

Year  
5

History

Who were the Norsemen  
and what did they do for us?

Knowledge  
Organiser

**Historical summary**

Throughout much of Alfred's life the Vikings had been raiding England. In 870, the Vikings had conquered all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms except for Wessex. Alfred's brother Aethelred died in one of the battles and Alfred was crowned king. Over the next several years Alfred fought off the Vikings. In 878, the Danish King Guthrum led a surprise attack against Alfred and his army. Alfred managed to escape, but with only a few men. He fled to Athelney where he plotted his counterattack. Many of the men of Wessex were tired of the constant raids and attacks of the Vikings. They rallied around Alfred at Athelney and soon they had a strong army again. With his new army, Alfred counterattacked the Vikings. He defeated King Guthrum and took back his stronghold at Chippenham. He then required that the Vikings convert to Christianity and established a peace treaty where the Vikings would remain on the eastern side of Britain. The Vikings land was called the Danelaw.

**Key facts**

'The Terror' which occurred on 8<sup>th</sup> June 793 is the Viking attack on Lindisfarne, looting the monastery and killing and enslaving many monks. It was the first of the Viking attacks on a monastic site and came as a shock to Christians. Land and climate were the two most important aspects of invasions. The Viking Age is considered around the age of 793-1066AD.

**Key people**

Alfred the Great— was King of the West Saxons from 871 to c. 886 and King of the Anglo-Saxons from c. 886 until his death in 899. He was the youngest son of King Æthelwulf and his first wife Osburh, who both died when Alfred was young.



Vocabulary

bow	the front of a boat
brutal	savagely violent
climate	The general weather conditions in an area
defenceless	Without protection
hull	The bottom or base of a boat
Lindisfarne	Also called 'Holy Island'. A small island off the north-east coast of England
longship	a long, narrow warship, powered by both oar and sail with many rowers
mast	a tall upright post on a ship or boat, used for a sail or sails
monarch	a sovereign head of state, usually a king or queen
monastery	a building or buildings occupied by a community of monks living under religious promises
Norsemen	people who lived in Scandinavian countries in medieval times
Northumberland	is a county in Northern England which borders with Scotland
pagan	a person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions
sacred	Having to do with religion
Scandinavia	part of northern Europe, consisting of Norway, Swede and Denmark
settlement	a place, typically one which has previously been uninhabited, where people set up a community
terror	Extreme fear
treasure	a quantity of precious metals, gems, or other valuable objects
weapons	a thing designed or used for inflicting bodily harm or physical damage

## What I should know by the end of this unit.

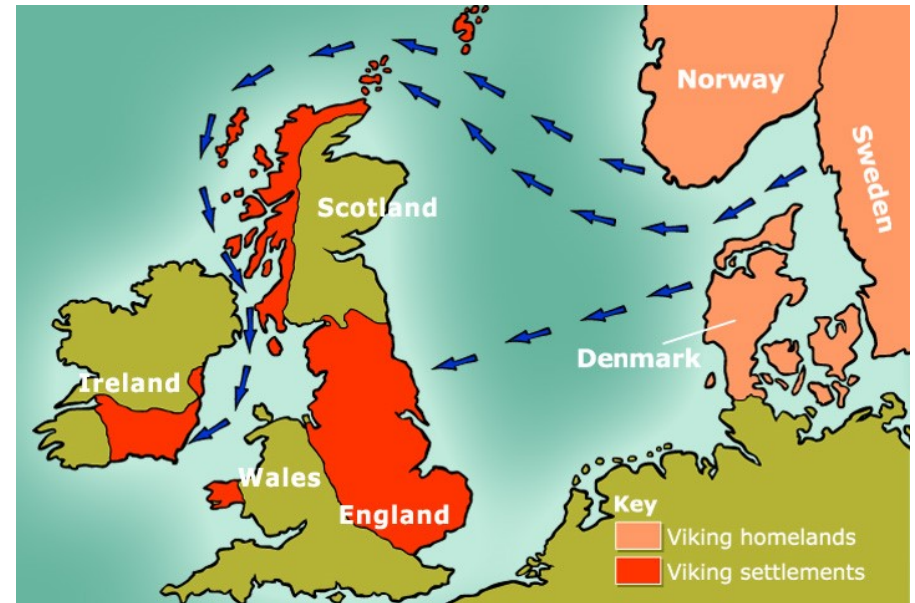
Describe the reasons for the attack on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in 793.

Describe why 'Vikings' is not, in fact, the correct name for these people and explain who the attackers really were,

Interpret a range of source evidence to explain why most Viking Norsemen travelled to Britain in Anglo-Saxon times and justify their judgment,

Explain the difference between historical evidence and a myth, folklore and a legend, with reference to both the commonly held belief that Viking Norsemen wore helmets with horns and that the outlaw Robin Hood really existed,

Evaluate evidence relating to the achievements of Anglo-Saxon King Alfred the Great, reach a judgment as to whether he is justifiably 'great' and justify their decision



## Important questions

What did the Vikings want and how did Alfred stop them?

What was the 'terror' that appeared in Britain on June 8th 793?

Why was the design of their longships so important to the Vikings?

What were the two treasures that most Viking Norsemen wanted from Britain?  
Why is Alfred the only King or Queen of England to have 'the Great' after their name?

What did the Vikings want?

How did Alfred stop them?

