Vikings

Gallery themes

Meet the Vikings

🌟 Star object – a Viking grave
Activity Sheet 1: A Viking grave
Activity sheet 2: A Viking woman

Raiders and traders

🌟 Star Object – A Viking boat stem
Activity Sheet 1: A Viking boat
Activity sheet 2: A Viking trader

Settlers and farmer

🌟 Star Object: The Quern stone
Activity sheet 1: The Quern stone
Activity sheet 2: A brooch from Scotland

Warriors and heroes

🌟 Star object: Sword hilt
Activity Sheet 1: Viking weapons
Activity sheet 2: A rich Viking
The Early People gallery in the National Museum of Scotland explores the lives of Scotland’s first settlers.

The Vikings were some of Scotland’s more colourful invaders, arriving dramatically and violently in the 8th century AD. In time, many settled in Scotland, while others continued to use bases in Scotland as stepping-stones in a trading network which stretched from modern-day Scandinavia to the Middle East. Many fascinating objects used by the Vikings survive and are on display in the gallery today.

This pack highlights some of the most interesting objects from the Viking displays and uses them to explore four themes.

1. Meet the Vikings
2. Raiders and traders
3. Settlers and farmers
4. Warriors and heroes

We have identified a Star Object for each theme. Each Star Object has two worksheets.

You may wish to divide your class into smaller groups, with each group exploring one or two themes.

There are other NMS resources about the Vikings that you might like to use:

- **Viking Discovery Zone**: a small activity area in the gallery, open to the public. Costumes to try on, a game to play and replica objects to handle.
- **Viking Object Box**: a box of real and replica Viking objects to use as part of your visit to the Museum of Scotland.
Vikings

Gallery Plan
Early People gallery, Level 0

Star objects:
- W7
- P2
- R10
- Q9
Vikings

Star object – a Viking grave

Background information

• This is a Viking grave from Orkney. A man aged about 30 was buried here.
• He was buried wearing clothes and surrounded by a number of objects: farming tools, weapons and everyday objects.
• The body was covered with wooden planks from a boat. The metal rivets from the boat have survived.
• Not every Viking was given such a grand burial. Ordinary Vikings were buried in simple graves.
• We think that Vikings believed in some kind of life after death, because many graves contain everyday objects, perhaps to be used in their ‘afterlife’.
• The first Vikings to invade Scotland were not Christians. They believed in warlike gods and goddesses who lived in a place called Valhalla. Later on they did become Christians.

Did you know?

• Sometimes Vikings were buried in or under a whole boat. Near this case you can see a display with the skeleton of a horse (W15). The horse was buried with a Viking man in a 12-metre long boat. When a Viking chief died his body was sometimes placed in a long-boat and then set alight. The burning ship might even be launched out to sea.

Key questions

• Why do you think this man was buried with so many objects?
• What part of the Viking’s skeleton is missing? Why do you think this might have happened?

Look out for

• The game (3). This was a Viking game called Hnefatafl, which means King’s Table. It’s a board game for two people. One person has the ‘king’ – the bigger piece in the middle, and a group of defenders. The other person has to try and capture the king.
• Strike-a-light (4). This was used like matches today. A piece of flint was struck against the metal to make a spark.
**Activity Sheet 1: A Viking grave**

This Viking died when he was about 30. He was buried with lots of his things.

Look at the drawing below. It shows how the grave might have looked when the man was first buried. Parts of the objects have rotted away, but others have survived.

**Circle the parts which still survive today.**

Most of the objects are like things we still use today.

**Can you match the modern day objects with some of the Viking ones?**

**Talk about**

What materials were the objects made out of? Which materials have survived? Which have rotted away?

**Back at school**

We don’t know how the Viking’s shield was decorated. Can you design a fearsome shield for him?
Activity sheet 2: A Viking woman
These are objects from the grave of an important Viking woman.

Can you help her finish getting dressed?
Draw a line to show where the objects would go.

Although she was important, she still had to work. Draw something from the display that she would have used to:

- Sew a dress for her daughter
- Skin a hare for dinner
- Cut crops from the field

Talk about
Why do you think the woman was buried with these objects?

Back at school
Find more pictures of Viking jewellery. Can you design and make your own brooches and necklaces like them?
Background information

• In this case you can see a wooden boat stem from a Viking boat (object no. 7). The stem is the front part of the boat. You can see how the wooden planks overlap each other to keep the water out. It’s very unusual for wood this old to survive.

• Viking ships were long, flat wooden boats with a steering oar and a large sail. Some of the boats were nearly 25 metres long - as long as a swimming pool! They carried large numbers of oarsmen to row if the wind was not strong enough.

• The most famous kind of Viking ship was called a drakkar. This means ‘dragon ship’. It had a wooden dragon’s head carved at the front of the ship, on top of a boat stem like this one. Drakkars were very flat, so they could even be sailed up shallow rivers. They were light so they could be carried short distances overland to make short cuts or to reach inland lochs or seas.

• Vikings also built much smaller boats for travelling short distances and for fishing.

• Many Vikings were traders. They brought goods such as fur and timbers from Scandinavia and sold them abroad in countries as far away as modern day Iraq and Turkey. They returned with other goods, such as silk and wine and sold these on their way home.

Did you know?

• There were stowaways on some Viking ships! Scientists have found that cats and mice in some parts of Scotland have ancestors from Scandinavia.

Key Questions

• What were the good things about travelling by sea? What would the bad things be?

• How do you think Vikings found their way when they were at sea?

• Imagine how it felt if you saw a Viking ship appearing without warning over the horizon… what would you have done?

Look out for

• The two drawings of Viking ships scratched on stones. You can see the steering rudder and the oars very clearly in the top one.

• The support for a fishing line (object no. 10), which would have been fixed onto the top edge of a boat to keep the fishing line in the right place.
Activity Sheet 1: A Viking boat
This Viking ship isn’t quite finished. Look at the objects in the case and draw in the front part of the boat.
Can you add a rudder to your drawing, and a mast?

There wouldn’t have been much space to carry things on the boat when it was full of people. Here are some of the things the Vikings might have taken with them.

Circle which three items you think are the most important.
Sheep  Fresh water  Bags of grain  Warm clothes
Axes  Toys  Horses  Jewellery  Musical instruments

Talk about
Why do you think the Vikings wanted to have settlements around the coast of Scotland?

Back at school
Imagine you a Viking on your first voyage to Scotland and away from home. Write a diary of the journey. What are the best parts? The worst?
Vikings

Activity sheet 2: A Viking trader

This set of scales was found buried in the grave of a Viking man. He was buried in a boat. He was probably a trader who travelled around selling things.

The weights have different designs on the top.

**Can you complete the designs by looking in the case?**

The Vikings didn’t use money. They either swapped things, or used silver objects instead of money. They would use the scales to weigh out the amounts of silver.

Look in the cases to the right of the scales.

**Can you find two silver objects which the Vikings used as money?**

---

**Talk about**

Why do you think the weights have different designs on them?

---

**Back at school**

Find out about what kinds of objects the Vikings bought and sold. Mark on a map where they came from. Find out how they travelled to these places.
Vikings

Star Object: The Quern stone

Background information
- This big round stone is part of a quern stone. It was used to grind grain to make flour. This stone sat on top of another round stone. Barley, oats or wheat seeds were poured in through the hole in the middle. The top stone was then turned round and round using a wooden handle in the hole at the side. The seeds would be crushed into flour between the stones.
- Most Vikings in Scotland spent their time farming. They planted and harvested crops like barley, oats and wheat. They kept animals for meat and milk as well as for wool and leather. They also went fishing, and hunted deer, grouse and hares. If whales and seals were washed up, they would eat these and use their bones too.
- They brought some things with them from home but also later started using designs and patterns from Scotland. Gradually Viking families and Scottish families began to settle down together. They traded objects and learnt skills from each other.
- The Hunterston brooch in case V7 was made in Scotland before the Vikings arrived. It shows that some craftspeople in Scotland were very highly skilled and could make beautiful things. It later came into the hands of the Vikings – through robbery? Trade? Diplomatic bribe? We don’t know.

Did you know?
- Archaeologists have found some tiny Viking quern stones. They were probably toys so that Viking children could pretend to grind corn too!

Key questions
- Where did the Vikings get their food from?
- What do you think the local people thought when the Vikings first started to settle?
- What materials did the Vikings use to make the things that they needed?

Look out for
- The quern stone, used for grinding grain to make flour. Discuss what the different holes were for
- The lamp, used to light houses by burning oil
- The big patched cooking pot
- Big shears, maybe used for shearing sheep for their wool
- Golden bangles, brought from Scandinavia
Vikings

Activity sheet 1: The Quern stone
The Vikings came to live in parts of Scotland. They built long wooden houses and farmed the land.

Look at this drawing of a Viking house. There are 10 objects in the house that you can see in the cases. **Can you find them all?**

Can you match these objects with the places where they were made? Read the object labels to help.

**Talk about**
Why do you think the Vikings made the quern stone in Scotland, rather than bringing it from home?

**Back at school**
Find out about daily life in the time of the Vikings. Compare it to your daily life. What is the same? What is different?
Vikings

Activity sheet 2: A brooch from Scotland

This brooch is made from precious stones and metals from across Europe. It was made in Scotland, before the Vikings arrived, perhaps for a Scottish king. Later on it was owned by a Viking.

Look at the front of the brooch. **Can you fill in the missing parts on the drawing?** Make a note of the colours so you can finish it back at school.

Look at the back of the brooch. **Can you find a clue that a Viking once owned it?**

Tick the correct clue:
- [ ] There are pictures of Vikings on the back.
- [ ] There is Viking writing scratched on to the back.
- [ ] There are typical Viking decorations on the back.

Read the label to find out what the Viking writing says. **Write it here:**

_______________________________________________________________________

Can you copy some of the writing onto the drawing of the brooch?

**Talk about**

Why do you think this brooch is suitable for a king?
What does it tell us about the people who lived in Scotland before the Vikings arrived?

**Back at school**

Colour and cut out the two drawings you completed in the museum. Stick the two halves together on to card and make it into a brooch to wear.
Vikings

Warriors and heroes

Star object: Sword hilt

Background information

- Look at object no 1. This is a sword hilt, the handle of a sword. Unlike the other weapons in this case, it was probably never used in battle, because it is much too delicate. It was probably designed for an important person to hold as part of a ceremony.

- Viking weapons included the sword, the axe and the spear. Swords were nearly a metre long and were designed for slashing rather than stabbing. Their hilts were often richly decorated. Axes and spears were made of iron; their wooden shafts rarely survive.

- Vikings carried a round wooden shield with a central iron ‘boss’ to protect the hand. These may have been brightly coloured and decorated.

- Viking helmets have been found in some countries but not in Scotland. They were made of metal and included a nose-guard and sometimes an eye-guard – but not horns!

- Warriors were important people in Viking society. Important Vikings often had a history of bravery on the battlefield, and carried ceremonial weapons even in times of peace.

Did you know?

- Some swords were thought to have magical powers. Sometimes their owners would give them names, like ‘Skull splitter’.

Key questions

- Only the metal parts of the weapons have survived. What other parts have rotted away?
- Why do you think Vikings used swords as decorations as well as for fighting?

Look out for

- The axe head, sword and scabbard, spearhead and shield boss on the top shelf here were all found in one grave.
- The huge dent in the shield boss - did this happen in a battle?
Activity Sheet 1: Viking weapons
These Viking warriors have lost parts of their weapons. Can you find the missing parts in the case? Draw them onto the picture.

Look at the sword hilt.
Circle the statements you agree with and then add your own comment

Talk about
Why do you think the shield boss on the top shelf is so badly dented?

Back at school
Make up a dramatic story about a battle. Learn it and tell it in a really dramatic way.
Vikings

Activity sheet 2: A rich Viking

Some Vikings became very rich. They could use their wealth to buy what they wanted or to bribe people, instead of fighting them. This Viking treasure was found buried in a stone pit.

Here is an archaeologist’s notebook.

She has recorded some information about the treasure. Unfortunately the rain has washed away some of her notes. Can you help her complete her notebook?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of object</th>
<th>Number (approx.)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big cloak brooch</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver neck ring or necklace</td>
<td></td>
<td>Several different types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracelet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coins</td>
<td>Only ____ are complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Draw your favourite piece of treasure in the notebook.

Estimate its size in centimetres, using the ruler along the edge of this sheet.

Talk about

Why do you think the Viking buried the treasure?
Why do you think he or she never came back for it?

Back at school

Imagine you are the archaeologist who found this treasure. Tell the story of its discovery – perhaps as a newspaper article, or as a TV interview.