

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

WHY BUILD HERE?



KS2

KS3

Recommended for

KS2 and KS3 (History, Geography)

Learning objectives

- Understand the relationship between land and sea at Whitby.
- Analyse why St Hild and King Oswiu chose to build a new Anglian monastery on the headland at Whitby in AD 657.
- Consider how Whitby's history has been shaped by its location.

Time to complete

20 minutes



The abbey ruins on the headland with the town and River Esk below.

SUMMARY

On a class projector screen, use the 'map view' on Google Maps to locate Whitby Abbey on the coastline. Switch the view to 'satellite' to give your class a more detailed picture of the cliffs.

Ask students to discuss the pros and cons of each point listed below. Do this in small groups, using the card sort activity provided (on the next page).

TEACHER ANSWERS

Whitby Abbey stands above a busy harbour with international trading links.

- **Pro:** Money made from harbour trade can be used to build and maintain the abbey.
- **Con:** Harbour towns are vulnerable to Viking raids.

Whitby Abbey is high up on a cliff, overlooking the sea.

- **Pro:** It can be used to keep an eye on enemies trying to attack by boat.
- **Con:** There are no streams or springs on the headland because it's too high up.

Whitby Abbey is a symbol of the Christian faith, which can be seen from miles around.

- **Pro:** It will help to strengthen Christianity, which was still a fairly new religion.
- **Con:** It is a target for people who aren't Christian and want to seize the wealth of the monasteries.

Whitby Abbey is exposed to the sea, wind and rain.

- **Pro:** Rainwater can be collected as a source of fresh water.
- **Con:** Erosion means bits of the cliff will fall into the sea as the years go by.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Discuss topography and learn key terminology relating to coastal erosion. The cliff edge is being eroded at a rate of about 10m every 100 years. In Roman times the headland might have extended out another 200m or more. Visit our web page to find out more about Whitby Abbey's history: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/whitby-abbey/history-and-stories

WHY BUILD HERE?



Sort the eight cards into the pros and cons table. Put one card in each box.

WHITBY ABBEY IS...	THIS IS GOOD BECAUSE...	THIS IS BAD BECAUSE...
... above a busy harbour with international trading links.		
... high up on a cliff, overlooking the sea.		
... a symbol of the Christian faith, which can be seen from miles around.		
... exposed to the sea, wind and rain.		

I think it was a good/bad idea to build an abbey here because:

.....

.....



It can be used to keep an eye on enemies trying to attack by boat.	Harbour towns are vulnerable to Viking raids.	It will help to strengthen Christianity, which was still a fairly new religion.	There are no streams or springs on the headland because it's too high up.
Rainwater can be collected as a source of fresh water.	It is a target for people who aren't Christian and want to seize the wealth of the monasteries.	Money made from harbour trade can be used to build and maintain the abbey.	Erosion means bits of the cliff will fall into the sea as the years go by.