To maximize the outcome of your visit, please see our suggestions for assignments that can activate students in the classroom, both before and after your visit. You will find them in the text, sorted per theme. Answers to questions put in the text are in cursive. Complementing this document is a Student handout with some of the assignments and questions included. The Student handout follows this document in disposition.

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About the Exhibition

*Vikings* challenges our picture of the Viking Age.

What do we really know about the people we call Vikings?

More than a thousand years ago Viking culture was advancing, and the Viking Age is today a mythical period in Scandinavia. But the world of the Vikings has changed as a result of the archaeological discoveries of recent years. Who were they, how did they live and what did their world look like? These are some of the questions you will find answers in the exhibition based on new archaeological findings and interaction with the museum visitors. Their story is told with the help of a large number of unique objects from the National Historical Museum in Stockholm, objects that have rarely been shown outside Scandinavia.

Nine different themes in the exhibition give insights into domestic life, death rituals, the significance of craft, the power of mythology and the symbolism of the Viking ships.
The exhibition is a joint venture between and produced by The Swedish History Museum in Sweden and MuseumsPartner in Austria.

LEAD MARKETING PARTNER:

PRODUCED BY:

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1. Meet The Vikings
2. Family Community
3. Homes, Colourful and Bustling
4. More than just Worship
5. The Living and the Dead
6. Norse Craftsmanship
7. Away on Business
8. Over the Sea
9. Viking Ship
WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN 750 AND 1100 IN WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS EUROPE?

The exhibition deals with the period between 750 and 1100 in Scandinavia. Contemporary events in other parts of Europe are used to act as comparison to the surrounding world of the Vikings.

Theme 1 - Europe under Construction

Traditionally the start of the “Viking Age” has been set to 8 June 793 when plundering Vikings attacked the monastery of Lindisfarne. But it is not altogether easy to date the “Viking Age”. Different time frames appear depending on the studied material. There is also clear evidence that contacts with the continent and the British Isles stem from a much earlier date than the Viking Age.

We know that Scandinavian travellers took home both goods and important information about conditions and opportunities in foreign countries, both in the east and west, many centuries before the “Viking Age”. During the Viking Age encounters sometimes grew into armed conflicts. The causes can to a large extent be traced to domestic politics in the realms of the Franks and in England.

Preparing your visit

1. Prepare your students by going through the historic period 750-1100 and focusing on events and remains in your own country and region. Could people in your area have had any contact with people from Scandinavia during that time? Could there be descendants of Vikings in your country?

After your visit

Discuss further with your students:

2. How can we know about people and events during the Viking Age, what are our sources? (Archaeological finds, scientific methods of analyses such as radiocarbon dating or DNA-testing, written sources from medieval times, contemporary eye witness accounts, comparative studies of sociology, ethnology, religion and history all give us knowledge about the Viking Age and the people living in that time.)

3. Are there any traces of Viking influence in your country, such as artifacts, sites, place names, stories or traditions?
Theme 2 - Meet the Vikings

We do not really know what the name “Viking” stood for. But we do know that the Vikings were not a national entity. The word “Viking” was used already during the Viking Age, sometimes with reference to things that people did: “being out as a “Viking” or “acting like a Viking”. At other times it seems to have referred to a person, or rather a person’s surname. In the exhibition we have chosen to define the Viking as a person from Scandinavia involved in plundering, trade or colonization. Ordinary people are referred to as norroenar or norroenir men, almost all of them being farmers or slaves. The Viking was commonly a man. Although there are a few examples, women, slaves (‘thralls’) and children were rarely Vikings.

Preparing your visit

1. A good way to start your studies of the time period the Viking Age and the people of that time is to discuss with your students what kind of preconceptions they have about Viking Age people. Depending on the age of your students or preferred pedagogical method, let them write, draw or tell about their thoughts and ideas. What did people living in the Viking age look like? How did they live their lives? Consider how many of your students that visualize a Viking as a male connected to violence. Why is that? Why are there so few women present in our preconceptions of the Viking Age? Take these questions with you into the exhibition.

2. Help your students orientate themselves in Viking Age geography. Use a map of Europe to discover the Viking “homelands” of Scandinavia. Of course, in those days the present day countries Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland hardly existed as kingdoms or nations yet. Viking societies consisted of villages and farms scattered across the countryside and the occasional larger town-like settlement. Try to find and mark on the map the island Gotland in the Baltic Sea and the small island Birka (Björkö) 50 km west of Stockholm, Sweden, in the Lake Mälaren.

After your visit

3. Discuss your students’ preconceptions of Viking Age people in light of what you have discovered during your visit. Which of their original views have been confirmed by your visit? Which have been challenged? Where do you think that the preconceptions that have been challenged by the visit originally came from? *(Perhaps from films, cartoons, books, computer games and other commercial channels.)*
Theme 3 - Family Community

MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FREE AND THE UNFREEd  
The Viking societies were peasant communities. Owning land was very important; it determined your social position, history and destiny. The large family was the basic community on the farm. Being a person meant first and foremost that you belonged to a family collective, with responsibility for the family’s actions. An individual’s social status was dependent on his/her position within the family.

The greatest divide was between those who were free and those who were not free. A free person was allowed to carry weapons and talk at the ‘Thing’ (a decision-making assembly, within a specific geographic area). An unfree person had, according to the wording of the law from the early Middle Ages, no rights at all.

WOMEN AND MEN HAD A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT ROLES  
Women ruled the household on the farm, which was the focal point of society. Contribution to production and reproduction by people with different roles was highly valued. But in the Icelandic sagas women appear to have acted in the background. The sagas tell us that the men would plough the fields and represent the family at the Thing. They would settle disputes, conflicts and trade with others. The men acted within society’s official sphere. Archaeology on the other hand, tells another story, which reveals that both men and women could be rich and powerful.

After your visit

1. Allow your students to imagine themselves living in the Viking Age. What kind of life would they have lived? What kind of position would they have had in society? What role would they like to have had?

2. Discuss together the different roles that women and men could have in the Viking Age. Make a comparison to our present-day society. What has changed? Is anything unchanged?
Theme 4 - Homes - Colourful and Bustling

THE DAILY LIFE A MULTICOLOURED AND ANIMATED MOSAIC

The domestic environment was colourful and anything but grey, colourless and harsh, as one might otherwise be led to believe. The well-situated people had ornaments of glossy bronze, weapons of burnished steel and artistically-ornamented combs that they wore together with their clothing.

Textile fragments from graves show that even in simple agrarian environments, not only wool but silk and linen too were available. Textiles were generally dyed with plant materials and dyes were based largely on regional flora. Pigment analyses of runes and pictorial stones reveal that these too were colourfully painted.

During/after your visit

1. Allow your students to work in couples comparing the practicalities of life on a Viking Age farm with living in a present-day home.

   Instead of chimney they had __________ (“a window” near the roof where the wind could carry the smoke out.)
   Instead of windows they had __________________________________________________________ (shutters)
   Instead of electrical light they had ____________________________________________________ (oil lamps)
   Instead of an electrical stove they had __________________________________________________ (a hearth with an open fire)
   Instead of insurance against thunder striking the house they had __________. (a Stone Age axe under the floor)
   Instead of white bread made of wheat they had bread made of __________________________________ (barley)
   Instead of concrete walls they had _____________________________________________________ (wattle and daub)
   Instead of a tin roof they had __________________________________________________________ (a roof made of reeds, straw, wood or turf)
   Instead of a supermarket they had ____________________________________________________ (to harvest, slaughter and hunt for their own food.
   Tools, clothes and equipment was crafted at home or traded for)
   Instead of ice-skates made of iron they had ______________________________________________ (ice-skates made of bone)
   Instead of matches they had ___________________________________________________________ (fire steel and flint)
   Instead of playing music on a stereo they ________________________________________________ (sang songs together)
   Instead of employees they had _________________________________________________________ (slaves)
   Instead of exclusive drinking glasses they more often had __________. (cups made of wood or drinking horns)
   Instead cutlery made of plastic or metal they had cutlery made of __________________________ (bone or wood)
   Instead of roman letters they had ______________________________________________________ (runic letters)
RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS
Visitors will learn how runes work and how to write words, names or a simple message in runes, and how they are connected to other letters, e.g. Latin

Preparing/after your visit
2. Use the rune key here to allow your students to practice using the runes. Each student can start by writing his/her name in runes. Also let them work in pairs constructing simple messages for their partner to decipher.
Theme 5 - More than Just Worship

RELIigious TRANSITION
During most of the Viking Age, people in Scandinavia were aware of two very different religious systems: the domestic Old Norse tradition and Christianity. The two systems seemed to have blended into a kind of hybrid, as can often be inferred from existing graves. Religion may not have been such a great watershed between people as it later became. Christ was, from the Viking point of view, not hard to accept; the crux was rather how his doctrine affected the everyday side of life. But by the end of the Viking Age, Christianity dominated in Scandinavia and by 1100 AD, it was the only official religion in Scandinavia.

THE OLD CUSTOM
The Old Norse tradition cannot be compared with a religion in the conventional Western sense of the word. Instead, the expression used in the sources is “forn sidr”, i.e. old custom. This old custom related to all aspects of life and death and consequently to a great deal more than just the worship of deities. But, there are no contemporary sources that describe people’s religious beliefs and customs. The most coherent report on religion in the Norse area was produced in 1220-30 by the Icelandic chief and poet Snorre Sturlisson in a document known as the prose Edda. According to Snorre, the supernatural world was populated by two different mythological beings: gods and giants.

Preparing/after your visit
1. Read some of Snorre Sturlisson’s mythological stories out loud to your students. You will find three of them in this document.

   a. Discuss with your students: In what ways did the Old Norse gods serve people during the Viking age? (Ensuring good harvest, protection against evil, success in battle, success in love and marriage, ensuring fertility and much more.)

   b. Why were these stories told by the people of the Viking Age? (To explain the world, life and death, the weather and seasons and more. Probably also for entertainment.)

   c. Do we tell similar stories today?

2. Find out together: Have the Old Norse gods given names to the days of the week in your language? Which gods have days named after them in the English or German language? (Day 2 is Tyr’s day, day 3 is Odin’s day, day 4 is Thor’s day and day 5 is Frigg’s day)

3. In other languages the gods of the Roman or Greek world have left traces in the names of the week. Find out together: Which gods can you discover in the weekday names in French, Italian or Spanish? Have these gods any similarities to the Old Norse gods?
Theme 6 - The Living and the Dead

THE BOAT BURIAL
On an interactive touch table a spectacular boat burial of the Viking Age can be excavated. Layer by layer, like an archaeologist, the visitors excavate the skeleton of the buried and discover rich accompaniments such as weapons, gaming pieces, household tools, animals and more. Photos of the artifacts can be enlarged and details examined. Short descriptions give information about the historical and archaeological background. Visitors discover that research is dependent on cooperation by taking part in an archaeological process of digging, finding and interpreting artifacts. In the end you can share your results with fellow archaeologists.

During /after your visit
1. This assignment requires pen and paper. Allow your students to work in pairs or small groups with the excavation at the multitouch table. Let each student choose one of the excavated finds to sketch and describe briefly in words. Then discuss their finds together:

   a. Why was this particular item important for the deceased person to take with him after death?
   b. How come the artifact has been preserved to our time? Are there any parts of the artifact missing? How come? (Artifacts made of metal, bone and stone preserve well in the ground. Wood usually decays, except when deposited in water or wet and muddy ground where it can be preserved.)
   c. What kind of object would be the equivalent to this artifact in our present time?

   After your visit
2. Discuss together: What kind of personal items would the student like to take with them in their hypothetical burial? Why those items?

GRAVES EXPRESS VARIOUS SYMBOLS AND MEANINGS
The dead continued to belong to the farm household and lived on, but in the mound or the mountain rather than in the house itself. Thus the cemeteries were living places near the family settlement and were used for many other purposes than burials. These ideas have a distinctly popular touch and are not mentioned in the aristocratic Edda and Old Norse poetic literature. In the poetic Edda we meet instead the aristocratic kingdoms of the dead, the most famous of which is Valhall. Valhall is Odin’s hall, where he receives half the fallen warriors selected by the Valkyries.

INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVE MENTALITY
In contrast to the Christian approach, which was unequivocally individualistic, Old Norse mentality was more centered on the collective. You could count on a good life in the hereafter if, in this life, you embraced values that benefited your own family, kinship or the warrior collective. As regards the warrior aristocracy, an honourable death on the battlefield gave credit while a natural death on the farm was anything but glorious.
After your visit
3. In the exhibition four realms of the dead are presented: Valhalla, Folkvagn, the Christian Paradise and Hel. Discuss together:

a. Who in Viking society had the right to journey to the war-god Odin’s dwelling, Valhalla, after death? *(Half of all male warriors who died in battle).*

b. Who would journey to Folkvagn, the dwelling of Freyja - the goddess of both love and war? *(The other half of the warriors who died in battle.)*

c. Who in society would journey to Hel? *(Women, children and men who have died of old age or decease).*

d. Who had the right to end up in the Christian Paradise? *(All Christians - men, women and children).*

4. Perform an exercise of values and opinions called 4 corners:
Allow your students to imagine living in the Viking age. Which realm of the dead would they most like to end up in?

Use a room/an area for the exercise where you can move about freely. Name the four corners of the room/area as 1. Valhall, 2. Hel, 3. Folkvagn and 4. Paradise.

Assign the students to choose a corner. Then discuss their choices. Why have they chosen one realm and disregarded the others? Which realm is most popular in the class-room? Which realm do they think would have been more preferred by the people of the Viking Age?

THE BOARD GAME HNEFATAFL
One Viking Age board game is called Hnefatafl. Hnefatafl was not just for passing the time, but was used to influence the fate of the players. Original gaming pieces are on display nearby in the exhibition. Visitors are encouraged to learn the rules and to play the game on a touch screen. They will learn that this aristocratic board game is based on military strategy and they will need to cooperate by playing this fun game with a partner.

Preparing/after your visit
5. Teach your students the game Hnefatafl. Construct a gaming board by drawing it on a piece of paper or cardboard. Use buttons or stones in two colours as gaming pieces.
HNEFATAFL – KINGS TABLE

Hnefatafl is for two players. To play it you need 16 white counters, 8 black ones and a king.

In Hnefatafl the object is for a king, aided by their warriors (black counters), to escape from their castle, which is besieged by the enemy (white counters).

The centre square is the royal castle and the four corner squares are castles to which the king must escape. All the pieces in the game can be moved any number of squares at once in a straight line (not diagonally).

The game begins with the pieces arranged like this (fig. 1).

1. The king’s side has first move, and then the players take it in turns.

2. A piece is captured if the opponent manages to get one counter on each side of it (in a straight line). (fig 2) The captured piece is then removed from the board.

3. The king is captured if surrounded on all four sides by white counters, (fig 3) or if driven to the edge of the board and surrounded by three white counters. The king is also captured if driven to the centre-square castle (fig 4) or to one of the four camps of the white enemies to which nobody is allowed to return or to pass through (fig 5).

4. If the king is captured, white is the winner. If the king gains the security of a corner castle, black wins.

Let battle commence!

Figure 1: Where to place the pieces.

Figure 2: The black piece is captured.

Figure 3: The king is surrounded by the enemy.

Figure 4: The king is surrounded with the help of the centre square.

Figure 5: The king is surrounded with the help of two camp squares.
Theme 7 - Norse Craftsmanship

CRAFTSPERSONS, POLYVALENT AND SKILLFUL

A typical element of craftsmanship was the ability to transform finished products acquired from foreign countries. Such objects originally had a certain function, but assumed a different significance in Viking Age culture. Craft, especially metal craft, had metaphysical and mythological significance. It is stated in Völvan’s Prophecy that the Aesir/gods forged metal. Forging in this context means creating or making. The gods were regarded as craftspersons in one sense or another and refinement of metal as a way of changing the world was created by the gods. For this reason craftspersons also had to master the rituals that controlled certain forces in the world.

THE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Viking craftspersons used many different materials like textiles, metal (wrought iron, steel and precious metal), wood, bone and horn, leather, glass and pottery. They were skilful and had great knowledge when it came to the best way of working up their raw material. Their craft was the result of ancient learning and traditions.

After your visit

1. Allow your students to answer the questions below individually and then to discuss their answers in pairs:
   a. What is your favourite or most important personal item?
   b. Where is it made?
   c. Who has made it?
   d. Was there an equivalent of your item in the Viking Age? If so, where would that have been made and who would have made it, do you think?
   e. If there was no equivalent of your item in the Viking Age, was there a similar type of thing?

2. Discuss together: personal items can influence a person’s status in society, both in the present and in the past. In the Viking Age men and women could achieve high status by owning weapons (men) or keys (women). What kind of personal items can give higher status for men and women today?
Theme 8 - Away on Business

THE TRADING HUB
Goods such as silver, wax, fur, glass, beads, and humans were exchanged in the trading hubs of the Viking Age. Visitors will learn that the trading routes were more complex than purely export-import in two directions and that a substantial amount of the traded goods is not preserved today. A disc with pictures, which can be turned around a display case, invites the visitor to search for important goods.

Preparing/after your visit
1. Discuss with your students:
   a. Why does trade between people arise?
   b. Why are some trading goods more in demand than others?
   c. Why are some things considered to be luxury items and others not?

2. Discuss:
   a. Is there slave trade being conducted in the world today? (*Compare with trafficking of women, child labour, child soldiers. Look up the UN Child Convention*)
   b. If so, who are the sellers of these slaves?
   c. For what reasons?
   d. Who are the buyers?
   e. Why are they buying?

3. Discuss:
   a. What is the meaning of freedom, according to your students?
   b. What does a person living in our present time need to be free?
   c. What would a person living in the Viking Age need?
   d. Are the conditions of freedom the same in different time periods?
Theme 9 - Over the Sea

SHIPS – THE KEY TO A VIKING JOURNEY
The Vikings were capable of navigating the seas without instruments and navigation calculations. Instead, they used knowledge about winds, tidal currents, weather phenomena and travelling times accumulated by many generations of ancestors. Ships were the key to the Vikings’ journeys over the seas and a strong symbolic element of the age, and this is also borne out by the many kennings – poetic paraphrases – for ships that occur in Norse poetic literature. Seahorse, Wavehorse, Sailhorse and Seaskis are some common examples.

EXPEDITION – TRADING – LOOTING – COLONIZATION – SHIPWRECK
Even if contacts with the continent occurred earlier, the world of the Scandinavians expanded considerably during the Viking Age. The Viking Age offered plenty of scope for cultural and new influences. Riches and exclusive articles such as luxury objects, cloth and clothing, but perhaps most of all silver, flowed into Scandinavia

We do not know how much derived from legitimate trade and how much from plundering. Both activities were probably closely interconnected. We should also remember that not all journeys ended as planned. There is no doubt that there were many shipwrecks, especially in the open sea.

The building of a Viking Age ship required a vast amount of materials. Wood was used in especially large quantities. Using a touch screen, the visitors are encouraged to collect the necessary resources and build a ship. They learn, among other things, how many trees had to be cut, the quantity of iron needed for thousands of ship rivets, and the amount of flax or wool that was used for the sail. They will learn that environmental issues were important during the Viking Age and their life-style had an enormous impact on the environment.

During/After your visit
1. Use the maps in the exhibition to discover where in the world the Vikings went:
   (From Scandinavia eastwards: Russia, Black Sea, Konstantinopel (Istanbul), Caspian Sea.
   Westwards: Western Europe, British Isles, Holland, France.
   Northwards: Iceland, Greenland, New Foundland (called Vinland).
   Southwards: Spain, North Africa.)

2. Discuss together:
   a. Why did people during the Viking Age go abroad on boats over stormy seas and on dangerous rivers?
      (Several reasons: to trade, to plunder, to go for an adventure and earn experience and higher status when coming back and to colonise in search for new land to farm)
   b. Why do we go abroad today?
   c. Do we have the same reasons to travel today as people did during the Viking Age?)
THE HELMET WITHOUT HORN

Toward the end of the exhibition, the most widely known stereotype of the Viking Age is encountered: the helmet with horns. A lever with two horns is positioned in front of a reconstruction of a Viking Age helmet without horns. Through the up and down motion of the lever, visitors can project the cliché of the horns as a shadow on the wall. It will then automatically be removed and leave the helmet without horns. The visitor will learn that this stereotype was created as late as the 19th century, and how history can be misused.

After your visit

1. Allow your students to discuss together, in small groups or pairs:
   1a. What separates your lives from those of young people in the Viking Age? Make a list of things.
   1b. Are there any things that you would have in common with young people in the Viking Age? Try to think of at least 3 things.

2. Would your students like to live in the Viking Age? Perform an exercise of values and opinions called The line, to discuss your students opinions on what their lives would be like in the Viking Age:

   Make a line on the floor of the class-room, perhaps with a piece of string. One end of it represents the statement: I would prefer living in the Viking Age! The other end represents the statement: I would prefer living in our present time!

   Allow your students to choose a position on the line that illustrates their opinion. Let them motivate their positions and opinions on the matter.

3. Allow your students to discuss in pairs:
   a. Is there one true interpretation of history?
   b. Who interprets history for your students?

4. Choose an event that he whole class has experienced. It can be a party, a trip, a visit to a museum or something else. Let each pair discuss the event to see if they have the same experiences, memories and thoughts on the event. If they discover that they don’t, urge them to consider why. How come two people have experienced the same event differently? Can this happen also when it comes to important historical events? If that is the case, can history be used, and misused by people for their own purposes?

5. Discuss together:
   a. Which are the most famous historical events that have occurred in your country that you need to learn about in school?
   b. Who has chosen what you should learn in history-class? Why have those particular events been chosen?
6. Perform an exercise of values and opinions: 4 corners. Use a room/an area for the exercise where you can move about freely. Name the four corners of the room/area as:


Ask your students through what medium they prefer to learn new things. Allow them to choose a corner and then motivate their choice. Discuss what advantages the different media have when it comes to learning.

7. Perform an exercise of values and opinions: 4 corners. Use a room/an area for the exercise where you can move about freely. Name the four corners of the room/area as:

1. Financial development, 2. Environmental issues, 3. People’s identity connected to religion, 4. People’s identity connected to national history.

Ask your students what they believe will have most consequence when it comes to the future of humanity. Allow them to choose a corner and then motivate their choice.

This exercise is to allow the students to consider the importance of different aspects of human life when it comes to deciding the future.
Skadi Chooses Feet

Nobody remembers any more where the great world tree, Yggdrasil, grows. Nobody remembers where the gods and the giants live. Only tales of them remain. The tales have been told a thousand times and changed a thousand times. Sometimes people have added things, sometimes they have taken away. One of the tales goes something like this:

Skadi the Giant is angry. She is as angry as only a giant can be. She puts on her skis and throws her bow over her shoulder. Far away in the distance, she sees the Rainbow Bridge leading up to Asgard where the gods live. That is where she’s headed. The gods have killed Skadi’s father, Thiazi the Giant. And now she wants vengeance.

She spits in the snow and sets off. First she skis over the snow-covered mountains, then she goes on foot through dark forests and along the black water. Not once does Skadi stop to rest - because she is really angry.

The gods stand at the wall of Asgard and see how the giant comes stomping up the Rainbow Bridge. They know that trouble is brewing. The god of thunder, Thor, offers to strike Skadi in the head with his hammer, but Odin, the god who rules, thinks otherwise.

When Skadi enters Asgard, she shakes the snow from her hair and draws the bow.

“Now you’re all done for”, she says as she aims at the gods, one after the other.

Odin takes a step forward. He wears a black hat and a long cape. Skadi has heard that Odin is the oldest and wisest of all the gods. The brim of his hat shadows Odin’s face, but Skadi can clearly see him smiling.

“What good will shooting at us do?” he asks.

“I want vengeance, that’s what we giants do when somebody takes one of our own!” answers Skadi.

“Yes, it was a pity about your father,” says Odin. “But maybe we can solve this in a different way for a change.”

Then the goddess Freyja makes a suggestion. She is tired of the fighting and arguing, but she knows all about love.

“You can marry one of the gods,” she says to Skadi.

The other gods look at Freyja in amazement. A god and a giant? Get married?

“I don’t want to get married!” roars Skadi.

“You can at least take a look around? Perhaps one of us is right for you,” says Odin who thinks Freyja’s idea is very good.

“What use is a god to me?” Skadi hisses.

But even though you can hear the anger in her voice, she lowers her bow. She looks at Odin and shudders. He’s tall and skinny and his cape is dusty. The god of thunder, Thor, smells like goat. You can smell it from miles away. Skadi thinks they are all ugly. Not at all like the giants at home.

But then she sees Baldr. His hair is long and white as snow and his eyes are the colour of the blue mountain glaciers back home.
“I’ll take him there,” says Skadi, gesturing towards Baldr.

“You can’t choose based on looks,” says Freyja. “Love is not so easy.” “You must choose based on the feet.”

The gods are amused by Freyja’s idea and they set up a large canvas between two trees. Then they hide behind the canvas and take off their shoes. Skadi can only see a long line of feet. Feet with unclipped nails, feet with bunions and dirt between the toes, feet with long toes, feet with short toes. But amongst the feet is a pair that are beautiful and freshly washed.

“I’ll take Baldr,” says Skadi in a decisive voice as she points towards the nice feet.

“You have made your choice,” says Freyja, “and you may not change your mind.”

But those feet do not belong to Baldr. Who on earth could believe that Baldr has unclipped toenails? The feet that Skadi pointed to belong to Njord, the god of the sea. He loves to wade along the beach, which is why his feet are so clean and beautiful.

Njord and Skadi look at each other, curiously. Something strange starts to happen. The giant and the god fall in love. They kiss each other and Skadi forgets both the argument and Baldr.

Skadi goes to live with Njord. His house is on a cliff by the sea. Njord proudly shows her everything he owns. Skadi looks around, but all she sees is water. It smells of seaweed. And the house is covered in seagull poo. Njord cooks for her, a fat, shimmering salmon that he has fished out of the sea. Skadi eats, but the fish bones stick between her teeth, leaving her in a bad mood. At night time, the seagulls screech so loudly that she cannot sleep. After nine nights with no sleep, Skadi has had enough. She cries and giant tears roll down her cheeks.

“I miss home, I want to go back to my snow and my mountains” cries Skadi and her voice echoes over the sea.

“Not a problem,” says Nord. “We’ll move to your home then. If you love snow, then so do I.”

Although he can’t be entirely sure of course, as he has never seen snow before. Still, together they travel to the giants’ world, and he goes to live with Skadi in her house on the top of the mountain. Now Skadi is happy. During the days, she goes skiing and hunting. It is so nice to have a god waiting at home for her. In the evenings, Skadi makes a warming rabbit soup for Njord. But he has no appetite. He can no longer walk barefoot and the skis chafe his beautiful feet. At night time, the wolves howl so loudly that he cannot sleep. After nine nights with no sleep, Njord has had enough. Now he is the one who is homesick. Skadi understands.

It is a sad day when Njord packs his bags and leaves the mountain for his home by the sea. He turns around many times and waves to Skadi until she can no longer be seen.

And so, Skadi lives up in the mountains and Njord by the sea. This is how it will be for the rest of the gods and the giants’ time. In the evenings darkness descends over mountain and sea. By the sea, Njord goes into his house and dries his feet by the fire. Up in the mountains, Skadi takes off her skis and goes into her house. Each in their own way. Each where they are the happiest. Maybe they think about each other. Maybe they miss each other sometimes.

What do you think?
Idun’s Apples

This is a tale, thousands of years old. Maybe more. It has been told by different people in different ways. It has been told so many times that nobody knows just what it was like in the beginning.

High up in the crown of Yggdrasil - the World Tree - there is a kingdom named Asgard. There, amongst the clouds and the rustling leaves, live the gods. If you have ever been there, you know that the gods are young and strong, even though they are as old as time. They never grey, wrinkle or weaken as we humans do when we grow old. The years come and go - hundreds, thousands of years - but the gods have eternal youth. Do you know why? It’s because of Idun’s apples you see.

Idun is a goddess. You can recognise her from the beautiful box she always carries. It looks like a little chest. She never puts the box down, for inside she keeps the most valuable thing in the whole world: Her apples. They shimmer with gold. They are juicy and refreshing. There are no better apples. But what is most remarkable about the apples is not their taste, nor that they are made of gold. Idun’s apples hold a power, a power that gives eternal youth to those who eat them.

Idun pays close attention to her apples. No god may eat too many, nor may any of the gods’ children taste them. Because the more apples you eat, the younger you become. So Idun is strict. The gods are allowed one apple a day, no more, no less.

When Idun gives away one apple, another one soon appears in her box. Like magic. And magic is quite a common thing in the world of the gods.

Of course, it’s not only the gods who live in Yggdrasil... Further down the branches, far from Asgard, lies Utgard. This is where the giants live. And the giants also want Idun’s apples. They want eternal youth and to be strong, just like the gods. But Idun says no. Only the gods may eat her apples.

One of the giants, named Thiazi, paces around in Utgard, wondering how to get hold of Idun’s apples. Then one day he has his chance. It all starts with an argument with Loki. In reality, Loki is also a giant but he looks like a god and lives in Asgard. Loki is often involved in arguments and mischief. The gods have become used to him doing silly things and getting into trouble. Now Loki does something really stupid. To make friends with Thiazi again, he promises to kidnap Idun and take the apples to give them to the giant. Afterwards, he regrets what he has said – but what’s done is done and he must keep his promise.

For Thiazi to get to Idun, she must first leave Asgard. She never usually does. So Loki goes to Idun and lies, saying that he has seen a tree filled with golden fruits in a large forest outside of Asgard. He convinces her to come with him to the tree and compare the fruits with her apples.

“Perhaps the fruits in this tree have the same magical powers as your apples”, says Loki.
Idun goes along with Loki. Side by side they leave Asgard for the large forest outside. The giant is prepared. He wears a cloak of eagle feathers and circles high amongst the clouds like a bird of prey, looking for Idun and Loki. He waits for just the right moment. Then everything happens at once. Thiazi dives towards Idun so the wind howls through the wings, he grabs both Idun and the box with his giant talons, flaps his wings powerfully and takes off again. Idun screams and hits Thiazi with the box, causing the feathers to fly. Loki stays put and watches them rise through the sky until they are just a little, flickering speck. A speckled feather floats down and lands on the grass just before the tip of Loki’s shoe. He hesitates, but bends down and picks up the feather. For one moment, the world stands still and everything becomes absolutely quiet.

As soon as Idun is gone, the gods start to change. Not so much at first... A grey hair appears in Thor’s beard. Freyja finds a little wrinkle between her eyes. A bitterly cold gust of wind blows through Yggdrasil’s crown. Everything becomes a speck greyer and more melancholy. At first, nobody knows what has happened. But the guard of Asgard soon realises that he saw Loki and Idun walking out of Asgard. And he clearly remembers Idun carrying her box. The gods go to Loki. One has backache, another is losing his hair and a third is starting to lose her hearing. Now that Idun is gone, they are getting older - fast. Everyone is furious at Loki. Loki, always that Loki!

Loki sweats and shivers at the same time. He explains that this is not a problem at all. If only Freyja, one of the goddesses, will lend him her cloak of falcon feathers he can bring back Idun and the apples in a flash. He boasts of how it will be such a joy to head to Utgard. Freyja fetches the cloak and lays it before his feet. Loki forces himself into the beak and the wings and flies away. He’s is a little unsteady, but soon Loki flies high above the whole world. He gazes over Yggdrasil and sees dark thickets and black waters. There lies Utgard, the world of the giants. He sees Thiazi’s court, but not the giant himself. The beak feels dry and the wings chafe. Dare he land? Yes, he does.

It’s not easy, but Loki finally opens the door to Thiazi’s house and enters. His talons scrape against the floor. There, sitting in the darkness, is Idun. She is angry. She holds the box in her arms and some golden apple cores shimmer in the shadows. Loki explains who he is and asks forgiveness for what he has done. He treads around the room with nervous steps and his voice sounds strange and croaky underneath the beak. Idun notices his small bird legs and the unsteady wings.

“Are you going to turn me into a nut?” she asks. “And carry me home to Asgard in your beak?”

Loki nods.

“You are not allowed to swallow me!” says Idun firmly.

Loki promises.

And so it was. Loki transforms Idun and the box into a little brown hazelnut. He takes her in his beak and flies away from Utgard, towards the light and up towards the top of Yggdrasil. But the danger is not yet over. The giant Thiazi has seen them and now he is angry. He throws on his eagle cloak and takes off after Loki and Idun. He flies faster than the wind.
In Asgard, the gods see Loki and the frightful eagle flying rapidly through the sky. They quickly prepare a great fire and just as Loki reaches the ground and Thiazi is about to land, they set it ablaze. The hot flames rise and scorch the feathers off the giant, and he falls right into the bonfire with a crash. Loki removes the falcon cape and turns Idun back to her original form. The gods silently stand around the bonfire until Thiazi the Giant is no longer there.

“Well then”, says Idun as she opens her box. “Does anyone fancy an apple?”

**Thor’s Catch**

There are lots of tales of Thor’s adventures. They have been told by many people, each in a different way. Now you are going to hear the story of when Thor went fishing. Just like all fishing stories, each time it is told it changes a little bit.

Thor is the god of thunder. He is the one who creates thunder and lightning as he rides his chariot through the skies and swings his giant hammer. Sometimes, Thor grows tired of making thunder. When this happens, he wants to have adventures and fight with giants and trolls. The giants and the trolls live in Utgard. They can be terrifying and dangerous. But the most dangerous thing in the world is the sea snake Jormungand. Thor would really like to get a closer look at him.

When Jormungand was young, he lived in Asgard with the gods. But the gods grew weary of tripping over the little slippery snake. They also thought he had a nasty stare. He didn’t look friendly. So Odin, the god who rules over Asgard threw the snake into the great sea so he wouldn’t have to look at him anymore. And so now Jormungand lives at the bottom of the sea, feeling cross. He’s not so little any more. He has grown large and long, and now he stretches around the whole world. He lies, chewing on his tail, wondering how he can best take revenge on the gods.

Thor often boasts of how one day, he will catch the awful Jormungand.

“We know that you have fought giants and trolls”, the gods say. “But how do you suppose you will take on a snake, as big as the whole world?”

“No problem,” says Thor. “I have my hammer. And I have my belt of strength”.

When Thor puts on his belt, he becomes twice as strong.

“Whatsoever you say Thor,” the gods respond, “we’ll see about that.”

“I’ll show them that I can catch Jormungand alright,” Thor thinks to himself.

But he needs a boat. He then remembers Hymir the Giant, who lives by the sea in Utgard. The giant has a good, stable boat. He decides to go there. But before he sets off, he disguises himself as a little boy so the giant will not recognise him. It is for the best, because the giants aren’t so keen on Thor after all the times he has travelled to Utgard and fought with them.
When Thor reaches Utgard, Hymir is down on the beach, pottering about with his boat.
   “What are you doing?” Thor asks, in his most boyish voice.

Hymir glares at the boy. His red hair seems familiar, but to think that this little pipsqueak is Thor, well that would be impossible.
   Surly, he says “I’m going fishing.”
   “May I come with you?” asks Thor, tilting his head to one side.
   “You’re too small,” roars Hymir. “I can’t have freezing small boys in the boat.”
   “I’m wrapped up warm,” says Thor, patting his woollen shirt. Underneath he has both his hammer and his belt of strength. The giant nods grumpily.
   “Fine then,” he mutters. “But you have to sort the bait out yourself.” Hymir points towards the field.
   “There’s plenty of worms there.”

Thor traipses into the field. But he knows that one worm is not enough for the catch he wants to make. He needs something more substantial. He goes up to one of Hymir’s best bulls and tears off its head. Hymir goes pale when he sees the little boy shuffling along with the bull’s bloody head. Hymir has never encountered a boy like this before.

They sit in the boat and Thor places the bull’s head at his feet. Hymir stares sternly at him. That was his best bull. Thor does not notice Hymir’s stare. He takes the oars and rows out to sea with great speed. The giant sits silently. But when the boat has gone out a bit, he clears his throat.
   “You can stop here. This is where I usually fish for flounders.”
   “Small fish,” scoffs Thor and continues to row.

The giant fidgets. He looks closely at the boy who is rowing with powerful strokes. There’s something familiar about him, but Hymir can’t quite think what.

The water gets even darker and soon there’s no land in sight. Only the waves lapping against the boat can be heard. Not even the sea birds dare come this far. Hymir sits slouched, with furrowed brow. They have arrived in Jormungand’s neighbourhood. You need to lay low here, Hymir knows this.

With a satisfied sigh, Thor pulls in the oars. He is set for his greatest adventure. He chooses a fishing line as thick as his massive thigh and sets the bull’s head on the hook. He casts the bait and it disappears down into the water with a powerful splash.
   “Aren’t you going to wish me happy fishing?” wonders Thor.
The sweat trickles down the giant’s forehead.
   “Out here there’s bigger fish than you can manage, boy” says Hymir, his voice trembling.

The giant wants to go home. He wishes he were far away from this boy and these dangerous waters.
At the bottom of the sea, Jormungand sits and daydreams. He does this, as there’s not much else he can do down there. He nibbles on his tail and thinks about how one day, he will munch on the gods who threw him into the sea. Not just the gods, by the way. Jormungand dreams of destroying both Midgard and Utgard.

Suddenly, something brushes against the snake’s nose. It’s the bull’s head on the hook. Jormungand spits out his tail and devours the bull’s head, hook and all. The waves surge over the entire sea and the boat shakes. With both hands, Hymir grabs hold of the rails. For a brief moment, Thor loses his balance and takes a firmer grip on the line.

“We’ve caught something,” he whispers to the giant.

As soon as Jormungand feels that he is stuck on the hook, he wriggles and lashes his tail. The sea bubbles, the skies become black, the giant screams and throws himself down onto the boat. On land, the mountains shake and the wolves howl in fear. The whole world rocks as Thor reels in Jormungand from the depths of the sea.

Thor fumbles underneath his shirt and tightens his belt of strength. Now he is twice as strong and with this new power his feet crash straight through the boat. Finally, the snake rises above the surface of the sea. Looking straight into the beast’s eyes, Thor and Hymir shudder. Jormungand’s gaze is cold. The head is scaled with long antennae. The shiny body twists and turns and the snake hisses and spits. It stinks of snake venom.

Thor takes out his hammer and just as he is about to pound it into the snake’s head, Hymir comes to life. The giant draws his knife and cuts the fishing line. Thor falls headlong into the boat and Jormungand is freed. He blinks confusedly a few times and then sinks into the depth of the sea with the line hanging from one corner of his mouth. The sea becomes still and calm. The mountains cease to shake. The sky clears. Everything returns to normal. It’s as though nothing has happened.

“No!” cries Thor. “Now nobody will believe me!”

He slaps the giant across the ear and jumps out of the boat. As angry as a bear with a sore head, he wades all the way to shore. Hymir rows the boat back.

That night, the giant has trouble sleeping. He can’t stop thinking about the strange red-haired boy and the terrifying Jormungand. It is long before Hymir goes out fishing again.

Thor goes home to Asgard. There he tells everyone how close he was to catching Jormungand. He tells of the snake’s gruesome eyes. He spreads his arms and shows how big Jormungand has become.

“Like this, but bigger!” he says.

And Thor promises that he will try again to catch the snake. At some point he will succeed, sometime before the time of the giants and the gods is over.
Theme 1 - Europe under Construction

Preparing your visit
1a. What happened in your own part of the world during the Viking Age?

b. Could people in your area have had any contact with people from Scandinavia during that time?

c. Could there be descendants of Vikings in your country?

After your visit
2. How can we know anything about people and events during the Viking Age, what are our sources?

3. Are there any traces of Viking influence in your country, such as artifacts, sites, place names, stories or traditions?

Theme 2 - Meet the Vikings

Preparing your visit
1a. What do you know about people in the Viking Age?

b. What comes to mind when you hear the word “Viking”?

c. What did they look like? How did they live their lives?

Write your answers down and keep them.
2. Use a map of Europe to discover the Viking “homelands” of Scandinavia. Try to find and mark on the map the island Gotland in the Baltic Sea and the small island Birka (Björkö) 50 km west of Stockholm, Sweden, in the Lake Mälaren.

**After your visit**

3. Bring out your answers from question 1 of this theme.
   a. Answer the questions again.
   b. Have your ideas about people in the Viking Age changed? How?
Theme 3 - Family Community

After your visit
1a. Imagine yourself living in the Viking Age.

b. What kind of life would you have lived?

c. What kind of position would you have had in society?

d. What role would you like to have had?

2a. What different roles could women and men have in Viking Age society?

b. Compare with society today. What has changed? Is anything unchanged?

Theme 4 - Homes - Colourful and Bustling

During/after your visit
1. Compare life on a Viking Age farm with living in a present-day home! Work in pairs.

Instead of chimney they had ____________________________________________________________

Instead of windows they had __________________________________________________________

Instead of electrical light they had _____________________________________________________

Instead of an electrical stove they had __________________________________________________

Instead of insurance against thunder striking the house they had __________________________

Instead of white bread made of wheat they had bread made of _____________________________

Instead of concrete walls they had _____________________________________________________

Instead of a tin roof they had _________________________________________________________
Instead of a supermarket they had ________________________________

Instead of ice-skates made of iron they had _________________________

Instead of matches they had ________________________________________

Instead of playing music on a stereo they ____________________________

Instead of employees they had _____________________________________

Instead of exclusive drinking glasses they more often had ______________

Instead of cutlery made of plastic or metal they had cutlery made of ______

Instead of roman letters they had ____________________________________

Preparing/after your visit

2. Use the rune key here to practice using the runes.

a. Start by writing your name in runes.

b. Then work together in pairs with writing messages to each other and trying to decipher them.
Theme 5 - More than Just Worship

Preparing/after your visit
1. Listen to Snorre Sturlason’s mythological stories.

a. In what ways did the Old Norse gods serve people during the Viking Age?

b. Why were these stories told by the people of the Viking Age?

c. Do we tell similar stories today?

2. Have the Old Norse gods given names to the days of the week in your language?

a. Which gods have days named after them in the English or German language?

3. In other languages the gods of the Roman or Greek world have left traces in the names of the week.

a. Which gods can you discover in the weekday names in French, Italian or Spanish?

b. Have these gods any similarities to the Old Norse gods?

Theme 6 - The Living and the Dead

During your visit
1. This assignment requires pen and paper. Work in pairs or small groups with the excavation at the multitouch table. Choose one of the excavated finds, sketch it and describe it in words.

a. Why was this particular item important for the deceased person to take with him after death?
b. How come the artifact has been preserved to our time? Are there any parts of the artifact missing? How come?

c. What kind of object would be the equivalent to this artifact in our present time?

**After your visit**

2. What kind of personal items would you like to take with you in your hypothetical burial? Why those items?

**After your visit**

3. In the exhibition four realms of the dead are presented: Valhalla, Folkvagn, the Christian Paradise and Hel.

a. Who in Viking society had the right to journey to the war-god Odin’s dwelling, Valhalla, after death?

b. Who would journey to Folkvagn, the dwelling of Freyja - the goddess of both love and war?

c. Who in society would journey to Hel?

d. Who had the right to end up in the Christian Paradise?

**Preparing/after your visit**

5. Play the game Hnefatafl. Construct a gaming board by drawing it on a piece of paper or cardboard. Use buttons or stones in two colours as gaming pieces.

**HNEFATAFL – KINGS TABLE**

Hnefatafl is for two players. To play it you need 16 white counters, 8 black ones and a king.

In Hnefatafl the object is for a king, aided by their warriors (black counters), to escape from their castle, which is besieged by the enemy (white counters).

The centre square is the royal castle and the four corner squares are castles to which the king must escape.
All the pieces in the game can be moved any number of squares at once in a straight line (not diagonally).

The game begins with the pieces arranged like this (fig. 1).

1. The king’s side has first move, and then the players take it in turns.

2. A piece is captured if the opponent manages to get one counter on each side of it (in a straight line). (fig 2) The captured piece is then removed from the board.

3. The king is captured if surrounded on all four sides by white counters, (fig 3) or if driven to the edge of the board and surrounded by three white counters. The king is also captured if driven to the centre-square castle (fig 4) or to one of the four camps of the white enemies to which nobody is allowed to return or to pass through (fig 5).

4. If the king is captured, white is the winner. If the king gains the security of a corner castle, black wins.

Let battle commence!

Figure 1: Where to place the pieces.

Figure 2: The black piece is captured.

Figure 3: The king is surrounded by the enemy.

Figure 4: The king is surrounded with the help of the centre square.

Figure 5: The king is surrounded with the help of two camp squares.
Theme 7 - Norse Craftsmanship

After your visit

1. Answer the questions below individually and then discuss your answers in pairs:

a. What is your favourite or most important personal item?

b. Where is it made?

c. Who has made it?

d. Was there an equivalent of your item in the Viking Age? If so, where would that have been made and who would have made it, do you think?

e. If there was no equivalent of your item in the Viking Age, was there a similar type of thing?

2. Personal items can influence a person’s status in society, both in the present and in the past. In the Viking Age men and women could achieve high status by owning weapons (men) or keys (women).

a. What kind of personal items can give higher status for women and men today?
Theme 8 - Away on Business

Preparing/after your visit

1a. Why do people trade with one another?

b. Why are some trading goods more in demand than others?

c. Why are some things considered to be luxury items and others not?

2. a. Is there slave trade being conducted in the world today?

b. If so, who are the sellers of these slaves?

c. For what reasons?

d. Who are the buyers?

e. Why are they buying?

3. a. What is the meaning of freedom, according to you?

b. What does a person living in our present time need to be free?

c. What would a person living in the Viking Age need?

d. Are the conditions of freedom the same in different time periods?
Theme 9 - Over the Sea

During/After your visit
1. Use the maps in the exhibition to discover where in the world the Vikings went.

2a. Why did people during the Viking Age go abroad on boats over stormy seas and on dangerous rivers?

b. Why do we go abroad today?

c. Do we have the same reasons to travel today as people did during the Viking Age?

After your visit
1a. What separates your lives from those of young people in the Viking Age? Make a list of things.

b. Are there any things that you would have in common with young people in the Viking Age?
   Try to think of at least 3 things.

3a. Is there one true interpretation of history?

b. Who interprets history for you?

5a. Which are the most famous historical events that have occurred in your country that you need to learn about in school?

b. Who has chosen what you should learn in history-class?

c. Why have those particular events been chosen?