

Who Were the Vikings?

The Vikings were a Norse people from Scandinavia — the countries we now call Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. They flourished during the Viking Age, which historians date from AD 793, when they famously raided a monastery at Lindisfarne in England, to 1066, the year of the Norman Conquest.

Their iconic longships were masterpieces of engineering. Narrow, lightweight, and fitted with both oars and a large sail, they could cross the Atlantic Ocean yet were shallow enough to travel far up rivers. This gave the Vikings a huge advantage in both exploration and surprise attacks.

Although raiding made them famous, most Vikings were farmers, traders, or craftspeople. Norse merchants established trading routes stretching from Scandinavia across Russia to Constantinople and beyond, exchanging furs, timber, and amber for silk, silver, and spices.

Viking society was organised into jarls (nobles), karls (free farmers), and thralls (slaves). Women had more rights than in many other societies at the time — they could own property and even seek divorce.

The Vikings had a rich mythology featuring gods like Odin, Thor, and Loki. They recorded their history and legends in poems and sagas, many of which survive today.

Questions

1. What name is given to the countries the Vikings came from?
2. What event in AD 793 marks the beginning of the Viking Age?
3. What year is considered the end of the Viking Age, and what happened then?
4. Describe two features of a Viking longship that made it so effective.
5. Name two goods that Viking traders sold or swapped.
6. Name two goods that Viking traders received in return.
7. What were the three groups in Viking society?
8. Name one right that Viking women had which was unusual for the time.
9. Name three Viking gods mentioned in the text.
10. Why do you think historians describe the longship as giving Vikings "a huge advantage"?



Text C Quiz



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