



# Filologia del testo inglese medievale

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CdL in Lingue e Letterature Europee e Americane

A.A. 2020/21

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# The origins of the Anglo-Saxons

Legend: **Hengest and Horsa** (Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 8th cent.,  
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae*, 1136)

History: 5th cent.

Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians reached the shores of Britain and replaced the vacuum of power left by the Romans

# The Heptarchy



The Anglo-Saxons pushed the Britons westwards and established seven kingdoms, which seldom coexisted peacefully.

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674: the **synod of Whitby** established the adoption of the Roman dating system for Easter

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Birth of a vernacular written literature: laws, chronicles, epic poetry

# The Viking raids

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9th cent.:

the Vikings occupy Northumbria, East Anglia and part of Mercia. **Alfred the Great**, king of Wessex (871-899) stops their expansion (battle of Edington, 878) determining the birth of the Danelaw.

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➤ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a record of events (annals), which will be continued until the 12th cent.

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- Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (959-988)
- Oswald, bishop of Worcester (961-992) and archbishop of York (971-992)
- Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester (963-984)
- Ælfric of Eynsham (955-1010), one of the most distinguished intellectuals in Europe
- Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York (1002-1016)

# The four poetic manuscripts

The four major Old English poetic manuscripts we have were all produced in that period

- London, British Library, [MS Cotton Vitellius a.xv](#) (*Beowulf*, etc.); Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501; Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CXVII; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius xi.

They contain traditional and religious poetry in the vernacular along with other miscellaneous texts.

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14 October. William invades England and defeats Harold at Hastings. William becomes king of England.

# Hastings embroidered: The Bayeux tapestry

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