

For
parents of
7-11
year old
children



HELP YOUR CHILD DISCOVER...

The Vikings in Britain

www.parents.dfes.gov.uk/discover



LEARNING ABOUT THE VIKINGS IN BRITAIN... AT SCHOOL



PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Your child is going to learn about the Vikings and how they lived after settling in Britain. This leaflet gives ideas on how you can help them to find out more about the topic. It suggests activities you could carry out at home, things to do when you're out with your child, and where to go for more information on the Vikings.

By trying some of the activities in this leaflet, you will help your child to understand and remember what they learn in school.

Why is my child learning about the Vikings in Britain?

Between the years 800 to 1100, the Viking people of Scandinavia sailed from their homeland to trade, raid and explore as far afield as Russia and North America. Many Vikings came to settle in Britain and, despite their bloodthirsty reputation, lived peacefully as farmers, craftworkers and traders.

Learning about the Vikings in Britain will help your child to piece together the past and understand how it shapes the way we live today.

What will my child learn about the Vikings in Britain?

Your child may learn about some or all of these topics:

- who the Vikings were and where they came from
- why and how they raided and settled
- the effect of their arrival on people already living in Britain
- Viking ships and navigation
- everyday life for Vikings in Britain, including their homes, clothes, food, crafts and religion
- Viking story-telling and language
- how archaeologists have found out about Viking towns in Britain, like Jorvik (York).



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DISCOVER THE THE VIKINGS IN BRITAIN... AT HOME



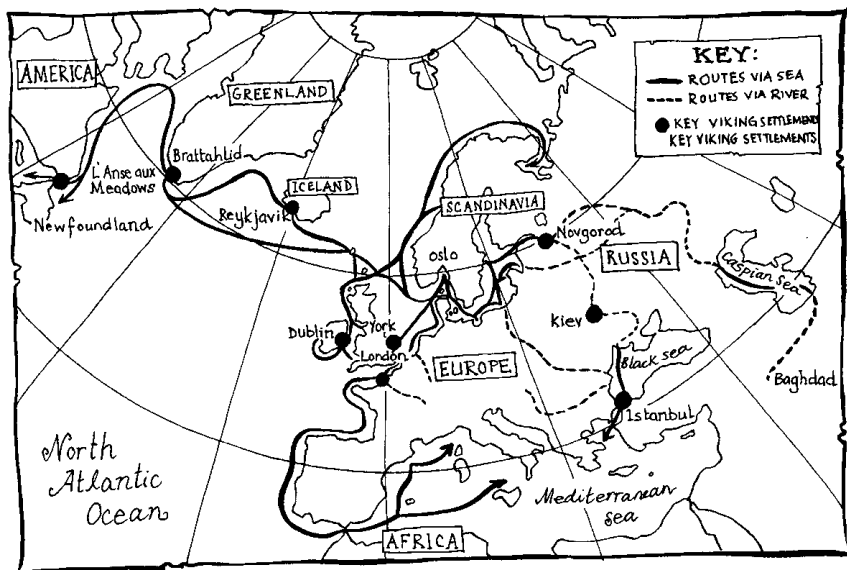
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The Vikings in Britain

Here are some ways that you and your child can find out more about the Vikings when you are at home.



All at sea

The Vikings left their homes in Sweden, Denmark and Norway and sailed as far as Italy in the south, Russia in the east and North America in the west. Some stole treasures and took people as slaves, but many Vikings were peaceful traders, who travelled to other countries to trade furs, honey and weapons for silver, spices and glass.

Look at the map above with your child, which shows some of the routes that the Vikings travelled. If you've an atlas or globe, help your child to trace some of the journeys more closely. How might they have travelled from Denmark to York? Or from Sweden to Kiev in Russia? Remember that the Vikings travelled by rivers and the sea as much as possible.

The Vikings didn't have maps, compasses or any of the equipment that sailors use today to find their way from one country to another. Talk with your child about how the Vikings knew which way they were going. (They stayed in sight of land whenever possible, used weather vanes to tell them which way the wind was blowing, and steered by the Sun and the stars.)

Telling tales

The Vikings enjoyed listening to exciting stories and poems. People would travel a long way to listen to a storyteller reciting long poems, called sagas, about the adventures of kings, warriors and gods fighting dwarves, giants and evil monsters.

Many Viking stories are exciting and quite bloodthirsty! Visit your local library and see whether you can find any Viking stories. You could read some of the stories with your child and talk about what they show about the way Vikings lived.

What's in a name?

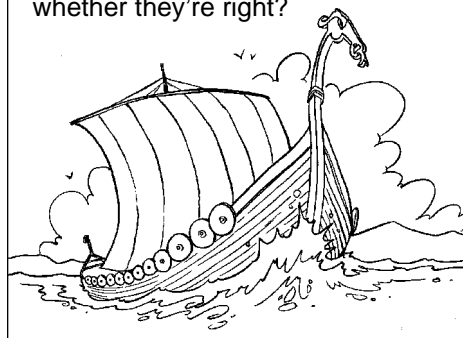
Names were very important to the Vikings – they named everything from their ships to their swords! Men and women took their fathers' first name as their surname, so Leif the son of Eric was called Leif Eriksson.

The Vikings also loved to think up nicknames for each other – everything from Keith Flatnose and Ragnar Hairy Breeches to Einar Belly-Shaker and Ulf the Unwashed. Help your child to come up with funny Viking nicknames for their friends, family and teacher.

Ship shape

The Vikings were brilliant shipbuilders. They travelled across the sea to Britain in wooden longboats that were decorated to look like dragons, with a fierce head at the front and a tail at the back. Warriors sometimes fixed shields to the side of their boat and gave it a name like 'Long Serpent' or 'Wave Walker'.

Try to find a book in your local library that includes pictures of Viking longboats and ask your child to draw their own boat. Can they design a fierce head to go at the front? Can they think of a good name for their boat? Ask them to think of ten things that the Vikings might have taken with them on a voyage to another country. Once they've drawn up a list, can you help them to find out whether they're right?





Digging up the past

The Vikings didn't write books, so an important way to find out how they lived is to dig up the evidence they left behind. Archaeologists have looked at the remains of everything from Viking houses and ships to graves and rubbish dumps to build up a picture of the past.

In 1000 years' time, how will archaeologists know how we live today? Talk with your child about the different evidence they could use. Look around the room and ask your child to spot five things that would rot and five that would survive. How much could an archaeologist find out just by looking through your rubbish?



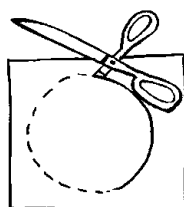
MAKING ACTIVITY

Making a Viking brooch

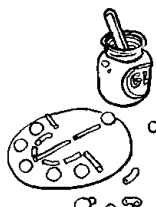
The Vikings were skilled craftworkers who made beautiful jewellery out of materials like gold, silver, amber and glass. Brooches were especially important to the Vikings, as they used them to keep their clothes in place (they didn't have buttons).

Help your child to make their own Viking brooch.

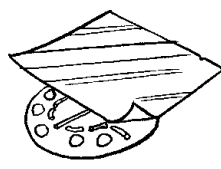
1. Cut a circle out of card (about 8cm across).
2. Glue some small objects onto the card circle. Beads would be ideal, but you could try using tiny pasta shapes or buttons. Try to copy some of the typical Viking patterns shown above.
3. Cover the card and objects with glue, then carefully stick a piece of foil on top, smoothing it down over the lumps and bumps.
4. Tape a large safety pin on the back of the card to finish your brooch.



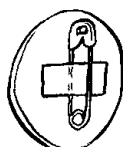
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Spell it out!

Viking letters were called runes. They were made up of straight lines so that they were easy to carve in stone (the Vikings didn't have pens and paper).

Using the Viking alphabet below, write out some words for your child to decode (for example 'BARK', 'FUN', 'MALT' and 'STIR'). How close can your child get to writing their name using Viking letters? Ask them to work out which sounds that we use today are missing from the alphabet. How would we manage without these sounds?



Good enough to eat!

The Vikings ate lots of food that we still enjoy today, like bread, fish, cheese, onions, cabbages, carrots and peas, but they also enjoyed delicacies such as whale, seagull, seal and horse!

Mead – an alcoholic drink made from honey – was the most popular Viking drink. The Vikings didn't have sugar, so often used honey to sweeten their food. You and your child could try making this Viking fruit drink.

HOT APPLE DRINK

You need:

- 2 mugs of water
- 4 eating apples (ripe)
- Leaves from an apple tree (washed, optional)
- 1 tablespoon of honey

1. To make enough drink for two people, pour two mugs of water into a saucepan.
2. Cut the apples into small pieces (with the skin on) and add to the water, along with the apple leaves.
3. Heat the mixture gently and let it simmer for ten minutes.
4. Bring the drink to boiling point, then sweeten it by stirring in the honey (you may wish to add more, according to taste).
5. Strain the drink through a sieve and serve hot.



DISCOVER THE THE VIKINGS IN BRITAIN... OUT AND ABOUT



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Here are some ways that you and your child can learn about the Vikings in Britain when you go out.

Going places

Three main groups of people settled in Britain – the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. All left their mark on the country and we can still tell where they lived by the names of towns and villages.

Roman place-names often include...

- Strat-, Stret-, Streat-, Strad-, Street-, Sturt-, -chester, -cester and -caster

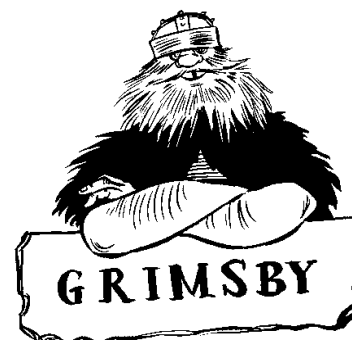


Anglo-Saxon place-names often include...

- burg, borough, den, ham, head, holt, ing, ley, mere, sted, stow, wald and worth

Viking place-names often include...

- often include thorpe, by, holm, beck, dale, wick, thwaite and toft



When you're out on a journey with your child, see if you can spot place-names that give you clues as to who settled in different parts of the country. You could try planning your route in advance and looking at the place-names on a map.



FINDING OUT MORE

At libraries and bookshops

Visit the children's section of your local library to find reference books and storybooks on the Vikings. As well as providing useful facts about the way the Vikings lived, some of these include exciting stories and activities for children to try. You could also look for CD-ROMs on the subject.

Your local bookshop should have some useful children's books on the Vikings. Look out for resources that are lively and entertaining, that your child will enjoy reading.

At museums and visitor centres

Some of the places where Vikings settled – in particular York, the Isle of Man and Shetland – have excellent visitor centres that can give children

a real insight into the Viking way of life. If you live near one of these places, or if you're visiting on holiday, it's worth paying a visit.

Other museums of history and archaeology also include exhibits on the Vikings (try asking at your local tourist information office to find out what's available near you).

Websites

If you have access to the internet, you could also go to: www.dfes.gov.uk/parents/discover

Here you will find:

- the information in this leaflet, along with a list of websites that can help you and your child find out more about the Vikings
- leaflets on other topics that your child may learn about at primary school.