



# Vikings for Schools

## Lesson Plans 2014/15



**Centre for the Study of the Viking Age**

**[www.nottingham.ac.uk/csva/for-schools](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/csva/for-schools)**

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## The Project

*Vikings for Schools* is a school-based project aimed at improving the employability of students in the School of English and supporting primary schools in the local area to enrich the primary curriculum. Participating students are expected to devise (with assistance from the CSVA) a series of primary school workshops, each based on a different aspect of Viking Age culture and society.

## Format of Workshops

The 4 workshops will each be based on the following themes:

- Viking Homestead
- Viking Long-ship
- Viking Storyteller
- Viking Warrior

Each theme will have its own equipment and resources and the themes will be rotated between groups so that resources are never stretched across two groups in the same week.

## Resources Rota:

Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4
Viking homestead	Viking long-ship	Viking storyteller	Viking warrior
Viking warrior	Viking homestead	Viking long-ship	Viking storyteller
Viking storyteller	Viking warrior	Viking homestead	Viking long-ship
Viking long-ship	Viking storyteller	Viking warrior	Viking homestead

These lesson plans are EXAMPLES only. Teams are encouraged to incorporate their own ideas into workshops using the plans outlined in this booklet for inspiration. The following lessons are best aimed at older children (Years 5, 6 and 7) but can be adapted to suit younger children. They outline 1-hour lessons including 5 minutes leeway for activities inevitably running over.

**Please remember to incorporate different abilities and needs into your plans.** Feel free to ask Emma and Eleni if you need guidance.

## Lesson Plan 1: Viking homestead

**Topics:** domestic life (i.e. cooking, weaving, personal hygiene)

**Resources:** Domestic life objects (spindle whorls, fabric, flint and striker, pots, spoons, game board, horns etc); keyword cards; Viking woman's costume.

**Introduction** (10 mins) - introductory talk given by **Viking woman** (in costume) outlining the topic and aims of the lesson. Play **Viking-life Mythbuster game** (tell the class a series of facts about Viking life and ask them to put their thumbs up if they think the fact is true and down if they think it's false. Facts might include: 'Vikings only drank from horns (false)', 'Vikings liked to drink sour milk (true)', etc.

**Divide class into 2 groups.** Groups switch between the two activities - volunteers decide beforehand which activity they want to host.

**Activity 1: Objects table** (20 mins) - get group to look at (and handle if safe) the domestic objects **one by one** and describe it (using keyword cards provided for younger children). The Viking woman should present the items as though they are taken from her home. Ask them to consider what the objects are and what they might be used for. Explain that there is no way to know for sure, and that archaeologists and historians guess by trying things out 'just as we're doing now', but explain what *we think* they are used for. When they have finished looking at the objects split them up into pairs and let them play a game of 'dice' (explain that this is the kind of game the Vikings played to pass the time).

**Activity 2: The Althing** (20 mins) - briefly explain what the Althing was (general assembly of Iceland where people met once a year to dispense justice and decide laws). Explain that each Viking community would have held its own 'thing'. Hold a thing based on a real case (ASK JUDITH JESCH FOR A FUN CASE) - one team member can be the law speaker. Ask for two pupils to volunteer: one will be the defendant, one the prosecutor. Give them relevant props so they feel more in character. Explain the trial and get the class to pass judgement (by show of hands). Then tell them what the real outcome was and see if they agree (show of hands).

**Round-up** (5 mins): send the pupils back to their seats and ask them what they enjoyed most about the lesson and what they've learnt (answer by putting hands up). Finish by giving everyone (volunteers, pupils and teachers) a round of applause.

## Lesson Plan 2: Viking long-ship

**Topics:** trade and exploration (the objects traded, the routes travelled, and the extent of Viking exploration - to North America and Central Asia)

**Resources:** Big map (in store cupboard); Viking world map print outs (just showing places Vikings travelled to); pre-prepared tea-stained ('vellum') sheets; trade items laminated cards; laminated Hagia Sophia runes sheet (showing that Vikings went as far as Turkey); laptop/ drum; pens and pencils.

**Introduction** (10 mins) - introductory talk outlining the topic and the aims of the lesson. Ask what the pupils think of when they hear the word 'Viking' (hands up answers). They should eventually (if not first off!) mention raiding. Then ask if anyone knows the actual meaning of the word 'Viking'. Explain that the word probably means 'pirate' and that the Vikings were known in Britain largely for their raiding activities because their well-built ships allowed them to travel long distances really fast. However, explain that the Vikings did much more than just raiding - they also traded with lots of far-off lands.

**Divide class into 2 groups.** Groups switch between the two activities - volunteers decide beforehand which activity they want to host.

**Activity 1: Raiding - The Sack of Lindisfarne** (20 mins). Ask the children what they know about Lindisfarne. Explain that it was an Anglo-Saxon monastery that was raided in 793 and was the first recorded Viking attack in Britain. Talk about how a monk called Alcuin wrote about the raid and described how ferocious and devastating the attack was (include a quote or two). Explain that many Anglo-Saxon Christians thought that Viking attacks were a punishment from God because the Viking raiders were pagans. We know how they felt about this because many Anglo-Saxon monks wrote it down in manuscripts. Have pre-prepared tea-stained sheets ('vellum') ready and ask the children to pretend that they are an Anglo-Saxon monk who has just witnessed the sack of Lindisfarne and ask them to write about their experience of it. They can then decorate the sheets if they want (have a ready-made example sheet and pictures of manuscripts for them to look at).

**Activity 2: Trade and exploration** (20 mins - 2x10 min activities). Have children sat in circle around one table for this activity.

**Map exercise** (10 mins) - give each pupil a map of the 'Viking world'. Have big map blown up on the white board or use big map (in store cupboard). Ask class where they think the Vikings came from (hands up) then point

out the Scandinavian countries - ask them to colour them in. Next ask where the class think they travelled to (they should mention different countries, i.e. Iceland - point these out). Then explain that they went everywhere on the map in front of them - even as far as America (explain Bjarni Herjólfsson's discovery of America if time) and Turkey (show Hagia Sophia runic inscription). Let children colour in the countries (they love doing this!)

**Viking pass the parcel** (10 mins) - pass pre-prepared parcel around the circle to the sound of Viking drums (youtube or bring your own drum in). The parcel will have a different 'tradable item' (i.e. the laminated cards we already have of different items) under each layer. When the drums stop, the child holding the parcel will take off one layer and present the item. The class then decide if it was traded by the Vikings or not (e.g. chocolate was not traded by the Vikings etc). Have about 15 layers so everyone in the group gets a go and stage the drums stopping so that each pupil gets a turn. If they don't want to unwrap it they can pass it to their neighbour.

**Round-up** (5 mins) - send the pupils back to their seats and ask them what they enjoyed most about the lesson and what they've learnt (answer by putting hands up). Finish by giving everyone (volunteers, pupils and teachers) a round of applause.

## Lesson Plan 3: Viking storyteller

**Topics:** myths and legends and methods of communication employed by Viking peoples (oral tradition, Viking runes, and manuscript transmission)

**Resources:** lollipop sticks; rune sheets (various types); manuscript sheets (already made - in resources box); replica rune-stones; laminated photograph of a rune stick; pens and pencils.

**Introduction** (10 mins) - get the class to sit on the floor at the front of the class. Give an introductory talk outlining the topic and the aims of the lesson: ask them to pretend that they are Vikings sat huddled around the fire on a cold winter's night. What might they do for fun? (ask for suggestions - hands up). Someone should eventually suggest storytelling. Ask them how we know about Viking stories today? Explain that they wrote things down in various different languages, with different writing materials and even using different alphabets.

**Divide class into 2 groups.** Groups switch between the two activities - volunteers decide beforehand which activity they want to host.

**Activity 1: Runes** (2 activities - 20 mins total)

**Rune-sticks** - ask the group what runes are and if anyone knows what the futhark is (explain because they almost definitely won't!). Ask them what sort of materials they think the Vikings wrote runic messages on. Explain that they wrote on lots of different materials but most examples we have today are rune-stones and rune-sticks (pass around the replica rune stones for them to look at). Then pass around the runic alphabet sheets. Explain that runic letters are made up of straight lines to make scratching into rock and wood easier. Show an example of a rune-stick (laminated photo) - explain that these were the Viking 'text message': a good way to get a message to your neighbour or friend before phones were invented (discuss the example of the rune-stick found in a church that a proposal of marriage is scratched onto - ASK JUDITH). Explain that they are going to make their own rune-sticks using the runic alphabet sheet. They can write messages to a friend, or their name, or anything they want.

**Runic code-breaker** - pass around the runic puzzle sheets and ask them to decode the message written in runes by figuring out what the letters mean in English.

**Activity 2: Manuscripts** (20 mins) - get the class to sit in a circle around one big table. Play Viking whispers - the volunteers in charge whisper a message (preferably an extract from a Viking tale) to the child sat next to them then the child passes it on to his neighbour etc. The final child

says what they think they heard. Explain that this shows how easy it was for stories to get muddled up when they weren't written down and were only passed on to people by word of mouth. This is why there are lots of different versions of stories today. Then tell them (briefly!) the story of Sigurd the Dragonslayer (or another story if they already know this one - ask teacher in advance). Once they have heard it, ask them to write down the story as they remember it (or draw it for lower ability children) on the manuscript-style sheets provided. Explain that it was only once stories were written down in manuscripts that they became fixed. Let the children colour in the sheets too if they want.

**Round-up** (5 mins): send the pupils back to their seats and ask them what they enjoyed most about the lesson and what they've learnt (answer by putting hands up). Finish by giving everyone (volunteers, pupils and teachers) a round of applause.

## Lesson Plan 4: Viking warrior

**Topics:** how Viking warriors lived and fought

**Resources:** Viking warrior costume; weapons (shield, axe, sword); chainmail and helmet borrowed from Matt (if he allows us); cardboard shields and detachable shield fronts (made before lesson); bull-dog clips; weapon inventory sheets (pre-prepared); pens and pencils.

**Introduction** (10 mins) - introductory talk outlining the topic and the aims of the lesson. It's a good idea to have the 21<sup>st</sup>-century dressed volunteers begin the introduction and then announce the arrival of a 'Viking warrior' (if there are no boy volunteers in the team a girl will have to wear the costume and be a shield-maiden or a valkyrie!) - this will get the children more excited. Get the warrior to take over and explain that this lesson is going to be all about learning how Viking warriors lived and fought and that today's class will be 'Viking bootcamp'.

**Divide class into 2 groups.** Groups switch between the two activities - volunteers decide beforehand which activity they want to host.

**Activity 1: Weapons training** (20 mins) - get the 'Viking warrior' to explain his/ her weapons to the children. Volunteer will need to do research on this - discuss how each weapon was used, tell the group some good 'battle stories' (taken from real Viking Age accounts of battle). Allow them to handle the weapons UNDER WATCHFUL EYES if teacher agrees. Hand out 'weapon inventory sheets' after the explanation is finished (these will be sheets with pictures of the weapons on and space to write left next to each picture). Pretend the children are at weapons training and ask them to write down what they remember about the items for future reference in battle. In the final 5 minutes of this activity (whilst pupils are busy filling in their sheets) the 'warrior' will need to go over to the other group to 'test' the shield wall.

**Activity 2: Shield-wall practice** (20 mins) - explain that historians and archaeologists (explain what an archaeologist is if not known) think the Vikings decorated their shields with different designs that were personal to them. Ask the children to decorate their own shields on the shield cut-outs provided. After 15 mins (hopefully most will have finished by this time), get the children to attach their shield fronts to the cardboard shields using bull-dog clips (will probably need to help them). Then ask them to form a shield wall by standing together. Test the shield wall's strength by having the Viking warrior charge at them (NOT VIOLENTLY!) and try to break through the wall. Each team will have to assess the

excitability and sensibleness of their class if they plan to do this otherwise it could result in injury!

**Round-up** (5 mins): send the pupils back to their seats and ask them what they enjoyed most about the lesson and what they've learnt (answer by putting hands up). Finish by giving everyone (volunteers, pupils and teachers) a round of applause.