

Ancient Warfare: The Vikings, the Normans, and Medieval Knights

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: World History

Lesson Duration: One to two class periods

Student Objectives

- Brainstorm how technology influences the way wars are fought.
- Conduct research about famous soldiers in history to learn how available technology shaped fighting styles.
- Develop profiles of three soldiers from different eras to see the evolution of fighting styles.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Horsepower: Harnessed for War*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- The Vikings and Their Longships
 - William the Conqueror and Chivalrous War in the Dark Ages
-
- Paper and pencils
 - Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what they know about how wars are fought and record their responses. What kinds of weapons are used? In what ways do weapons determine battle plans and strategies? Don't be concerned if students have little to contribute. The point of this introductory activity is to prompt them to begin thinking about these issues.
2. Tell students that they will explore these questions by researching famous soldiers of the past. Then divide students into pairs and have them research these groups of soldiers:
 - Vikings
 - Normans
 - Medieval knights

3. Ask students to consider these questions during their research:
 - What form of transportation did each group of soldiers use?
 - What weapons did each group use?
 - What strategies did each group use to fight battles?
 - How did each group try to ensure its personal safety?
 - What, if anything, do we know about how each group learned from those who came before them?
4. Give students time to conduct their research in class. Useful Web sites for each group are listed below. Students also may want to watch *Horsepower: Harnessed for War* as part of their research.

Vikings

- <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2001/20010827/vikings.shtml>
- <http://kidzlit.bravepages.com/Articles/vikings.html>
- <http://www.runenews.com/mythology.shtml>
- <http://www.runegame.com/myth.php?loc=Warfare>

Normans

- <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~chatsol/viking.htm>
- http://members.tripod.com/~Battle_of_Hastings/Hastings.htm
- <http://www.innish.btinternet.co.uk/History/AncientInnish.htm>

Medieval Knights

- http://www.pbs.org/wnet/warriorchallenge/knights/profile_job.html
- http://kevin.lps.org/Middle_ages/castles/weapons/knight.html
- <http://www.cyberlearningworld.com/nhhs/compapps/workshop/medieval/knights.htm>
- <http://historymedren.about.com/library/weekly/aa030598a.htm?once=true&>
- <http://members.tripod.com/~hkcarms/knights.html>

5. Using what they've learned in their research, have each pair write a profile for each group of soldiers. Remind them to address the questions in Step 3.
6. If time allows, give students an opportunity to share their work. Conclude the lesson by listing, as a class, the war technology that was considered "state of the art" for the Vikings, Normans, and medieval knights. Ask students how available transportation and weapons shaped the ways these soldiers fought wars? How did war technology affect the outcome of their wars?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students researched the topic carefully and thoroughly, developed a creative and comprehensive summary of their research, actively participated in class discussions.



- **2 points:** Students researched the topic, developed a competent summary of their research, participated somewhat in class discussions.
- **1 point:** Students did not complete their research, developed a summary with gaps and misunderstandings, did not participate in class discussions.

Vocabulary

Battle of Hastings

Definition: Famous 1066 battle in which Norman ruler William the Conqueror defeated the English and established Norman rule in England

Context: The effective use of archers on the battlefield allowed William the Conqueror to defeat Harold of England at the Battle of Hastings

code of chivalry

Definition: The rules a knight followed which included fighting against evil and injustice, and if necessary, defending his church and land with his life

Context: Although knights were supposed to follow the code of chivalry, in reality many were cruel and ruthless and treated people from lower classes very harshly.

knight

Definition: Soldiers during the Middle Ages (1100-1300) who were equipped and trained to fight battles on horseback

Context: Knights went through a long training program in which they first had to become a page and then a squire before they were knighted.

Normans

Definition: A group of people descended from the Vikings who first settled in France and eventually conquered England

Context: Over time, the Normans blended with the English and contributed a great deal to English literature and architecture.

Vikings

Definition: Norsemen soldiers who came from the countries known today as Norway, Denmark, and Sweden; the Vikings were known for raiding the coasts of Europe and exploring the world between 789 and 1100 A.D.

Context: Although once thought to be barbarians, the Vikings are now recognized as having a sophisticated culture and being expert navigators and sailors.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>



This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Technology – Understands the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual
- History – World History Across the Eras: Understands long-term changes and recurring patterns in world history

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Science, Technology, and Society
 - Global Connections
-

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

