

Victorious Vikings

The Vikings came from the area of the modern Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden). They set out in boats called longships to 'go Viking' (which meant to go travelling around looking for resources and land). The Vikings first arrived in Britain around AD 787 and in AD 793 they raided the monastery at Lindisfarne in Northumbria and stole many items from it.

The Vikings came to Britain looking for new items to steal and trade. In addition to this they wanted land that they could take and use for themselves. The Vikings particularly liked to raid monasteries, like the one at Lindisfarne. The monasteries were not very well protected and contained important goods like gold, jewels and food. The Vikings also stole manuscripts (handwritten books) and bibles, which they later sold back to the monasteries!

When the Vikings first came to Britain they raided, took what they could and then went home again. However, in AD 850 some Vikings stayed in Britain over winter for the first time on the island of Thanet. They enjoyed the milder climate and made use of the rich natural resources. Later the Vikings started to look for places they could take for their own and settle in for good. By AD 866 they had captured the city of York that eventually became a successful and important Viking city.

The Anglo-Saxon king of Wessex, Alfred the Great, fought against the Vikings in AD 878 and forced them out of the South of England, but this did not last long. Later that year the Vikings took over Wessex and forced King Alfred into hiding. They then went on to capture more places and many Vikings decided to live in Britain forever.

Viking Warriors

The Vikings are probably best known for their fierce warriors. They were expert fighters, very organised and brave in battle.

Viking warriors are often shown in pictures wearing helmets with horns but they did not really wear horned helmets in battle. Instead, the Vikings' helmets, which were made of leather or metal, would have been smooth and close fitting to the head. It is thought that horned helmets were worn only in religious ceremonies.

The Viking warriors carried large shields (about 80-90cm in diameter), which were made of wood and covered in leather. Sometimes the shields would be made with metal as well. They were held using a single hand grip on the back as this made them easier to move around.

The axe was a Viking warrior's main weapon but they also used spears and swords. Swords were very special weapons as they were often given to brave warriors who had done well in many battles. Swords were often double edged with a ridge running down the full length of the centre of the blade.

The Vikings believed that brave warriors who died in battle would go to Valhalla. This was like a heaven for warriors and the place where their chief god, Odin, lived.

Record your answers in complete sentences

Read the text carefully and then answer the following questions in as much detail as you can.

1. When did the Vikings first arrive in Britain?

2. Why did the Vikings choose to come to Britain?

3. Which monastery did the Vikings raid first? What happened?

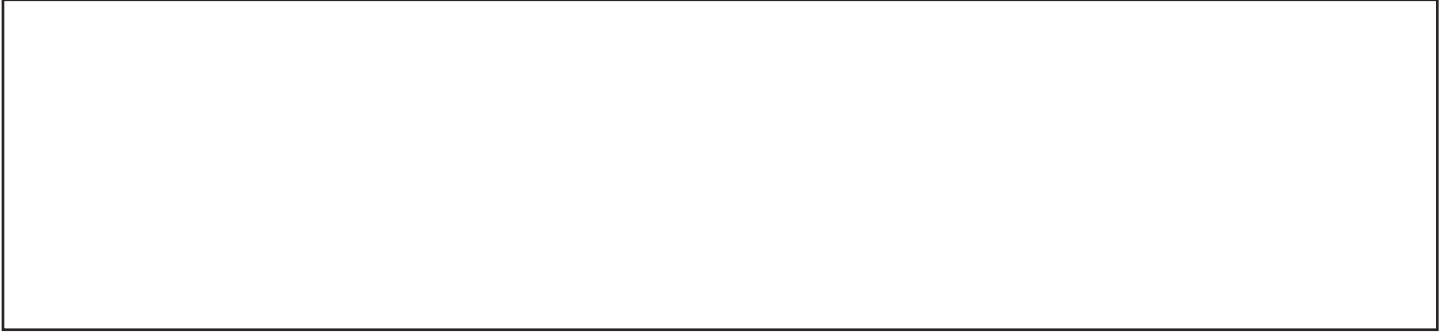
4. Why did the Vikings begin to settle permanently in Britain? Find two reasons.

5. Which city did the Vikings take over in AD 866?

6. Who was King Alfred the Great and what did he do?

7. Give two reasons why the Vikings made good warriors.

8. Draw and label a Viking helmet, shield or sword.

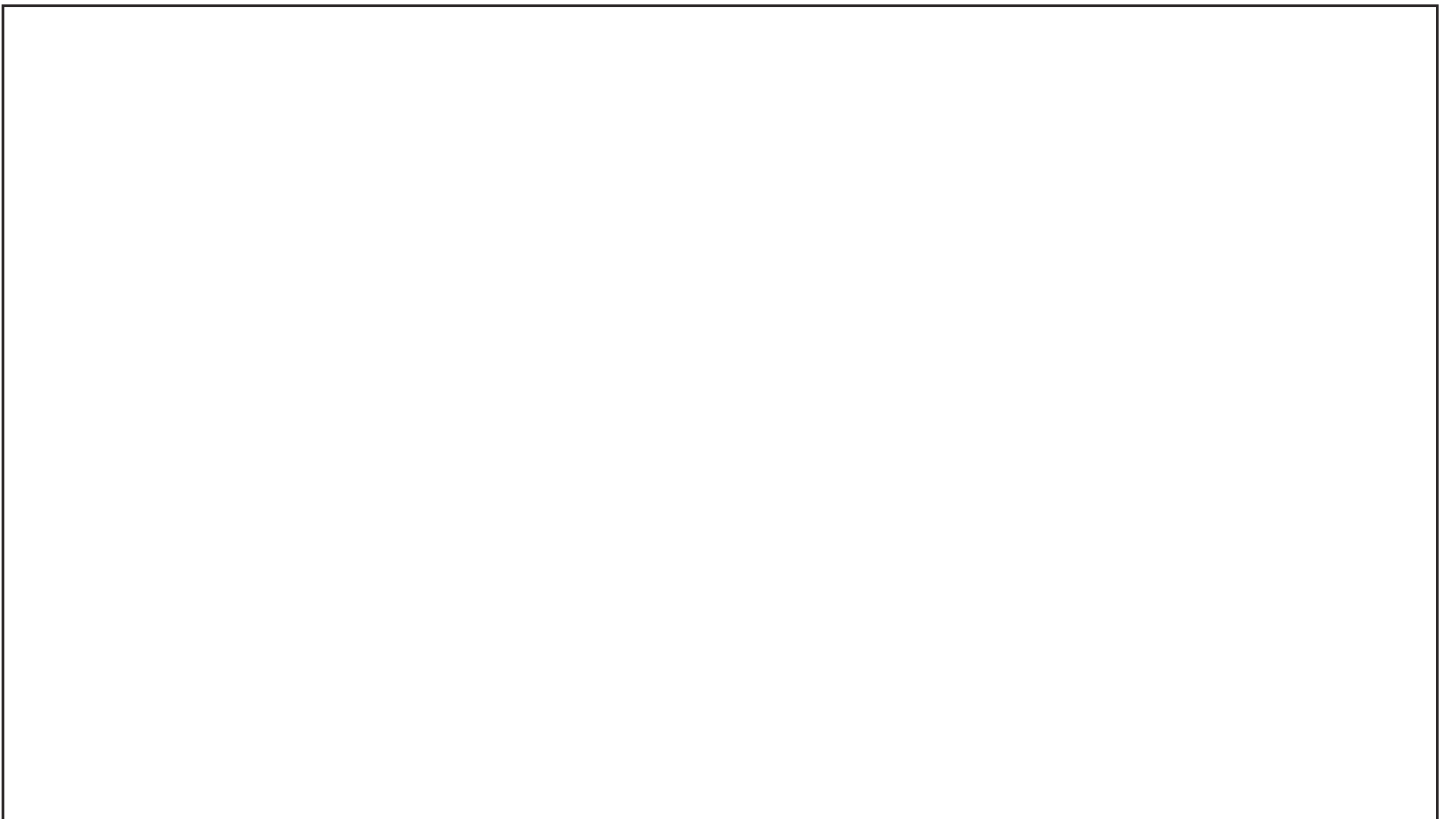


9. If you were a Viking warrior, which weapon would you choose? Why?

10. Where did Viking warriors believe they went if they died in battle?

Challenge

Can you draw and label what you think a Viking warrior might have looked like.



Answers

1. When did the Vikings first arrive in Britain?
The Vikings first arrived in Britain in AD787.
2. Why did the Vikings choose to come to Britain?
The Vikings chose to come to Britain for the land and new things to steal and sell.
3. Which monastery did the Vikings first raid? What happened?
The Vikings first raided Lindisfarne in Northumberland. They stole valuable things from the monastery.
4. Why did the Vikings begin to settle permanently in Britain? Find two reasons.
The Vikings wanted to settle permanently in Britain because of the mild climate and rich natural resources.
5. Which city did the Vikings take over in AD866?
The Vikings took over York in AD 866.
6. Who was King Alfred the Great and what did he do?
King Alfred the Great was King of Wessex. He fought against the Vikings but lost and went into hiding.
7. Give two reasons why the Vikings made good warriors.
The Vikings made good warriors because they were excellent fighters, very organised and they were brave in battle.
8. Draw and label a Viking helmet, shield or sword.
9. If you were a Viking warrior, which weapon would you choose? Why?
Responses could include; axe, spear, sword or shield, with plausible reasoning.
10. Where did Viking warriors believe they went if they died in battle?
Viking warriors believed they went to their idea of heaven, called Valhalla.

Challenge

Can you draw and label what you think a Viking warrior might have looked like.