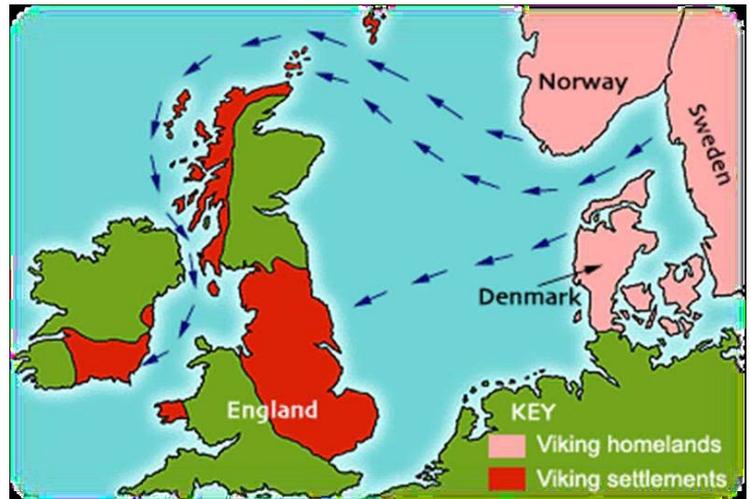


# Vikings in Britain: AD793—AD1066



The Vikings were pagans from Denmark, Norway and Sweden who spoke *Old Norse*. They were mainly farmers and skilled craft workers. They sailed in *longships* to trade with Europe, Russia and even Asia, exchanging furs, ivory, amber and slaves for luxury goods such as gold, silver, wine and glassware. With few natural resources in their homelands many Vikings migrated to settle in Britain, Iceland and Greenland and even Newfoundland.

Viking raids began on the coasts of Britain and Ireland during the late 8th century including Lindisfarne in AD793. Danish Vikings began settling in eastern England and then moved west, invading Wessex in AD878.



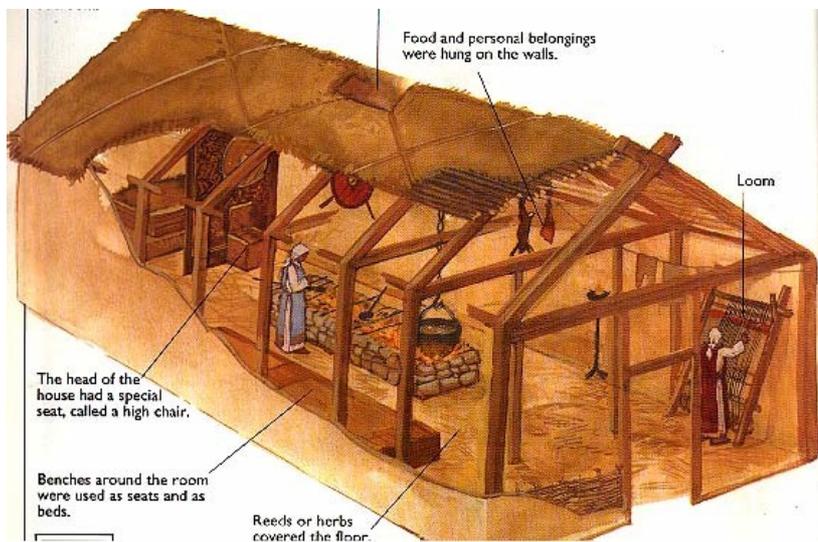
**King Alfred** of Wessex managed to defeat them in battle and England became divided in two with the Viking kingdom known as the **Danelaw** in the north and west of England.



The most famous Danish king was **King Cnut** or Canute (left) (1016-1035). During his reign and that of his son **Harthacnut**, Denmark, England and, for a while, Norway were politically united.



The Vikings in Britain and Ireland established major towns at York (Jorvik) and Dublin. They issued coinage and became major trading centres.



People lived in *longhouses*, these were made out of wood or stone with a thatched or turf roof and a central hearth. Beds and benches lined the walls with furs and skins for warmth. Vikings were skilled in making wooden objects, the bowls (below) have been turned on a *lathe*.

At the top of Viking society was the king, under him came the nobles or *jarls*. Then there were the *karls*, the ordinary farmers and craft people and below them the *thralls* or slaves.



They believed in many gods, chief among them was **Odin**, **Thor** was god of thunder, **Frigg** was married to Odin and **Loki** was a trickster. Vikings believed if they died in battle they could join Odin in the great feasting hall in **Valhalla**.



**Eric Bloodaxe** was the oldest son of King Harald Finehair of Norway and became King of Northumbria with his capital at Jorvik. Eric was killed in battle at Stainmore in AD954. This marked the end of the 'First Viking Age'. A period of relative peace and stability ensued.



The Vikings remained in England under the strong Saxon kings of **Athelstan** and **Edgar** but with the weak Saxon King **Ethelred the Unready** on the throne, King **Sweyn** Forkbeard of Denmark invaded during the AD990's. Sweyn was the son of King **Harald Bluetooth**, who had unified Denmark and converted to Christianity. Ethelred tried paying the Vikings in gold and silver (**Danegeld**) to leave but they kept attacking anyway. Eventually the son of Sweyn, **Cnut** became King of England as well as Denmark and Norway. He married the widow of Ethelred, Emma, to unify the country and they had a son, **Harthacnut**.

After the death of Harthacnut in AD1042, Emma's son by Ethelred became **Edward II** (the Confessor). Saxon kingship passed to **Harold Godwinson** who defeated the Viking King of Norway, **Harald Hardrada**, at Stamford Bridge in AD1066 before his defeat to William of Normandy at Hastings three weeks later. The Normans or Norsemen were also Vikings!



## Further study

A selection of the best Viking sites to enhance your learning.



## Jorvik Viking Centre

The Viking age city of York

<http://jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk/about-jorvik/>

## Roskilde Viking Ship Museum

See real Viking longships in Denmark

<http://www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk/en/>



## Jarlshof, Shetland Islands

Viking settlement

<http://www.shetland-heritage.co.uk/jarlshof>

## The Battle of Maldon

Battle between Saxons and in Vikings in AD 991.

<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/viking/battleview.asp?BattleFieldId=23>



## Activities

Ideas to try out in the classroom or at home.



### Viking Flatbread

Put 250g of plain flour in a bowl, add a pinch of salt and pour in 1 beaten egg. Knead together with 185g of diced butter and leave to stand for 30 minutes. Roll dough out flat, fold over four times and repeat. Roll into a ball and leave for 15 minutes. Then roll out into a flatbread shape and bake for 30 minutes at 220 degrees C. Add honey and nuts to add flavor and sweetness.

### Make a rune

Take a small ball of air drying clay (or you can use card) roll into a flat disc and allow to dry. Then choose your rune and paint on with acrylic paint (red works well). Then seal with diluted PVA glue. You could also use discs of a tree branch or smooth pebbles instead.

