

About the Viking Sagas

These are the stories the Vikings told about themselves.

The Viking sagas were mostly written down in Iceland in the 13th and 14th centuries, about events the writers believed had happened several centuries earlier. Some sagas tell stories from history, some tell ancient myths and legends, but they all tell stories the Icelanders believed had happened to their own ancestors. Stories that were often set far from Iceland, in North America, the British Isles, all over Scandinavia and mainland Europe.

The first saga story I discovered was the story of the Vikings invading Scotland and how they were opposed by the chieftain of Moray. Reading that story was quite an odd experience, because it's from the Orkneyinga Saga, the tales of the Norse Earls of Orkney, which was written with the Earls as heroes. But I grew up in Moray, so didn't see the story of Vikings invading Scotland as a magnificent heroic story at all.

I did enjoy the action-packed stories, but I also decided that the Vikings' violent reputation is probably entirely deserved and it's possibly even a reputation they were proud of, because they celebrate violence in most of the stories they told about themselves.

However, not all Vikings were violent warriors and raiders, or at least not all the time. They were also farmers, sailors, traders and explorers, and they believed in magic, monsters and ghosts.

There's good reason to believe that most of the tales in the sagas were told out loud for many years before they were written down. The stories I re-tell are the versions I tell out loud to audiences, which means they're not exactly as they appear in the sagas. I'm not a historian, a translator or an academic. I just love to share these stories from the sagas, and they change a little as I tell them, just as the original spoken tales will have changed as they were told. This is not a fact book; this is a book of stories. The Vikings loved fighting and sailing and feasting, but they also love storytelling.

I hope you enjoy their stories too.

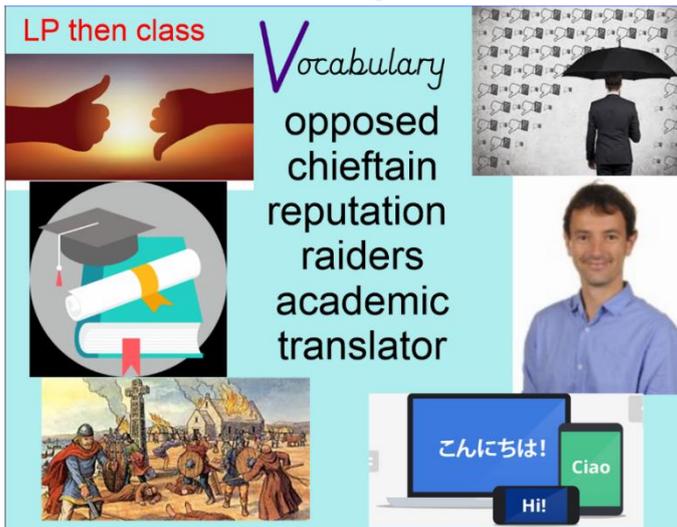
VIPERS Questions

Vocabulary: Match the words to the pictures. Can you use the pictures and the text to work out their meaning and write definitions?

LP then class

Vocabulary

opposed
chieftain
reputation
raiders
academic
translator



Definitions:

opposed- _____

chieftain- _____

reputation- _____

raiders- _____

academic- _____

translator- _____

Explain: Answer these questions using the text. All answers are in the text, so don't try to answer them from memory.

1. Where did these sagas take place?

2. How do we know the Vikings were proud of their reputation?

Retrieve: Look at the fourth and fifth paragraph of the text. Can you find the following things?

1. two contractions- _____
2. an expanded noun phrase- _____
3. an example of commas for lists- _____
4. synonym for 'story' and 'invaders'- _____
5. the tense this text is written in- _____

Summarise: the text by answering these questions.

1. Who wrote these sagas and when? _____

2. What was the first saga the author read and what was it about? _____

3. Describe what Vikings were according to the author. _____
