

VOLCANO TEACHING IDEAS *and* VIKING TEACHING IDEAS

with

GRIM GRUESOME VIKING VILLAIN

THE RINGS OF DOOM



THE RINGS OF DOOM is an exciting and entertaining historical novel for 7 - 11 year olds.

- ◆ Ideal for a **CLASS VOLCANOES PROJECT** – vividly set in Iceland with its landscape of volcanoes, hot springs, boiling mud-pools and other enthralling geothermal activity. Readers witness a volcanic eruption and its aftermath, and experience a dramatic journey through the Icelandic lava desert.
- ◆ Ideal for a **CLASS VIKINGS PROJECT** – authentically set in the Viking Age, the story is crammed with fascinating detail about their daily life: food, houses, travel, games and more.

It forms part of the series **Grim Gruesome Viking Villain**. However each title in the series works as a ‘stand alone’ novel, so it is not necessary to read the other Grim Gruesome books first.

This leaflet shows how reading this novel with your class could inspire some really stimulating project work. For more information and activity ideas, including a downloadable leaflet for children about **LIFE FOR VIKING KIDS**, please go to www.grimgruesome.com

TOPICS COVERED

VOLCANO PROJECT WORK

Primary Science and Geography

	<u>Page</u>
Iceland: a volcanic island	2
A volcanic landscape	3
What happens when a volcano erupts?	4
Living amongst volcanoes	5

VIKINGS PROJECT WORK

Primary History and English

Viking settlers in Iceland	6
A Viking farmhouse	7
Travel in Viking Iceland	8
Viking storytellers	9
Resources for teachers	10

Volcanoes Teaching Ideas and Project Work

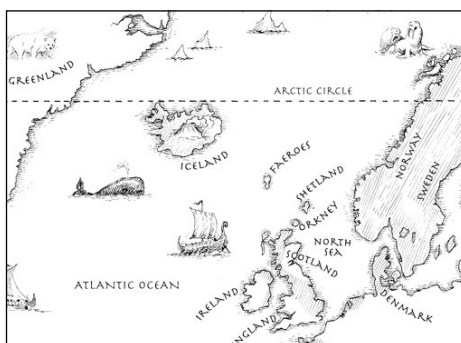
PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY: Where places are, what they are like and why

ICELAND: A VOLCANIC ISLAND

See descriptions throughout *The Rings of Doom*

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ Iceland is an island in the north Atlantic Ocean, just below the Arctic Circle. Its closest neighbours are: Greenland, 285 km (177 miles) away; the Faeroe Islands, 420 km (261 miles) away; Scotland, 800 km (500 miles) away; and Norway 970 km (600 miles) away. It stretches c. 500 km (311 miles) west to east, and c. 300 km (186 miles) north to south. It is slightly bigger than Ireland.
- ◆ Iceland is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, $\frac{3}{5}$ of it being uninhabitable wilderness. This comprises huge ice-caps, plateaux, mountains and deserts of lava, rock, stone and sand. The coast is mostly rocky and mountainous and heavily indented with deep, narrow fjords, though there are large areas of sand on the south coast. There are few trees, but it is rich in wild flowers and birds. The Viking Age population was c. 60,000. Today it is c. 318,000.
- ◆ Since the Viking Age, farmers have raised livestock on fertile land around the fjords, valleys and coastal lowlands. 'Salmon Valley' in *The Rings of Doom* was inspired by the broad valleys running inland from the north coast. There are 10 real places called Salmon Valley (*Laxárdalur*) shown on modern maps of Iceland.
- ◆ Icelandic weather is constantly changing. Summers are cool and winters are cold and snowy but not extreme. From early May to the end of July there is permanent daylight or twilight. But winter days have only five hours of daylight from mid-November to the end of January.



TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Show children where Iceland is on a world map and its location in relation to the other main Viking lands (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Scotland, Orkney, Shetland, Faeroes and Greenland). Show them the Arctic Circle and explain its significance in terms of climate and daylight hours.
- ◆ Read out passages from *The Rings of Doom* that describe the varied Icelandic landscape. Get children to make notes about what they have learned from these. They could then search the internet for photos to match these descriptions, looking for both wilderness and farming areas.
- ◆ Get the children to work out the routes that ships had to take between Iceland and the other Viking lands.

Volcanoes Teaching Ideas and Project Work

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY + SCIENCE: Physical processes. Changing materials. Solids, liquids + gases

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A VOLCANO ERUPTS

See especially *The Rings of Doom* chapters 2 - 4 and page 51.

INTERESTING FACTS

The Eyjafjallajökull volcano in southern Iceland erupted in April and May 2010, with lesser activity continuing until October. Eye-witness accounts described:

- a thunderous, roaring noise, everything vibrating and the strong smell of sulphur (bad eggs)
- falls of volcanic ash darkening the air - initially like hailstones (pure glass or magma), later changing to fine dust
- torrents of melt-water unleashed as the eruption burst through the ice-cap, washing away roads and pouring into homes
- a huge evaporation cloud like a mushroom, over 6,000 metres high
- a layer of ash piling up higher and higher over the ground – in some places over 10 cm. thick – coating buildings and any animals left outside



As time went by:

- the ash turned hard once it got wet
- fall-outs of ash, dust and sand continued for 4 months after the eruption.
- However, within 2 months grass was growing through it. 6 months after the eruption, the crops turned out to be outstandingly good.
- For months afterwards, there was still ash blowing about in the wind and penetrating inside nearby houses. One Icelander reported: “sweeping the floors at least 3 times a day... ash stuck in [soft furnishings]...wiping the chairs with my hand before I sit down, shaking the bedclothes before I lay down... soles of my feet getting black...”

TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Read the children the description of the volcanic eruption in *The Rings of Doom*. Get them to make notes of everything that happens.
- ◆ Get them to look on the internet for photos and videos of the Icelandic Eyjafjallajökull eruption.
- ◆ Using their notes and their internet research, get them to make a list of all the solids, liquids and gases they can identify in a volcanic eruption.
- ◆ Using their notes and their internet research, Get them to imagine they are one of the characters in *The Rings of Doom*, and write an eyewitness account of the volcanic eruption.
- ◆ In the story, Magnus speculates that volcanic eruptions are caused by dwarfs working as blacksmiths inside the mountains and overheating their forges (page 110). Get the children to research the true causes of an eruption, and then to compose a speech in which they explain this in simple words to an ignorant Viking child.

Volcanoes Teaching Ideas and Project Work

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY: Why places are like they are. Environmental Change. Managing the environment

LIVING AMONGST VOLCANOES

See especially: *The Rings of Doom*, chapters 2 - 4, 21 - 25, 29, 32 - 39

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ In Viking times the hot pools were used for personal hygiene, washing clothes, cooking, relaxing and socialising.
- ◆ Today 90% of the Icelandic population get their heating and power from either geothermal or hydro-electric sources. Geothermal heat is also used for open air swimming pools and greenhouses.
- ◆ In 1104 the valley of Þjórsárdalur in southern Iceland was overwhelmed by the eruption of the volcano Hekla, completely engulfing the Viking Age farm of Stöng, and depopulating the previously fertile valley. The ruins have been excavated and preserved, and an authentic reconstruction of Stöng opened in 1977. For detailed information go to: www.thjodveldisbaer.is/en



Þjórsárdalur



reconstruction of Stöng farmhouse

TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Discuss with children the long-term aftermath of the volcanic eruption, as described in *The Rings of Doom*, and how the eruption changed the landscape.
- ◆ Get the children to look out for more information about the geothermal landscape as they read *The Rings of Doom*. This could include bathing in the hot springs, the petrified lava flow, clouds of steam, the layer of ash covering the farm and animals, and the final battle around the Fiery Holes. They could compete to find the greatest number of different features, and the most detailed description of any one of them.
- ◆ Discuss with children the pros and cons of living in a volcanic country, e.g.: lack of farming land, danger of eruptions and floods, environmental-friendly heating from geothermal power, natural hot springs for bathing.

Viking Teaching Ideas and Project Work

PRIMARY HISTORY: *Viking Settlers*

VIKING SETTLERS IN ICELAND

See descriptions throughout *The Rings of Doom*

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ Iceland was virtually uninhabited until the late 9th Century and had no indigenous population. Before the Vikings settled there, a small number of Irish hermit-monks are believed to have migrated there in search of solitude
- ◆ Around the year 874 a Norwegian Viking called Ingólfur Arnarson and his foster-brother Hjørleifur arrived on the south coast of Iceland, settling in the place that later became the country's capital, Reykjavik. Over the next 60 years they were followed by other migrants who brought dogs, cats, pigs, goats, sheep, cattle and horses, and gradually settled over the whole country. Most of them were Norwegians, seeking farmland and fleeing the oppressive rule of their King, Harold Fairhair (died c. 932). Others were Viking men who had previously lived in Ireland and the Scottish islands (Orkney, Shetland and the Hebrides), who brought wives and slaves of Celtic origin.
- ◆ The detailed story of the settlement of Iceland is told in a book called *Landnámabók* (The Book of Settlements), possibly dating from the 11th or 12th Century and based on oral traditions.
- ◆ The modern Icelandic language is very similar to the Old Norse spoken during the Viking Age.



TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Discuss with children what they have learned from *The Rings of Doom* about the practicalities of living in Iceland during the Viking Age. Would it make them want to emigrate there? What were the positive and negative aspects of it?
- ◆ Get them to imagine they are either Sigrid or Magnus, showing a new immigrant from Norway around Salmon Valley. Write an account of what they would tell them about (e.g. bathing in hot springs, the danger of volcanoes, where to find 'moss' in the mountains and what this can be used for, using animal dung for the cooking fire).

Viking Teaching Ideas and Project Work

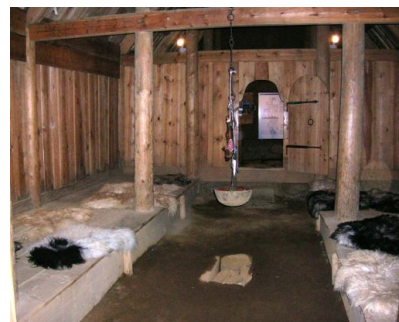
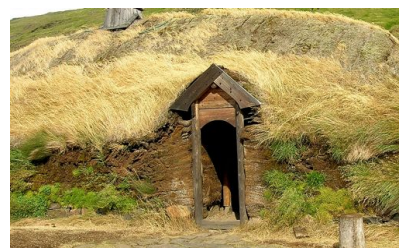
PRIMARY HISTORY: Daily life in the Viking Age

A VIKING FARMHOUSE

See especially *The Rings of Doom*, chapters 1 and 15 - 17

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ In Iceland there were few trees, so houses were built of stone, earth and turf. Inner walls were panelled with driftwood or imported timber.
- ◆ Farm houses were built long and narrow. Some had just one room. Others were divided by wooden partitions to provide a main room and several smaller ones. Broad benches were built out from the long walls for sitting and sleeping. In the middle of one bench there was often a 'high-seat' marked out by carved wooden pillars on either side, where the farmer and his wife sat. Rich families had built-in bed-cupboards or even separate sleeping rooms. Humbler people like Sigrid and Magnus's family, their servants and slaves slept on the wall-benches. For meals, stackable trestle tables were set up before the benches. Other furniture comprised stools, barrels and chests for storage, and a large upright weaving loom where the women worked.
- ◆ A fire in the centre of the room provided warmth and heat for cooking. Due to the lack of wood, the main fuel was dried animal dung.
- ◆ Outbuildings housed animals and stored grain, preserved foods and tools. In the dairy, the women processed butter, cheese, yoghurt and similar. Wealthy farms had their own smithy where iron tools were made and repaired, and a building containing a steam-bath (like a modern sauna).
- ◆ Viking Age Iceland was completely rural with no towns or villages. Everyone lived on isolated family farms where they kept sheep, cattle, goats, horses and pigs. The only crop was hay.



TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Use descriptions in *The Rings of Doom*, and the information above for a class discussion about Viking houses including:
 - furnishings
 - the need for an open fire for cooking and heating
 - the lack of electricity and how this affected daily life
 - sleeping arrangementsGet children to each make a list of the differences between a Viking house and a modern home, then compare and discuss.
- ◆ Get children to search in books and on the internet for pictures of reconstructed Viking farmhouses in Iceland. Using these, descriptions in *The Rings of Doom* and the previous class discussion, they could then each write an illustrated account of either Magnus's or Sigrid's home life.

Viking Teaching Ideas and Project Work

PRIMARY HISTORY: Daily life in the Viking Age

TRAVEL IN VIKING ICELAND

See references throughout *The Rings of Doom*

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ Because of the shortage of wood in Iceland, the Vikings there did not build many large ships (though they did use driftwood for inshore fishing boats). Even for journeys along coastal areas, they mainly travelled overland on horseback.
- ◆ Horses were the main form of long distance overland travel in the country. Despite large areas of wilderness, there was an extensive system of horse paths connecting settlements throughout the country. However, few of these were suitable for wheeled carts.
- ◆ Iceland has banned imported horses and cross-breeding since the 10th Century. Because of this, modern Icelandic horses are virtually the same as Viking Age horses. They are short and stocky, gentle, sturdy and hardy enough to withstand the harsh Icelandic climate and the roughest terrains. They also have a unusual gait: in addition to walking, trotting, cantering and galloping they can also do a smooth running-walk called *tölt*. Many farms in modern Iceland keep herds of horses.
- ◆ Viking Age people also walked long distances – often wearing out many pairs of shoes on the way – and travelled on skis in the winter.



TEACHING IDEAS

- ◆ Discuss with children the implications of having to travel everywhere either on foot or on horseback. From what they have learned from *The Rings of Doom*, did this restrict people's movements around Viking Iceland?
- ◆ Get the children to research Icelandic horses and their upkeep. Read them relevant passages about horses from *The Rings of Doom*. Have a class discussion about what Viking children had to do to look after and ride their horses. How does this compare to looking after and using a bicycle in modern times?
- ◆ Using the journeys in *The Rings of Doom* as inspiration, get the children to write about an imaginary journey through Viking Iceland, either on foot or on horseback, lasting several days, including where they would sleep overnight.

Viking Teaching Ideas and Project Work

PRIMARY HISTORY: Daily life in the Viking Age.

PRIMARY ENGLISH: Speaking + Listening. Writing to inform, explain, describe and entertain.

VIKING STORYTELLERS

INTERESTING FACTS

- ◆ The 10th Century Viking Icelanders were mostly illiterate, though some could read and write inscriptions in runes. However, oral storytelling was very popular, particularly about true local events. After the end of the Viking Age, during the 12th and 13th centuries, many of these old, stories were recorded in writing. Collectively they are known as *The Icelandic Sagas*
- ◆ The *Sagas* concern the lives, feuds and exploits of real-life farming families, chieftains and royals in Iceland and other Viking lands, during the 9th – 11th Centuries. Written in a down-to-earth style, they celebrate heroic virtues such as honour, fortitude and courage, with colourful women in important roles. Scholars regard the *Sagas* as one of the most developed forms of medieval literature. Some contain poetry within the main prose narrative and are laced with ironic humour. You can read digitised versions of the main sagas at: www.sagadb.org.
- ◆ The *Sagas* provide much important historical information about Viking Age society, culture and world views.
- ◆ The Scottish islands of Orkney have their own saga, *Orkneyingasaga*.
- ◆ *The Saga of the Greenlanders* and *Eirik the Red's Saga* together provide a fascinating account of the Vikings' settlement of Greenland, and of their voyages from there to north America some 500 years before Columbus. Both events have been verified by archaeological excavation.
- ◆ The Vikings' stories about the gods and goddesses of their old religion form the *Norse Myths*.



TEACHING IDEAS

Read the class the introductory paragraph of one of the sagas reproduced at www.sagadb.org for an idea of the traditional narrative style. Using *The Rings of Doom* as inspiration, get the children to:

- Jot down notes to compose their own 'sagas' about Sigrid and Magnus's adventure.
- Learn their sagas by heart then recite them aloud, following the oral tradition of the Viking Age.
- Turn their oral stories into written versions.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Of the numerous reference books available on Vikings, the following are especially useful for information about Viking Age life and culture, all written by experts in the field. Some are out of print now, but should be readily obtainable as second hand copies through www.amazon.co.uk or www.abebooks.co.uk; or order through your local library.

Foote, P.G & Wilson, D.M: ***The Viking Achievement*** (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1970)
Everything you could possibly want to know about the Vikings!

Graham-Campbell, James: ***The Viking World*** (London: Frances Lincoln 1980)
Lots of illustrations and an especially detailed section on Viking ships. Also good section on runes.

Graham-Campbell, James & Kidd, Dafydd: ***The Vikings*** (London: British Museum Publications 1980)
Produced to accompany an exhibition at the British Museum, so especially good on artefacts, with many high quality photos.

Simpson, Jacqueline: ***The Viking World*** (London: B. T. Batsford 1980)
Easy to read and informative, with plenty of illustrations.

The Sagas of Icelanders (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press 1997)
A collection of the major Sagas: the 'soap operas' of the Viking Age. Though not written down until several hundred years later, they claim to be based on true people and events of the Viking Age and offer fascinating insights into Viking life.

Byock, Jesse: ***Viking Age Iceland*** (London, Penguin, 2001)
A fascinating 'anthropological' study mainly based on information gleaned in the Icelandic Sagas.

For quick reference, try these two excellent, well researched websites:

www.hurstwic.org

www.vikinganswerlady.com

If you have used these ideas to produce some good project work on Volcanoes and Vikings and would like to share them with others through future updates on the Grim Gruesome website, do please email the author at: roskerven@hotmail.com

All illustrations © David Wyatt