

Upper Key Stage 2

English National Curriculum published 2013

Pupils should be taught about...

- *the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor*

The NC's 'Examples - Non-Statutory' focus on the belligerent role of the Vikings: the work outlined below helps present a more rounded view.

Learning Outcomes.

History

Pupils will gain an insight into Viking culture through studying two of the most important saga stories.

They will learn to 'read' non-written primary sources and relate them to simplified translations of Snorri Sturluson's versions of the Eddas.

Religious Education

They will gain an insight into the way religions can assimilate existing beliefs as they spread to new areas.

They will reinforce knowledge of Christian beliefs about the crucifixion.

Suggested Activities:

These two lessons can be used at anytime; during a unit on the Vikings, or as a one-off mini topic at the end of a unit on the Anglo- Saxons, or in conjunction with RE lessons about Easter.

Session One

- 1.1 Arrange the class in groups and give out the A4 sheets of **ramsundStone.pdf**

Task them to devise the outline of a story that would explain what is happening in the picture. They can map their idea as a storyboard or bullet point summary.

Explain that the same character might occur in more than one place in the picture.

[If they ask what the rune writing says, you can tell them it is of no help to understanding the story - it just says that a nearby bridge was built to celebrate a dead Viking (it translates as 'Sigridr, Alrikr's mother, Ormr's daughter made this bridge for the soul of Holmgirr, father of Sigrodr, her husband').]

You may wish to ask them if they can identify the objects immediately to the right of the decapitated chap at the bottom left hand corner (hammer, bellows, anvil and tongs).

After around thirty minutes, ask the groups to feed back their results and get the pupils to identify the most important similarities and differences between their ideas.

- 1.2 Either hand out the **Sigurd.pdf** sheets for the groups to read or tell the story yourself. Keen readers may detect that attempts have been made to introduce humour into this simplified version of the story. By all means weed them out if you want, though in defence, the original Sagas make use of humour quite often. (An abridged version of the original saga in a scholarly translation is available below as the downloadable **SigurdVolsungaSaga.pdf**.)

If you have not used the Sigurd.pdf sheets, check the pupils understand how the story relates to the various details on the sheet.

- 1.3 Discuss any plot similarities the pupils can make between the Sigurd tale and Tolkien's fiction (dwarves, dragon, treasure, special sword, talking birds, super-horse, shape-changers). Explain, if they don't already know, that Tolkien's day-job was as a Professor studying north European medieval literature such as the Sagas.

Ask why they think the same sort of fantasy stories that entertained the Vikings are still popular today.

Tell them that next lesson they will be studying a much more complicated and impressive carving on the finest Viking Age sculpture in England.

Session 2

- 2.1 Arrange the class in groups and give out the A4 sheets of **GCparker1917.jpg**. *This is probably the best drawing made of the Gosforth Cross; after it was cleaned for the V&A cast to be made, but before the latest century of wind and rain had weathered it.*

Explain that they are repeating the same exercise as in the previous lesson, but this time with a more detailed saga with different elements of the story cropping up all over the 1050 year old 4.2 metre high cross.

You could tell them that the trickster god Loki reappears in this tale.

After around forty minutes, the groups report back and hear each other's storylines.

- 2.2 Explain that the most amazing thing about the cross is that it can be read as not just illustrating the sagas, then play them the Richard Cobden Primary version of the film **Gosforth CrossV&A.mp4**

- 2.3 Explain that another version of the script was made for Gosforth CE Primary. They are to watch that, and make a note of any extra details in this slightly longer version. Play **GosforthCrossCumbria.mp4**

- 2.4 Discuss the extra details and check they understand the explanation offered for why Vikings and Saxons seem to have lived at peace in this part of England.

Development Activities and Alternative Session 2

Study the **HaltonCross.pdf** images and identify the part of the Sigurd story shown here that is not depicted in the Swedish stone the pupils saw in the first session.

Baldr seems invulnerable, but has one secret weakness:

- what other examples can the pupils give of this plot theme in other stories? (Samson, Achilles, Superman)
- why has it been such a popular device?

As an alternative to session 2, after 2.1 give the pupils the **ChristianSources02.pdf** and **Ragnarokr.pdf** sheets and ask them to identify the image on the cross that could be read as illustrating **both** Christian **and** Saga stories.

Resources. Notes and Links

ramsundStone.pdf
Sigurd.pdf
GCparker1917.jpg

Gosforth CrossV&A.mp4
GosforthCrossCumbria.mp4
SigurdVolsungaSaga.pdf
Ragnarokr.pdf

'The Impact of Diasporas'; major academic project investigating migrations...
<http://www2.le.ac.uk/projects/impact-of-diasporas>

Useful archived materials created for the British Museum's 'Viking Life and Legend' exhibition...
http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2014/vikings.aspx