) In towns

4. Anglo-Saxons came to Britain in boats - but where from?

- (a) Northern Europe
- (b) Scandinavia
- (c) Italy
- (c) England



This map shows how the Angles, Saxons and Jutes migrated across the North Sea to Britain. **Shade lightly with pencils to colour it.**



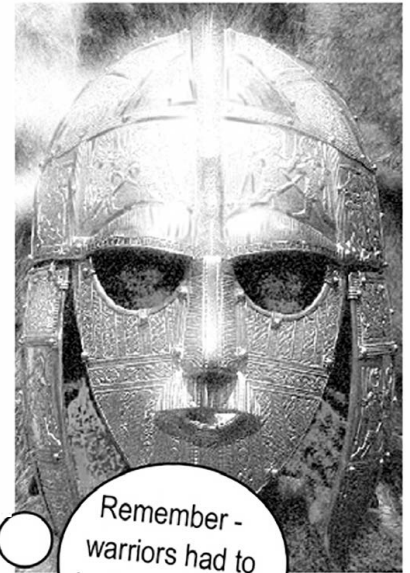


Daily life in Anglo-Saxon Britain

Anglo-Saxon costumes



Imagine that you are a famous Anglo-Saxon warrior, like Beogard in *Freedom for Bron*. What would you wear? Design your costume here -remember to include a warm cloak, a helmet, a tunic and lots of jewellery...



Remember - warriors had to look impressive!

Draw your warrior's costume...

Write a description of your clothing and jewels here...

Write a list of things you might need in a battle...



Anglo-Saxon story telling

make up your own fireside tale!



After reading *Freedom for Bron* by N.S.Blackman you'll know how much Anglo-Saxons loved telling stories beside the fire.

Pick one of the ideas below and make up a Saxon tale of your own.



Story idea 1: A Dangerous Journey

Imagine that you are a warrior telling your tale at a Saxon feast. Everyone wants to hear about your latest adventure.

Describe an exciting journey that you have just made, tell what you found, and what dangers you escaped from.

(Remember, Saxon warriors loved to boast about their own strength and skill!)



Story idea 2: The Lost Sword

Imagine that you are an Anglo-Saxon child who finds a precious sword left beside a tree.

Describe the sword, tell how you find it. Who does it belong to? And what happens next?



Picture: Robert Luke Newberry

Can you make up a map to go with your story?

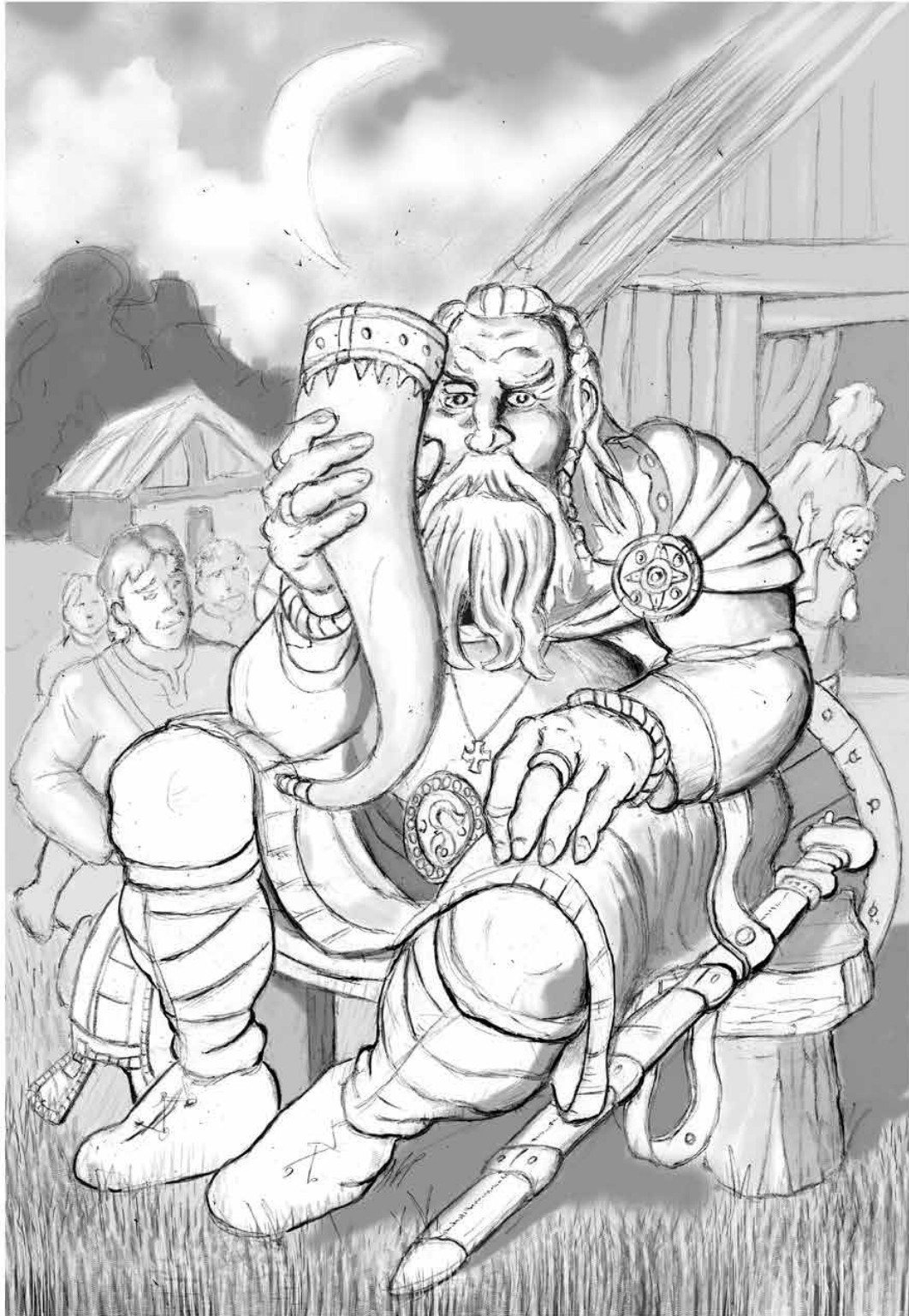


Beogard, 'Anglo-Saxon warrior



Shade lightly
with pencils to
colour this
picture

A Saxon warrior's feast



Picture: N.S. Blackman



Discussion Points, Themes Explored

Freedom for Bron



Themes explored in the text with ideas for discussion

1. Different groups were living side by side
2. Life after the Romans
3. Slaves and farmers
4. Settlers and traders
5. Daily life: jewellery and costume
6. Daily life: kings and warriors
7. Daily life: on a farm
8. Daily life: feasting and story telling

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

1. Different groups were living side by side: Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Britons

During the early Anglo-Saxon period (AD 400 - 700) there was often fighting between neighbouring communities, as local warlords took over land and kingdoms were formed. But the different groups also integrated and lived together.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: four Saxon warriors arrive at a Jute farming village. There is suspicion between the two groups but, after the Saxons help the Jutes to scare away dangerous raiders, the Saxons and Jutes sit down together to eat and tell stories. Suspicion gives way to friendship.

Recommended passage: pp 33-40 (Chapter 6)

Soon men came running from the fields and a crowd gathered at the farm. They began to point at the three young strangers, Sigwyn, Edwyn and Kenhelm. The farmers glanced suspiciously at the three friends' swords and their Saxon stlye clothing...

[continues to] ... Nobody noticed an extra figure squeeze in at the back of the crowd. Bron had slipped away from the forge where his master, the blacksmith, now lay snoring. Tomorrow he would have a slave's work to do again. But tonight he would listen to warriors' tales.

Points for discussion...

- 1) Why are the farmers hostile towards the Saxons at first?
- 2) How do you think the Saxons must feel in this situation?
- 3) What are the differences between the Saxons and Jutes? (Clothing, style of jewellery, different accents and way of speaking- but their customs and their way of life are really very similar).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

2. Life in southern Britain after the Anglo-Saxons took over from the Romans

During the early Anglo-Saxon period (AD 400 - 700) Britain was a much less settled place than it had been under Roman rule. Nobody was in charge of mending the roads, controlling money or keeping trade routes open. Many of the Roman towns and country villas fell into ruin. People now survived by farming the land and producing local goods. But these new communities were always vulnerable to attack.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: Saxon warriors are travelling to meet the king of the Jutes to offer peace. But along the way they come across a Jute farm that has been attacked by raiders. The same gang of bandits is about to attack a second Jute farm and the Saxons must decide what to do.

Recommended passage: pp 9-15 (Prologue and Chapter1)

This road through the woods is no longer safe. It was less dangerous once, when the Romans ruled here - in those times, it is said, a travel-ler could walk for miles without fear...

[continues to] ... "Lord?" They were all waiting, looking at him. Beogard sighed. "Very well," he said at last. "Go on then. Show me this farm."

Points for discussion...

1) What sort of things do you think ordinary people worried about at this time? (Protecting themselves; growing enough food; becoming ill or getting injured- life was very tough).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

3. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: slaves and farmers

In Anglo-Saxons culture anyone could fall into slavery – you could be captured in a raid, or if you ran out of food you could offer yourself into slavery as an alternative to starvation. Enslaved people had hard lives but the lives of farmers and most ordinary people were equally tough. The enslaved were often paid a small amount and they could sometimes buy their freedom.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: the enslaved boy Bron works hard all day keeping the blacksmith's forge fed with charcoal. The blacksmith is ungrateful and Bron's life seems tough – he also has to feed the animals and prepare the midday meal. But towards the end of the passage Bron makes an exciting discovery that will change his life...

Recommended passage: pp 79-84 (Chapter 13)

Bron worked all day, just as he always did, keeping the fire in the forge burning and fed with charcoal. Whenever Frumold shouted at him, he would step into fan the flames until his arms ached and his skin was burning, feeding the fire with air and making the flames hotter... [continues to] ... Frumold stared at the hound brooch. His mouth opened but he was too astonished to speak.

Points for discussion...

- 1) Why is Bron so unhappy? (His life is hard, he has too much work to do and the blacksmith is lazy and ungrateful).
- 2) What sort of thing does the blacksmith make? (Mainly farm tools; but not decorated items).
- 3) What does Bron discover about the amulet that is so important to him? (It contains a valuable gold ornament that he can use to buy his freedom).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

4. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: settlers and traders

There is good evidence (from jewellery, weapons and glasswork for trading links between the Anglo-Saxons/Jutes living in Kent and the Franks across the Channel (modern France).

In the AD 600s this became important because the close links helped the spread of Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons. Through ties of marriage, the Kingdom of Kent was the first to convert...

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: the enslaved boy Bron leaves his quiet village and sees an exciting, wider world. He seeks the help of a goldsmith called Cloda. Cloda and his sister are wealthy traders and craftspeople from Francia (France) – and to Bron they seem exotic and fascinating.

Recommended passage: pp 117-120 (Chapter 18)

Cloda sat in silence, his sister beside him, listening as Bron told his story about Beogard and the Saxons and their mission to see King Eormenric...

[continues to end of chapter]

Points for discussion...

- 1) Why do Cloda and Cleava seem strange to Bron? (Their home is well decorated and Bron has never seen such fine ornaments. They also know the king and his warriors).
- 2) Why is Cloda wealthy? (He has skills that are highly valued. He makes gold and silver jewellery, as well as expensive weapons).
- 3) Are Cloda and Cleava Saxons or Jutes? (Neither, they are originally from Francia, modern France).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

5. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: jewellery and costume

Jewellery of all kinds was important to Anglo-Saxons. Expensive brooches, belts and ornaments were worn as a sign of a person's importance. Powerful warriors would have finely decorated weapons and perhaps even chain-mail and war-helmets covered with fantastic decoration (like the famous items found at Sutton Hoo, on display at the British Museum).

Gift-giving was important too, and was one way that a leader ensured loyalty from his followers. Wrong-doers could also be made to pay 'wergild' (gold or treasure) to people they had wronged. This was a way of stopping feuds from growing.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: when he reaches the king's hall Bron rescues the Saxon warriors and is rewarded with gifts. The warriors adopt him as their new 'brother' and say they will help him to improve his appearance – a warrior should not look scruffy. The king says that the warrior Jutrad will have to pay for his actions 'with blood or treasure'.

Recommended passage: pp 150-153 (Chapter 6)

*Bron ran forwards and used his knife to cut through the ropes...
[continues to] ... The law of the kingdom would be followed.*

Points for discussion...

- 1) How does the king make Harnost feel better? (The king tells Harnost that Jutrad will pay for killing his brother 'with blood or with treasure').
- 2) How does the king say that he will reward the Saxons? (He promises them 'gifts of friendship').

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

6. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: Kings and warriors

Key theme: Anglo-Saxon society was controlled by local kings and their bands of loyal warriors. There was no single country called England at this time but instead a number of smaller kingdoms (which continued until the 10th century).

In wars between neighbouring kingdoms the kings were expected to lead their followers personally into battle. Any king who was poor war leader would not last long. Warriors were expected to fight to the death to defend their kings.

When not at war, kings and their warriors spent time feasting, drinking and exchanging gifts. The king collected taxes from the people who farmed the land and in return he was supposed to protect them and ensure that laws were obeyed.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: Eormenric, King of the Jutes, is holding a lavish banquet for his followers. But while everyone else is enjoying themselves the king is pondering over important decisions. Should he go to war with the Saxons or not? If he makes a bad decision he knows that he could lose his kingdom and his life.

Recommended passage: pp 143-145 (Chapter 22)

Tables had been set up along the full length of King Eormenric's hall, down either side and across the end, in the shape of a horseshoe... [continues to] ... "Bring them in now," said Eormenric. "Bring in your Saxons."

Points for discussion...

- 1) Do you think life was easy for an Anglo-Saxon king? (Kings were rich and did not have to work the land. But they had to be tough and clever to control the warriors around them. And in time of war they had to fight in battle).
- 2) What is King Eormenric thinking about at the feast? (He is trying to decide what to do about his rival, the king of the East Saxons).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

7. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: Life on a Saxon farm

Most people in the early Anglo-Saxon period (AD 400 - 700) survived by farming the land. They grew crops and reared animals for food. People of all ages had to work hard from dawn to dusk and their lives followed the seasons, planting and harvesting crops. If their crops failed, they would starve. As well as growing food, Anglo-Saxon communities had to make everything they used, from clothes to tools, from homes to medicines. Women were often in charge of weaving and essential tools were made by blacksmiths. When they weren't working, they may well have sat around the fire telling stories and making music.

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: the farmers thank the Jutes for helping them by holding an impromptu feast. The local families gather at Rowena's farm and food is prepared.

Recommended passage: pp 33-38 (Chapter 6)

Soon men came running from the fields and a crowd gathered at the farm. They began to point at the three young strangers, Sigwyn, Edwyn and Kenhelm. The farmers glanced suspiciously at the three friends' swords and their Saxon stlye clothing...

[continues to] ... In the light from the fire Beogard's war-helm shimmered and on it the golden beasts and dragons seemed to dance in the flames.

Points for discussion...

Points for discussion:

- 1) What would you have liked about living on a Saxon farm? (Fresh air? Freedom? No school work!)
- 2) What would have been the worst things? (Tiring work, risk of hunger, lack of proper medicine, cold in the winter).

Themes in *Freedom for Bron*

8. Daily life for Anglo-Saxons: feasting and story telling

Key theme: feasting and sharing tales must have been one of the highlights of life for Anglo-Saxons. There were few other forms of entertainment. And there were no books, so information had to be passed down by word of mouth. Songs and stories were an important way that beliefs and values would be shared. Sometimes tales were very exciting (in the greatest surviving Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* we meet demons, dragons and mighty warriors).

In this passage from *Freedom for Bron*: the old warrior Beogard stands up by the fire to tell the story of his journey. He embellishes the story, makes jokes and keeps everyone entertained.

Recommended passage: pp 33-40 (Chapter 6)

*Bron wrapped his arms around his knees and waited. Beogard stood. And instantly, from his very first words - deep, slow, almost chanting - Bron was spellbound...
[continues to] ... The hound was warning me again. It was commanding me to leave my safe hall and make the journey to the king."*

Points for discussion...

- 1) How do the farmers react when Beogard offers to tell them his story? (They are all keen, they want to hear a good tale).
- 2) How important do you think story telling was to Anglo-Saxons?
- 3) How does Beogard make his story exciting? (He shows the children his brooch with the golden hound on it. And he puts plenty of mystery into his story- including a message from the gods!).

Pronouncing names in *Freedom for Bron*

Most of the names are pronounced as they are written, but you might find this guide helpful. The 'Old English' spoken by Anglo-Saxons sounded quite different to our modern English!

How to say it like a Saxon!

The Saxon characters

King Bricgnytt (pronounced **Brich-nit**)
He controls Robrivis, the river and lands to the west.

Saxon warriors

Sigwyn (pronounced **Sig-win**)

Edwyn (pronounced **Ed-win**)

Kenhelm (pronounced **Ken-elm**)

Sherwyn (pronounced **Shur-win**)

Other main characters

Lord Beogard (pronounced **Bay-o-gard**)
Beogard controls his own lands, the wild Weald country in the west. He is a Saxon but he is also uncle to the Jute king.

Hrotha (pronounced **Ha-roth-ah**)

Cloda (pronounced **Cloe-dah**)

Cleava (pronounced **Clee-vah**)

Gods

Thunor (pronounced **Thoo-nor**)

Woden (pronounced **Woe-din**)



The Jute characters

King Eormenric (pronounced **Yor-men-rik**)
He controls all the land from the river to the coast

Jute warriors

Jutrad (pronounced **Joot-rad**)

Havrad (pronounced **Hav-rad**)

Fornost (pronounced **For-nost**)

Jute villagers

Rowena (pronounced **Row-ee-na**)

Wigstan (pronounced **Wig-stan**)

Willa (pronounced **Wil-a**)

Paega (pronounced **Pay-ga**)

Frumold (pronounced **Frum-old**)

Bron (pronounced **Bron**)

Places

Robrivis (pronounced **Rob-ree-vis**)

Frefresham (pronounced **Fef-ra-shum**)

Cantwareburh (pronounced **Kant-ware-bur**)