Kingdoms Under Pressure

Trace how settlement, invasion, and leadership shaped England.

AWH.C.9.5.C "Trace the rise of Anglo-Saxon England, the Danish invasions, and the influence of Alfred the Great."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the paragraphs to track the three stages. In each paragraph, circle an event or action and underline a change it helped cause.

Before England Was United

1 After Roman rule in Britain ended in the early fifth century, groups from across the North Sea, including Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, settled in parts of the island. Over time, several kingdoms emerged, including Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria. Their rulers fought and made alliances, while shared languages and Christian institutions helped shape what historians call Anglo-Saxon England. It was not yet one united kingdom, but these kingdoms laid the groundwork for one.

2 From the late eighth century, raiders from Scandinavia attacked coastal sites, including monasteries. In the ninth century, larger Danish armies began taking territory rather than only carrying away goods. They defeated several Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and pushed into Wessex. Danish settlers also established communities in lands they seized. These invasions changed who held power and threatened Wessex, the last major Anglo-Saxon kingdom still resisting Danish conquest.

3 King Alfred of Wessex faced this threat. After a Danish force captured much of Wessex, he rallied troops and won at Edington in 878. A later agreement with the Danish leader Guthrum marked areas of English and Danish control. Alfred also built fortified towns, organized defense, and supported learning and written records. These steps strengthened Wessex and gave later rulers tools for expanding its power. England's unification came after Alfred, not during his reign.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did settlement lead to Anglo-Saxon kingdoms without creating a united England?

2. How did the Danish threat change between the late eighth and ninth centuries?

3. How did Alfred's victory at Edington affect the struggle for control?

4. How did Alfred's actions prepare Wessex for what came after his reign?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum sign claims, “Alfred united England by himself.” Write four sentences correcting it. Connect the early kingdoms, Danish invasions, Alfred's response, and later unification with at least two cause-and-effect links.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.9.5.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the paragraphs to track the three stages. In each paragraph, circle an event or action and underline a change it helped cause. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did settlement lead to Anglo-Saxon kingdoms without creating a united England?	**Settlers formed several kingdoms whose rulers fought and made alliances, but the kingdoms were not united.**
2	How did the Danish threat change between the late eighth and ninth centuries?	**Raids on coastal sites gave way to armies taking territory and threatening Wessex.**
3	How did Alfred's victory at Edington affect the struggle for control?	**It helped Alfred resist Danish conquest; a later agreement marked areas of English and Danish control.**
4	How did Alfred's actions prepare Wessex for what came after his reign?	**His defenses strengthened Wessex, and his support for learning and records gave later rulers useful tools.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Settlers formed several Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but no single ruler governed them all. Danish armies conquered territory, so Wessex faced a serious threat. Alfred resisted the Danes and strengthened Wessex through fortified towns and organized defense. Because Wessex grew stronger, later rulers could expand its power, but England was not united during Alfred's reign.

Accept accurate cause-and-effect links drawn from the passage. The final response should distinguish Alfred's influence from the later unification of England.