

Voyagers of the North: The Viking Age

Learning objective: To understand the origins and impact of the Vikings in Britain, identifying key features of their society and exploration.

Read the passage carefully about the Viking age. Answer the questions below, ensuring you use evidence from the text to justify your opinions. Ellie the elephant has provided a word bank to help you with tricky vocabulary.

During the late 8th century, the landscape of Britain changed forever as Viking longships appeared on the horizon. Originating from the harsh, cold climates of Scandinavia, these Norse people were not merely raiders; they were also skilled explorers, traders, and farmers. Their longships were marvels of engineering, featuring a shallow draught that allowed them to navigate shallow rivers, enabling them to travel deep into the heart of the British countryside. While many historical accounts focus on their swift attacks on monasteries, such as Lindisfarne in 793 AD, the Vikings soon sought more than just plunder. Many chose to settle permanently, establishing thriving communities and introducing their own customs, agricultural techniques, and legal systems. By the 9th century, large portions of England fell under the Danelaw. These settlers integrated into local life, leaving a lasting legacy on the English language, place names, and the structure of British society. Their influence transformed Britain from a collection of fragmented kingdoms into a more interconnected, albeit often contested, cultural mosaic.

Word bank: Longship: A narrow, swift Viking vessel designed for both sea and river travel. · Raiders: People who attack and take goods from a place. · Settlement: A place where people establish a community to live. · Danelaw: The area of northern and eastern England where Viking laws were once used.

1. According to the text, in what year did the famous raid on Lindisfarne occur? (1 mark)

2. Name two roles the Vikings held other than being raiders. (2 marks)

3. Why was the design of the Viking longship considered an advantage for their exploration? (2 marks)

4. Explain why the author suggests that the Vikings were not just 'raiders' but also 'settlers'. (2 marks)

5. Do you think the Viking influence on Britain was primarily positive or negative? Justify your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Illustrate a Viking longship approaching the British coast. Include details such as the dragon-headed prow, a striped sail, and shields lined along the side of the ship, as described by Ellie the elephant.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast the Viking way of life with the Anglo-Saxons who lived in Britain before them. What might have happened to British culture if the Vikings had never settled in the Danelaw? Write a short diary entry from the perspective of a Viking farmer who has just arrived in a new settlement, explaining your hopes for the future.