



Introducing St Edward the Confessor – teachers' notes

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SLIDE 2: Learning Objectives:

- To learn that St Edward the Confessor was an Anglo-Saxon King of England who ruled from 1042 – 1066
- To find out about some of the key events in St Edward the Confessor's life
- To understand St Edward the Confessor's connection with Westminster Abbey
- To find out about the impact of St Edward the Confessor's death on the Kingdom of England

SLIDE 3: Who was St Edward the Confessor?

Ask pupils to discuss in pairs: What do you already know about St Edward the Confessor? Listen to answers.

SLIDE 4: Introduction summary

- St Edward the Confessor was an Anglo-Saxon king of England.
- He ruled from 1042 – 1066.
- One hundred years after his death he was made a saint.
- His title 'Confessor' was added after his death to reflect the holy life he led and to differentiate him from another saint named Edward (Edward The Martyr).

Hand out the St Edward the Confessor fact sheet. Explain to the pupils that you are going to be asking some questions during the lessons today, the answers to which will be on the fact sheet.

SLIDE 5: St Edward the Confessor's Birth

When was St Edward the Confessor born? (*pupils to look at the fact sheet to find the answer*) That's over 1,000 years ago. Discuss in pairs: Why is there no exact date and what do you think life was like back then? Take suggestions.

SLIDE 6: Anglo-Saxon England

St Edward the Confessor was born in the time of the Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxons were a mix of tribes from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands who came over to Britain after the Romans left in around AD410. Anglo-Saxon Britain was not ruled by one person at first – there were different kingdoms, each ruled by a different king. Eventually, these separate kingdoms were united by one king

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known as 'Alfred the Great'. He was Edward's great great great grandfather. During Anglo-Saxon times, there were many periods of invasion and fighting with a group of people known as the Vikings (who came from Scandinavia – Norway, Sweden and Denmark). Alfred the Great fought the Vikings but then made peace so that the English and Vikings could settle down and live together. However, by the time St Edward the Confessor's father was king, things were changing....

SLIDE 7: St Edward the Confessor's family

Who was St Edward the Confessor's family? St Edward the Confessor was the 8th son of King Ethelred the Unready, and his wife Emma of Normandy.

Where is Normandy? Normandy is a region in the northern part of France.

King Ethelred was an Anglo-Saxon King. To be a king during these times, you had to be strong and fight to keep your lands. Ethelred was weak, and angered the Vikings. In 1013 King Sweyn of Denmark and his son Canute invaded England and became the next kings.

What happened to St Edward the Confessor and his family during this time? (*look at the fact sheets*)

SLIDE 8: St Edward the Confessor in Normandy

St Edward the Confessor moves to Normandy to live with his mother's family. St Edward the Confessor's mother initially went with him, but then returned to England and married the King Canute – which meant that she was Queen twice! St Edward the Confessor spends 28 years of his life in Normandy.

During his time there it is said that St Edward the Confessor prayed to God and asked for his help to become the King of England. St Edward the Confessor promised that if God made him the King, then he would go on a pilgrimage (a holy journey) to the church of St Peter in Rome. As the 8th son of a king, and with a Danish King on the throne now, is St Edward the Confessor likely to become King? Explain that at the time in which he is living, there is no clear system for royal succession. It does not just pass from father to eldest son. It depends on a range of factors - support from the church, support from the wealthy people in the land, and the military might of the contender for the throne. When St Edward the Confessor returns to England in 1041, his half-brother Harthacnute is the King. When does St Edward the Confessor become King? (*have a look on the timeline on the factsheet*).

SLIDE 9: St Edward the Confessor becomes king

St Edward the Confessor becomes King of England in 1042. Despite being the 8th son of a king, he had the backing of the people and was elected to be king by a royal council. He has a coronation ceremony in 1043 at Winchester Cathedral. What is a coronation? It is a special religious ceremony where a new king is anointed with holy oil, invested with regalia, and crowned. Now he is king, does this mean all his problems have gone away?

SLIDE 10: St Edward the Confessor and Earl Godwin

Upon ascending the throne, St Edward the Confessor had to come to an agreement with the powerful regional earls. Explain that these earls have money, power and their own armies. If St Edward the Confessor falls out with the earls, it could cost him his crown. One of these, Earl Godwin – is likely to have been responsible for murdering Edward's own brother. The image is from the Bayeux Tapestry and shows St Edward the Confessor talking to the earls in his kingdom. Ask pupils to discuss: How can St Edward the Confessor secure a good partnership with Earl Godwin?

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SLIDE 11: St Edward the Confessor and Earl Godwin

Explain that St Edward the Confessor married Earl Godwin's daughter Edith. When did they marry? (*look at the fact sheet – 1045*). He never had children with her. Despite the marriage, St Edward the Confessor had a difficult relationship with Earl Godwin. They fell out in 1051 when Earl Godwin opposed St Edward the Confessor's appointment of a Norman as Archbishop of Canterbury. He forced Earl Godwin into exile, but when Earl Godwin raised an army to fight back, St Edward the Confessor made peace with him.

SLIDE 12: St Edward the Confessor and his promise

St Edward the Confessor was known for being a deeply religious man, who led a holy life. When he was in Normandy, what promise had he made to God?

[click to reveal]

That he would go on a pilgrimage to St Peter's Church in Rome. However, upon becoming King, St Edward the Confessor felt that the kingdom of England was too unstable to leave. A journey to Rome would take many months.

[click to reveal]

What could happen if he left England? Foreign invasion? Someone else might take the throne? What do you think he decided to do? Ask pupils to discuss with a partner

SLIDE 13: St Edward the Confessor and Westminster Abbey

St Edward the Confessor decided to build a great church next to his royal palace and dedicate it to St Peter. Instead of going on a holy journey of pilgrimage, Edward would glorify God by building a beautiful church. Work began in 1050 on the site of an older Anglo-Saxon monastery. It was built in the Norman style of architecture. Why? St Edward the Confessor had been influenced by his time spent in Normandy. The church became known as the 'West Minster' to distinguish it from St Paul's (the east minster) ('minster' means church). Today the church is known as Westminster Abbey.

SLIDE 14: Westminster Abbey is finished

The new church was finished and then consecrated (blessed) on the 28th December 1065. Sadly, St Edward the Confessor was too sick to attend. The image on the left shows how the interior of the Abbey may have looked when completed. The two pictures on the right are the only remains of St Edward the Confessor's church. The Abbey was rebuilt nearly 200 years later by King Henry III.

SLIDE 15: St Edward the Confessor's death & sainthood

St Edward the Confessor died on 5th January 1066 and was buried in the church. In 1161, almost a hundred years after his death, he was made a saint. What is a saint? A Christian who was believed to have been close to God and have led a holy life. People believed that St Edward the Confessor had led a holy life and stories began to grow that those who visited his grave were healed of sickness. Christians believed that the saint was in Heaven with God and was able to talk to Him directly. In 1269, St Edward the Confessor's body was moved into a beautiful new Shrine, which became a popular site of pilgrimage (a holy religious journey). The Shrine remains in the Abbey today.

SLIDE 16: St Edward the Confessor's death

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What happened after St Edward the Confessor's death? His death sparked a succession crisis (check that pupils know what succession means) Who should be king next? Edward had no children with his wife and had not made it clear who he wanted to succeed him. He had also caused problems by supposedly promising the throne to two different people. What do you think will happen?

SLIDE 17: Who should be king?

Upon the death of St Edward the Confessor, there were three main claimants to the throne of England. Read through the three contenders. Ask pupils: Who do you think deserves to be king? What do you think happens?

SLIDE 18: The end of Anglo-Saxon rule

St Edward the Confessor's failure to name an heir to succeed him led to a series of battles between those who said they should be king, ending with the Battle of Hastings that took place in October 1066. William of Normandy was triumphant and became King of England, which brought about the end of Anglo-Saxon rule in England. William's Norman invasion of England began a new period in England's history: The time of the Normans.

SLIDE 19: The life of St Edward the Confessor activity

The images we can see here come from a piece of artwork known as the Bayeux Tapestry – an embroidered cloth that tells the story behind the Battle of Hastings in 1066. It is 70m long and contains 50 scenes.

Activity: Imagine you are creating a piece of artwork to celebrate the life of St Edward the Confessor. What images would appear on it? Use your St Edward the Confessor fact sheet and what you have learned today to draw at least 6 scenes from his life. You can also include an image of what happens after his death. The activity can be carried on at another time if there is not enough time to complete in the lesson.

SLIDE 20: Quick quiz

Who was St Edward the Confessor? An Anglo-Saxon King of England that ruled from 1042 – 1066. He is also an English saint.

Why was he called the Confessor? To reflect the holy life he led and to differentiate him from another saint named Edward (Edward The Martyr).

What was St Edward the Confessor famous for building? A great church dedicated to St Peter, now known as Westminster Abbey.

What did St Edward the Confessor fail to do before he died? He failed to have a son and name someone to succeed him as King.

Who won the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and became the King of England? William of Normandy, who began a Norman invasion of England and ended Anglo-Saxon rule in England.

SLIDE 21: Plenary

Today I have learnt:

- That St Edward the Confessor was an Anglo-Saxon King of England and was later made a saint.
- That St Edward the Confessor built Westminster Abbey.

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- That St Edward the Confessor's death and his failure to name an heir led to the end of Anglo-Saxon rule in England.