Notetaking Sample

Anglo-Saxon Period

Focus Questions:

What specifically did America inherit from Britain in terms of our political system, law, and language?

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| What was the heroic ideal of Anglo-Saxon Britain? |

Key Words: animism, Epic, epic hero, archetypal, alliteration, imagery, foil, simile, epithet, prefixes and suffixes

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| Great Britain has been invaded and settled many times: first by ancient people we call the Iberians, then by the Celts (kelts), by the Romans, by the Angles and Saxons, by the Vikings, and by the Normans.  |  |
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Celts—4th Century B.C. and before (Greeks record); Britons (Britain)—group of Celts

Religion:

* Animism--Saw spirits everywhere (rivers, trees, stones, etc)
* Spirits/gods controlled all aspects of existence
* Priests (Druids)—act as go-betweens between gods and people
* Ritual Dances and Human Sacrifice
* Stonehenge (lunar and solar cycles)

Literature:

* Legend of King Arthur (Celtic Legend) (Le Morte D’Arthur by Thomas Mallory)
* Mythology: strong women, leapt into the sunlight, passionate love affairs, fantastic animals, great adventures, magic and imagination rule

Romans: The Great Administrators

* Conquered all of Celts by 100 A.D.
* Armies, organization, fortifications (Hadrian’s Wall), and roads, Latin language
* Christianity becomes a unifying force (Celtic religion diminishes)
* When Romans leave, no central gov’t and no strong armies
* many invasions

Anglo-Saxons: Birth of Engla-Land

Language:

* From Germany
* Anglo-Saxon (old English) becomes dominant language (oral and written)--*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*
* Some texts still written in Church’s Latin
* Wales-Welsh (related to Celtic)—only survivor

Religion

Anglo-Saxon (Mythology)

* Warrior gods
* dark, fatalistic religion
* similar to Norse or Scandinavian mythology.
* Odin, the god of death, poetry, and magic. The Anglo-Saxon name for Odin was Woden (from which we have *Wednesday*, “Woden’s day”). Woden could help humans communicate with spirits, associated with burial rites and ecstatic trances, important for both poetry and religious mysteries
* The Anglo-Saxon Thunor same as Thor, the Norse god of thunder and lightning. His sign was the hammer and possibly also the twisted cross (swastika), which is found Anglo-Saxon gravestones. (Thunor’s name survives in *Thursday,* “Thor’s day.”)
* Dragon, protector of a treasure—“death the devourer” and guardian of the grave mound
* Religion was more concerned with ethics than with mysticism—with the earthly virtues of bravery, loyalty, generosity, and friendship.

Christianity

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| * Christianity eventually replaced the old warrior religion, unifying force, linking England to continental Europe.

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| * Monasteries served as centers of learning and preserved works from the older oral tradition.
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Politics:

* Divided into separate kingdoms until Alfred the Great (871-899)
* Danes (from Denmark/Vikings)—defeat Anglo-Saxons and takeover central and northeast England
* Defeated by William the Conqueror, Norman Invasion (1066) (from France),
* kinship groups led by a strong chief. (law and order responsibility of leader)

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| * Valued military leadership (Sootun Hoo ship—burial mound)
* Loyalty (allegiance) to leader, success measured by gifts from leader
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| * The people farmed, maintained local governments, and created fine crafts, especially metalwork, led simple lives but were also ready for a battle (not barbarians).
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Women in Anglo-Saxon England

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| * women inherited and held property.
* married, women still retained control over their own property
* a prospective husband had to offer a woman a substantial gift of money and land.
* The woman had personal control over this gift: She could give it away, sell it, or bequeath it as she chose.
* Lost many of these rights with the Norman Conquest

The Bards: Singing of Gods and Heroes* Communal Hall—shelter, a place for council meetings, a space for storytellers and their audiences.
* Storyteller-- sang of gods and heroes (oral tradition)
* Creating poetry as important as fighting, hunting, farming or loving
* Stress that life is hard and death is an end (no afterlife),
* Only in songs (fame in the collective memory) do people live on
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