

*The LBC Guide to*  
**The Middle Ages**

**A complete study guide**  
using high-quality literature to teach children,  
ages 9 and up, the history of The Middle Ages.

Includes relevant activities and internet resources.



**LIVING BOOKS CURRICULUM™**

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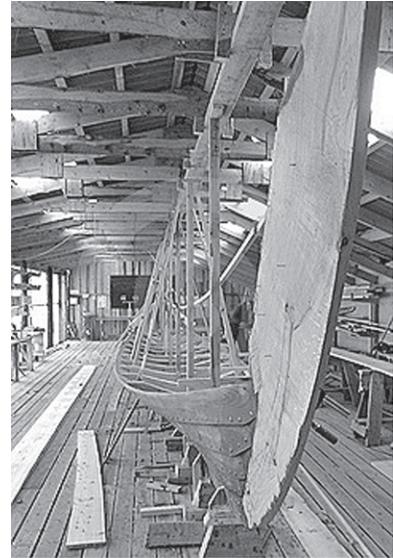
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## Lesson 3: Norsemen

### Weeks 5 and 6

#### People, Places, and Events

- Viking raids terrorize England, Ireland, France, Spain, southern Italy, and Germany, 793-911
- Vikings colonize Iceland, 845
- Vikings in Constantinople, 882
- Eric the Red explores Greenland, 882
- King Olaf brings Christianity to Norway, 994-1028
- Leif Erickson lands in North America, 1000



VIKING LONG BOAT reproduction being built in Norway.

#### Overview text

 *The Discovery of New Worlds*, chapters 14-16.

#### Literature for study

 *Beowulf, the Warrior*, read in its entirety (see Notes). Alternatively, you may wish to use *Stories of Beowulf Told to the Children*, Henrietta Elizabeth Marshall; an e-text found at: <[www.mainlesson.com](http://www.mainlesson.com)>.

 *Beorn the Proud*, Madeleine Polland.

#### Additional reading

- *D'Aulaire's Norse Gods and Giants*, Ingri and Edgar d'Aulaire.
- *White Stag*, Kate Seredy. Migration of Huns and Magyars from Asia steppes.
- *Children of Odin*, Padraic Colum. Norse myths and legends for older children.
- *Story of Rolf and the Viking Bow*, Alan French. Set in Iceland in 1000 AD, the story of the introduction of Christianity.
- *Sword Song*, Rosemary Sutcliff. A Viking swordsman banished from his homeland sets out on an adventure.
- *Story of Siegfried*, James Baldwin. Story taken from the *Ring of the Nibelungenlied*, an Icelandic saga.
- *What Do We Know About the Vikings?*, Hazel Mary Martel.
- *Slaves Tale*, Eric Christian Haugaard. Viking adventure tale.
- *Havelock, the Dane*, Charles W. Whistler. This story is based on an ancient British legend and is set in sixth-century England and Denmark.
- *Leif the Lucky*, Ingri and Edgar d'Aulaire. Beautifully-illustrated account of Leif Erickson's travels to North America.
- *Art of the Vikings*, Shirley Glubok.
- *Viking Tales*, Jennie Hall, Yesterday's Classics.

## Activities

### Mapping

- Create a map showing the Viking exploration and trade routes, raids, and settlements. Decorate the map with colorful images of Viking culture.
- As you read *Beowulf* together, create a map of the Danes camp and the “fell” where Grendel lived.

### Model Viking Longship

- Discovery School has directions for a simple model, which can be constructed using an egg carton. The project demonstrates the genius of proportion that the Vikings accomplished, allowing them to carry tons of cargo:  
<[www.school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/vikingdiscoveries](http://www.school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/vikingdiscoveries)>.
- Directions for building a model longship using card stock:  
<[www.ncte.ie/viking/model.htm](http://www.ncte.ie/viking/model.htm)>.

### Runes

The Norsemen had an alphabet, consisting of sixteen letters, or characters, called runes. The meaning of the word rune is “mystery”, which alludes to the fact that originally only a few were acquainted with the use and meaning of these marks. To learn your child’s name in the runic alphabet and to learn about Viking villages and culture:

<[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings)>.

### Norse mythology

A study of Norse mythology will help your child understand the context of the story of *Beorn the Proud*. There are several titles under “Additional reading”.

### Beowulf’s monsters

Beowulf battles a formidable monster in each of the three parts. Draw a picture of each and add to your notebook.

### More on Beowulf

There are many sources at the library and online for further study. An excellent mega-site:  
<[www.webenglishteacher.com/beowulf.html](http://www.webenglishteacher.com/beowulf.html)>.

## Sample questions for narration and discussion

- Beorn follows his father’s custom of *viking*. Explain what that word means and how it occurs.
- Describe the scene when Anlaf the Sea King and his warriors attack the monks in the monastery. What kinds of things were taken? Why?

- When Beorn and Ness return to Ireland at the story's end, Ness says, "Do you see now if the old man had not been brought aboard, you would never have begun to think about his God! I think how he died for you—and for all the people that would follow into his Faith." Why did she say that? What did the old hermit do to help Beorn accept the Christian faith?
- Retell the story of *Beowulf* in three parts: Grendel, Grendel's Mother, and the Fire Dragon. Use the mapping done in activities to help you.

## Notes

### Understanding Beowulf

*Beowulf* is a thrilling tale, but can be challenging to read. However, it is well worth the effort as it is the earliest example of English literature and provides a basis of study for all English literature. To encourage understanding, read the poem aloud a little at a time, stopping for narrations. Once the reader's ear attunes to the language, it becomes a pleasure to hear.

Here is a summary of the story from The Class Zone <[www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com)>.

*England's oldest surviving epic tells the story of Beowulf, a Swedish Geat, who comes to the aid of the Danes to defeat Grendel, a monster who has terrorized them for years. When Grendel's mother appears, hungry for revenge, Beowulf follows her back to her watery lair and kills her too. Showered with gifts, he returns to Geatland, where he becomes a great leader of his people. Many years later, he faces the threat of an angry fire-breathing dragon, aroused by the theft of a jeweled cup from its treasure hoard. The aging hero kills the dragon only after suffering a mortal wound, and then dies himself. The Geats bury both his ashes and the dragon's treasure in an earthen tower at the sea's edge, to guide sailors from far and wide.*



A VIKING dragon ship.

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