

TEACHER'S GUIDE



SIRI THE VIKING

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MIMIR'S WELL



Teacher's Guide for Siri the Viking 2: Mimir's Well

Recommended for years 3-4

"Siri the Viking is a very charming comic packed with action, heart, humor and, of course, facts! Sometimes it really felt like a Swedish version of Asterix and Obelix. 5/5 Thor's hammers!"

Anton Amlé, archaeologist and head guide at Birka the Viking City

"A thrilling tale with humor and wonderful illustrations. Both children and adults can get a lot out of this book. It is chock full of facts about the Viking Age and Birka – a great choice for parents who want their children to learn something while they read."

The Birka-Hovgården Guild

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Introduction

About Siri the Viking

Summary: Siri the Viking is a series of graphic novels intended for readers age 9-12. The series combines imaginative adventure with historical settings and facts about the Viking Age. The protagonist, a brave and clever Viking girl named Siri, is always happy to join her father, Viking chieftain Torkel, on his trade voyages. In the second book, Mimir's Well, she is reunited with her Byzantine friend Zack, and together they accompany Torkel on a journey to Birka. There they meet Ansgar the monk and hear about a secret treasure hidden in a mysterious place called Mimir's Well. In order to find the well and the treasure, they must solve riddles, overcome difficult challenges and deal with the villainous duo Ivar and Grim, who are also searching for the treasure.

While the individual characters in Mimir's Well (other than Ansgar) are fictional, the story takes place in real Viking Age locations. Many aspects of Viking life are presented in an historically accurate way, and a number of facts are emphasized in special fact boxes and in the fact pages at the back of the book. Thus the book can serve both as engaging fiction reading with a multimodal interplay of text and pictures, and as a way of awakening interest in European history, specifically the Viking Age.

Although Mimir's Well is a sequel to The Emperor's Treasure, it can be read as a stand-alone story. Therefore, this teacher's guide does not presuppose or require that the students have read the previous book or worked with the vocabulary words, historical aspects, reflection questions or activity suggestions found in the previous teacher's guide. As a result, some of the material in this guide may serve as a review for a class that has already read the first book. It is up to the teacher to decide when such a review is necessary and when it would be redundant – the teacher may choose freely among the reflection questions, activity suggestions, etc.



About this Teacher's Guide

Aims: This teacher's guide has a twofold focus: developing pupils' literacy skills (with an emphasis on the multimodal graphic novel genre), as well as serving as a tool for teaching the history of the Viking Age. To achieve the first aim, discussion questions, vocabulary words and writing activities have been selected to touch upon the eight reading content domains for Key Stage 2 laid out in the 2016 National Curriculum Test Framework documents:

2a: give / explain the meaning of words in context

2b: retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction

2c: summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph

2d: make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text

2e: predict what might happen from details stated and implied

2f: identify / explain how information / narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole

2g: identify / explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases

2h: make comparisons within the text

(Department for Education, 2014)

Mimir's Well, as a graphic novel, is a multimodal text in which the written words are inextricably linked to the illustrations. Therefore, the scope of this framework is expanded to include both text and picture and the interplay between them. Reflection questions dealing with the writer's perspective or the craft of writing are similarly focused on the graphic novel genre.

With regards to history, this teacher's guide provides one historical aspect of focus for each chapter, so that these aspects can be studied in conjunction with reading.

Among the suggested activities are some in which the pupils may investigate, reflect on and present specific historical aspects of the Viking Age.

This content is well-suited to cross-curricular work with the pupils' history class, providing a contrastive perspective as they study such subjects as "the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor" (Department for Education, 2013). As the story takes place in roughly AD 850, it may be interesting to learn about Viking life at home and abroad and to consider a view of Vikings as travelling traders rather than mere pillaging invaders.



Structure and application: This teacher's guide contains a section with **vocabulary words and phrases** for each chapter (as well as the cover, the introduction and the fact pages). These have been selected either because they are uniquely related to Viking history, because they are integral to the story or because they may pose a challenge to certain readers. The teacher may choose freely among them based on the pupils' reading level. The words and phrases may be explained prior to reading or examined in context together after reading.

The vocabulary section is followed by a list of various aspects of **Viking history** that can be studied in conjunction with each chapter. The teacher may choose freely among these suggested themes in cross-curricular lesson planning.

This list is followed by a section with **reflection questions** for each chapter. These questions may be used for individual thinking, partnered talk or class discussion, or a combination. The lists of questions may be used in their entirety, or the teacher may select one or two key questions in order to focus on reading comprehension or creative writing, or to adapt the lesson for younger or older students.

The final section of this teacher's guide contains a number of **activity suggestions**. One or more of these activities may be selected for use parallel to reading the book or upon completion. Among the suggested activities are creative writing projects, as well as projects focused on Viking history.

As a graphic novel, *Mimir's Well* can provide a unique classroom reading experience and can be used in several different ways depending on the pupils' reading levels and the teacher's preference. For example, the pupils may all read silently, or the teacher may read aloud to them while they follow along in their own copies or with the e-book projected on the board. If appropriate, the pupils could also take turns reading aloud or even read specific roles in a dramatized fashion. However the book is read, its multimodal nature must be respected if the pupils are to get the most out of the experience – they must have access to both the words and the pictures.



Vocabulary words and phrases

Cover and introduction: Mimir, Ansgar, baffling, villainous, chieftain, moderation, "a knack for", Aesir, Birka, Gospel, chronically

Chapter 1: afar, foreign, valiant, Thor, Odin

Chapter 2: Miklagard, runestone, runes

Chapter 3: possess, sacrifice, "in due time"

Chapter 4: valuable, merchants

Chapter 5: ashore, vandals, heathens, "a tidy profit", ingenious, monastery, "old wives' tales"

Chapter 6: sorceress, perish, Helheim

Chapter 7: perilous, "... or my name isn't ...", Loki

Chapter 8: ...

Chapter 9: all-knowing

Chapter 10: accompany, thus

Fact pages: Björkö, Mälaren, Stockholm, the Arabian Peninsula, Constantinople, wares, excavations, anniversary, continental, parchment, convent



Viking history

Cover and introduction: The Vikings' place on the timeline (the book takes place approximate A.D. 850) and the other nations in Europe and the world at that time.

Chapter 1: How Viking society was organized and the nature of life in their villages.

Chapter 2: Constantinople and Europe in the time of the Vikings.

Chapter 3: Odin and Mimir's well. Other Viking gods; the religion of the Vikings.

Chapter 4: Vikings as plunderers or seafaring merchants. Viking invasions of the British Isles.

Chapter 5*: Ansgar and the spread of Christianity to the Vikings.

Chapter 6*: Viking runes.

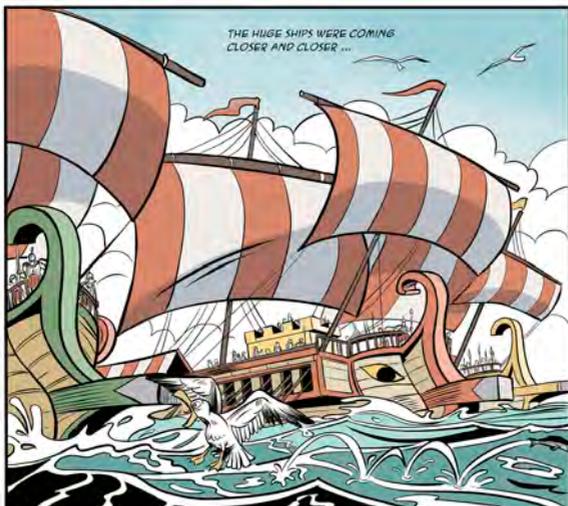
Chapter 7: Viking boats and boatmaking.

Chapter 8: Viking kings.

Chapter 9*: Books in Viking times.

Chapter 10*: The city of Birka.

Fact pages: (Can be referred to in the chapters marked with asterisks or be read last as a separate chapter.)



Reflection questions

Certain questions can be used with any chapter, for example:

- What are the most important events that happened in this chapter?
- What do you think will happen in the next chapter? Support your prediction with details from the text.
- Do you see any similarities between the chapter and another book or your own life? (Can be made more specific if the teacher wants to focus on a certain event or aspect of the chapter.)
- Choose a panel. What details of the story are told in the picture, and what details are told in the text? How would the story be different if there were no pictures? How would it be different if there were no words?
- Is there anything in the chapter that you think could be a historically accurate fact? Anything that you think could be made up? Why?
- Is there anything you would like to know more about after reading this chapter – either in the story or in Viking history?

If variation or more specific questions are desired, the following questions can be used after reading their respective chapters:

Cover and introduction:

- . What kind of book is this? How do you see that? Can you think of any examples of similar books?
- . What is the book about? Support your answer with details from the book.
- . Where and when does the story take place? Support your answer with details from the book.
- . Do you think this is fiction or a true story? Or could it be fiction in a historical setting? Support your answer with details from the book.
- . Which characters do you think are good, and which ones are evil? How do you see this? Do the author or illustrator do anything specific to suggest that the characters are good or evil?

Chapter 1:

What does Torkel think about reading? What does Siri think about reading?

How would you describe Siri, based on this chapter? How would you describe Torkel? Support your answer with details from the book.

Can you find an example of humor in this chapter? What is the “joke”, and what makes it humorous?

How might the book be different if the author and the illustrator decided to make it more serious and less humorous?



Chapter 2:

What do we learn about Zack in this chapter?

How is life in the Viking village different from what Zack is used to? How does this lead to conflict between him and Siri?

Have you ever been a guest in a home or in a country where things were different from what you were used to? What advice would you give Zack about how he should act?

It takes an entire page for Zack to get ashore, but it only takes a single yellow caption for him to see the entire village. Why do you think the authors chose to give a brief event so much space and a long event so little space? Can you find more examples of how the book “skips” events or makes them short or long?



Chapter 3:

Who is Urd? What does she talk about with Siri and Zack?

What do you think Urd saw in the runes? What do you think is going to happen?

Sometimes an author chooses to explain things to the reader by letting one character explain them to another. Do you see any examples of this in Chapter 3? What would the effect on the reader be if the author chose to give the same information to the reader through captions, without any dialogue between the characters?

Chapter 4:

Why does Ivar have so many books in his house?

How would you describe the relationship between Ivar and Grim? Support your answer with details from the book.

In Chapter 4, we see a flashback showing something that happened in Ivar's life many years ago. How can you see that it is a flashback? How are the panels different compared to panels showing the "present" in the story?

Why do you think the author and the illustrator chose to use a flashback rather than just showing several panels of Ivar in his house, telling the story to Grim in speech bubbles?



Chapter 5:

What do we learn about Ansgar in Chapter 5?

What goals do the various characters have at the end of the chapter? Do you think that their goals could lead to conflict? Why or why not?

What emotions do you see in Chapter 5? What have the author and the illustrator done to convey these emotions to the reader?

Chapter 6:

How do Siri, Zack and Ansgar get the next piece of the map?

What do you think of Kraka's riddle? Is it easy or difficult? Have you heard it or a similar riddle before?

In Chapter 6, a grown-up, educated character (Ansgar) fails Kraka's tests, and a child (Siri) passes them. Why do you think the author chose to have it happen this way? What would the effect on the reader be if Ansgar solved all the group's problems?



Chapter 7:

What problems do the main characters face in Chapter 7? How do they compare with the problems they faced in previous chapters – are they more serious, less serious or about the same? Support your answer with details from the book.

What do you think will happen in the next chapter? Why?

The author and illustrator could have ended the chapter with a panel showing the entire scene, including the character who is speaking. What have they chosen to do instead? Why do you think they have done this?

Chapter 8:

What has happened to Zack since he fell into the water?

What obstacles do the main characters face in this chapter? How do they overcome these obstacles?

Does it look as if Ivar is going to succeed at any point in Chapter 8? Why or why not?

What details from previous chapters have proven to be important in Chapter 8? Why do you think that the authors have chosen to reuse these old details?



Chapter 9:

Why does Ivar fail to get to Mimir's well? Why does Siri succeed?

Do you have a guess as to who might have created the well? Explain your reasoning.

Find two details that are presented in the pictures but not in the text. Find two details that are presented in the text but not shown in the pictures. How would the book be different if it had been written without pictures?

Chapter 10:

Why did the pirate captain come up with the story about Mimir's Well and the challenges?

How do you think each character feels at the end of the story? Support your answers with details from the book.

What do you think of the ending? Has the author left any questions unanswered? Why do you think the author chose to do this (or not to do it)?



Fact pages:

The purpose of these pages is to convey facts about the Vikings rather than to tell a fictional story. What differences do you see between these pages and the previous chapters? Do you notice any details that suggest that these pages are conveying facts?

Is there any fact that was new for you or that you found especially interesting?



Activity suggestions

History:

- 1. Viking village.** Build a model or draw a map of a Viking village. Write a short text about the various parts of the village and about what life in a Viking village was like.
- 2. Runes.** Write your own copy of the Viking rune alphabet. Use this alphabet to write a secret message. Exchange secret messages with a classmate and try to decode them.
- 3. Bookbinding.** Create your own book. Suggestions of things to write in it once it is finished: facts (or a comic) about books during the Viking Age, a summary of Mimir's Well, or a reading log.
- 4. The Viking trade game.** (Teacher instructions.) Choose a number of wares (for example, furs, iron goods, textiles, glass, spices and honey). Write lists for 3-5 different "trading ports" with historical names located in various parts of the classroom. Each port should be supplied with 4 lists with different prices for the various wares (for example, Holmgard: furs: 2, iron goods: 4, textiles: 2, glass: 3, spices: 6, honey: 1). Divide the pupils into trading teams and give each team a paper marked with 4 of a certain ware, which they start with (for example: "4 honey") and zero of all other wares. The pupils must stay together in their teams as they travel around to the various trading ports where they may trade with the merchants according to the current prices – for example: 2 glass (value of 3 apiece) for 1 spice (value of 6 apiece). The merchants update the pupils' papers by crossing out the old numbers and writing new ones. Each group may only make one trade per port before moving to the next port. Four times during the course of the game, the price sheets are switched on a given signal. The students try to get as much of the wares as they can. This game can be played as a barter version where the prices are just numbers on paper, or as a cash variant with pieces of paper or other tokens representing money. The merchants may be played by adults, or by pupils who volunteer for the role.
- 5. Viking gods.** Draw a picture of one of the Vikings' gods and write a fact box describing this god. Another element of Viking mythology may also be chosen.



English:

- 6. Dissect a panel.** Choose a panel in the book which you think uses text and illustration together in an effective way. Draw a copy of the panel. Write a list of all the information that is communicated by the text (and what kind of text is used – for example, sound effects, caption, speech bubble, thought balloon etc.) and a list with all the information communicated by the pictures.
- 7. Character bio.** Choose a character from Mimir's Well. Draw a picture of this character and write your own description of him and her. Make a list of examples of this character's words or actions that demonstrate how he or she lives up to your description.
- 8. Condensed version.** Write a short version of Mimir's Well, using one or at most two sentences to express the most important events in each chapter. Alternatively, this short version could be written as a comic with at most 10-15 panels. (Feel free to use captions to express transitions and cover what has happened between panels.)
- 9. Create your own comic book character.** Create a character of your own who could exist in the world of Mimir's Well. Draw the character and write a description of him or her.
- 10. Missing chapter.** Write a new chapter of Mimir's Well – for example, something that happens while Siri is showing Zack around her village, or what Torkel is doing while the children are off on their adventure. The chapter may be written as a comic or merely as text, with a single comic panel showing one scene.
- 11. Comic book.** Write your own short comic about yourself or a made-up character. Try to use speech bubbles, sound effects, captions and thought bubbles.
- 12. Siri theater.** Choose a chapter and enact it as a short skit in a group, with different group members playing the various roles.
- 13. Book review.** Write a review of the book with a summary and some elements that you liked, as well as some that you did not like, along with motivations.

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