

Vikings: Raiders, Traders and Settlers

Learning objective: To understand the impact of Viking invasions and settlements in Britain, and explore their way of life, society, and influence.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of Viking history. Read the term or question on the left, then check the answer on the right. For the Greater Depth questions, think critically about the consequences of Viking actions.

What was the primary purpose of a Viking longship?

Longships were shallow-drafted vessels designed for speed and agility, allowing Vikings to navigate both deep oceans and narrow rivers to launch surprise raids or carry out trade.

Why is the raid on Lindisfarne (AD 793) historically significant?

It is widely considered the beginning of the Viking Age in Britain, as it was a shocking attack on a holy monastery that left the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms vulnerable.

Explain the significance of the 'Danelaw'.

The Danelaw was an area of Northern and Eastern England where Viking laws and customs held authority, established after a treaty between Alfred the Great and the Viking leader Guthrum.

Describe the social hierarchy of Viking society.

It was divided into three main classes: the Jarls (wealthy leaders/nobles), the Karls (free farmers and craftspeople), and the Thralls (enslaved people).

What were Runes?

Runes were the letters of the runic alphabet used by Germanic peoples, including Vikings, often carved into wood, stone, or metal for inscriptions.

How did Vikings typically heat and light their longhouses?

They used a central open fire pit (hearth) which provided warmth, light, and a place for cooking, with smoke escaping through a hole in the thatched roof.

What is a 'Saga'?

A saga is a long, epic prose narrative from medieval Iceland and Norway, detailing the adventures of Viking heroes, families, and mythological figures.

Justify why Vikings were not just raiders, but also traders.

Vikings established extensive trade networks stretching from Britain to the Middle East, exchanging furs, walrus ivory, and amber for silver, silk, and spices.

Compare and contrast the Viking religion with the Christianity they encountered in Britain.

The Vikings were Pagans who worshipped many gods (like Odin and Thor), while the Anglo-Saxons were largely Christian, worshipping one God.

What might happen if the Vikings had never settled in Britain?

The English language would lack many Old Norse loanwords (such as 'sky', 'egg', and 'window'), and the political map of the UK would not have been divided into the Danelaw.