**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**The Anglo-Saxon Period**

**450 A.D.- 1066 A.D.**

Some of the **earliest inhabitants** of the island now known as **Great Britain** were the **Celts**.

Their religion was called “**animism**” from the Latin word for **“spirits.”** They saw spirits everywhere…in trees, rivers, stones, fire, and thunder. Their **priests**, called “**Druids,**” acted as go-betweens between the gods and the Celtic people.

The **Druids** are associated with **Stonehenge**.

England was invaded by **the Roman army** led by **Julius Caesar** in 55 B.C.

The Romans ruled the lower half of England for the next **400 years**.

The Romans left England when the **Roman Empire collapsed** in 410 A.D.

Over their 400 years in England**, they made many** **contributions**, including:

roads public baths Latin words

meeting halls law courts sanitation systems

**The Anglo-Saxons** invaded England in 450 A.D. They were actually 3 tribes of **Germanic people** called **Angles, Saxons, and Jutes**.

As the Anglo-Saxons began pouring into England, the **Celts eventually settled in** **Scotland, Wales, and Ireland**. Much of their culture can be found in those countries.

Anglo-Saxons were farmers, sailors, fishermen, hunters, and great warriors.

**A group of thanes (warriors) served a lord (chief).**

The lord, his thanes, and their families **lived communally in a** **mead hall**.

Mead was a favorite drink made of fermented malt, honey, yeast, and water.

**The ideas of fate (wyrd) and fame were very important in the lives of the Anglo-Saxons**. They believed that humans rarely control their own destiny. They believed that men blindly follow fate or "wyrd," and that fame was the only way to be remembered after death. **It was** **only through great deeds and fame that a warrior could hope to live forever.**

Some scholars believe that a fifth century military man named **Arturius** (or **Arthur**) might have actually led the Celtic people in their fight against the Anglo-Saxons.

**What did the Anglo-Saxons value most?**

**courage honor loyalty strength**

**kinship glory fame wisdom**

Beowulf is an **epic poem**—**a long narrative (story) poem in grave and stately language about the achievements of a hero.**

Beowulf is over 3,000 lines long. **Its theme is that strength, wisdom, and courage can overcome evil.**

**The religion of the early Anglo-Saxons was Paganism, but over time, they converted to** **Christianity.** The Beowulf poem contains elements of both.

The Anglo-Saxons had a strong oral tradition.

Because **they were illiterate and did not have an alphabet** with which to record things, **they relied on speech and memory**.

The Anglo-Saxons especially enjoyed riddles, poems, and word play.

The Anglo-Saxon mead hall is where British literature really began.

**Their poet-historians, called** **“scops,” made people famous by telling and singing about their great deeds.**

Beowulf was finally written down about 700 A.D.

The final lines of Beowulf are elegiac. **An elegy is a poem that mourns the death of** **someone or the loss of something**…in this case, a great leader.

The only existing copy of the original can be seen in the British Library in London, England.

The end of the Anglo-Saxon Period is marked by The Norman Conquest, when **William the Conqueror and his French soldiers defeated the Anglo-Saxons in 1066 AD.**

**When we say “British literature,” we include the literature of 4 countries (the WISE countries)**

**W—Wales (Welsh)**

**I-- Ireland (Irish)**

**S--- Scotland (Scottish)**

**E---England (English)**