

# MR B'S EDITORIAL WRITING FUN PACK

## VIKINGS



Mr Barton in casual mode

KING Edward VI (geddit?)

# VIKINGS

The term **Viking** commonly denotes the ship-borne explorers, traders, and warriors of the Norsemen (literally, men from the north) who originated in Scandinavia and raided the coasts of the British Isles, France and other parts of Europe as far east as the Volga River in Russia from the late 8th century to the 11th century. This period of European history (generally dated to 793–1066) is often referred to as the Viking Age. It may also be used to denote the entire populations of Viking Age Scandinavia and their settlements elsewhere.

Famed for their navigational abilities and the longship, the Vikings, in three centuries, founded settlements along the coasts and rivers of mainland Europe, Ireland, Normandy, the Shetland, Orkney, and Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland circa 1000.[1] Their influence reached as far south as North Africa, east into Russia and to Constantinople, where they were looters, but also traders and mercenaries. Vikings under the command of Leif Ericsson, heir to Erik the Red, are also known to have been early explorers of North America, with putative expeditions to present-day Canada as early as the 10th century. Viking voyages grew less frequent with the introduction of Christianity to Scandinavia in the late 10th and 11th century. The Viking Age is often considered to have ended with the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066.

In English and many other languages it has become common to use it to refer to the Viking Age Scandinavians in general.[3] The pre-Christian Scandinavian population is also referred to as Norse.

In history, the Vikings were the enemies of the Anglo-Saxons, especially the Saxons of Wessex. For 300 years, the Saxons and Vikings were unable to co-exist with one another. However, the Vikings were friends and allies of the Cornish Celts, who were themselves battling the Saxons. The first ever recorded Viking attack is mentioned in the *Annals of Cambria* in 722 when the Celts of Cornwall and Danish Vikings joined forces to destroy the Anglo Saxons at "Hehil" in Cornwall; the first of various Viking/Celtic alliances. However, Viking/Celtic relations were generally poor, as evident by the common Viking plundering of Celtic Christian monasteries.

Viking navigators also opened the road to new lands to the north, to the west and to the east resulting in the foundation of independent kingdoms in the Shetland, Orkney, and Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and L'Anse aux Meadows, a short-lived settlement in Newfoundland, circa 1000 A.D. Many of these lands, specifically Greenland and Iceland, were discovered by sailors blown off course from their destinations, usually the Faroes. Greenland, which was named to attract people to come to it, was later abandoned because its few "green" spots disappeared. Vikings also seized and destroyed many villages and territories in Slavic-dominated areas of Eastern Europe. But their military expansion was stopped by people of Novgorod Republic in the early 800s, forcing them to switch their military intentions westwards, and restricting visits to the east only to trading. However, because of this history, in the Russian language Vikings are called "vorog", or varag, which means "an enemy".

## England

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, after Lindisfarne was raided in 793, Vikings continued on small-scale raids across England. Viking raiders struck England in 793 and raided a Christian monastery that held Saint Cuthbert's relics. The raiders killed the monks and captured the valuables. This raid was called the beginning of the "Viking Age of Invasion", made possible by the Viking longship. There was great violence during the last decade of the 8th century on England's northern and western shores. While the initial raiding groups were small, it is believed that a great amount of planning was involved.

During the winter between 840 and 841, the Norwegians raided during the winter instead of the usual summer. They waited on an island off Ireland. In 865 a large army of Danish Vikings, supposedly led by Ivar, Halfdan and Guthrum arrived in East Anglia. They proceeded to cross England into Northumbria and captured York (Jorvik), where some settled as farmers. Most of the English kingdoms, being in turmoil, could not stand against the Vikings, but Alfred of Wessex managed to

keep the Vikings out of his country. Alfred and his successors continued to drive back the Viking frontier and take York.

A new wave of Vikings appeared in England in 947 when Erik Bloodaxe captured York. The Viking presence continued through the reign of Canute the Great (1016-1035), after which a series of inheritance arguments weakened the family reign. The Viking presence dwindled until 1066, when the Norwegians lost their final battle with the English. See also Danelaw.

The Vikings did not get everything their way. In one instance in England, a small Viking fleet attacked a rich monastery at Jarrow. The Vikings were met with stronger resistance than they expected: their leaders were killed, the raiders escaped, only to have their ships beached at Tynemouth and the crews killed by locals. This was one of the last raids on England for about 40 years. The Vikings instead focused on Ireland and Scotland.

### Etymology

The etymology of "Viking" is somewhat vague. One path might be from the Old Norse word, *vík*, meaning "bay," "creek," or "inlet," and the suffix *-ing*, meaning "coming from" or "belonging to." Thus, *Viking* would be a 'person of the bay', or "bayling" for lack of a better word. In Old Norse, this would be spelled *vikingr*. It may be noted that *Viken* was the old name of the region bordering on the Skagerrak, from where the first Norse merchant-warriors originated. Later on, the term, *Viking*, became synonymous with "naval expedition" or "naval raid", and a *vikingr* was a member of such expeditions. A second etymology suggested that the term is derived from Old English, *wíc*, ie. "trading city" (cognate to Latin *vicus*, "village").

The word *Viking* appears on several rune stones found in Scandinavia. In the Icelanders' sagas, *viking* refers to an overseas expedition (Old Norse *farar i vikingr* "to go on an expedition"), and *vikingr*, to a seaman or warrior taking part in such an expedition.

In Old English, the word *wicing* appears first in the Anglo-Saxon poem, "Widsith", which probably dates from the 9th century. In Old English, and in the writings of Adam von Bremen, the term refers to a pirate, and is not a name for a people or a culture in general. Regardless of its possible origins, the word was used more as a verb than as a noun, and connotated an activity and not a distinct group of individuals. To "go Viking" was distinctly different from Norse seaborne missions of trade and commerce.

The word disappeared in Middle English, and was reintroduced as *Viking* during 18th century Romanticism (the "Viking revival"), with heroic overtones of "barbarian warrior" or noble savage. During the 20th century, the meaning of the term was expanded to refer not only to the raiders, but also to the entire period; it is now, somewhat confusingly, used as a noun both in the original meaning of raiders, warriors or navigators, and to refer to the Scandinavian population in general. As an adjective, the word is used in expressions like "Viking age," "Viking culture," "Viking colony," etc., generally referring to medieval Scandinavia.

### Popular misconceptions

#### Height

There is a conception that the Vikings were very tall and large men. Ibn Fadlan and various European sources mention that the Vikings were of great stature. A number of modern studies<sup>*[citation needed]*</sup> have been conducted which show Vikings to have been on average between 168.4 cm (66.3in) and 176 cm (69.3in) tall. There is variation, and higher ranking Vikings tended to be taller (likely due to better nutrition), but the Vikings were, compared to people of today, not unusually tall. However, when compared to the people that lived during the Viking era, vikings were indeed taller (which is highly attributable to genetic factors).

The Vikings may be responsible for spread of R1a1 gene, abundant in Rus country. The more Viking region there is more R1a1 as in Iceland on Orkey Norway and Sweden.

### Horned helmets

*Main article: Horned helmet*

Apart from two or three representations of (ritual) helmets with protrusions that may be either stylized ravens, snakes or horns, no depiction of Viking Age warriors' helmets, and no actually preserved

helmet has horns. In fact, the formal close-quarters style of Viking combat (either in shield walls or aboard "ship islands") would have made horned helmets cumbersome and hazardous to the warrior's own side. Therefore it can be ruled out that Viking warriors had horned helmets, but whether or not they were used in Scandinavian culture for other, ritual purposes remains unproven. The general misconception that Viking warriors wore horned helmets was partly promulgated by the 19th century enthusiasts of the *Götiska Förbundet*, founded in 1811 in Stockholm, with the aim of promoting the suitability of Norse mythology as subjects of high art and other ethnological and moral aims. The Vikings were also often depicted with winged-helmets and in other clothing taken from Classical antiquity, especially in depictions of Norse gods. This was done in order to legitimize the Vikings and their mythology, by associating it with the Classical world which has always been idealized in European culture. The latter-day *mythos* created by national romantic ideas blended the Viking Age with glimpses of the Nordic Bronze Age some 2,000 years earlier, for which actual horned helmets, probably for ceremonial purposes, are attested both in petroglyphs and by actual finds (See Bohuslän and Vikso helmets[13]). The cliché was perpetuated by cartoons like *Hägar the Horrible* and *Vicky the Viking*, and the uniforms of the Minnesota Vikings football team. Another way that this was increased was that in the opera, they would wear horned helmets, probably for decoration. The regular Viking helmets were conical, made from hard leather with wood and metallic reinforcement for the regular troops and the iron helmet with mask and chain mail for the chieftains, based on the previous Vendel age helmets from central Sweden. The only true Viking helmet found, is that from Gjermundbu in Norway. This helmet is made of iron and has been dated to the 10th century.

### **Savage marauders**

Despite images of Viking marauders who live for plunder, the heart of Viking society was reciprocity, on both a personal, social level and on a broader political level. The Vikings lived in a time when numerous societies were engaged in many violent acts, and the doings of the Vikings put into context are not as savage as they seem. Others of the time period were much more savage than the Vikings, such as the Frankish king, Charlemagne, who cut off the heads of 4,500 Saxons (Bloody Verdict of Verden) in one day, partly because they would not accept the Christian faith. Most Vikings were traders, although some did plunder, often monasteries around Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, as they had a lot of valuables in gold and silver. As monasteries were centers of learning & writing, their experiences were much more likely to enter the historical record. However, considerable literature in the monasteries would have been destroyed during the plunderings.

In the 300-year period where Vikings were most active, there were only approximately 347 attacks that spread from the British Isles to Morocco, Portugal, and Turkey. In Ireland, where the Vikings are most famous for attacking monasteries, there were only 430 known attacks during this 300-year period.

### **Skull cups**

*Main article: Skull cups*

The use of human skulls as drinking vessels is also ahistorical. The rise of this myth can be traced back to a Ole Worm's *Runer seu Danica literatura antiqussima* of 1636), warriors drinking *ór bjúgvíðum hausa* [from the curved branches of skulls, i.e. from horns] were rendered as drinking *ex craniis eorum quos ceciderunt* [from the skulls of those whom they had slain]. The skull-cup allegation may have some history also in relation with other Germanic tribes and Eurasian nomads, such as the Scythians and Pechenegs.

### **Uncleanliness**

The image of wild-haired, dirty savages sometimes associated with the Vikings in popular culture is a distorted picture of reality. Non-Scandinavian Christians are responsible for most surviving accounts of the Vikings and consequently, a strong bias exists. This attitude is likely attributed to Christian misunderstandings regarding paganism. Viking tendencies were often misreported and the work of Adam of Bremen, among others, told largely disputable tales of Viking savagery and uncleanliness.[14]

However, it is now known that the Vikings used a variety of tools for personal grooming such as combs, tweezers, razors or specialized "ear spoons". In particular, combs are among the most frequent artifacts from Viking Age excavations. The Vikings also made soap, which they used to bleach their

hair as well as for cleaning, as blonde hair was ideal in the Viking culture.

The Vikings in England even had a particular reputation for excessive cleanliness, due to their custom of bathing once a week, on Saturdays (unlike the local Anglo-Saxons). To this day, Saturday is referred to as *laugardagur/laurdag/lørdag/lördag* "washing day" in the Scandinavian languages, though the original meaning is lost in modern speech in most of the Scandinavian languages ("laug" still means "bath" or "pool" in Icelandic).

As for the Rus', who had later acquired a subjected Varangian component, Ibn Rustah explicitly notes their cleanliness, while Ibn Fadlan is disgusted by all of the men sharing the same vessel to wash their faces and blow their noses in the morning. Ibn Fadlan's disgust is probably motivated by his ideas of personal hygiene particular to the Muslim world, such as running water and clean vessels. While the example intended to convey his disgust about the customs of the Rus', at the same time it recorded that they did wash every morning.

A

The English Tourist Board is keen to promote more visitors to Yorkshire and East Anglia. It has decided to promote the Viking traditions of both regions. As part of this they are developing a website to attract the kind of visitor who will be interested in history, and families who will enjoy learning more about this period of history.

You have been asked to write the text for the pages of this website, including any necessary links between pages. Give a brief indication of your preferred layout and any illustrative material you wish to see. Write a commentary of 150-200 words explaining the significant decisions and choices you have made.

B

A television company is making a programme about Vikings to be fronted by Tony Robinson. It is aimed at general viewers and aims to break some of the myths and stereotypes about Viking culture. To promote the programme there is an illustrative article in the *Radio Times*. Write the article, giving a brief indication of your preferred layout and any illustrative material you wish to see. Write a commentary of 150-200 words explaining the significant decisions and choices you have made.

C

BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* is producing a documentary about the Vikings. It is aimed at female viewers and aims to break some of the myths and stereotypes about Viking culture, and to explore the role of women. Write the script, using a range of voices and experts to illuminate the theme. Write a commentary of 150-200 words explaining the significant decisions and choices you have made.

D

An educational publisher is producing a new history textbook. It is aimed at 11-14 year olds and one section will be called: "What did the Vikings do for us?" It aims to bring Viking culture alive in an interesting but educational way. Write the section, giving a brief indication of your preferred layout and any illustrative material you wish to see. Write a commentary of 150-200 words explaining the significant decisions and choices you have made.