Year: 7
Subject: History
Topic/Unit: Monks, Monasteries and Yorkshire
When: Autumn Half Term 1

Huntington School
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Overview: An opportunity to study local history and figure out why there are so many remnants of monasteries left behind in our local area.

Why this? Why now? Yorkshire's landscape is uniquely defined by its monastic ruins, yet the origins of these sites are often misunderstood. Following the study of the Norman Conquest, this unit explains how the **Harrying of the North** and the Norman religious changes transformed Yorkshire into a monastic stronghold. It provides students with a local context for national medieval history.

Building on...building to: This unit builds on prior knowledge of the **Norman Conquest** and the devastation of 1069. It establishes the foundation for future studies regarding the **Dissolution of the Monasteries** in the 1530s, explaining why these institutions were so wealthy and numerous to begin with. It also provides crucial background to the study of **Fountains Abbey** at GCSE.

Sequence summary:

1. **Traces in the Landscape:** Identifying monastic influence in modern street names (e.g., Monkgate, Priory Street) and major ruins like **Fountains Abbey** and **Whitby Abbey**. Examining the story of **St Hilda** at Whitby to understand early religious life. Investigating the **Viking raids** (starting in 793 AD) that led to the near-total abandonment of northern monasteries.
2. **The 12th-Century Recovery:** Analysing the massive growth of monasticism (a 13-fold increase in monks). Using the story of **Walter Espec** to explore how the fear of **Purgatory** and the availability of "wasteland" after the Harrying of the North incentivised Norman lords to sponsor new abbeys like **Rievaulx**.
3. **Causation Writing Practice:** Students will complete a formal practice **historical explanation** answering: *"Why were there so many medieval monks and nuns across Yorkshire?"*. They must use a structured **5 sentence paragraph** format to support their claims with factual evidence.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Monk/Nun, Abbey/Monastery, Abbot, Purgatory, Sponsor/Patron**

Assessments: Knowledge from this unit will be used and assessed in History assessment 1.

Able and interested: Students can investigate the specific "motto" of **St Benedict** ("to work is to pray") and compare the different roles of **Cistercian monks** and **Augustinian monks**. They may also explore why Yorkshire's isolated geography made it "perfect" for those seeking a remote life of prayer.

Inclusion, Personal Development and Wider Skills: The unit enhances **literacy** through structured paragraph writing and story exploration. It develops **cultural capital** by connecting students to local heritage sites and explaining the origins of their own regional history.