



The Vikings in Ireland

Part 1: The work of a historian and introduction to primary sources





Connection to the Curriculum Republic of Ireland

Strand one: The nature of history (pg. 16):

Elements	Students should be able to:
Developing historical consciousness	1.1 develop a sense of historical empathy by viewing people, issues and events encountered in their study of the past in their historical context
	1.2 consider contentious or controversial issues in history from more than one perspective and discuss the historical roots of a contentious or controversial issue or theme in the contemporary world
	1.3 appreciate their cultural inheritance through recognising historically significant places and buildings and discussing why historical personalities, events and issues are commemorated
	1.4 demonstrate awareness of historical concepts, such as source and evidence; fact and opinion; viewpoint and objectivity; cause and consequence; change and continuity; time and space
Working with evidence	1.5 investigate the job of the historian, including how s/he finds and uses evidence to form historical judgements which may be revised and reinterpreted in the light of new evidence
	1.6 debate the usefulness and limitations of different types of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, such as written, visual, aural, oral and tactile evidence; and appreciate the contribution of archaeology and new technology to historical enquiry
	1.7 develop historical judgements based on evidence about personalities, issues and events in the past, showing awareness of historical significance
	1.8 investigate a repository of historical evidence such as a museum, library, heritage centre, digital or other archive or exhibition
Acquiring the 'big picture'	1.9 demonstrate awareness of the significance of the history of Ireland and of Europe and the wider world across various dimensions, including political, social, economic, religious, cultural and scientific dimensions
	1.10 demonstrate chronological awareness by creating and maintaining timelines to locate personalities, issues and events in their appropriate historical eras
	1.11 make connections and comparisons between people, issues and events in different places and historical eras

Strand two: The history of Ireland (pg. 17):

Elements	Students should be able to:
Recognising key change	2.1 recognise how a pattern of settlement and plantation influenced identity on the island of Ireland, referring to one example of a pattern of settlement, such as the growth of towns, and one plantation
Exploring people, culture and ideas	2.6 consider the historical significance of Christianity on the island of Ireland, including its contribution to culture and society in the Early Christian period
Applying historical thinking	2.11 make connections between local, personal or family history and wider national and/or international personalities, issues and events
	2.12 debate the idea that the 1960s was an important decade on the island of Ireland, referring to relevant personalities, issues and events
	2.13 analyse the evolution and development of Ireland's links with Europe



Northern Ireland Guidelines

Guidance for History at Key Stage 3:

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities strands	Managing Information	Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making	Being Creative	Working with Others	Self-Management
Purpose	To develop learners' abilities in an information intensive environment	To engage pupils in active learning so that they can go beyond mere recall of factual information and the routine application of procedures	To encourage personal response of the learner by promoting dispositions for curiosity, exploration, experimentation and invention	To enable learners to engage in collaborative activities and to make the most of their learning when working with others	To help learners to become more self-directed so that they can manage their learning in new situations and in the longer term
Examples of processes in which pupils are involved	Asking, accessing, selecting, recording, integrating, communicating	Searching for meaning, deepening understanding, coping with challenges	Imagining, generating, inventing, taking risks for learning	Being collaborative, being sensitive to others' feelings, being fair and responsible	Evaluating strengths and weaknesses, setting goals and targets, managing and regulating self
Examples of contexts in History	<p>Locating and collecting relevant information to sort, classify, sequence, compare/contrast and to analyse whole/part relationships when using historical sources as part of an enquiry</p> <p>Interpreting historians' ideas on a particular event/issue and analyse why they differ</p> <p>Collecting information from a range of historical sources about a significant episode in different formats e.g.</p>	<p>Analysing and evaluating different types of historical sources and assessing what value they have to a particular enquiry</p> <p>Develop causal reasoning by explaining the outbreak of the First World War or the origins of a movement e.g. slavery/ women's suffrage</p> <p>Explaining the similarities and differences between Arabic and Western medicine in the Middle</p>	<p>Designing a museum shelf about the Norman legacy</p> <p>Suggest hypotheses and look for alternative outcomes e.g. the outcomes of the Act of Union 1801</p> <p>Framing/generating historical questions to begin a new enquiry e.g. what characterised the quality of life for poor people in medieval times?</p>	<p>Entering into the mind or feelings of a historical character through personal stories/eye witness accounts/ poetry/music and art in collaborative situations e.g. role play</p> <p>Develop the criteria for judging the motivations/ actions of an individual in history as part of a group discussion</p> <p>Using a reflective journal/learning log to develop their own sense of empathy e.g.</p>	<p>Planning and setting goals for a piece of research on a historical topic</p> <p>Predicting the outcomes of their research</p> <p>Improving own performance through the use of history skills walls/graffiti boards</p> <p>Knowing the next steps pupils need to take to improve performance to make a historical account better for example giving one</p>

The Vikings

- The Vikings were famed throughout Europe for their abilities as mariners and marauders and originally came from the Germanic-speaking peoples who occupied the area roughly coextensive with modern Denmark, Norway and Sweden today.

The Vikings went on to settle in many parts of Europe; the case of Great Britain and Ireland is no exception.

- It wasn't long after plundering the monasteries of mainland Britain, that the Vikings set their sights on the monasteries of Ireland and their wealth.

The Vikings who raided Ireland came from Norway and the Scottish Hebrides (Ó Corráin, 1998, 298). By this time, Vikings were already living in the Hebrides, which are still known as In(n)se Gall 'the islands of the Vikings' in the Gaelic Languages today (Irish and Scottish Gaelic).

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/vikings>



<https://shorturl.at/bkY36>



The First Reference to Vikings in Ireland

- The Vikings suddenly burst into Irish History when they burn the place known as Rechru in 795 AD, according to the Annals of Ulster (*Mac Airt et al., 1983, 250, 251*):

Loscadh Rechrainne 7 geinntib 7 Sci do choscradh 7 do lomradh.

The burning of **Rechru** by the heathens, and Scí was overwhelmed and laid waste.

- The location of Rechru is not certain, but two possibilities have been suggested: i.e. Reachrainn, ‘Lambay Island’, an island off Dublin City; and Reachlainn, ‘Rathlin Island’, an island north of Ballycastle in Co. Antrim.
- The Irish initially called these raiders *gen(n)te* or *gen(n)tlide* ‘Pagans’. They were later called *gaill* ‘foreigners’, following the Vikings’ adoption of Christianity.

<https://www.logainm.ie/ga/61298>



<https://www.logainm.ie/ga/16810>



Primary Literary Sources and the Work of an Historian

- Historians study written documents by people living at the time (primary sources) to gain an understanding of events and peoples’ lives in the past and how peoples’ lives changed over time.

Numerous primary literary sources have come down to us from the time that refer to the Viking raids, e.g. they are mentioned in the Annals, like the Annals of Ulster.

- The Annals are annual diary entries detailing major events. This practice became widespread across Europe in the Early Middle Ages. The Irish Annals are written in Old and Middle Irish and Hiberno-Latin.

The word ‘annal’ derives from the Latin word *annus* ‘year’, as does the word ‘annual’ itself.



Annals of Ulster, Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B. 489:



Annála Ulad / Annals of Ulster



798 AD

- Combustio Inse Patraicc o genntib, 7 bórime na crich do breith 7 scrin Do-Chonna do briseadh doaib 7 innreda mara doaib cene eiter Erinn 7 Albain.

The burning of Inis Pátraic [Holmpatrick] by the heathens, and they took the cattle-tribute of the territories, and broke the shrine of Do-Chonna, and also made great incursions both in Ireland and in Scotland.

807 AD

- Gentiles combuserunt Insolam Muiredaigh 7 inuadunt Ross Camm.

The heathens burned Inis Muiredaigh [Inishmurray] and invade Ros Comáin.

821 AD

Orggan Etir o genntib; pred mor di mnaib do brid ass

Étar [Howth] was plundered by the heathens, and they carried off a great number of women into captivity.

823 AD

- Gentiles inuaserunt Bennchur Mor.

Heathens invaded Bennchor [Bangor] the Great.

832 AD

Cétna orggain Airdd Machae o genntib fo tri i n-oen-mhís.

The first plundering of Ard Macha [Armagh] by the heathens three times in one month



Is acher in gaíth in-nocht

- As well as the Annals, there is a **verse** on the margins of a manuscript page in *Codex Sangallensis 904*: a manuscript that was produced in Ireland in the 9th Century AD, but was taken to the Continent with Irish missionaries. It ended up in the monastery of St Gallen in Switzerland, where it is to this day (*Ó Corráin, 1998, 304*).
- The verse occurs above a copy of *Institutiones Grammaticae*, a famous Latin grammar written by Priscian in the Early Middle Ages.
- This primary source is different to the Annals in the way the verse allows us to build a connection with the monk by illustrating his emotions. One can imagine a monk in the *scriptorium* one night learning Latin by candlelight and a howling wind outside. He may have been daydreaming, neglecting his Latin studies, whereupon he is inspired to compose the verse.
- There is a sense of relief that Vikings Ua Lothlind / Lochlainn—i.e. the Vikings of Scotland (*Ó Corráin, 1998, 304-6*)—will not be able to raid the monastery because of the inclement weather.



St Gallen, Switzerland
<https://shorturl.at/nqGN2>



Scriptorium
<https://shorturl.at/erFH8>

Is acher in gaith innocht fu.fúasna fairggae findholt; mágon réim mora; dond láechraid leann óaloth lind...

Is acher in gaith innocht

*Is acher in gaith in-nocht,
fu.fúasna fairggae findholt;
ní.ágor réim Mora Minn
dond láechraid lainn úa Lothlind.*

Bitter is the wind tonight,
it stirs up the white-waved sea.
I do not fear the coursing of the Irish sea
by the fierce warriors of Lothlind

Listen to the verse in Old Irish via this link:

https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/spokenword/i_isacher.php?d=tt

Codex Sangallensis 904 folio 112

<https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0904/112>

Task: the Work of an Historian

- **Pair Work:**

Compare the verse and the Annals of Ulster entries as primary sources. What ways are these sources different from each other? Why is it important that a historian would take a wide range of primary sources into account when assessing the evidence?





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