



Viking Life

Transcript

MIKEY: There are some really weird noises coming from my neighbour's house. Really strange noises. Did you hear that? I don't know what it is, but I gotta find out. Wish me luck.

ERIK THE RED: Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself die, but I know one thing that never dies: The judgment of a man's life!

MIKEY: What the heck?!

ERIK THE RED: Oh – Mikey! Come in, come in. I've been cast as a Viking for a series of educational videos. Do you know what a Viking is?

MIKEY: Uh, yeah. Of course I do –

ERIK THE RED: Vikings were fierce, seafaring warriors, who lived in the countries now known as Denmark, Norway and Sweden, from the late 8th to mid-11th century.

Ha hahah ha yah hmmph!

Fearsome, seafaring warriors who loved wearing eye make-up and reciting poems. Famous for looting, violence and annoying monks.

And renowned for wearing horned helmets. Which is a lie. I've researched extensively for my Viking role.

Not now. Not now. Since the budget doesn't allow you to appear on camera for an extended period of time, you can film me as I reveal my findings.

MIKEY: Uh, no thanks.

ERIK THE RED: Do you know what a Viking would do if someone disobeyed them? ...Sorry, I'm just scratching my neck. My beard is really quite itchy...Or is it? No... it really is. Aah yeah.

Home Life

ERIK THE RED: Oh!

MIKEY: What are you doing?

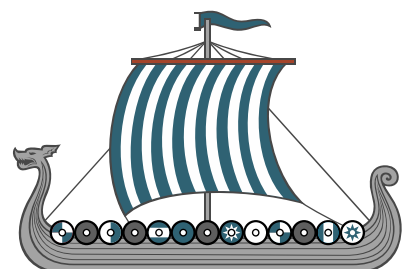
ERIK THE RED: Well, umm... most Vikings lived on farms, in longhouses. A longhouse was typically one big cosy room. Like this one.

Only the wealthy could afford more than one room. Like in this home... I mean, uh, my home. Our longhouses were built from the bones of our victims.

MIKEY: Bones of your victims?

ERIK THE RED: Well, wood, stones and earth. Same thing.

MIKEY: It's quite different things.





Viking Life

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ERIK THE RED: Vikings couldn't read or write, which meant we didn't record our own history. So I can basically say whatever I like.

On occasion, farm animals would sleep in the longhouses. Not only were the animals kept warm on freezing winter nights, we stayed warm as well.

The fireplace was in the middle of the room with a small smoke hole cut in the roof. Homes were often very smoky. So smoky, some nights I couldn't see if I was kissing my wife, or one of my pigs...

We had simple furniture - sleeping platforms, tables and wooden stools. In fact, the range is still available at Ikea.

Just preparing for battle.

We stored our valuables in locked chests. Where did I... Ah! Keys to the chests have been found in the graves of Viking women, indicating they controlled the chests.

At that time in Viking history, women had more rights than women in other areas of world. When men were off raiding and trading and –

MIKEY: murdering ...

ERIK THE RED: Umm, yeah. The women ran the farms and businesses. They could get divorced if their husbands were horrible beasts. They were entitled to part of his wealth if they divorced. You see, us Vikings were forward-thinkers, innovators and ...

MIKEY:... murderers.

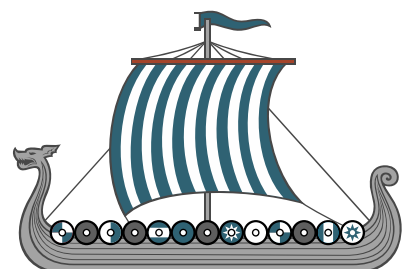
ERIK THE RED: Is there somewhere else you'd rather be?

MIKEY: Can't believe I'm going to say this: school.

ERIK THE RED: In the Viking age there was no school. Children were taught skills, trades and how to throw an axe in someone's face.

Being a Viking, every family member had a role. We valued loyalty and honour above all else. If something happened to any one of our family members –Revenge!

Vikings were treated as adults at age 12. The average life span of a Viking was 40... 40?! For the love of Odin, I'm 39! I've only got 4 months left!





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Mikey, let's talk about food. We Vikings ate 2 meals a day. Dagmal at lunch. And Nattmal at night.

We had porridge and breads, all kinds of meat and seafood. Also, milk, butter, cheese – oh we ate plenty of that. We really loved peas and especially cabbage and we had flavours like cumin, mustard and garlic they were very commonly used.

ERIK THE RED: Beer was brewed from barley. And mead was a type of wine made from honey. We drank it out of wooden mugs and animal horns. Mead was believed to have magical effects. This brought us closer to the gods. Especially if we drank it and then drove our long ships into icebergs.

Work and Leisure

MIKEY: He's digging now.

ERIK THE RED: Hello. Do you know most Vikings were farmers? We raised cattle, sheep, goats and horses. We grew oats, barley and rye.

Many Viking families were self-sufficient. Women and children took care of the animals. Women also did spinning and weaving. While the men were farmers, fishermen, craftsmen and traders.

The Scandinavian countryside was difficult to farm due to the harsh weather and infertile ground. That's one reason why we travelled to new land. Well that and the fact that we loved to sightsee.

MIKEY: And to slaughter monks...

ERIK THE RED: Oh, yes, you should've seen their faces!

We also kept reindeer like cattle and used them for meat and hides. We even milked the reindeer. Would you like some reindeer milk?

MIKEY: No.

ERIK THE RED: Hmm, you're no fun.

MIKEY: I'm hearing more strange noises again.

ERIK THE RED: Yes, that's it. Come on. Come on. Oh God. Well, as you can see, we Vikings loved games. Like wrestling or dice games. Yes!

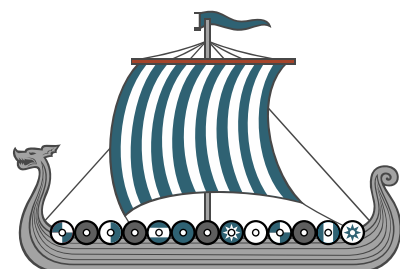
We Vikings loved games - tug of war, king's table, or hnefatafl, ice-skating, swimming or my favourite game - horse-fighting. That's where two horses fight one-on-one. Can you imagine how difficult it is to get four boxing gloves on a horse? Now go away, I'm going to finish the game.

I can still remember....

MIKEY: There's another really strange noise.

ERIK THE RED: I cut him in to pieces and we fed him...

MIKEY: And now he's singing.





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ERIK THE RED: Ha ha ha ha. Oh Mikey. Music was popular with Vikings too. We had instruments made from wood and bone like flutes, oh, here's one here. Also we had panpipes and harps.

But being illiterate, we didn't write down our music. Our songs are lost forever.

MIKEY: Sounds like you could've done with some schooling.

ERIK THE RED: What?!

MIKEY: Nothing.

ERIK THE RED: Storytelling was another pastime. Viking gods and goddesses like Odin, Thor, and Freya were the subject of many fantastic tales. Sagas were long stories about heroic kings and warriors.

Also, there were Skalds, who were professional travelling storytellers who did what I'm doing now. By the way, I'm emailing you an invoice for my storytelling services.

MIKEY: What? But, I didn't ask for you to tell me the stories.

ERIK THE RED: Well, that's too bad!

Law and Society

ERIK THE RED: Like waiting for the fjords to clear. Are you enjoying yourself?

MIKEY: Surely you know the answers to that.

ERIK THE RED: Argh, that's right, you are of course. Mikey!

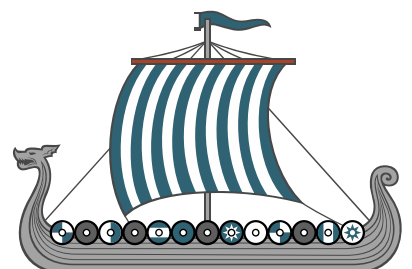
MIKEY: Yes, Erik. It is Erik isn't?

ERIK THE RED: Well, of course! Did you know that during the Viking Age, there were three classes of people? Jarls were nobles who ruled over small areas of land. Then there were Freeman - landowners, farmers, warriors and traders.

And Thralls - the slaves. Slaves could be freed. Sometimes when slave-owners died, their favourite slave was sacrificed and their body placed in the grave with them. Cosy.

Eventually kingdoms emerged in Norway, Denmark and Sweden. But for most of the Viking era we were king-less.

Local law was maintained by...the Thing. Which was a democratic assembly that met in a place called the Thingstead. Come on, I'll tell you about it on the way.





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The thing was a predecessor to modern parliament. It was held in the same place every year. People could settle disputes, punish criminals and make new laws.

ERIK THE RED: A Lawspeaker knew the laws and recited them at each Thing. In some regions, women could attend the Thing and contribute to the debates.

Women weren't allowed to vote. But our horses could.

MIKEY: Really?

ERIK THE RED: No. We're not idiots. Arguments could be sorted out by putting people through ordeals - like pulling stones out of boiling water. Or carrying a hot iron.

We believed the gods would protect the innocent, by healing their wounds quickly, hence proving their innocence. Like I said, we're not idiots.

MIKEY: I think he wants to have a fight with me. Hang on, here he comes.

ERIK THE RED: Mikey. Holmgangas were bloody duels fought on a square of cloth. They were outlawed in Iceland in around the year 1000, because of the unfairness of the system.

There were other ways crimes were dealt with, namely - Wergild. Wergild means "man value". Criminals could receive fines to the value of their crimes or killings. The fines were paid to the victim's family.

Or criminals could just receive physical punishment - like a good, old-fashioned stoning.

The harshest punishment was banishment - you lost everything, plus everyone had the right to kill you without consequence, so you had to skedaddle.

The Police! Here. Hold my belongings for me.

MIKEY: What – why?

ERIK THE RED: I've got to go!

MIKEY: Are these even your belongings?

ERIK THE RED: Oh dear...

MIKEY: Now the police are after us. I'm outta here.

