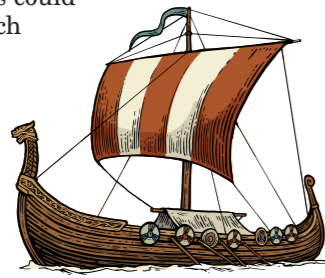




Who were the Vikings?

Vikings left their homelands in Scandinavia like the Anglo-Saxons had 400 years earlier. They were great travellers and sailed to other parts of Europe, where they traded, raided, and often settled. The people of Britain called the invaders 'Danes', because many came from Denmark, but they also came from Norway and Sweden. Vikings were also known as the Norsemen. Norsemen means 'people from the North'.

Many Vikings sailed all over Europe and the Atlantic Ocean in their longships. Their longships could sail in shallow water which meant they could travel up rivers as well as across the sea. They were also used in battle and were long, light and slender so they could move around quickly.



How did the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings co-exist?

The Anglo-Saxons and Vikings became neighbours in Britain, but they did not always get along peacefully. By 874 AD the Vikings had conquered all the kingdoms except Wessex. In January 878 AD, the Vikings succeeded in taking Wessex. King Alfred fled and built up his forces. In May 878 AD, King Alfred confronted the Vikings at the Battle of Edington. His victory forced Guthrum to withdraw from Wessex and agree to the division of England. Alfred's Wessex controlled the south and west, Viking Danelaw was the north and east. Guthrum and thirty of his chieftains were baptized as Christians as part of the treaty and they swore not to raise arms against Wessex again.



What was life like in Viking Britain?

Viking home life was simple but comfortable. Vikings lived in longhouses made of woven branches and clay. The longhouse had just a single room where all the family and the animals would live. The Vikings kept an open fire in their houses to provide heat and a place to cook. The family ate, drank, and socialised around a stone fireplace.

What role did women play in Viking society?

Viking women were independent. While men were away exploring new lands, women looked after the farms and households. They could become wealthy landowners, and while they had no public say in politics, they had a lot of influence at home. Viking women were skilful weavers, and they produced fine, warm textiles. Women's respected status is shown by the lavish ship burials for female Vikings that have been discovered.

How were ships important to the Vikings?

The Vikings feared they would wander the world as ghosts if they were not given the right type of funeral. Ordinary Vikings were buried with their sword or favourite brooch, while the wealthiest men and women were buried in ships to carry them to the next world. These were crammed full of their belongings, from clothes and weapons to kitchen goods and furniture. Horses, dogs and even slaves were killed and laid to rest with the dead person. The ships were covered with mounds of earth or set alight.



Glossary

1	Danes	Another name for the Viking invaders
2	invade	To enter a country armed and capture it
3	raid	A rapid surprise attack, usually involving stealing something
4	religious institutions	Churches, temples, mosques and other places of worship and institutions that exist to support and manage the practice of a specific set of religious beliefs
5	pagan	A religion other than one of the main world religions, e.g. non-Christian
6	trade	The action of buying and selling goods and services
7	conquest	The invasion and control of a country or place
8	'Thing'	A community gathering where problems would be solved and decisions made
9	chieftain	Leader of the people and law speaker who oversees decisions
10	holmgang	A type of duel to settle arguments
11	Danelaw	The area of land given to the Vikings in the east of England
12	borough	A borough was a town and the five towns of the Danelaw were Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Stamford and Lincoln
13	fortification	A defensive wall built to strengthen a place against attack
14	monarchy	A form of government with a monarch (King or Queen) at the head
15	rival	A person competing with another for the same reason or for control of something
16	decisive	An important moment where an issue is settled or there is a clear result such as victory in battle
17	tactic	An action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific result
18	alliance	A relationship formed for shared benefit, especially between countries
19	territory	An area of land under the control of a ruler or state
20	unification	The process of being united or made into a whole

Significant People and Places



Scandinavia	King Guthrum	Danelaw	Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians
Scandinavia is a region in Northern Europe which during the time of the Vikings consisted of the three kingdoms of Norway, Denmark and Sweden. The Vikings were also known as Norsemen and they travelled to Britain from their Scandinavian homelands.	Guthrum was the leader of an important Viking invasion against King Alfred the Great in 878 AD. When Guthrum was defeated by Alfred, he allowed himself to be baptised. A copy of the peace treaty between the two still exists. This image shows Guthrum surrendering to Alfred.	Danelaw is the name given to the lands of England ruled under the laws of the Vikings (or Danes). The lands were divided as part of the peace treaty between Alfred the Great and King Guthrum.	Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians, was the eldest daughter of Alfred the Great. Strong and independent, she and her husband took back large areas of land from the Danes. After the death of her husband, she continued her quest to drive out the Danes by joining forces with her brother, Edward the Elder.

Significant People and Places



King Athelstan, 924-939 AD	King Ethelred the Unready, 978-1013 AD	King Cnut the Great 1016-1035 AD	Edward the Confessor
Athelstan is also known as the first King of England. The grandson of Alfred the Great, he defeated the Vikings, the Scots and finally conquered Northumbria to bring the whole of England together in 937 AD.	King Ethelred was the son of King Edgar the Peaceful who was the great-grandson of King Alfred the Great. Some people think the name 'unready' means he was not ready to cope with being king but when translated using the language of the time, his name reads Etheled the Ill-Advised.	King Cnut was the son of the invading Danish king during the reign of King Ethelred. To end years of fighting, he agreed to split the kingdom of England with Ethelred's son, Edmund. However, Edmund died a month later and Cnut therefore became the King of all England.	King Edward the Confessor was the son of King Ethelred the Unready. Edward's reign was prosperous and the first real towns started to emerge since the time of Roman rule. Edward died leaving no heir. Three rivals fought for the crown and the fight for power ended with the Battle of Hastings in 1066.