

# ANGLO SAXON SOCIETY



**Women weren't a class in Anglo-Saxon society, but they were treated very differently from men.**

Women were not allowed to eat in the great hall during a feast. A rich man's wife might serve food and drink to the guests, but would eat elsewhere. Anglo-Saxon women stayed at home, cooking, making clothes and looking after the children. Women usually didn't marry men of a higher class than themselves. A slave woman usually married a slave husband.

**The king was at the top of society and everyone had to obey his orders.**

Each group of Anglo-Saxon settlers had a leader, or a war-chief. A strong leader became a *cyning*, the Anglo-Saxon word for king. Kings wore expensive clothes and a crown. In Anglo-Saxon times there was not just one king - there were many kings. They often quarrelled and fell out with each other.



**After kings, the most powerful Anglo-Saxons were the *thanes*.**

Thanes lived in large halls and helped the king rule the land. A thane was in charge of a village. Everyone in the village had to do what he said. If he didn't like someone he could force them to leave his village!



**Most Anglo-Saxons were *ceorls*. These were the common people or peasants.**

Ceorls were usually poor and lived in small huts. They worked on the land or had a trade, like weaving, metalworking or carpentry. Ceorls had to fight for their thane. In return, the thanes gave them protection from invaders.



**Slaves were at the very bottom of Anglo-Saxon society.**

Many slaves were badly treated and forced to work for a *thane* their whole life. Slaves would wear cheap, dull clothes made from wool.

At the end of their working day, a slave would sleep in the cowshed or barn.