

# Vikings vs Anglo-Saxons

Learning Objective:

To find out about the Viking invasions of Britain.



There were seven kingdoms in England in the 8th century. This meant seven kings who were constantly trying to gain power over one another, as well as trying to fend off the Britons who were now living in Wales and Scotland.



However, in 793 the Vikings invaded England and so started a new era in British history. As well as fighting amongst themselves and battling the Britons, the Anglo-Saxons now had to deal with the Vikings too.



What do you  
already know about  
the Vikings?

**Can you answer any of these questions about the Vikings?**

**Where did the Vikings  
come from?**

**What did the Vikings do  
when they got to Britain?**

**Why did the Vikings  
invade Britain?**

**How did the Vikings  
get to Britain?**

**What were the  
Vikings like?**



**The Vikings came from Norway, Sweden and Denmark, a group of countries called the Norse countries, now known as Scandinavia. The Vikings invaded Britain to gain the riches to be had there, as well as to find farmland. Scandinavia, and especially Norway, was becoming overpopulated and there was not enough land to go around.**



Because Norway, Sweden and Denmark have long coastlines, the Vikings used sailing as the quickest way to get around. They were good at developing ships that were fast and safe. Ships, known as longboats, were often used as a sign of wealth and were so important to the Norse people that sometimes they were buried in them.



The Vikings are thought to have developed the longboat from the narrow boats used in prehistoric times but they made many improvements to the shape and structure. For example, they added masts, sails and a keel which is the backbone of a ship, running all the way under its hull. This made the ship much more stable.



Longboats were perfect for attacking coastal towns. They were shallow boats, which meant that they could sail all the way up to a sandy coast without the need for an anchor. This gave them the element of surprise and let them sneak up on the towns, ready to attack before the townspeople had a chance to defend themselves.



Longboats, or 'drakkars', were often called dragon ships because they would have a dragon's head carved into the prow of the boat. When the Vikings started attacking towns and villages, the sight of the dragon ships became something to be very afraid of.



The Vikings were feared across Europe and in 793 it was England's turn to be afraid. The Vikings embarked on a raid to the English coast in search of riches. What they found on this first raid was a monastery called Lindisfarne on Holy Island. The monks and nuns who lived in holy orders like at Lindisfarne lived very peacefully, praying and copying out holy texts, devoting their entire lives to God.

The Vikings ransacked Lindisfarne. They took the gold, silver and jewels they found and killed the monks who lived



How do you think the Anglo-Saxons would have felt about the Vikings and the attack on Lindisfarne?



Even during wars at this time, it was generally understood that monasteries, being sacred places, would not be attacked. However, the Vikings were not Christians and saw the defenceless monasteries as easy targets. They could not understand why the monks would not try to defend themselves.

The next slide has an extract from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (an important historical document from the time). What does this tell you about the Anglo-Saxon opinion of the Vikings?



AD. 793. This year came dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the firmament. These tremendous tokens were soon followed by a great famine: and not long after, on the sixth day before the ides of January in the same year, the harrowing inroads of heathen men made lamentable havoc in the church of God in Holy-island, by rapine and slaughter.



Using the 5W's that you have identified during your English lesson, role play an interview between a reporter and an Anglo Saxon about the first Viking Invasions.

Consider the following:

- The brutality shown by the Vikings.
- The lack of mercy shown by the Vikings about attacking the sacred monastery.
- Consider the language used – would the Anglo Saxons have known they were called Vikings?

Don't forget to send me your recording!