

History 3rd Class: 11. The Mighty Thor!

Paired Units: History: 9. The Vikings Are Coming! & 10. Life in Viking Ireland;
Geography & Science: 11. Denmark

Following a double unit on the Vikings, explore Viking mythology. Discover the origins of the Avengers superhero, Thor, and study the famous myth about the creation of his mighty hammer, Mjolnir.

Notes

Thor was a Norse god and the stories about him are part of Norse mythology from the Nordic areas that now form the countries of Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. For the purpose of simplification Thor is discussed in this unit only in the context of the Vikings. However, the Vikings are just one group of Nordic people. The story of *The Creation of Mjolnir* that appears in the unit has also been simplified for the age group. A more detailed animated version is linked below.

Note that other myths and legends covered in the *Explorers* series for Junior Infants-2nd Class include *The Children of Lir* (Sl), *The Salmon of Knowledge* (1st), *Oisín and Tír na nÓg* (2nd), *The Origins of Thunder and Lightning* (2nd), *How the Narcissus Got Its Name* (2nd), *The Tale of Lutey and the Mermaid* (2nd) and *Cúchulainn* (2nd). *Explorers History* for 3rd Class also includes *The Cattle Raid of Cooley* (Unit 2) and *The Myth of the Dé Danann* (Unit 7).

Curriculum Information

History

Strand and Strand Unit

Story: Myths and legends

- listen to, discuss, retell and record a range of myths and legends from various cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds in Ireland and other countries
- discuss the chronology of events in the stories
- discuss the actions and feelings of characters
- distinguish between fictional accounts in stories, myths and legends and real people and events in the past
- express or record stories through oral and written forms, artwork, drama, mime, movement and information and communication technologies

Skills

Working as a historian

- Time and chronology
- Change and continuity
- Cause and effect
- Using evidence
- Synthesis and communication
- Empathy

Resources

- *Explorers History 3rd Class Digital: 11. The Mighty Thor!:* Unit Stimulus
- *Explorers History 3rd Class Student Book: 11. The Mighty Thor!* pp. 58-61
- Props to bring the story to life such as a blonde wig, a toy ship, a toy spear, bellows, a toy boar/pig, a golden ring and a toy hammer (a large inflatable one might be particularly effective), or classroom items that bear similarities to each of these things e.g. a ruler could play the role of the hammer

Useful Links

After reading, watch a TED-Ed animated version of the story of how Thor got his hammer:

<https://youtu.be/Qtyj-DbXMKQ>

Children can watch another animated story about Thor and his journey to the land of giants:

<https://youtu.be/e6XeP9gQPmg>

Keywords

Vikings, Thor, Asgard, gods, Mjolnir, Sif, Loki, trickster, dwarves, Sons of Ivaldi, Brokkr, Sindri, Odin, Frey

Lesson Suggestions

- Use the digital Unit Stimulus to introduce the character of Thor and establish what children already know about him. The composition shows three images: *Thor's Fight with the Giants*, an 1872 painting by the Swedish artist Mårten Eskil Winge; the cover of Marvel Comics issue 272 from 1966; a photograph from the 2013 film, *Thor: The Dark World*. Commonalities between the images include the position of the hammer above Thor's head, Thor's clothing, his long hair and his fierce pose. Differences include the additional people and creatures in the painting, less armour in the painting, lightning in the painting and comic cover but not in the photograph, and the style of the images themselves. Children may suggest that the images depict Thor as strong, fierce and powerful.
- Discuss other myths and legends that children know. What and who are they about? Which are Irish and which are from other countries? What do the stories have in common? What are the differences between myths/legends and factual stories about the past?
- Before reading, predict the characters children expect to find in the story. Based on their prior knowledge of myths and legends also predict features they expect to find e.g. a magical land, powerful characters, a journey.
- On a map, plot the area where the myths about Thor come from. Other stories covered throughout the year could also be record on a classroom map.
- During reading, create a story map using sketches and words to keep track of the people and events. Use props to enhance the telling of the story.
- Explore the cause and effect of events in the story. Use the story map to support this.
- After reading, create a character profile for each of the main characters. Use evidence from the text to describe them, their feelings and motivations. This could develop into a hot-seat activity.
- Analyse the story for evidence that it is fictional. Make a list of events, people and items that could not be real.
- Put the main events of the story in order as per the 'Working as a Historian: Time and Chronology' activity on p. 61 of the Student Book. Extend this activity by illustrating the main events in a comic book style, embellishing with speech bubbles and captions. The main events could also be staged as tableaus, with thought tracking to explore what each character is thinking.
- Compare *The Creation of Mjolnir* to *The Cattle Raid of Cooley* as per the 'Working as a Historian: Using Evidence' activity on p. 61 of the Student Book. Create a chart using the points of comparison in the activity. Could any other myths or legends the class has studied be added?
- Record a retelling of *The Creation of Mjolnir* using a medium of choice, for example audio with sound effects, audio over stills of the comic style illustrations, live action, or stop motion animation.
- Explore more myths about Thor such as the story about his journey to the land of giants.

Linkage and Integration

History: 9. The Vikings Are Coming! pp. 48-51; 10. Life in Viking Ireland pp. 52-57. Also linked to 2. The Cattle Raid of Cooley pp. 10-13 and 7. The Myth of the Dé Danann pp. 38-41.

Geography: 11. Denmark pp. 60-63.

Language: Use the story as a text for oral language, reading or writing.

Drama: See Lesson Suggestions for hot-seating, tableaus, thought tracking and a live action retelling.

Visual Arts: Create props for a live action retelling or characters for a stop motion animation as per the Lesson Suggestions, paying attention to the evidence in the story for accurate details.

Home/Parental Involvement

Children could ask parents or other people at home to share myths and legends they know, particularly those from other countries. These could then be shared in class or compiled as part of a class anthology.