

# GRIM GRUESOME VIKING VILLAIN

**Discussion Topics**

**+**

**Fun Activities**

**for**

**CHILDREN'S BOOK GROUPS**

# DISCUSSION TOPICS

This is arranged in two sections.

## Part 1:

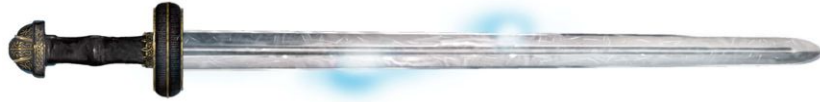
Suggests topics which children could discuss after reading *any* of the Grim Gruesome books.

## Part 2:

suggests discussions specific to each of the four books:

*The Cursed Sword*  
*The Queen's Poison*  
*Trolls' Treasure*  
*The Rings of Doom*

# DISCUSSION TOPICS RELEVANT TO ALL THE GRIM GRUESOME BOOKS



1. Could this story have happened in modern times?  
If not, why not?
2. What have you learned about how children lived in Viking times?  
How were their lives different from yours?  
Discuss all the good and bad things about life in Viking times.  
Would you rather have lived then – or now?
3. Did you find the story(ies) scary or funny or a mixture of both?  
What aspects made you feel scared?  
What aspects made you laugh?
4. At what point in the story did you guess who Grim Gruesome was?  
What did you think of his disguise? Was it effective? Did you see through it?
5. If Grim Gruesome was alive today and he tried to trap you, would you see through his disguise? Or would you get caught in his trap? How could you escape him?
6. Which of the child characters did you like best and least, and why?



## DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR *THE CURSED SWORD*



1. Do you think Bjarni made the right choice when he joined a pirate ship to win treasure for Astrid – even though this meant fighting and killing people?
2. Do you believe the sword was really cursed? Or did the curse only exist in Bjarni's and Astrid's minds? *(This could lead into a general discussion about magical beliefs)*
3. If you were in Astrid's situation, would you have dared to run away to Lapland and seek help from a Lapp sorcerer?
4. What have you learned about the landscape of Norway? How does it add to the adventure?



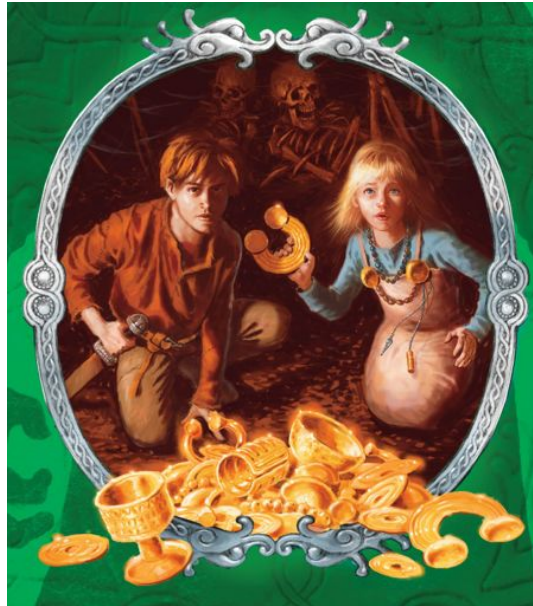
## DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR *THE QUEEN'S POISON*



1. Do you think Aki, Frodi and Dalla's parents were right or wrong to go away, leaving the the three children to look after themselves? What might have happened if they had been at home when Grim Gruesome arrived?
2. Everyone in Jorvik was easily tricked by the 'berserk' claiming that he would protect them from Grim Gruesome. Do you think that was true to life?
3. Do you think Queen Gunnhild was a good or an evil person? How does she differ from our Queen today?
4. Did Grim Gruesome really shape-shift Aki and Frodi? Or was it just their imaginations? *(This could lead into a general discussion on magical beliefs).*



## DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR *TROLLS' TREASURE*



1. In the story, Grim Gruesome offers to let each of the children go free – but only on condition that they trap other children for him! Would *you* have accepted his offer?
2. Discuss what it was like to live as a Viking outlaw. Could *you* survive living rough like that?
3. What do you think of the 'Ordeal Test' that the Vikings used to test someone's guilt or innocence? Was it fair? Compare with how accused people are tried in court today.
4. Seals play an important part in the story. Find out about other Scottish seal legends and discuss how they inspired the author to write this book.



## DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR *THE RINGS OF DOOM*



1. Do you think Sigrid and Magnus really hated each other or loved each other?
2. What have you learned about the landscape of Iceland? Would you like to live there?
3. Faithful the horse plays an important role in the adventure. What episodes do you think were the most frightening / upsetting / exciting / happy for him?
4. One theme of the story is the danger of wishing for something bad. Do you believe wishes can come true?



# **Fun Activities**

**1. MAKE A RUNE-STONE**

**2. COMPOSE YOUR OWN GRIM GRUESOME STORY**

**3. HOLD A VIKING FEAST**

*please also visit*

***[www.grimgruesome.com](http://www.grimgruesome.com)***

*for more activities,*

*including wordsearch, puzzles, quizzes, board games  
and Viking history project work for schools*

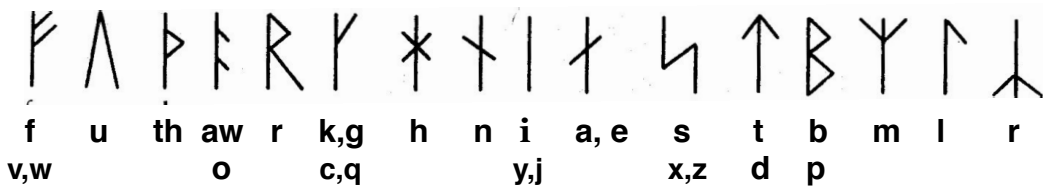
# MAKE A VIKING RUNE-STONE

## about Grim Gruesome

During the Viking Age, rune-stones were erected to record important events and to honour special people.

A rune-stone was a large, upright boulder set in a public place – for example by the side of a road, or in front of a farm. Writing, complex patterns and pictures were carved on it using a sharp knife or similar tool. Some rune-stones were huge, and decorated with brightly coloured paint: usually red for the lettering, but also brown, blue, black and white.

The Vikings wrote using the runic alphabet. It only had 16 letters, so some letters were used for several different sounds. The symbol : was inserted between each word. There were several different versions, so you might see it looking slightly different in some books or websites.



The messages carved on rune-stones were short, cryptic and often poetic. They recorded men's and women's lives, deaths, properties and deeds.

Here are some real rune-stones from the Viking Age:



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## TO MAKE YOUR OWN RUNE-STONE

- Either: use a sheet of paper; or make a 3-D model using paper maché (in which case, ensure the bottom is flat so it can stand upright).
- Paint the surface grey.
- On scrap paper, practice drawing a pattern, like the ones above. Then copy it onto the rune-stone.
- Compose a very short message about Grim Gruesome. This should describe something he did or what happened to him in one of the books about him.
- Use the runic alphabet to write the same message in rune letters.
- Copy the message onto the rune-stone, writing it inside the lines of the pattern. Draft it in pencil first, then go over it in red felt-tip, ink or paint. Colour the pattern in brown, blue, black and white.



# MAKE UP YOUR OWN GRIM GRUESOME STORY



## To begin the activity:

Get the children to sit in a circle, each with paper and pencil.

Discuss the following:

- Which Viking country or kingdom will the story be set in? (The Grim Gruesome books are variously set in Norway, York, the Scottish Orkney Islands and Iceland)
- What is the main girl in the story called? What does she look like? What sort of person is she?
- What is the main boy in the story called? What does he look like? What sort of person is he?
- What disguise will Grim Gruesome appear in?
- How will he trap his victims?
- Who will help the children to escape Grim Gruesome?
- Are there any other characters in the story?

As you agree the answer to each question, get all the children to write it down. They can then refer to these notes as they develop the story.

## To tell the story:

Choose a confident child. Ask her to make up the beginning of a story about Grim Gruesome: just a couple of sentences, to set the scene – then tell her to stop.

Moving clockwise round the circle, let the next child add his own contribution to the story, and then the next one and so on.

Help the children to make the story develop in the following way:

- Grim Gruesome appears in disguise
- Two children unwittingly fall into his trap
- The children discover they have been trapped by the famous villain
- They work out a way to escape him, with help from other characters
- There is a big sword fight
- Grim Gruesome is destroyed, by his own carelessness or stupidity.

The children should refer to their notes to remind themselves of names and other details.

As the story develops, each child should try to stop on a cliff-hanger, which the next child then has to resolve.

# HOLD A VIKING FEAST

*Get the children to invite family and friends to a Viking feast -  
and then entertain them with Grim Gruesome story telling!*

## **INVITATIONS**

- Make cards shaped like a rune-stone (see activity above).
- Tell the children to write their invitation in spiky letters like runes. These should be all straight lines - no curves.
- A Viking-style message could read like this:

“(name of child) MADE THESE RUNES!  
MAY THE ONE WHO READS THEM COME TO OUR VIKING FEAST.  
(Give date, time and location)”

## **TURN YOUR BOOK CLUB MEETING ROOM INTO A VIKING HALL**

A classroom, hall or other venue, can easily be made to resemble a Viking longhouse. For inspiration, use this photo of inside a reconstructed Viking farmhouse in Iceland.

Push all the furniture out of the way, to make a large empty space.



Now bring all the benches or chairs into the space and arrange them in two long lines of seats, with enough space to walk between them.

If you are using chairs, the two rows should be facing. Cover the seats with cushions rugs or throws.

In the centre of the ‘Viking hall’, make a model of an open fireplace as follows:

- Mark out the edge of the hearth with bricks, stones, play-bricks or similar
- Fill this with a criss-cross arrangement of twigs and larger pieces of wood
- Use coloured and metallic gold paper to model the flames

Set up a table at one end of your ‘farmhouse’ for the food.

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## MAKE VIKING COSTUMES

The Book Group children could all dress up as Vikings. Here are some simple ideas:

### Girls



- Wear an ankle-length dress
- Use crepe-paper to make a colourful apron to wear over this
- Make two large, oval brooches out of cardboard and safety pins, decorate with Viking patterns and and pin them onto the apron, just below the shoulders.
- Hang trinkets and useful objects from the brooches, eg. nail-file, needle case.
- Drape strings of colourful beads between the brooches.



### Boys



- Wear an outside t-shirt as a tunic
- Decorate it round the edges with coloured braid
- Wear the tunic over any long trousers
- Wear a leather belt round the waist
- Use scrap materials to make:
  - a large leather purse
  - a sword scabbardand fix these onto the belt.



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## **FOOD**

The following foods and drinks were all commonly consumed during the Viking Age. Use your imagination to turn them into a feast-like spread!

- All kinds of meat, both fresh and smoked
- All kinds of fish: fresh, smoked and pickled
- Bread - flat-bread only
- hazelnuts, plums, apples, pears, blackberries, cherries, blueberries
- carrots, onions, peas, beans, cabbage, radishes
- yoghurt, cheese, butter
- eggs
- dulse (seaweed)
- honey
- milk, water



## **STORY TELLING**

This was an important part of any Viking feast.

Once your guests have eaten their fill, get them to sit comfortably around your model fire.

Then get the Book Group children to take turns to do some Grim Gruesome story telling.



This could consist of one or more of the following:

- Reading aloud short, favourite extracts from one of the books
- Reciting a short summary of what happens in one of the stories (*prepared beforehand*)
- Reading out a new Grim Gruesome story, composed by the group (*prepared beforehand*)