



Viking ships activity outline



Activity support notes

Objective

To understand the key features of Viking ships.

What you will need

You will need:

- Classroom activity sheet A.pdf (Viking longship investigation)
- Classroom activity sheet B.pdf (Viking knarr ship investigation)
- Viking longship picture
- Viking knarr ship picture

Activity

This activity can be done individually, in pairs or in groups. Each group will use the questions on Classroom activity sheets A and B to explore the key features of the Viking ship pictures.

Pupils will need some time to look at the pictures and answer the questions. The answers could be recorded as captions to put around an illustration. Alternatively, pupils could present their findings orally.

Outcomes

Pupils will notice differences between the types of ship. They will draw conclusions as to speed and use of the boats, materials and construction.

Please note: The answers to the questions are on this page, in the right hand column.

Viking longship investigation answers

- 1 It is long and narrow. It has many oar holes.
- 2 In an attack they would want to surprise the enemy and be able to get away quickly.
- 3 The oars, because they would not want to rely on the wind.
- 4 The steerboard.
- 5 The dragon head carving on the prow and the shields.
- 6 Approximately 50-60 men, most of whom would be rowing. Others would be steering and navigating.
- 7 The ship is in the harbour, because the shields would not be over the side at sea.
- 8 The stern is nearest, as the dragon's head would have been at the front.

Viking knarr ship investigation answers

- 1 Because that is where the cargo is stored.
- 2 Speed was less important as they were trading not attacking.
- 3 Because it provides more space for cargo, and meant that ships could navigate shallow waters in rivers and harbours.
- 4 The sail (wind) was the main source of power. The ship would have been very heavy – too heavy to row except short distances.
- 5 The crew slept on the deck, sometimes under an awning to protect them, sometimes in sleeping bags.
- 6 The cargo was kept in the space in the middle of the ship and also under the deck – the boards would be loose to allow access, or the vessel would be undecked.
- 7 There would be far fewer crew on a knarr than a longship – approximately ten. The crew would row if necessary, look after the sail, steer and navigate.
- 8 The sailors ate cold food – dried and salted meat and fish – and they drank sour milk or water. There were no cooking facilities.