# Victorious Vikings

**The Vikings came from the area of the modern Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden). They set out in boats called longships to 'go Viking' (which means to go travelling around looking for resources and land to claim as their own). The Vikings first arrived in Britain around AD 787 and in AD 793 they raided and pillaged the monastery at Lindisfarne in Northumbria.**

The Vikings came to Britain looking for lucrative new items to steal and trade. In addition to this they wanted land that they could take and claim as their own. The Vikings particularly liked to raid monasteries, like the one at Lindisfarne. The monasteries were not very well protected and contained valuable goods like gold and jewels, imported foods and other useful materials. The Vikings also stole manuscripts and bibles that they later sold back to the religious leaders who could not bear to see them lost or damaged.

When the Vikings first came to Britain they raided, took what they could and then went home again. However in AD 850 some Vikings stayed in Britain over winter for the first time on the island of Thanet. They enjoyed the milder climate and made use of the rich natural resources.

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

The Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred the Great, who became King of Wessex in AD 871, managed to force the Vikings out of the South of England, but this was short lived. By AD 878 the Vikings had settled permanently in England, overrun Wessex and forced King Alfred into hiding. The Vikings went on to capture more places and many made Britain their 'forever' home, integrating with the local people and merging traditions and customs.

**Viking Warriors**

The Vikings are probably best known for their fierce warriors. They were expert fighters, extremely organised and very brave in battle.

Viking warriors are often shown in pictures wearing helmets with horns but they did not actually wear horned helmets in battle. Instead, the Vikings' helmets, which were made of leather or metal, would have been smooth and close fitting to the head – much more practical! It is thought that horned helmets were worn only in religious ceremonies.

The Viking warriors carried large shields (about 80-90cm in diameter), which were made of wood and covered in leather. Sometimes the shields would be reinforced with metal as well. They were held using a single hand grip on the back as this made them easier to move around.

The axe was a Viking warrior's main weapon but they also used spears and swords. Swords were considered very special weapons as they were often given to brave warriors who had proved their worth in many battles. Swords were often double edged with a ridge running down the full length of the centre of the blade.

The Vikings believed that brave warriors who died in battle would go to Valhalla. This was like a heaven for warriors and the place where their chief god, Odin, lived.



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# Questions

**Record your answers in complete sentences**

**Read the text carefully and then answer the following questions in as much detail as you can.**

1. When did the Vikings first arrive in Britain?

2. 'In AD 793 the Vikings raided and pillaged the monastery at Lindisfarne'. What does this mean?

3. Why did the Vikings like to raid monasteries?

4. Why did the Vikings begin to settle permanently in Britain? Find three reasons.

5. Which city did the Vikings take over in AD 866?

6. How do you think the Vikings felt when they captured this city?

7. How was King Alfred the Great successful in fighting the Vikings?



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8. Find three ways in which the Vikings make good warriors.

9. Draw and label a Viking helmet, shield or sword and describe its features in detail.

10. If you were a Viking warrior, what would be your weapon of choice? Why?

11. Why were the Viking warriors so fearless in battle?

12. Imagine you lived in Britain in AD 793. Describe how you might have felt meeting a Viking for the first time.



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