

Vikings

Opportunities for the children to explore music and sound

Activity 1: Viking Row the Boat Ashore!

Revising pulse as they dramatise rowing a Viking longship

Activity 2: Viking Sagas

Considering rhythm patterns as they learn to clap the name of a famous Viking Saga character

Activity 3: Rhythm Performers

Working in groups to compose and perform the rhythm or song of another name from Viking folklore

Resources

For this topic, you will need:

- a selection of percussion instruments, including a drum (optional)
- access to a digital or online copy of BBC School Radio programme Time and Tune: Loki the Joker, Viking Saga Songs

Resource 1: Pulse Visual



Activity 1: Viking Row the Boat Ashore!

Explain to the children that they are going to be learning about Viking longships today. Tell them that they will be imagining that they are Vikings themselves on-board a longship. Prompt the children to recall as many facts about longships from their topic work as they can.

Discuss why teamwork was important when the Vikings were rowing the longship. By rowing together with a good sense of rhythm, they could move through the water efficiently. This contributed to the success of their voyages and raids.

There are many videos available online that illustrate rhythm and beat. Choose an appropriate video to play for the children. Here are two examples from YouTube:

Beat vs Rhythm

Beat and Rhythm Explained

Work with the class to make rowing movements. As you do this, encourage the children to think about what they could do to ensure they all move at the same time. Prompt them to suggest counting or chanting alongside their movements. Use phrases such as 'forwards, backwards' or sing a simple song such as 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat (or longship)'.

Once you have practised as a class, ask the children to form four or five groups to represent different longships. In their groups, encourage them to think of their own chant or song to help them find the rhythm to row swiftly through the waters.

Vikings

After this, encourage the children to perform their chant or song as they pretend to row. Ask them to sit behind each other on the floor, with their legs out-stretched to represent Vikings on-board their longship. Give the child at the front a drum to keep a steady pulse the others can rhythmically chant or sing the phrase or song to. Show and explain **Resource 1: Pulse Visual**. Give each child a chance to go to the front of the longship and play the drum.

Encourage the groups to perform to each other for peer-evaluation. Which group of Vikings rowed with most co-ordination? Which chant or song worked best and why? Who used the drum to greatest effect to keep a strong sense of pulse? If you have time, practice and perform again, making changes based on the feedback the children gave.



Activity 2: Viking Sagas

Discuss what the Vikings might have done on their longship voyages to pass the time (as well as chanting and singing). Introduce the term **saga**. Explain that a saga is a long, poetic story from the past. Some of these are real and some fictional. Sagas are famous for having gods, goddesses and half-human creatures as the main characters.

Use the [BBC School Radio Time and Tune Viking Saga Songs](#) video to introduce the idea of sagas. Play from 2:13 minutes to 4:10 minutes when Loki the Joker appears. Tell the children that they are going to be learning more about this character's name.

Tell the children that you are going to clap the name of someone in the class. Ask them if they can work out whose name it is. Clap the rhythm of someone's name, preferably the longest or shortest name in the class to make it easier to identify.

When they have worked out the name, ask the children if they know what helped them to identify it. Encourage them to think back to the work on rhythm when acting as Viking rowers. Explain that you were clapping the **rhythm** of that person's name.

Turn this activity into a game where the child who guesses the name correctly from its rhythm pattern claps the next name. As the children begin to feel more confident about clapping rhythms, play an earlier section from the [BBC Viking Saga Songs](#) video from 1:18 minutes to 2:12 minutes. This part of the video teaches the children how to clap and sing the rhythm pattern of Loki's name: Loki the Joker. You could also use percussion instruments here for added effect.

Finally, play from 4:11 minutes to 6:40 minutes of the [Viking Saga Songs](#) video, which teaches the children the chorus of the song that Loki's name appears in. The video also suggests actions. It also teaches the words of the five verses, with the chorus repeated after each.

Ask the children to perform these verses in different ways. For example, give each group one verse to sing and/or create actions to or give the groups percussion instruments to use to perform the **pulse** of the verses. Show the children **Resource 1: Pulse Visual**. Encourage everyone to join in each time the chorus appears.

Sing and perform the whole song together.



Activity 3: Rhythm Performers

Discuss with the children what they enjoyed learning about Loki the Joker. Ask them if they can remember anything about him from the song they performed.

Play one of the saga videos involving Loki, for example the saga of [Thor and the Giants](#), Part 1. Each time he appears in the story, or when you give a special signal, encourage the children to chant, clap or play his name in the correct rhythm.

Following this, introduce some of the other characters from the [Viking sagas](#) using pictures and descriptions from the same website.

Explain that you would like the children to create their own imaginary character. Discuss how they could combine the features or characteristics they like best from the characters already discussed.

Divide the children into groups and encourage them to think about what their new Viking saga character might look like. Give them paper and pens to draw this character. Encourage them to write words describing their character around their portrait.

Then, encourage them to consider what to call their character. Tell them that the Viking name is important as it will become part of a song or chant. Once they have decided on a name, ask them to write it below their portrait.

Encourage them to think carefully about the name that they choose, as this will form the basis of a short rhythmical chant or song.

Play the section of the [BBC Viking Saga Songs](#) video from 1:18 minutes to 2:12 minutes, where the children learn to clap Loki's name in a rhythmic pattern. Encourage them to create a rhythmic pattern for their own character's name.

Once the children have perfected this rhythm by clapping it, distribute some percussion instruments. If possible, allow each group to choose which instruments would be best suited for tapping out their character's name. For example, if he is an angry god or mighty goblin, his name might sound best when performed on a drum or gong. If their character is a goddess or a mischievous trickster like Loki, lighter-sounding instruments like bells or shakers might be more appropriate.

Ask each group to perform their rhythmical chant to the rest of the class for peer-evaluation.

As an extension, you could ask the children to compose a song about their character. Encourage them to sing their song to the tune of Loki's chorus. To remind them of this tune, play and sing the chorus of [Loki's song](#) again (from 4:11 to 6:40).

Before they begin, ask the children to look back at their drawings and the words they chose to describe their character. Encourage them to think about how they could sing their character's name to the tune of Loki's chorus, possibly along with the names of other Viking saga characters. Use the [backing track of Loki's song](#) to help the children as they practise and to keep them in tune.

Ask the children to perform to each other and peer-evaluate.