



VIKINGS

WARRIORS OF THE NORTH · GIANTS OF THE SEA

WA MARITIME MUSEUM
LEARNING RESOURCE



Never was I known by one name only!

Grímnismál, The Tale of the Masked One, Poetic Edda

In Norse mythology the superior god Óðinn was known as the masked one. Actually the Vikings had more than a hundred names for him, used to designate him in various guises. The mask is a recurrent theme in Viking art. Interlaced, folded, blinded—masks were carved in stone and wood, put on jewellery, worn as amulets. Scary, wary, ecstatic, furious, wise, disordered masks.

You can see this object in Viking Mind – Gods and Beliefs



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About the exhibition

When we think of Vikings, we think of fierce warriors wielding blades of iron and steel. We think of sleek, powerful vessels carrying fearless raiders across treacherous seas to invade foreign shores. There was a time of conquest and colonisation, but the legacy of the Vikings is defined by more than the battles they won. *Vikings: Warriors of the North, Giants of the Sea* is your chance to learn about the true stories of conquest, plunder, craft, trade and adventure which turned these Nordic people into heroes of myth and legend.

The exhibition is broken up into 7 themed areas for your students to explore:

1. Introduction
2. A Wind Age – Ships, Sails and Sea
3. Connecting Continents – Traders and Merchants
4. With the Sword in the Hand - Warriors
5. Viking Way of Life
6. Power of Kings
7. Viking Mind – Gods and Beliefs

This guide outlines the key messages being explored within that theme and also two key objects that your students will see. You can use these key messages to focus your student's exploration within the exhibition. At the back of the guide is the Vikings Object Explorer Activity that can be used in the exhibition.



Thor's hands clenched the shaft of the hammer until his knuckles whitened

Snorri Sturluson, Prose Edda

Don't mess with this hammer! Of all the symbols linked to Viking Age mythology, Thor's hammer, *Mjölnir*, is probably the most popular. *Mjölnir* was the most terrifying and powerful weapon that existed in Asgard (home of the gods). It could level mountains if needed and would always return like a boomerang when thrown by Thor.

Although Thor's hammer is most famous for its use as a weapon, it was also of vital importance when the Vikings practiced their religion and rituals. Today small amulets depicting Thor's hammers are found in many places in Scandinavia underlining its ritual significance.

You can see this object in *Viking Mind – Gods and Beliefs*

Key messages

- Vikings were the people of Scandinavia, occupying what is now Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
- Vikings would have referred to themselves in numerous ways, as Danes, Swedes, Gotlanders, Jutes, Icelanders, Northmen – and many other. Their common language, which they called “Danish Tongue” was what distinguished them from other people.
- The term ‘Viking’ was originally used to describe an activity and not a person. The practice of raiding, ‘to go on a Viking’, was an activity in which both men and women participated.
- The Vikings’ innovative and advanced shipbuilding techniques enabled them to travel far beyond the shores of their homeland.
- Vikings were not just raiders, although their reputation as warriors was well earned.
- Not uncommon, at this time, Vikings were also slavers. Along with furs, weapons, honey, wax and amber, Vikings traded slaves for silver, establishing a vast network of long distance trading routes.
- Vikings changed and were changed by the cultures with whom they interacted.
- Viking culture lives in modern place names, the days of the week, Norse Mythology, runic inscriptions, historic re-enactments, music and in many forms of popular culture.

Where wolf’s ears are, wolf’s teeth are near

The Völsunga saga

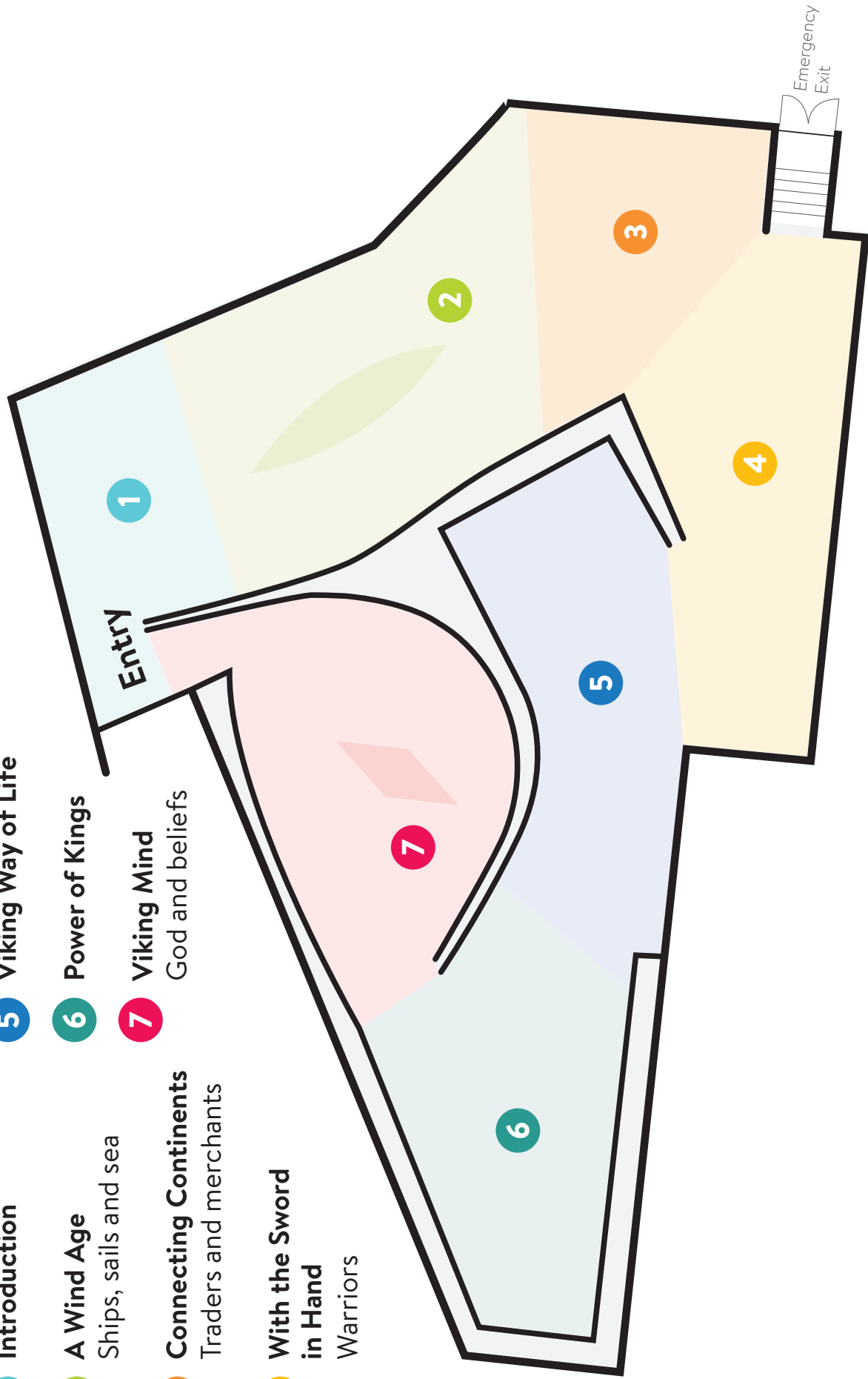
A beast of terror! The Viking world was a world filled with fears and horror. The wolf was the beast of the North, and at the end of the world, Ragnarok, the monstrous wolf Fenrir will swallow the supreme god Odin. Together with the giant Hel-hound Garm, the wolf will unleash all the powers of chaos!

This fully-moulded wolf-head terminal from a harnessbow – a bow attached to the front of the shafts of a horse-drawn vehicle and joins them by arching above the neck of the horse—was intended to scare away evil powers as the wagon travelled through the landscape. 10th century.

You can see this object in *Viking Mind – Gods and Beliefs*



- 1** Introduction
- 2** A Wind Age
Ships, sails and sea
- 3** Connecting Continents
Traders and merchants
- 4** With the Sword
in Hand
Warriors
- 5** Viking Way of Life
- 6** Power of Kings
- 7** Viking Mind
God and beliefs





Exhibition Theme 1

Introduction

This section introduces students to the Viking Age and its legacy. Time and place, geographical and historical orientation and the themes the Viking Age represents: characteristics like the formation of the Danish state (The Jelling Dynasty, Harald Bluetooth, Denmark and Norway); the Danes are christened; the Vikings as founders of towns and cities (home and abroad); the earliest documentation of the Viking Age in Ribe AD 704-710 and internationally at the raid of Lindisfarne AD 793.

How the Vikings changed the world and what relevance do the Vikings have to us today will be an essential part of uncovering the question - What did the Viking Age mean? The stereotypical image of the Vikings (eg. violent, horned helmeted raiders) which is often presented in a European context, is not correct. The exhibition will expose students to a more nuanced picture of the Vikings as traders, settlers, explorers and highly qualified craftsmen, architects and engineers.

Objects your students will see:

Brooch

This brooch depicts an eagle holding a man with its claws and biting his neck. In the transition period from the Iron Age to the Viking Age we find animal and human motifs adorning the jewellery.



Brooch

This circular swastika-shaped brooch depicts 4 bird- or dragon-like heads. The swastika or sun wheel is a symbol that was commonly used in the Viking age. The swastika symbol is known to have special affiliation with Thor and was often carved on objects to imbue them with sanctity or simply luck.





Exhibition Theme 2

A Wind Age – Ships, Sails and Sea

In the Viking Age, Scandinavians had a major influence on the development of many parts of Europe and western Asia. The technologically well-developed ships were a necessary precondition for this.

It was the Vikings' impressive ships which made it possible to travel anywhere in the known world - from the North American coast in the west to the Black Sea in the east and from Greenland in the north to Spain in the south - either to plunder, trade, make war or settle.

Students will explore these main messages:

- The ship was vital to the Vikings of Scandinavia.
- Archaeological finds show that the Vikings built a range of different kinds of vessels
- The Viking Ship is one of the symbols of the Viking Age today.

Objects your students will see:



Viking boat*

This is a reconstruction of a Viking ship called the *Joanna* (pronounced Yo-Ahna).

Joanna is one of the small boats found accompanying the *Gokstad* ship.

*Replica



Coin

This early ninth-century coin depicting a Viking longship was probably minted in Hedeby, Denmark. Coins provide useful historical evidence for archaeologists.



Exhibition Theme 3

Connecting Continents – Traders and Merchants

Royal power was consolidated and strengthened during the Viking Age, and the economic conditions increased. Greater and more sophisticated specialisation in trade and production took place. Towns became centres of political, economic and social organisation with trade and crafts as the central basis. Trading goods bear witness to both a substantial local demand and to the fact that all these towns were hubs for long-distance trade.

Trading, which characterized the Vikings' journey to the east, mainly occurred along the Eastern European and Russian rivers, and all the way to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, where they reached the Byzantine Empire and on to the Muslim Caliphate. They traded amber, salt, honey and wax, furs and slaves against payment in silver. The exhibition shows some of the many impressive treasures that bear witness to the Vikings' trade and foreign contact. The exhibition also includes examples of the merchandise the Vikings traded with.

Students will explore these main messages:

- The trading routes of the Viking Age extended over vast distances.
- The Viking Age was a time of flourishing trade.
- Slaves, furs, silver and weapons were traded across long distances, and the merchant was a key figure in Viking Age society.
- Silver was Viking currency, but there was no monetary standard.
- The Vikings were skilled traders who travelled far afield to buy and sell goods.
- In the Viking world, slavery was seen as a condition of life.

Objects your students will see:

Currency of the Vikings

Silver was the main currency of the Viking Age. Goods were paid for in silver by weight. In a transaction the required amount of silver was simply cut off. Silver ingots and rings with smaller rings attached (payment rings) indicate that the owner of such items was affluent.

Weight

This object was originally a mount but reshaped as a weight. A weight was used on a scale to measure an amount of silver.

This weight depicts a well-groomed Irish male mask with amber eyes.





Exhibition Theme 4

With the Sword in the Hand - Warriors

The warrior played a central role in the Viking Age, which was a very turbulent period of unrest and dissension. Written sources describe major Danish, Northmen (or simply pagan) Viking army and navy attacks on England, France, Spain and other countries. The size of the armies and the attacking techniques are not described in detail in the written sources, but the archaeological finds can help throw light on the warrior's equipment (weapons etc.) and fighting techniques (organization, technology, tactics, strategy, battles etc.).

The warrior, their equipment (rider, heavy and light armament), battle and infantry (duel, army against army, formation) form a central part of this section.

Students will explore these main messages:

- Warriors played an important role during the Viking Age.
- Viking arms consisted of shields, spears, bows and arrows, axes, swords, chain mail and helmets.
- Viking Age warriors were light infantry, which, combined with Viking ships, made them a fast, mobile military force.

Objects your students will see:



Sword

Viking swords are typically recognized as being large and frightening. Swords were the weapons of kings, nobles and free men. They were far more expensive to produce than other weapons. Thus, the sword was a symbol of power.



Mammen Axe*

One of the most magnificent finds from the Viking Age is one of the axes from the grave at Mammen. It is made of iron with silver inlay. The axe is decorated in the so-called Mammen style, which is named after this particular find. The style arose in the 900s and it survived until around 1000. The motifs on the axe can be interpreted as both Christian and pagan.

*Replica



Exhibition Theme 5

Viking Way of Life

What was life like in Scandinavia one thousand years ago? This section features artefacts to help answer that question.

The role of each person in Viking society depended strongly on whether you were free or unfree, rich or poor, man or woman. All groups often lived together in societies where honour and family relationships played an important role. The exhibition focuses on everyday life in the Viking's homelands - the lives of women and children, cooking, clothing and textile manufacturing, houses, agriculture, livestock, crafts and leisure.

Students will explore these main messages:

- The Vikings built different kinds of dwellings like longhouses, pit houses, town houses, smaller family houses and great, royal halls.
- Life in the Viking Age could be hard work. Periods of unrest, bad weather and failing crops left people hungry.
- Most people lived in villages, with agriculture forming the basis for existence.
- During the 9th century the Vikings raided monasteries, churches and marketplaces along the coasts of Western Europe.
- Men and women of the Viking Age dressed according to their gender and income.
- The discovery of gaming pieces reveals that the Vikings played board games.
- The Vikings were skilled craftsmen.

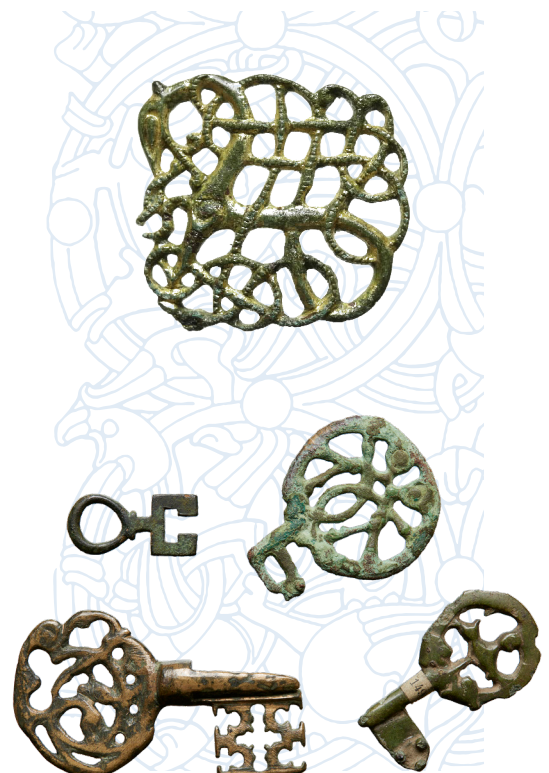
Objects your students will see:

Urnes -style brooch

C. 1000 – 1150. The Urnes style has a three-dimensionality and lightness that distinguishes it from earlier animal ornamentation. The style is asymmetric, and often has a single, main motif that fills the entire surface. The animal figure in the centre is depicted using thin and thicker lines, and its body twists in dynamic, swirling patterns. The slender face with almond-shaped eyes is in profile.

Key

Many keys dated to the Viking Age have been found in both female graves and as individual finds. Bronze, silver and iron keys – some made with supreme craftsmanship – were a status symbol worn by women. Often these were small pieces of art worn on a string attached to the belt and thus visible when the woman walked around.





Exhibition Theme 6

Power of Kings

Viking society was clearly divided into social classes. At the top, the king was surrounded by an aristocratic elite. The free people constituted the majority of the community – they had the right to carry weapons and had the right to be heard at the annual assemblies, called “*The Thing*”. They were farmers, landowners, craftsmen, hunters, professional warriors and merchants.

The unfree were slaves who had no rights to decide over their own lives. They were either bought or brought back from raids around Europe. Many slaves were also born and raised in Viking homelands. Some were Scandinavians, taken in internal wars, some were Scandinavians having lost their status. The purpose of many of the Viking raids was to obtain slaves for their own use and for resale.

Students will explore these main messages:

- From the 8th to the 11th centuries the Vikings left their mark on Europe as settlers, traders and warriors.
- The remains of the residences of wealthy magnates, with numerous dwellings, stables, barns, workshops and storehouses, have been found in Lejre and Tissø, Denmark.
- During the Viking Age, Scandinavia changed from being fragmented in smaller kingdoms to become the larger kingdoms that were the forerunners of present-day Denmark, Sweden and Norway.
- The 8th to 10th centuries were a time of major change in Denmark.
- Harald Bluetooth’s unification of the kingdom of Denmark included a number of monumental constructions, for example, the fortified towns of Hedeby and Aarhus.

Objects your students will see:



Golden filigree brooch

Amongst the Vikings were skilled artisans and the best of them lived and worked for the kings and queens of the time.

The often quite small artworks were often quite detailed - winding, twisting bands intertwined with snakes, birds, dragons and human figures are common features which all denotes fascinating myths, tales and meanings.



Cammin casket*

Diplomatic gifts, similar to this casket, played an important part in the establishment of contacts between European and Scandinavian rulers. The casket is decorated in the Mammen style indicating that it was made in Denmark between 950-1000 CE.

Eventually, this casket held the relics of Saint Cordula and was on display in the Cathedral of Saint John in Cammin, north-western Poland. The casket disappeared in a fire during World War Two, but several replicas like this one survive.

*Replica



Exhibition Theme 7

Viking Mind – Gods and Beliefs

Odin, the supreme God of the Nordic pantheon, was god of war and wisdom and was particularly worshipped by the rulers of Viking society. The pagan gods had great influence on human everyday life, and it was therefore necessary through sacrifices to be on good terms with them. In this way it was possible to ensure peace, welfare and crops in the field.

The Vikings encountered Christianity in the countries to the south and west of Scandinavia, while monks attempted to convert them in the home countries. The transition from paganism to Christianity was slow, and archaeological finds have revealed that both religions flourished side by side.

Students will explore these main messages:

- The Jelling complex is one of the most imposing construction projects of the Viking Age.
- Christianity was officially introduced to Denmark in 965.
- Beliefs, faith and religion were an important part of everyday life for the Vikings.
- The Vikings encountered Christianity in the countries to the south and west of Scandinavia, and monks also attempted to convert them in their home countries.
- The Viking Age graves we know of provide a unique picture of Viking life, as well as valuable information about the beliefs and traditions of the Vikings.
- Among the thousands of Viking Age graves that have been discovered, some stand out due to their size and riches.

Objects your students will see:

Åby crucifix*

The Åby crucifix is the oldest large-scale crucifix in Denmark and comes from Åby Church near Aarhus. The crucifix is from c. 1050-1100 and is made of gilded copper plates on a base of wood. It is only in Scandinavia that Jesus is depicted as this kind of king on the cross.

*Replica

Jelling stone*

The large Jelling Stone erected in 965 by Harald Bluetooth, son of King Gorm and Queen Thyra, tells of Harald's achievements in uniting Denmark and Norway and making the Danes Christian. This full-scale replica has been reconstructed to show the details and patterns depicted on the stone (Christ and the beast), and an interpretation of the possible original colors, which have eroded on the original stone. The actual rune stone can be seen at its archaeological find site in Jelling.

*Replica





Vikings Object Explorer Activity

The Vikings *Object Explorer Activity* encourages your students to freely explore the exhibition and to self-select objects that spark an interest for them. The students then undertake an analysis of their chosen object while in the exhibition. Back in the classroom, you can lead a discussion based on the exhibition themes, with the students presenting their objects as primary source material to support the key messages.

Before the excursion

1. Print out enough copies of the *Object Explorer Activity* sheet so that there are enough for each student.
2. Ensure each student has their own clipboard and pencil.
3. Discuss with the students what they might already know about the Vikings and what they would like to know more about. Could anything they already know be considered fiction? (eg horned helmets)
4. Using these exhibition notes, talk about the themes in the exhibition.
5. Talk through the *Object Explorer Activity* so that they are prepared when they arrive at the exhibition.

In the exhibition

1. Your students will have up to an hour in the exhibition. To begin, encourage your students to freely explore the exhibition at their own pace, allowing them to focus on the themes and objects that interest them the most.
2. During the last 20 minutes of your allotted exhibition time have the students return to an object that they found interesting or would like to know more about.
3. When the students have returned to the object they can complete the questions on the Object Explorer activity sheet.

Back at school

1. Your students can present their chosen objects to the rest of the class. The order this is done should be based on following the exhibition themes.
2. The next student to present should be one who chose an object that was nearby to the one just presented (students should know if they are a nearby object as they list these on the activity sheet). Even if students have picked the same object their interpretations may be different, so every student should present.
3. This activity will allow the students to explore the key theme messages through the objects they have selected.



Vikings Object Explorer

Student Activity Sheet

STEP ONE:

Get the big picture by walking through the entire exhibition. Make a note of a few objects that interest you and that you would like to look at again.

Objects I found interesting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STEP TWO:

Choose one of these objects and return to it and try and answer the following questions:

A. Why did I choose this object?

B. What does this object tell us about Viking culture?

C. Is an object like this still used today? If so, how? If not, why?

E. List two nearby objects. How are they connected to your chosen object?

STEP THREE:

My descriptions

In a few words describe the object's function, as well as its colours, shape, size and materials.

STEP FOUR:

My sketches

Try this: Turn away from what you're drawing and draw it from memory. Then turn back and fill in the details you forgot.



Vikings - School excursion

Thank you for considering an excursion to the *VIKINGS: Warriors of the north. Giants of the sea* exhibition showing exclusively at the Western Australian Maritime Museum.

By visiting this extraordinary collection of artefacts on loan from the National Museum of Denmark, combined with videos to watch and hands-on activities to do, your students will have the opportunity to learn the story of how the Vikings set sail from Scandinavian lands in search of knowledge, resources, and influence. Over a thousand years later, the legend of the Vikings persists, but the full story of their achievements is less known.

How to book

School excursions are available for booking during Term 1, 2021 (1 February – 1 April inclusive). To book please call **1300 134 081** or book online at <https://museum.wa.gov.au/vikings-learning-resources>

How to prepare

- Students should know that the objects on display are priceless artefacts never before seen in Perth.
- The objects on display— including the Viking ship — are not to be touched.
- While touching the objects is not allowed, there are several hands-on activities for students to do throughout the galleries as well as videos to watch. Students should be encouraged to try all of these activities in order to enrich their learning experience.
- Chaperones and students should know that the museum encourages conversation around the displays and children should ask questions and discuss what they see. Museum etiquette suggests that the conversation be kept to an appropriate indoor volume level.
- The exhibition entrance is located on the left of the Museum foyer.
- On average, most groups will spend about 45-60 minutes in the exhibition, if carefully examining all of the displays.
- There are no toilets inside the exhibition. Toilets are located on the Ground Floor behind the stairs.
- The WA Maritime Museum gift shop located outside the exhibition will have a selection of Vikings-themed merchandise available for purchase.
- No food or beverages are allowed in any of the exhibitions at the Museum.
- Non-flash photography is permitted in the exhibition.
- Running through the exhibition is not allowed.
- Designate a meeting location within the exhibition when you arrive in case someone gets separated. Please do not congregate at the entrance/exit, however, so as to enable other visitors to enter and exit easily.

