

# Medieval York: Capital of the North

Time Odyssey Teachers Pack



Chronology: Middle Ages

Yorkshire  
Museum

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## Section One: How to use this resource

This resource will help you get the most out of a visit to our Medieval galleries when completing a **Time Odyssey** activity at the Yorkshire Museum. It contains:

- An introduction to the **Medieval York: Capital of the North** exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum.
- Information about seven **Star Objects** in the exhibition, which you **may wish** to look at when completing your Time Odyssey adventure.

Our Medieval exhibition is particularly suited to the following Time Odyssey **mission**:

<b>Amulet of Power (Power)</b>	This activity requires pupils to find objects symbolising strength, power, bravery and protection to make a powerful amulet.
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More information about The Journal of Returning, The Vessel of Stories and other Time Odyssey missions can be found in the **Time Odyssey Guidelines for Teachers**, which you will be sent when booking your visit to the Yorkshire Museum.

You can share the information in this resource with your pupils whilst they are **completing a Time Odyssey mission**. Alternatively, you can use these notes to lead a **reflective discussion** with your pupils after they have finished an activity.

*You may find it helpful to share these notes with the other adults who will be accompanying the class on your visit to the Yorkshire Museum.*

### Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of **flash cards**, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in our Medieval galleries.

## Curriculum Links

A visit to our Medieval York: Capital of the North exhibition can be used to cover the following curriculum areas:

### *Key Stage Two*

Pupils should be taught about:

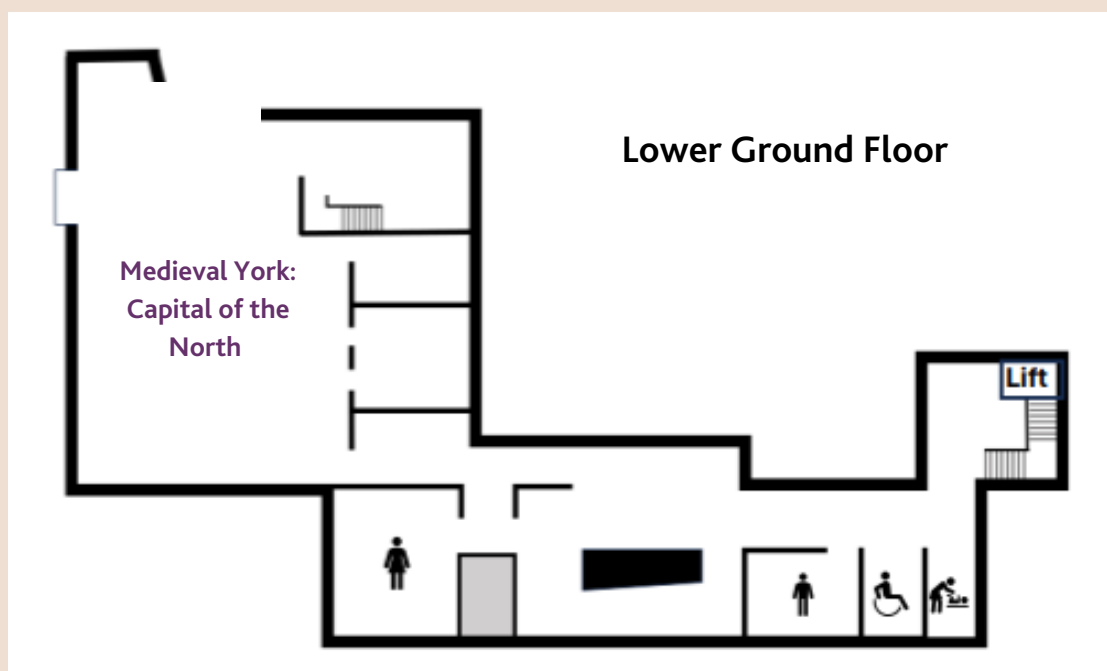
- Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots

Or

- The Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor

## Gallery Map

The **Medieval York: Capital of the North** exhibition can be found on the lower ground floor of the Yorkshire Museum. A full map of the Yorkshire Museum can be downloaded from our [website](#).



## Section Two: Introduction to Medieval York

The **Medieval York: Capital of the North** exhibition focuses on the following periods of history:

- The Anglo-Saxons
- The Vikings
- The Normans
- The High and Late Middle Ages
- The Tudors

The exhibition is split into eight themes. The themes in **bold** contain one or more of the Star Objects described in this resource:

- **Capital of Craft**
- **Capital of Commerce**
- Capital of Conflict
- Capital of Riches
- Capital of Colour
- **Religious Capital**
- Learned Capital
- **Royal Capital**



## Capital of Craft

York's **craftspeople** were among the greatest in Europe. Its markets were flooded with goods, from everyday objects to luxury items. A striking example is the gold and sapphire mount, made by a talented Anglo-Saxon goldsmith, which depicts a mythical creature (**Star Object Seven**).

## Capital of Commerce

York thrived as a centre of trade and commerce. Goods from far away places made their way into the city. For example, amber from the Baltic was transported to York, thanks to the Vikings' trading networks, where it was made into jewellery. Both the Anglo Saxons and Vikings had their own currency systems, as is shown by the discovery of a buried hoard of bronze coins (**Star Object Six**).

## Religious Capital

Religion and the Christian faith were at the heart of medieval life, and the objects on display in the gallery can tell us a lot about religious practices at the time. For example, the Middleham Jewel (**Star Object Three**) is a pendant designed to hold a holy relic. The object's decoration suggests that it was intended to provide protection during childbirth.

## Royal Capital

Roman rulers had, at times, governed their vast empire from York, and medieval monarchs continued this tradition, making York their royal capital in northern Britain. Many of the objects on display must have been owned by people of great power. The York Helmet (**Star Object Two**) is believed to have been owned by a member of the Northumbrian royal family in the Anglo-Saxon period, as is shown by the inscription on the nose guard.

## Section Three: Star Objects

You will complete the following Time Odyssey mission in our Medieval York: Capital of the North exhibition:

### The Amulet of Power

The Amulet of Power mission encourages pupils to reflect on powerful objects. Power can refer to many things, such as strength, status, wealth or even magic. During the mission, pupils must find powerful objects to make an amulet to protect their character. This mission is particularly suited to the **Medieval York: Capital of the North** exhibition, which contains a range of objects that demonstrate the power of their owners.

### Star Objects

The Star Objects listed below have been chosen due the stories they can tell us about power in the Medieval period.

Each Star Object links to one of the main themes in the Medieval York: Capital of the North exhibition. These are:



**Royal Capital**



**Religious  
Capital**



**Capital of  
Commerce**



**Capital of  
Craft**

Each Star Object comes with:

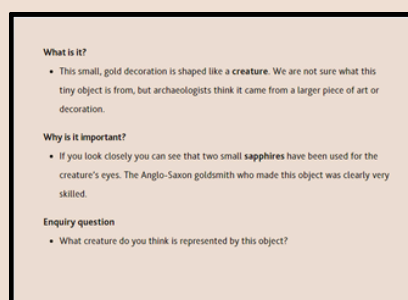
- A brief **description** of the object, the **materials** used to make it, and why we think it is **important**.
- Suggested enquiry questions which you can use to lead a discussion with your pupils. Some of these are designed to be shared with pupils before the object information.

You can share the information in this resource with your pupils whilst they are completing a Time Odyssey mission. Alternatively, you can use these notes to lead a reflective discussion with your pupils after they have finished an activity.

**Note: these are just suggestions for objects pupils might wish to look at during their Time Odyssey adventure. There are plenty of other excellent examples to find in the museum, and we encourage pupils to explore for themselves and discover what interests them.**

## Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of flash cards, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in our Medieval galleries.





# Star Object One: Gilling Sword

**Material:** Iron and silver; **Theme:** Royal Capital; **Period:** Anglo-Saxon

## What is it?

- This decorated Anglo-Saxon sword was found in North Yorkshire by a 9-year-old boy called Gary Fridd. Gary wrote to the children's TV show **Blue Peter** about his find, and both he and the sword were awarded with Blue Peter Badges.
- The fine **craftsmanship** and **precious materials** used to make the sword suggest it wouldn't have been used in battle. Perhaps it was intended to be **buried** with someone after their death?

## Why is it important?

- The Anglo-Saxons used swords to show off their **wealth** and **power**.
- This object shows that anyone is capable of discovering a significant archaeological find!

## Enquiry question

- What can you see that suggests this sword was intended for display rather than for use in battle?



## Star Object Two: The York Helmet

**Material:** Iron, brass and copper; **Theme:** Royal Capital; **Period:** Anglo-Saxon

### What is it?

- This Anglo-Saxon helmet is beautifully decorated with **animals** on its nose guard. A **Latin** inscription written in the central band dedicates the helmet to **God** and asks for the wearer to be protected.

### Why is it important?

- The York Helmet is the best surviving example of an Anglo-Saxon helmet in Europe. It must have been made a very skilled craftsman.
- Above the nose guard, the name of the helmet's owner ('*OSHERE*') can be read. It is possible the helmet was owned by a member of the **Northumbrian royal family**.

### Enquiry question

- If your Anglican helmet had Latin writing, what would your helmet say? Remember – you may be heading into a dangerous battle!



## Star Object Three: The Middleham Jewel

**Material:** Gold and sapphire; **Theme:** Religious Capital;  
**Period:** Late Middle Ages

### What is it?

- This pendant was designed to hold a **relic** - small pieces of silk and gold cloth, which may have come from the cloak of a **bishop** (an important figure in the church).
- We can see from the decoration and inscription that the pendant's owner wanted protection during **childbirth**.

### Why is it important?

- The pendant is the finest piece of medieval gold-working to be found in England. It was probably made for a **wealthy** and **powerful** woman. The object was found near the home of **King Richard III**, Middleham Castle.

### Enquiry question

- Who do you think the pendant may have belonged to?



## Star Object Four: Beads and Brooch Pieces

**Material:** Amber, glass and gold; **Theme:** Religious Capital;  
**Period:** Anglo-Saxon

### What is it?

- These Anglo-Saxon beads are made from **amber** and **glass**.
- The fragments of gold and red glass come from a **brooch**, typical of the type that women of the period would have pinned their clothes with.

### Why is it important?

- The glass was found alongside the fragmented brooch. They were probably buried with a **wealthy** and **powerful** woman.

### Enquiry question

- Why do you think this woman wanted to be buried with her jewellery?



## Star Object Five: Grave Cover

**Material:** Stone; **Theme:** Religious Capital; **Period:** Viking

### What is it?

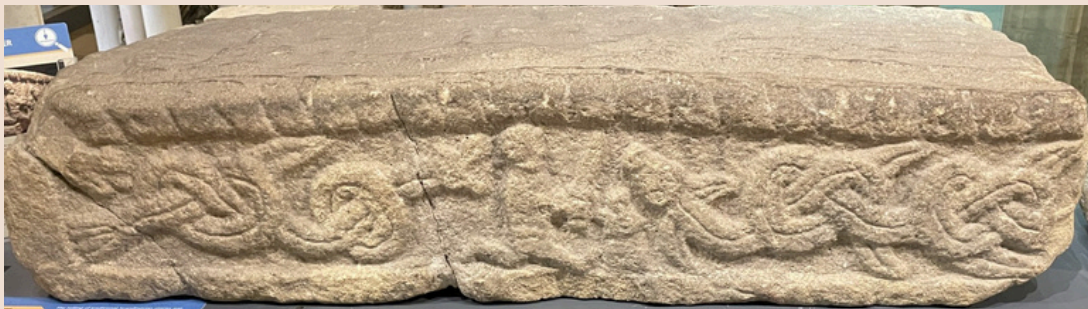
- This grave cover is decorated with scenes from a traditional Scandinavia **saga**. It tells the story of a hero called **Sigurd** who slayed a dragon called **Fafnir**.

### Why is it important?

- This grave cover was found beneath **York Minster**, telling us that this grave must have belonged to a very important Viking.
- The fact they wanted their grave cover decorated with a traditional saga shows us how important **storytelling** was to the Vikings.

### Enquiry question

- Are there any stories that mean something to you? If you were this Viking, what story would you liked to have shown on the stone cover?



## Star Object Six: Coin Hoard

**Material:** Bronze; **Theme:** Capital of Commerce; **Period:** Anglo-Saxon

### What is it?

- This **hoard** of **bronze** coins was buried in the ground in this ceramic vessel. A hoard is the name given to a set of precious objects - such as coins - which have been hidden by their owner for **safekeeping**.

### Why is it important?

- The hoard contained several thousands coins and represents a huge amount of **wealth**. The coins are equivalent to many years of pay for an ordinary person.

### Enquiry question

- Why do you think someone hid this money in this vessel? Were they in danger? Do you think they planned to come back for them?



## Star Object Seven: Gold and Sapphire Mount

**Material:** Gold and sapphire; **Theme:** Capital of Craft; **Period:** Anglo-Saxon

### What is it?

- This small, gold decoration is shaped like a **creature**. We are not sure what this tiny object is from, but archaeologists think it came from a larger piece of **art** or **decoration**.

### Why is it important?

- If you look closely you can see that two small **sapphires** have been used for the creature's eyes. The Anglo-Saxon **goldsmith** who made this object was clearly very skilled.

### Enquiry question

- What creature do you think is represented by this object?

