

At this time ...

After King Aethelstan's death, his brother Edmund became ruler. Edmund's son, Edgar, followed later. The Saxon kings held onto power despite fresh attacks from Norwegian and Danish Vikings. However, the Saxon rule started to fail when 'Aethelred the Unready' became king. His reign was chaotic! It took a strong Danish king, King Cnut, to re-unite England again.



FACTS

Aethelred raised taxes to pay Viking raiders to go away. But they came back again and again, demanding more money.

Aethelred ordered a massacre of all Danish men in England as he feared they would turn against him. This act enraged the Vikings who attacked in revenge. Aethelred fled to France.

King Cnut, the new Danish king, married Aethelred's widow, Emma. Apparently their marriage was a happy one.



My name is Runa. My father is one of King Cnut's earls. I'm glad our king is to marry Queen Emma, a Saxon. The marriage will unite the Saxons and the Danes.



I'm Lena. The Saxon king was useless and has left England in chaos. King Cnut should marry a Viking princess - one of our people.



COURT OF THE VIKING KING

'She looks beautiful,' murmured Runa. She and her younger sister, Lena, were in Winchester Cathedral to watch Queen Emma marry the new Danish King Cnut. Their father was one of Cnut's allies, and they'd been allowed to watch the wedding.

'She's just a Saxon,' muttered Lena. 'Cnut should have married a Danish princess, not a Saxon one.'

'Saxon, Danish, French... what does it matter?' retorted Runa. 'Everyone's all muddled up here anyway: we are all

English now. The most important thing is that we'll have peace in the country for a change. Don't you want that? We can go home to York and ride our ponies. We can practise our music and needlework. Father won't have to go to war and fight any more, and...'

She stopped. Her father was glaring at her. 'Sssh!' he hissed, 'otherwise you'll spend the rest of this historic day locked in your room practising your Latin.'

Runa blushed as she realised that her father's reprimand had attracted the attention of most of the people around them. She looked down, wishing the ground would swallow her up.



We are here!





Read 'Court of the Viking King' and the facts; then try these tasks:

HISTORY
KEY STAGE
2

The Vikings
Britain in Viking Times

7b

The Rule of England
A Viking king

Find the answers to these questions:

Who had started attacking England again at this time?

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Under whose reign did things start to go seriously wrong?

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How was England reunited?

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Do you think a marriage between a Saxon queen and a Viking king was a good idea? Explain your answer.

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Explain why Aethelred was unpopular:

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List two reasons the girls wanted peace:

1

2

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Something to talk about!

How do different countries keep peace nowadays?



Draw the girls doing one of the activities Runa lists, or draw Aethelred on a boat fleeing to France.

