

Viking Life



Settling Down

When the Vikings first came to Britain they raided, took what they could and then went home again.

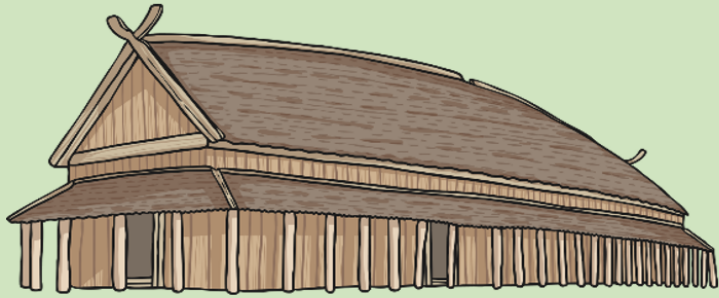
In AD 850, some Vikings stayed in Britain over winter for the first time on the Island of Thanet, enjoying the milder climate and making use of the rich natural resources.

In the later part of the 9th century, Vikings started to look for places that they could take for their own and settle more permanently and by AD 866 they had taken the city of York.

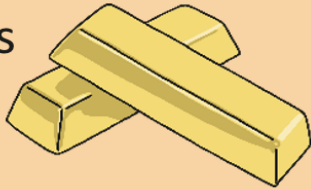
The Vikings went on to capture more places and many made Britain their permanent home, integrating with the local people and merging traditions and customs.



Vikings used whatever natural resources were available to make their houses. Typically, this might have been stone or wood for the walls, a thatched (straw) roof and wattle and daub (stick and mud/dung) on the inside walls to keep in heat.



Viking metal workers made objects from a wide range of different materials, from iron to gold.



Vikings wrote using characters from an alphabet called the Futhark.



Jewellery was worn to show off how rich a person was.



When the Vikings first came to Britain they were pagans, which means they worshipped many gods. Over time, many Vikings converted to Christianity.

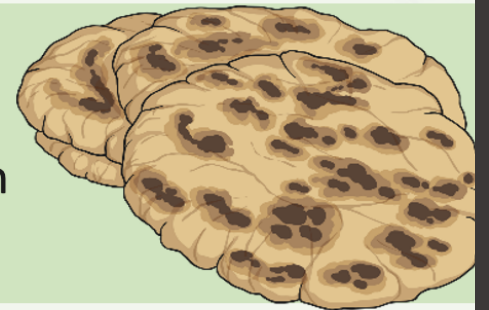
Most Vikings wore clothes made from wool or linen. Men wore trousers and tunics which were fastened at the waist with a leather belt. Women wore long sleeved linen dresses under a woollen apron type dress.



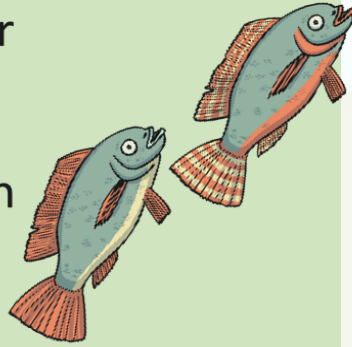
The individual letters of the Viking alphabet were called runes. There were 16 runes in total.



The Vikings made their own bread by grinding corn into flour and then mixing it with water to make a dough.



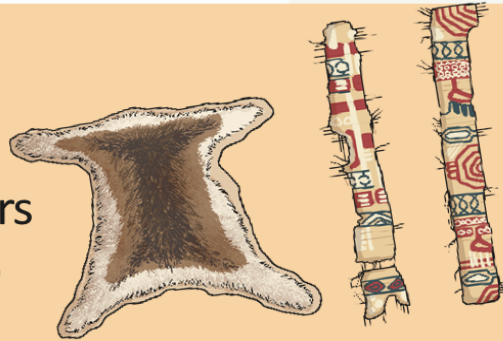
The Vikings kept an open fire in their houses to provide heat and a place to cook. They hung meats and fish above the fire to preserve them with the smoke. They also preserved by curing (drying out with salt).



Leather was commonly used by craftsmen to make a wide range of objects such as purses, saddles for horses and belts.



Rich Vikings wore clothes made from silk (which the Vikings traded from overseas). They also had furs to wrap around themselves to keep warm.



As Vikings converted to Christianity their customs and festivals also changed, merging together the old and new religions e.g. the pagan festival 'Yuletide' became 'Christmas'.



Jewellery makers engraved abstract animal shapes and patterns of interlace (criss-crossing) on brooches and other items, such as the handles of swords.



The Vikings believed that when the god Thor drove his chariot pulled by goats through the sky, he created thunder and lightning. Thor also had a special weapon: a hammer.

The Vikings used rhyme to tell long stories, known as sagas. Sagas often told about the adventures of heroic characters fighting dangerous monsters.

The Viking's chief god was called Odin and his wife, the goddess of marriage and fertility, was called Frigg.



Excavation of Viking graves has shown that Viking women wore two brooches, one on each side of the chest. These were probably used to hold up their dresses.



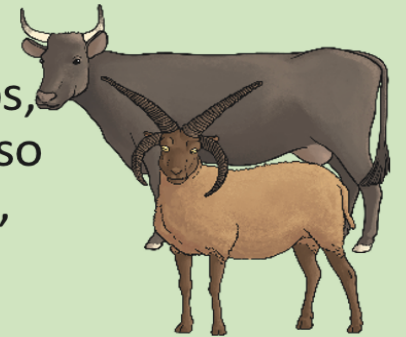
The Vikings made dyes from plants to create different colours for their clothes e.g. red cloth was made by using a plant called madder.



The Vikings believed that Odin lived in Valhalla. This was a type of heaven where warriors who had died bravely in battle would go.



Most Vikings lived on farms where they grew their own crops, such as oats and wheat. They also kept farm animals, such as cows, pigs and sheep which provided milk, wool and meat.



Vikings ate from wooden bowls or plates using a spiky knife. Forks were not invented until much later in history.



Viking runes were only made of straight lines as these were much easier to carve into stone and rock.



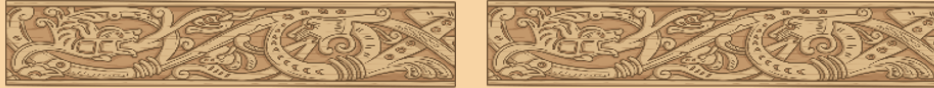
The Vikings love to make up riddles by skilfully choosing words to describe a thing or object without saying its name.

Bone and antler were commonly used by skilled craftsmen to make objects such as combs and handles for knives.



The pagan Vikings believed in life after death, so people were buried with their possessions when they died so that they could use them in the next life.

Woodworkers could carve very intricate patterns into wood. Churches built by the Vikings were often made of wood and featured beautifully carved scenes and interior decor.



Some Vikings drank beer from horns which had been scraped out.



Yorvick (York) was an important Viking manufacturing centre and many craftsmen worked on the streets producing a range of items. Coppergate (a place in the city of York) means 'street of the cup-maker'.

Fortune tellers were very popular in Viking times. Runes were carved on small stones and the fortune teller would pull these out of a bag one at a time, reading the future as each rune was revealed.



Vikings often wore cloaks to keep warm in colder weather. These were made from wool or linen and sometimes leather.

