

# Reading Abbey

**RM**  
READING  
MUSEUM

**ABBAY  
QUARTER**



# Aim: to understand -

- Where was Reading Abbey built
- Why and how was it built
- Why was it important

## Reading Abbey background:

In the year 1121, King Henry I announced that he wanted a new abbey built at Reading.

The Abbey would have a large and impressive church, and living quarters for dozens of monks, who would worship in the church. It would transform Reading forever turning a market town into an important religious centre known across western Europe.

## Reading Abbey background (continued):

Henry Chose a site on the edge of the town on high ground between the River Kennet and the River Thames.

The rivers would be used to transport stone during the building work.

Major roads leading to Reading would make it easy for pilgrims to travel to the abbey, and for Henry to visit as he travelled around his kingdom.

The Abbey was such a large and ornate construction that building continued for almost 200 years after the foundation in 1121. By this time the older parts of the Abbey would have been in need of repair.

# Planning and building an Abbey

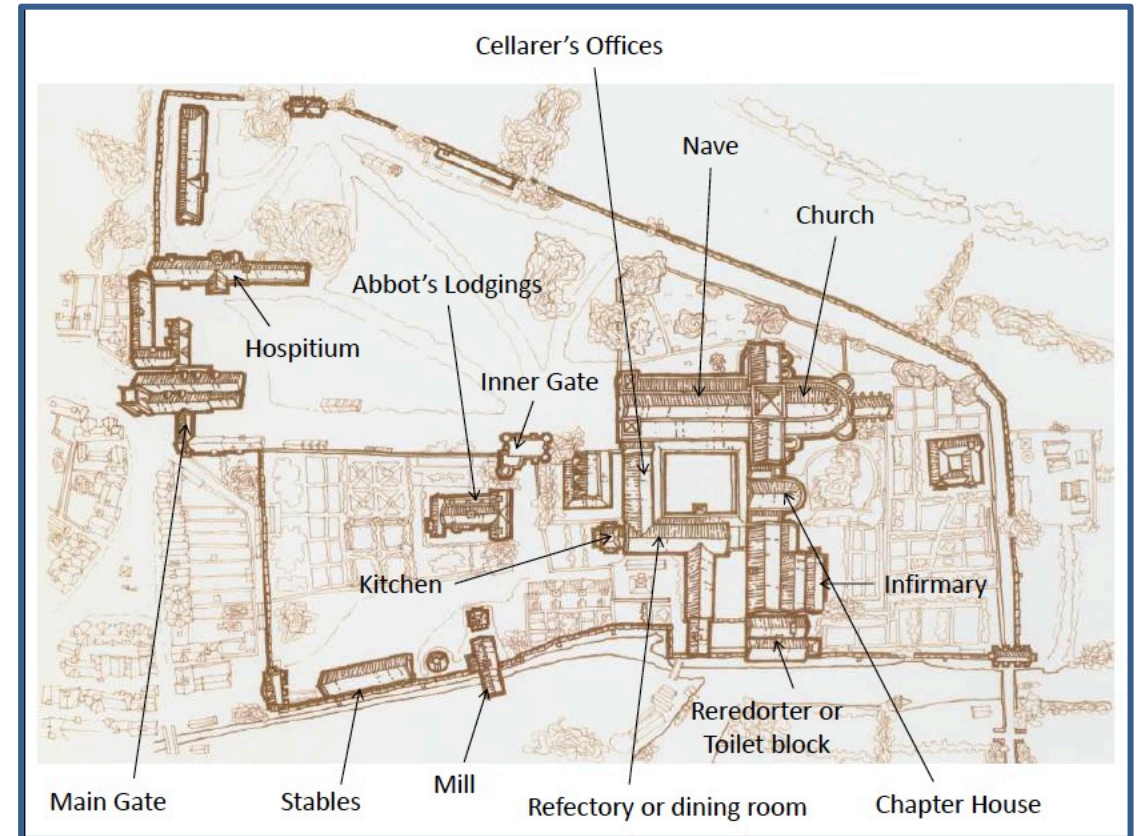
Now Imagine Henry I has asked **YOU** to design an Abbey for him. Before you begin plan the different parts you would include and what their role would be.

Draw a plan of your abbey. It doesn't have to be the same as Reading Abbey. Make sure you include all of the important areas and make it clear using symbols and colours with labelled locations.

# Plans of Reading Abbey



Reading Abbey Model on Sketchfab:  
<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/reading-abbey-8a50a29da1c1426b95c102946780965e>



## Reading Abbey Plan

Name some different rooms or areas in Reading Abbey and what you think they were used for or happened in them:

Area	What happened here? What was it used for?

# Designing an Abbey

Design your own Abbey in the space on your sheet. What will you include in your Abbey?

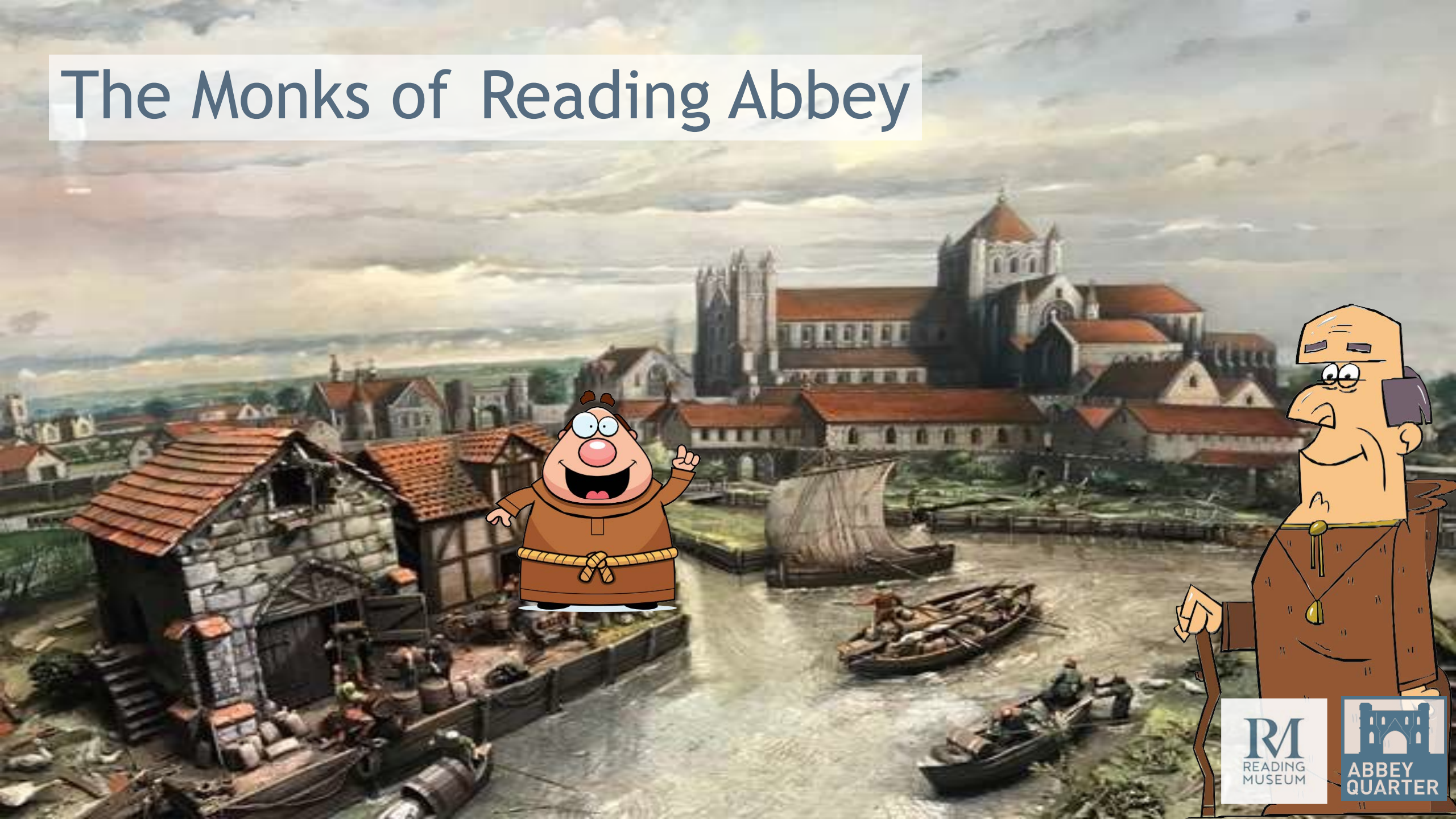




Think back to the questions we asked at the beginning of the lesson:

- Where was Reading Abbey built?
- Why and how was it built?
- Why was it important?

# The Monks of Reading Abbey



## Royalty visited the Abbey

Medieval kings weren't based in London, but moved from place to place with their courtiers and servants. Reading abbey's position on important roads which linked to the south West made it a natural venue for important events and visits from royalty.



The background of the slide is a detailed historical illustration of a river scene. In the foreground, a large stone building with a wooden structure on top is situated on the left bank. Several wooden boats are on the water, some with people inside. The sky is filled with soft, yellowish clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene depicts a bustling medieval or early modern river town.

## Ordinary visitors

The monks worshipped several times a day, but there was more to abbey life than church services, the monks also hosted pilgrims royal and noble visitors, studied religious texts, provided housing and medical care for local people and took care of Abbey property.

# Monk Jobs

**Abbot** - In charge

**Prior** - **Abbot's 2<sup>nd</sup>** in command

**Precentor** - in charge of the library, archives singing and processions

**Sacrist** - Responsible for the security and upkeep of the church

**Cellarer** - Managed the Abbey's estates and ensured the Abbey was well supplied with drink and firewood

**Kitchener** - organised meals for the monks and the infirmary

**Chamberlain** - Ensured the monks had clothes, shoes, and clean bedding and organised baths and shaving

**Master of the infirmary** - looked after sick monks staying in the infirmary

**Almoner**- Responsible for giving money, food and clothes to poor people living nearby

**Master of the Novices** - in charge of training and educating new monks.

**Novices** - Monks in training

And..

**Abbey servants** - lived on site working in kitchens, gardens, stores and maintaining the buildings.

## How monks lived

Monks would remain single for the rest of their lives and had to follow all of the rules of the Abbey including attending eight services a day in the abbey church. The monks also spent time saying prayers for the dead. Some must have done nothing but, worship, pray, sleep and eat.

The monks day varied from summer to winter. This is a typical timetable for a summer day. In winter monks got up later and went to bed earlier.

- **2am** Nocturns (night prayers)
- **Dawn** Lauds (“praise”)
- wash and change/reading
- **6am** Prime (first hour prayers - 6am was counted as the first hour of the day)
- Work
- **9am** Terce (Third hour prayers)
- Senior monks meet in the chapter house (work)
- **12 noon** Sext (sixth hour prayers)
- Dinner
- **3pm** None (ninth hour prayers)
- Work, supper
- **Dusk** Vespers (Evening Prayer)
- Reading
- **8pm** Compline (prayers that complete the day)
- Sleep

Music was central to life at the abbey. All the daily services included singing of psalms and hymns

# Music of Reading Abbey





**P**omer is icumen in. Ihude sing cucu. Swyef sed and blowep  
*Perfice xpicola que dignacio celicus agrico*  
 med and springe þe wde nu. Sing cucu. Twie bletet after  
*la pro uitis vicio filio non partent expoli*  
 lomb. lhoup after calue cu. Bulluc steret. bucke uertep  
*it mortis exicio. Qui captiuos semiuuos*  
 guntie sing cucu. Cucu cucu Wel singes þu cucu ne siwik  
*a supplicio. Vite donat et secum coronat in ce*  
 þu nauer nu.  
*u so u o.*  
**P**ing cucu nu. Sing cucu.  
 ing cucu. Sing cucu nu.

*Hanc rotam cantare possunt quatuor socii. A paucio  
 ribus autem qm a tribus ut saltem duobus no debet  
 dici. preter eos qui dicunt pedem. Cantet autem sic. Gacem  
 talz ceteris inchoat cu huius q tenet pedem. Et cu uenerit  
 ad primam notam post cruce. inchoat alius. Et sic de ceteris.  
 Singli u repauserit ad pauasiones septaste  
 nialibi: spacio unius longe note.*  
*hoc repetit un quociens op est.  
 facient pauasacionem in fine.*  
*hoc dicat ali paulant in medio et in  
 fine. Et immediate repetit principiu.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

# Summer is Icumen In

Summer is icumen in is one of the oldest secular (non-religious) songs in English and the first ever to be known with six lines of melody. It is thought to have been written at the Abbey in 1200s.

It is written in MIDDLE ENGLISH, a form of English that was spoken after the Norman conquest in 1066.

# Summer is Icumen In (in middle English)

Symer is icumen in Lhude sing cuccu Groweth sed  
and bloweth med  
and springth the wdue nu Sing! cuccu

Awe bleteth after lamb lhouth after calve cu Bulluc sterteth  
bucke verteth

murie sing! cuccu

Cuccu cuccu

Well singes thu cuccu - Ne swik thu naver nu!

What occasion do you think Summer Is  
Icumen In may have been written for?

Who may have sung Summer is Icumen in?

Why?

# The Dissolution of Reading Abbey



# What was the ‘dissolution of the monasteries’?

The dissolution of the monasteries took place in 1536 when Henry VIII was king of England. He broke from the catholic church so that he could divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

Once he had broken with the catholic church, he created the ‘Church of England’. He then set about dismantling and selling off catholic churches’s and abbey’s lands, buildings and possessions.

Henry spent a great deal of money in wars with other countries so confiscating the catholic church’s possessions was an ideal way to make more money for the crown.



## The dissolution in Reading:

In 1537, over 400 years of monastic time at Reading Abbey suddenly came to an end. On the orders of Henry VIII the Abbey was closed. Henry took the abbey's valuable possessions, the monks had to leave their home and the Abbott was executed!

## The last Abbott:

In November 1539 a gallows was set up near the west door of the abbey church. Readings last Abbott Hugh Cook of Farringdon was tied to a hurdle harnessed to a horse and paraded through the streets of reading to the gallows

He was executed alongside 2 monks: John Eynon (Priest of St Giles) and John Rugg. Hugh had been convicted of treason his punishment was hanging drawing and quartering.

## After the closure of the Abbey

After Hugh's execution the abbey was closed down the monks left to find work and all the church's precious gold silver and art were shipped to London to be added to the King's treasury.

When the abbey closed in 1539 the town was changed. Trade was lost and people in St Laurence parish lost their burial ground

However, in the longer-term merchants could trade more freely with the main trades of leather and clothmaking remaining. A new graveyard was created, and the town was given new rights and a new town hall and stone from the abbey gave reading a useful source of building materials for years to come.



# Making a rap for a character

Imagine you are someone affected by the closure of the Abbey you could be:

- Abbot Hugh Farringdon,
- Henry VIII,
- a monk
- someone else living in Reading town in 1539 when the Abbey is closed for example a baker, blacksmith, baker, farmer or tailor

## How does your character feel?

Chose 4 words to describe how your character may be feeling and describe why:

	Feeling	Why?
1		
2		
3		
4		

## Turn your character's feelings into a rap:

Write a poem or rap including your 4 chosen words. It needs to be short and punchy.

REMEMBER, a rap uses your speaking voice and needs to fit to a beat.

## Rap with a partner

Work with a partner or in a small group taking it in turns to keep a steady beat while you rap your character's lines or using the backing beat track.

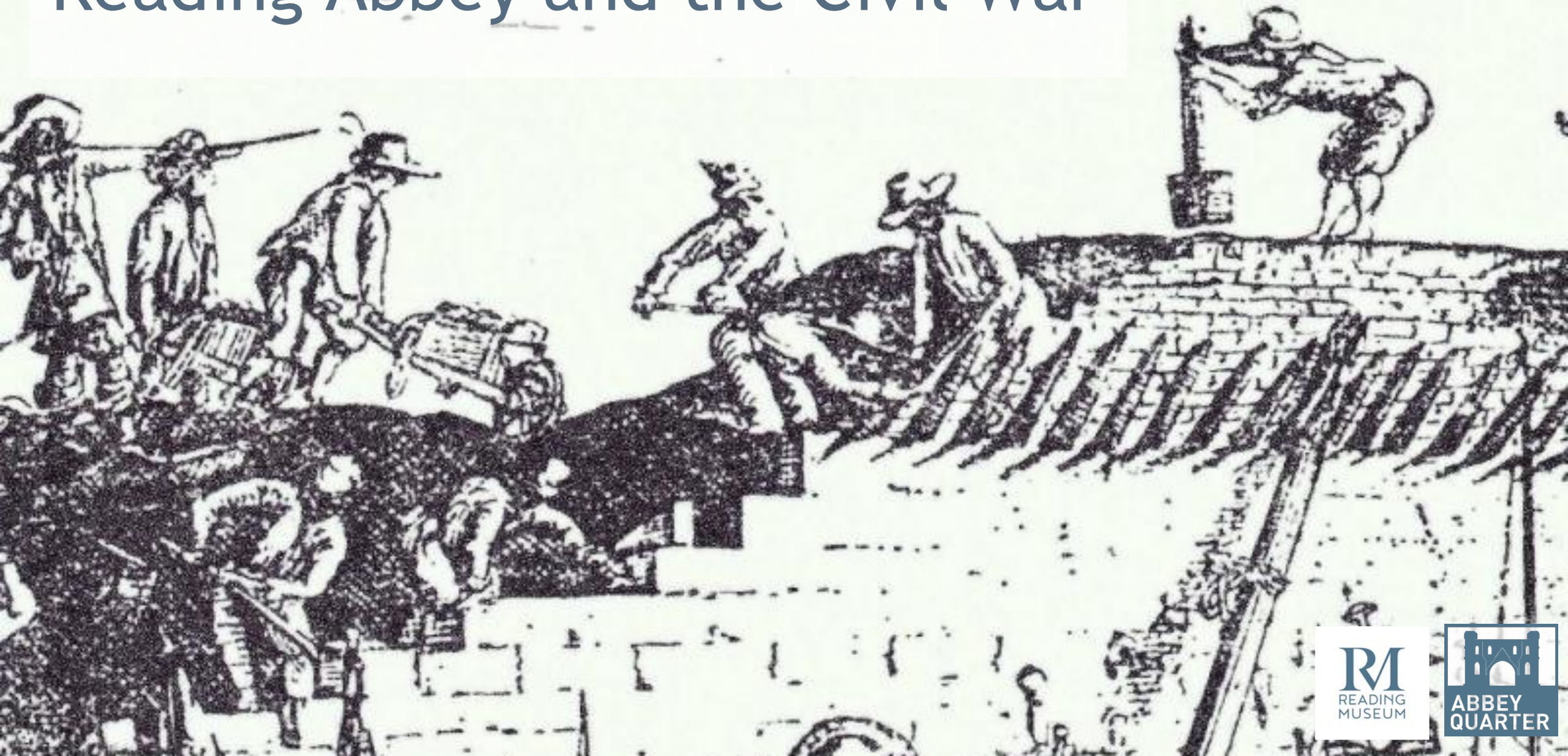
Write your lines in sentences in the beat boxes on your worksheet or the next slide.

Try clapping the pattern of the words as well as saying them - this will help you fit with the beat.

# Rap grid

	♥	♥	♥	♥
<b>Example:</b>	I'm	the	Ab	bot
<b>Example:</b>	Hugh	Far	Ring	Don
<b>Line 1</b>				
<b>Line 2</b>				
<b>Line 3</b>				
<b>Line 4</b>				

# Reading Abbey and the Civil War



When did the civil war take place?  
Who were the two sides in the Civil war?  
what were they fighting for?

# The English Civil War

In 1642 There was a power struggle between followers of King Charles 1 and the government at the time. Civil war broke out between parliamentarians (the government) and royalists (the followers of King Charles 1).

Thousands of soldiers fought for control of England. Reading also suffered in the struggles of the whole country. Soldiers arrived in Reading and used the ruined walls of the church, in the Abbey, to create fortifications overlooking the town and river. The Abbey Church was severely damaged as a result.

In 1643, Reading was captured by Parliament and then taken again by the royalists. Finally, in 1644 the ruins were demolished on the orders of King Charles 1 so the abbey could not be used for military purposes again. The east end of the church was finally destroyed with a massive charge of gun powder.



## King Charles 1 condemned to death

In 1649 parliament had the upper hand and condemned Charles 1 to death. Robert Blagrove, a member of parliament (MP) from Reading, was one of 59 judges to sign the death warrant.

Despite the damage to the church dormitory and palace, the stables survived and were still being used in the 1670s

Prince William of orange led a glorious revolution against rule of James II in 1688 and became king William III. The revolution was largely peaceful William and James supporters clashed in the deadly reading skirmish

# Civil war storyboard and soundscape


# Body percussion

Symbol	What does it mean?	Symbol	What does it mean?
X	Clap hands once loudly.	EXAMPLE xxxxxxxx	Clap hands quickly and quietly
			Stamp feet

Honda civic - choir and body percussion:

<https://youtu.be/U05Was4Wf1k>

# Illustration: The Ruins of Reading Abbey



## Reading Minster

Some of the stone from the Abbey was used to rebuild the tower of Reading Minster church of St Mary in the 1550s after having been ransacked in the dissolution of the monasteries.



**St James' Church**  
Some of Reading  
Abbey's remains sit  
next to St James'  
Church and nursery.





# Bulbs, Biscuits and Beer

# Reading in the Victorian Era

This period at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is called Victorian from the name of Queen Victoria who was on the throne at the time and it is a very interesting part of our history, particularly because it was a time of many changes: changes to towns like Reading and changes to the life of ordinary people who live there.

## Industrial revolution

Many of the important changes of the Victorian times are connected to what we call the industrial revolution.

The discovery of the steam power allowed people to start building very powerful machines which changed the way people worked and lived.



# Reading in the Victorian Era (continued)

Many new factories were built, using steam powered machines to produce goods of all kinds . They were built in towns to be closer to markets but also to be near the new rail stations and be able to transport their goods to far away markets on the new revolutionary steam powered trains.

Some of the new factories became very wealthy, big and renowned. They were known as Reading 3Bs, from the initial of the goods they produced:

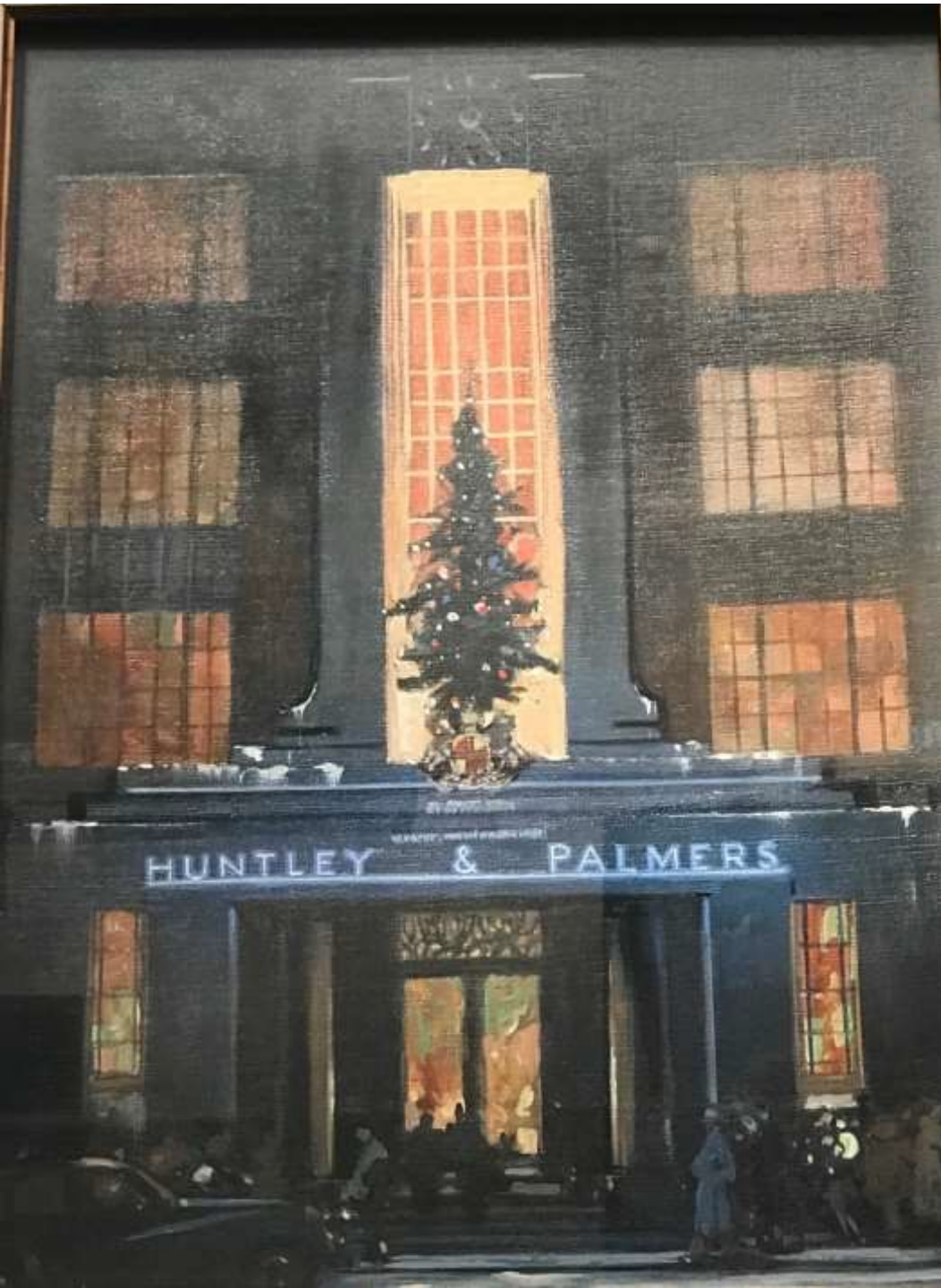
Biscuits - H&P

Bulbs - Sutton's Seeds

Beer - Simond's breweries

And sometimes another B was added to Reading 3Bs:

Bricks - Collier's bricks (many houses were built in Victorian times in Reading for all the new people moving to town to work in factories so it is not a surprise that the brick industry flourished.



## Huntley & Palmers

- 1822 - J. Huntley and Son biscuit bakery opens in London Street
- 1922 - Huntley & Palmers supplies Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition
- 1914 - The company makes army biscuits and artillery shell cases during world war I
- 1975 - The factory is used as location for Bugsy Malone
- 1976 - Biscuit production ends at Reading
- 1960 - As business wanes, Huntley and Palmer joins larger biscuit firm, W. & R. Jacob & Co.
- 1996 - Head office moves from reading to Liverpool.

JULY, 1906.

## PRICE LIST.



THE HOP LEAF

ESTABLISHED OVER A CENTURY.

# H. & G. SIMONDS

LIMITED,

. **Brewers,** .

Wine & Spirit Merchants,

## READING.

## Simmonds Beer

Reading was a good place to make beer because malted barley and hops we produced locally in large crops. The most Famous brewery was H&G Simonds founded in 1785.

The brewery installed a steam engine in 1799. Simonds supplied the military college in Sandhurst. Their beer became the army's favourite and was taken to the Crimea and Boer Wars. They also supplied Great Western Railway.



## Sutton Seeds

In the 1840s Martin Sutton turned his Father's corn trading business into a household name by realising he could post catalogues to customer and deliver seeds by rail.

Suttons seeds established itself as one of the world's first mail order catalogues. Seeds were shipped around the world including to the Taj Mahal.

# Victorian playground games

During the Victorian era, whilst these companies were expanding things were changing in Reading. New laws called the Education Act were put into place and children were expected to attend school by the end of the Victorian era.

Try playing some of the playground games children may have played while they attended school or in their time outside of school - maybe children in reading would have played them in Forbury Gardens during this time.

Remember to keep a steady beat.

# High low, Chica Low

High low chica low  
Chica low chica low  
High low chica low  
chica low high

# Cobbler, Cobbler

Cobbler Cobbler Mend My Shoe  
Get it done by half past two  
Half past two is much too late  
Get it done by half past eight.

# Bells in the Steeple

Bells in the Steeple

How loudly they ring

Ding a dong , Ding a dong Ding a  
dong Ding!



# Lucy Locket

Lucy Locket lost her pocket

Kitty Fisher found it

Not a penny was there in it

But a ribbon round it