

ROYAL ARMOURIES

Witness | Guardian | Expert | Leader

Vikings

Learning Resource

Teacher Notes

KS2



Overview

The Royal Armouries learning resources have been created for teachers to use in the classroom or for your pupils to access from home with teacher guidance. The Vikings learning resources pack is specifically designed to support your Key Stage 2 pupils in studying:

- Local history
- Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggles for the Kingdom of England

Our digital resources focus on the achievements and impact of Viking raiding parties, traders, and explorers. They are excellent inspiration for cross-curricular learning. They will assist pupils with their:

- chronological understanding
- source knowledge and understanding
- development of historically valid questions

The Royal Armouries collection is home to various Viking weaponry, including a small sword which may well have belonged to a child. Below are notes of additional information intended to help you use our online resources and collection to bring this topic to life for your pupils.

General information

The Viking Age

The Viking Age in mainland Britain ranges from around 700 AD to 1100 AD. It was a period of mass migration, exploration and Viking raids. The Vikings were not a homogenous group of people from one location, but instead came from many different places including Norway, Denmark and Sweden. The very word 'Viking' would have been used as a verb in old Norse, people who went to see to raid would have 'gone Viking'. In Britain, the most infamous known Viking raid was of the monastery at Lindisfarne in 793 AD. This is probably because it was an attack on a Christian place of worship by pagan Vikings.

In 865 AD, a great Viking army, often called the Great Heathen Army, arrived in Britain. Unlike previous Viking invasions, rather than raid, this time their intentions were to settle. They were incredibly successful and placed much of England under control of the 'Danelaw'. The parts of England ruled by Danelaw constantly changed through the next few centuries, culminating in a unified England being ruled by the last Viking King, Halthacnut, in 1040 until his death in 1042.

Harald Hardrada was the final Viking contender for the English throne, but he was defeated and slain by the Anglo-Saxon King of England, Harold Godwinson, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge 1066.

Key terminology

Pattern Welded Sword made through a process of layering and twisting different strengths of iron and steel, to leave a pattern on the blade.

Dane Axe Large two-handed axe used to strike opponents and pull down shields to break a defensive stance.

Francisca Axe A small, light axe designed to be thrown.

Trelleborg Shield A round shield with a central boss (metal dome protecting the hand). Primarily used for defence but could also be used as a weapon.

Shield Wall Rows of warriors overlapping their shields to create a strong defensive formation.

Mail Shirt Armour made from thousands of small interlocking metal rings used to make a shirt. Great for protecting against slashing attacks.

Lamellar Small plates of iron overlapping to create a body armour. In regard to the Vikings, this type of armour has only been found in Birka, Sweden.

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The resources

Viking Raider Video

This fictional account of a sea voyage gives a thorough account of the weapons, armour and experience of a Viking raider. The video also covers topics such as religious beliefs, benefits and drawbacks of the raiding lifestyle, fear and war tactics, home life and the female experience. It is designed to assist pupils with:

- Historical knowledge
- Understanding of historical sources
- Historical enquiry skills
- Inspire creative writing, composition and drama-based skills.

The existence of shieldmaidens has been debated for many years. Shieldmaidens appear as 'Valkyries' in Norse mythology, with historical documentation of real-life shieldmaidens rare but existing. There is archaeological evidence of female warriors, with weapons found in female graves and the so-called 'Birka'-burial of what appears to be a female warrior. Pupils could look at this evidence and create their own opinions, furthering their understanding of historical sources and constructing historical enquiries.

Time Travel Radio: Viking Traders

This fictional recording of an interview with a Viking who trades goods in Jorvik (York) is designed to inspire pupils to imagine what it might have been like to explore and trade across the world as a Viking Trader. It is purposely written to ensure that pupils are made aware of the substantial amount of trading that occurred in Viking society. Jorvik was of huge importance in Britain. It was a trading hub for craftsmen, farmers, and a centre for ship building. It is designed to assist pupils with:

- Historical knowledge
- Understanding of historical sources
- Historical enquiry skills
- Inspire creative writing, composition and drama-based skills.

Photo bank

The photo bank has been compiled to assist your lessons in any way that you see fit. They are all original photographs or images of items in our collection. Please download them for educational use only. They are great for increasing historical knowledge, building evidentially supported enquiries and historical source work.

Images will be added and updated on a regular basis.

We have added notes to each image; collections items are hyperlinked in the descriptions to our Collections Online, where you can get more images and technical information; and the asset numbers for our Image Library are given

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where relevant. If you would like any more information about any image, please contact educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk and we would be happy to assist.