

HISTORY · Y4-Y6

The Vikings

Knowledge Organiser — KS2 History

Key vocabulary

1

Viking

Sea-faring people from Scandinavia (modern Norway, Denmark, Sweden) who raided and settled in many parts of Europe between about 793 and 1066.

2

Scandinavia

The region of northern Europe — modern Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

3

Longship

Long, narrow Viking ship with a sail and oars, designed for fast sea travel and shallow rivers.

4

Raid

A sudden, violent attack — Vikings often raided coastal towns and monasteries for treasure.

5

Danelaw

The part of England (mostly the north and east) ruled by Vikings from around 878 onwards.

6

Jorvik

Viking name for the city of York. Major Viking trading centre.

7

Saga

Long Viking story, told aloud and later written down.

8

Rune

Letter from the Viking alphabet, often carved into stone or wood.



9

Valhalla

Hall of the dead in Viking mythology — warriors who died in battle went there.

10

Pagan

Someone who worshipped many gods. Vikings were pagan until many converted to Christianity.

King timeline

Key events of the Viking A

- 793 AD — First major Viking raid on the monastery at Lindisfarne, England
- 865 AD — Great Heathen Army of Vikings invades England
- 871 AD — Alfred the Great becomes King of Wessex; resists Vikings
- 878 AD — Treaty creates the Danelaw — Vikings rule eastern England
- 954 AD — Last Viking King of York (Eric Bloodaxe) defeated
- 1013 AD — Danish King Sweyn Forkbeard becomes King of England
- 1016 AD — Cnut the Great rules England, Denmark and Norway
- 1066 AD — Battle of Stamford Bridge: Anglo-Saxons defeat Vikings (then lose to Normans)
- 1100 AD onwards — Viking Age fades; Vikings convert to Christianity

Why did Vikings raid?

And how did they travel?

- Their homeland (Scandinavia) had limited farmland — population grew faster than food.
- They had advanced shipbuilding skills — could sail across rough seas.
- Coastal monasteries were rich and undefended — easy targets.
- Some Vikings sought adventure, status and wealth.
- Their longships could land on beaches, sail up rivers, AND sail across oceans.



- Vikings reached: Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, North Africa, Russia, Iceland, Greenland — and even North America (around 1000 AD), 500 years before Columbus.

Viking life

What Vikings actually did when they v

- **FARMING:** most Vikings were farmers, not raiders. They grew barley, oats, kept cows, sheep, pigs.
- **TRADING:** Viking merchants traded amber, fur, slaves, silver, walrus tusks across Europe and Asia.
- **CRAFT:** skilled at metalwork, woodcarving, jewellery-making.
- **STORYTELLING:** long winter nights spent telling sagas about heroes and gods.
- **FAMILY:** lived in long wooden houses with extended family, animals at one end.
- **WOMEN'S ROLES:** women had more rights than in most cultures of the time — could own property, divorce, run farms.
- **WEAPONS:** swords, axes, spears. Sword was prized possession, often passed down.
- **DRESS:** woollen tunics, leather shoes, brooches and jewellery. Helmets did NOT have horns (a Victorian myth).

gods and myths

What the Vikings believe

- Odin — chief god, god of wisdom and war
- Thor — god of thunder, hammer-wielder, very popular among ordinary Vikings
- Loki — trickster god, often caused chaos
- Freya — goddess of love and beauty
- Tyr — god of justice and warfare
- Days of the week named after Viking gods: Tuesday (Tyr's day), Wednesday (Odin/Woden's day), Thursday (Thor's day), Friday (Freya's day)



- Vikings believed warriors who died bravely went to Valhalla, the hall of Odin
- Viking funerals: important Vikings were buried in their ships, sometimes with their belongings
- Many Vikings later converted to Christianity, especially after settling in Christian lands

