Voyagers of the North: The Viking Age

Learning objective: To understand the origins, lifestyle, and impact of the Vikings in Britain.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below in full sentences.

During the late 8th century, a group of skilled seafarers known as the Vikings began arriving on the shores of Britain. Hailing from the cold lands of Scandinavia, these people were not just warriors; they were also talented farmers, craftspeople, and explorers. Their most iconic invention was the longship, a shallow-draft vessel that allowed them to navigate both deep oceans and narrow, shallow rivers with incredible speed. This gave them a massive advantage during their early raids on coastal monasteries. However, as the decades passed, the Vikings did more than just raid. Many chose to settle in Britain, establishing thriving communities, especially in the north and east, an area that became known as the Danelaw. They introduced new farming techniques, established busy market towns, and used a unique system of writing called runes. While they are often remembered for their battles, the Vikings left a lasting legacy on the British language, legal system, and landscape. Ellie the elephant, who loves history, notes that without their influence, the story of Britain would look very different today.

Word bank: longship · raid · settlement · scandinavia · trade · runes

1. Identify two regions in Scandinavia that the Vikings originally came from, and explain why the longship was effective for their travels. (Refer to the text) (2 marks)

2. What does the term 'Danelaw' refer to according to the passage? (2 marks)

3. Based on the text, why might the Vikings have transitioned from raiding to settling in Britain? (2 marks)

4. How does the author challenge the common stereotype that Vikings were only aggressive warriors? (2 marks)

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

Draw: Draw a Viking longship approaching a British coastline. Include details like a dragon-head prow, a striped sail, and Viking settlers waiting on the shore.

Extension challenge: Research three words in the English language that have Old Norse origins and explain how they relate to the Vikings' daily life.