

Where do English place names come from?

Village and Name • KS2 History • Years 3 to 6

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

1 Choose where to build

GEOGRAPHY LINK

A family has walked inland from the coast, looking for somewhere to stop for good.

Site	What is there	Good or bad?
A	An empty Roman town of stone buildings and paved roads	
B	A bend in a river, a wood behind it, ground that drains	
C	Flat wet ground, no trees, water a long walk away	

- Which site would the family choose? Site _____
- Three things they needed: water they could _____, trees they could _____, soil that would _____
- The Roman towns were already built and empty. Why did the family walk past them?

2 Words to know

VOCABULARY

a. Draw a line to match each word to its meaning.

thatch	the open fire burning down the middle of the floor
wattle and daub	the biggest building in the village, where everyone ate and argued
hall	a roof made of straw from the field
hearth	woven branches packed with mud, used to make walls

b. Finish these sentences using three of the words above.

- The walls were made of _____, and the roofs were straw.
- The village ate, argued and slept in the _____, around a fire burning in the _____.

3 What does the ending tell you?

EVIDENCE

Anglo-Saxon place-name endings are not decoration. Each one describes the place.

Ending	What it means	A place with it
-ham	_____	_____
-ton	_____	_____
-ford	_____	_____

- Say **Oxford** slowly. What two words can you hear? _____ + _____
- A man called **Snot** gave his name to **Snotingham**. What do we call that place today? _____
- The name was passed from parent to child for about **1,300 years**, through roughly **60 grandmothers**. About how many years is that for each one? _____ years

MATHS LINK

4 Write about the village

ENGLISH LINK

You are inside the fence on an ordinary working day. Write three or four sentences about what you can see, hear and smell.

Use at least two expanded noun phrases — for example **a long fire burning down the centre of the floor**.

Answers and teaching notes

Watch: [keystagestories.co.uk](https://www.keystagestories.co.uk)

Where do English place names come from? • Village and Name

1 • Choose where to build

Site B is what the family in the film chose. **Mark the reasoning, not the letter.** A child who picks **A** and argues that the buildings were already standing has understood the choice, and the discussion is why the Anglo-Saxons did not agree. **C** should be rejected by everyone: no water, no timber, wet ground.

Three things: water they could **carry** • trees they could **cut** • soil that would **not turn to soup in February** (accept *drain*).

Why walk past the Roman towns: stone buildings in the wrong places. These were farmers, so they needed water, timber and ground that drained, not paved streets. Accept any answer reaching “the towns were not where the good farmland was”.

2 • Words to know

a. thatch → a straw roof • wattle and daub → woven branches packed with mud • hall → the biggest building • hearth → the open fire down the middle of the floor

b. wattle and daub • hearth • hall

3 • What does the ending tell you?

-ham a home, a place settled for good — *Nottingham, Birmingham, Durham*

-ton a farm with a fence round it — *Brighton, Preston, Luton*

-ford a river crossing shallow enough to walk a cart across — *Oxford, Bradford, Watford*

a. Ox + ford. It was the shallow place in the river where oxen were walked across.

b. Nottingham. The S at the front was lost under Norman French after 1066.

c. $1300 \div 60 \approx 22$ **years** each (accept 20–25, or “about 20”).

4 • Write about the village

Not marked for content. Look for: **expanded noun phrases** (Year 4 statutory); detail drawn from the film (woodsmoke, oxen and the plough, pigs in the woods for acorns, children carrying firewood); and present or past tense held throughout.

Curriculum

National Curriculum KS2 History — *Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots*. Question 1 links to Geography (why settlements are where they are), question 3c to Maths (division and estimating), and question 4 to English (expanded noun phrases, Year 4 statutory).

Where each question comes from in the film

- **0:16** Chapter 1 — the family choose their ground, the post goes in at the gate (Q1)
- **1:36** Chapter 2 — timber, thatch, the hall and the hearth, and nobody able to write (Q2, Q4)
- **3:02** Chapter 3 — sixty grandmothers, and what -ham, -ton and -ford mean (Q3)

Two things the film is careful about

- **Snot was a real name.** Snotingaham means “the home of Snot's people”, recorded before the initial S was lost under Norman French. The film says it rather than tidying it away.
- **Almost nobody here could write.** Anglo-Saxon England was largely non-literate in these centuries, and nothing about a village like this was written down for another three hundred years. That is why the place names carry the record instead of documents — the point of chapter 3.