



THE LEGEND OF VIKING THUNDER

M. G. LEONARD

NOTES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

AGES 8+

Explore themes of:

- ✓ Viking Mythology
- ✓ Norse Culture and Traditions
- ✓ Time Travel

Subject Checklist:

- ✓ History
- ✓ Literacy
- ✓ Art & Design
- ✓ Geography

The activities included here are suitable for the classroom or library sessions.



About the Book

The action adventure of Indiana Jones meets the time travel of Doctor Who in the second title of this epic series by bestselling award-winner M. G. Leonard. Perfect for fans of Adventures on Trains. Illustrated throughout in black and white by Manuel Šumberac.

Sim's Uncle Emmett is missing and on the run from the ruthless Council of Keys. Sim and his cousin Jeopardy are determined to find him. Their search takes them through a hidden door in time to Viking Norway and a desperate mission across land and sea to stop the legendary Gjallarhorn – said to herald Ragnarök, the end of the world – from falling into the wrong hands.

The Legend of Viking Thunder can be read as a stand-alone novel, or enjoyed as part of the thrilling Time Keys series written by M. G. Leonard. Follow Sim and Jeopardy's adventures in the series in *Hunt for the Golden Scarab*.



Please share your Time Keys activities with us – we'd love to see them!

 @macmillankidsuk @mglnrd #TimeKeys



Pre-reading Activities

Book Cover Discussion Questions

- What do you notice about the characters or objects on the cover?
- What clues does the title give about the story?
- Do you think the story will be set in the past, the future, or both? Why?
- What do you already know about Vikings?
- What questions or predictions do you have about the story?

Viking Vocabulary!

Here are some words that you'll come across when reading. Can you define them?

Word	Definition
skald	
longship	
axe	
fjord	
prophecy	
jarl	
rune	
karl	
völva	
helmsman	
oar	
thrall	
saga	

Norse Mythology Quiz

Recap your knowledge of Norse mythology
by taking this quick quiz before reading.

1. Who were Ragnar, Agnar, and Eirik Ragnarsson?

- A) Vikings from a famous family
- B) Giants from Utgard
- C) Gods who lived in Asgard

2. What is Midgard?

- A) The home of the gods
- B) The world where humans live
- C) A giant's castle

3. What is Asgard?

- A) The home of the giants
- B) The home of the gods like Odin and Thor
- C) The underworld

4. Who are the Valkyries?

- A) Warriors who help gods in battle
- B) Magical horses
- C) Maidens who choose which warriors go to Valhalla

5. Which Norse god is known as a trickster and loves mischief?

- A) Thor
- B) Loki
- C) Heimdall

6. Who is the Allfather and ruler of the gods?

- A) Loki
- B) Odin
- C) Thor

7. What is Ragnarök?

- A) A big feast in Valhalla
- B) The final battle where many gods fight
- C) The name of Thor's hammer

8. What is the Gjallarhorn?

- A) A magical hammer
- B) The horn Heimdall blows to warn of danger
- C) The name of a giant

9. Who is the god of thunder, known for his mighty hammer?

- A) Odin
- B) Loki
- C) Thor

10. What is Mjölmir?

- A) Thor's magical hammer
- B) A giant's sword
- C) Odin's spear

11. Which god has amazing hearing and never sleeps?

- A) Loki
- B) Heimdall
- C) Thor

12. What is Valhalla?

- A) The home of the giants
- B) A magical hall where brave warriors go after they die
- C) The name of a giant wolf

Answers for teachers - 1.A 2.B 3.B 4.C 5.B 6.B 7.B 8.B 9.C 10.A 11.B 12.B



Reading Group Discussion Prompts

1. As you read the story, what is most surprising or different thing about life in the Viking Age compared to today? What details did the author use to help you imagine the past?
2. How does the author M. G. Leonard evoke the Viking Age in her writing? Consider her descriptions of settings and characters. Is there any passage that you find very informative or evocative?
3. How does Jeopardy grow as a character during the story? What lessons does she learn about responsibility? How does her relationship with her dad develop or change?
4. Which character did you relate to the most, and why? What would you have done differently if you were in their position?
5. The Gjallarhorn is powerful and sacred to the Vikings. Should people from the present be allowed to take objects from the past? What are the risks and rewards?
6. What are some of the customs of the Vikings described in the story? What do they tell you about their values and beliefs?
7. The quote at the start of the book says: *'Every doorway, before you go through, should be peered round, for you cannot know for certain where enemies may be sitting waiting inside.'* What do you think this means in the context of the story?
8. What message do you think M.G. Leonard wants readers to take away from this Viking adventure? How does the book make you think differently about the past – or the future?
9. What's one fact about the Vikings that you learned from this story? What more would you like to research or explore?
10. If the next Time Key led to a different civilization, where would you want to go and why?



Activity 1: Viking Mythology

Read Chapter 12: The Saga of Ragnar's First Sons

In this chapter, the children listen to the Norse legend about the brave adventures of Ragnar Lothbrok's sons, featuring the powerful Gjallarhorn, a mystical horn that signals important events and connects them to Viking gods and destiny.

Extract:

'A dazzling light shining in the deepest recess of the cavern caught Eirik's eye. Blind to the rare weapons and piles of jewels, he was drawn towards it. He saw it was a magnificent gold horn adorned with runes that moved as he tried to read them. Eirik lifted the great horn with effort and brought it forward.

"What have you there?" Agnar asked.

"It is the thunder that comes before the storm to end all life," Eirik said, his voice echoing around the cavern. "It is the Gjallarhorn."

"Brother!" Agnar exclaimed in awe.

"It is said, that at Ragnarök, Heimdall will sound this horn. It is when he and Loki are destined to die at each other's hands." Eirik looked at his brother in amazement. "But Loki will never die, if Heimdall cannot sound the Gjallarhorn. Loki must have stolen it and hidden it here!"

"This is why there is so much mischief in the world!" Bo exclaimed.

"To possess this is to hold the fate of all the worlds in our hands," Agnar said, reaching out and touching the Gjallarhorn. "Father will hear of our valour this day and be proud to have such sons."

'Agnar, Eirik and Bo the bold-hearted filled their longboat with Loki's treasure, and begging the favour of a travelling wind, their ship galloped across the waves home to the land of the Fjords.'



Discussion Questions

1. How do the children feel listening to Aksel tell the saga? Why is the saga important to their own quest?
2. What does the saga tell us about Viking family life and values? How important is loyalty, bravery, or honour?
3. What role does fate or destiny play in the saga? Do the brothers believe their future is already decided, or can they change it?
4. How is the Gjallarhorn described? Pick out key words and phrases.
5. What lessons or morals do you think the saga teaches? Are they important to the greater plot of the story?



Design a Viking Horn

Did you know?

The Gjallarhorn (pronounced "GYALL-ar-horn") was a magical horn in Norse mythology, used by the god Heimdall to warn the gods when danger approached – especially at the start of Ragnarök (the Viking end-of-world myth). The sound could be heard across all the worlds!

Step 1: What is the Gjallarhorn?

Write one sentence explaining what the Gjallarhorn is and what it was used for in Norse mythology

Step 2: Design Your Horn

Draw your Viking horn. Think about:

- How big it is
- What it's made from (bone, metal, wood?)
- Any runes or decorations
- How sound will come out

Step 3: Label Your Horn

Add at least 3 labels to your horn showing special features, e.g.

“Carved with protection runes” – “Wide bell for echo” – “Made from dragon horn”

1.

2.

3.

Step 4: Sound Power

How will your horn be loud enough to warn the gods? Circle your answers:

- It's long / short
- It's wide / narrow
- It echoes / it's quiet
- It's played by breath / magic / thunder

Bonus: Name Your Horn!

Give your horn a Viking name (tip: use words like “Storm”, “Echo”, “Frost”, “Flame” in Old Norse style).

My horn is called:

Activity 2: Norse Culture and Traditions

Read pages 105–106.

In this extract, the children quietly enter a bustling great hall where a Viking feast is underway, and Jeopardy senses that something is making her usually confident father nervous.

Extract:

Aksel looked sheepish. 'The preparation for a great feast is a lot of work,' he admitted.

Jeopardy laughed.

The great hall was an enormous building at the heart of the village, with tree-trunk walls and a heavy turf roof. It had no windows, just the chimney hole, out of which bubbled laughter and the smell of barbecuing meat.

Orm pushed the door open a slither and one by one the eight children slipped in, ducking down, and scurrying into the corner of the hall, where they were hidden by shadows. There was a roaring fire in the middle of the space. It created a circle of light. Wooden tables and benches were set up and down either side of it. A huge wooden throne was placed at the centre of the top table. Chieftain Hartvig wasn't a tall man, but he was broad. His mane of hair was streaked with grey, as was his beard, which was braided and decorated with silver beads. His shoulders were as wide as the throne he sat in. His chest was a wall of muscle covered with battle-scarred leather armour. On a bench to his left sat Jeopardy's dad. He had a chicken leg in one hand, a goblet of drink in the other, and his violin on his lap. He looked strange in his tatty jeans, shirt of crescent moons and stars, and array of necklaces. He'd been in such a hurry to go chasing after the Gjallarhorn, he'd not prepared. No wonder they thought he was a gift from the gods.

'Our skald is hungry,' Chieftain Hartvig declared, clapping Emmett on the back. 'But we in Borgund have hungry ears.'

'We have been starved of music and stories for too long.' He looked at Emmett. 'Play for us.'

Emmett lifted his goblet and toasted the jarl, and took another mouthful of chicken.

The jarl frowned, and the laughter and chatter in the hall subsided. Jeopardy became aware of the crackling of the fire. Her dad's usual relaxed demeanour had been replaced by a frenzied smiling. He looked nervous. Something was wrong.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of place do you think the “great hall” is? How does the description of the building and the fire make you feel?
2. How would you describe Chieftain Hartvig? What do you think about his appearance and role in the story?
3. How do you think Jeopardy feels when she notices her dad’s nervous smile? Why do you think he might be feeling that way?
4. The passage mentions laughter, the crackling fire, and the smell of barbecuing meat. Can you imagine being there? What other sounds or smells might you notice?
5. What is a “skald”? What role does Emmett seem to play at the feast? Why do you think music and stories are important at this celebration?



Design your own Viking Feast

Step 1: Imagine the Viking Great Hall

- Draw or build a model of the Viking great hall. Think about the materials used for the walls and roof, and where the fire would be.
- What kinds of decorations might Vikings have in their hall? (e.g., shields, runes, carvings)

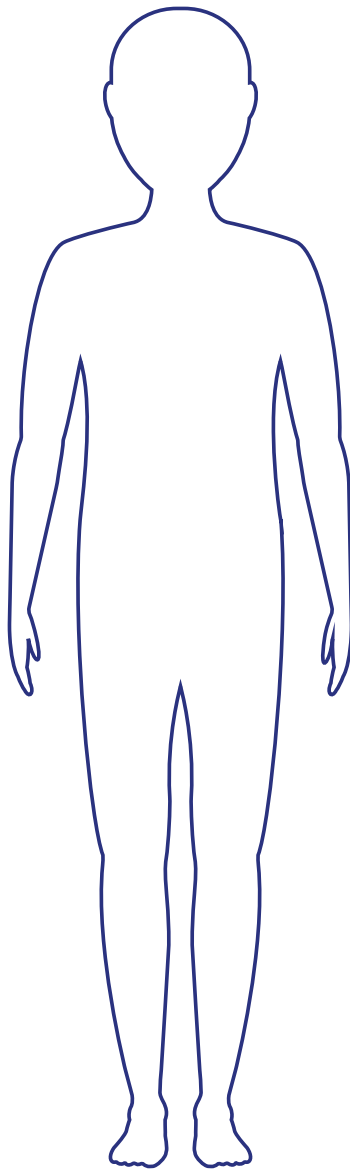
Step 2: Plan the Feast

- What foods do you think Vikings would eat at a feast? (Look for ideas like roasted meat, bread, berries)
- Draw or list the food and drinks you would serve.

Step 3: Viking Dress-Up

- Design the clothes Vikings might wear to the feast. Think about what Chieftain Hartvig wore — broad shoulders, leather armour, braided beard decorations.
- What colours or patterns might be used? Would they wear jewellery or special items?

Choose colours
and patterns



Design a beard
or hairstyle.

Step 4: Share Viking Traditions

- Write or talk about what might happen at a Viking feast besides eating — such as music, storytelling, or celebrating their leader.
- Why do you think these traditions were important to the Vikings?

Further Activity Ideas:

- On page 68, the children gaze out of the window as they travel into Norway. What do they see? Pick out key descriptions and sketch the view in the style of Manuel Šumberac. Use graphite or charcoal to create light and shade in your picture.
- Learn more about the Norse gods such as Odin, Thor, Loki and Njord by creating Viking Trading Cards. On each card write down the name of the god, picture, powers/strengths, symbol or weapon and fun facts. Pair up and introduce your gods to each other. Create a new Norse god of your own to add to the game.
- Carry out more research into how Vikings travelled, explored and raided using their famous ships. Build a model Viking longship using craft sticks, paper, or recycled materials. Decorate it with Viking symbols like dragon heads or shields along the sides.
- Learn about the Viking runic alphabet. Write your name or a secret message using runes on paper or carved into clay or soap bars.
- Create a timeline showing key events of the Viking Age (e.g. when it started, important raids, settlements, and the end). Use pictures and short descriptions.
- Read Chapter 12 again: 'The Saga of Ragnar's First Sons'. Add key moments of the story on a storyboard template. Then, act out the story with friends. Do the same for another famous Norse Legend.
- If Aksel travelled forward in time to the modern day, what do you think he would make of it? Imagine he has returned to the 'great hall' and been asked to tell a story about what he has seen. Perform as Aksel, the great and famous skald of Borgund. You can perform as a story set to music, or even as a song.
- On page 115, Nelson finds out that the word 'skítblása' is a Viking insult meaning 'Dung-blower'. Come up with some of your own Viking insults, taking into account the culture, values and beliefs of the time.
- On page 230, Jeopardy experiences first-hand the power of the Gjallarhorn. Write her internal monologue on this page. What is she thinking and feeling?
- Pick a mythical or important object from any culture or time period. It could be something like Thor's hammer, King Arthur's sword, a magical amulet, or a legendary artifact. Think about what special powers or meaning this object has. Write down or draw your ideas for a story featuring the object. Who are the characters? What adventure or challenge involves the object? Tell your story idea to a friend or family member.