



The Vikings: A Very Short Introduction

Julian D. Richards

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The Viking reputation is one of bloodthirsty seafaring warriors, repeatedly plundering the British Isles and the North Atlantic throughout the early Middle Ages. Yet Vikings were also traders, settlers, and farmers, with a complex artistic and linguistic culture, whose expansion overseas led them to cross the Atlantic for the first time in European history. Highlighting the latest archaeological evidence, Julian Richards reveals the whole Viking world: their history, their culture, and their legacy of overseas expansion for trade, colonization, and plunder. Viking identity is explored through what we have learned about their towns, art, shipbuilding, and religious rituals. Here the Viking story is brought up to the present, from the tales of adventure found in medieval Icelandic sagas, to their exploitation as a symbol of nationalism in the nineteenth century by Wagner, and later by Hitler and the Nazi party. The author also highlights their impact and influence on the history and people of Northern Europe. **Vikings**, a fascinating new look at a people and culture that have been reinvented throughout history, will take readers closer to discovering who they really were.

The Vikings: A Very Short Introduction Details

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Lucy Barnhouse says

Lucid, erudite, and engaging, this history provides a fine illustration both of the richness of evidence available for Viking (and/or 'Viking') history, and of the difficulties inherent in interpreting that evidence. Richards is an archaeologist, and he explices material evidence well. Also well-handled are the figures who loom larger-than-life in Scandinavian saga literature and in Hollywood history alike, and the often unpleasant modern afterlives of the Vikings as imagined. I might have appreciated some more footnoting of specifics, but the apparatus is good.

Powerofthehero says

A good introduction to who vikings were, where they came, where they went and what they did. +3 points on knowledge about vikings.

Marieca Wegener says

Excellent informative introduction to The Vikings. Julian D Richards is an expert filling you with confidence about his sources and the information he presents. For such a small book I feel I learnt a great deal on a subject I am already familiar with. Richards' style is highly readable and the book is well structured. Like all the 'Short Introductions' this book fits perfectly in a handbag or a pocket, great for snatching a few moments to read.

Max says

a useful informative book and a good introduction if you don't know nothing, or a little bit about the Vikings

It will begin step by step, make you go back in time to learn the history of the Scandinavian countries, the Norms, and how the Vikings came to rise in the 8th century, a quick review of their "glorious" yet "notorious" leaders.

Though, the book is kind of boring a little bit, I suppose its history but yet history can be exciting, I enjoyed the bits about describing the Vikings and their myths, the book as a whole is readable, easy and plausible.

Sleepless says

Dammit, I really wanted to love this book. I really did. I think there's a picture in my head of what Vikings were like but I'm not actually interested in making that picture accurate. I don't care about the dates and the

people, I'm here for the society and the culture.

This book was simply boring. I finished it because I couldn't bear the thought of another unfinished book. You'd think its length would mean it would only have the interesting parts but I found myself skimming through pages about archeology.

I probably should pick a different book to read about Vikings, one that suits what I'm looking for. This just wasn't it, sorry. If you're into the historical kinda dry knowledge, this book is for you.

what I'm taking with me:

- I wish I could go Viking. So much adventure, ahh.
- It seems all the Nordic countries are constantly arguing over who has more legitimacy over Vikings.
- I didn't know the Viking love came from Denmark and Sweden losing wars.

Helena Heald says

I love this series as far as it does what it says on the tin - it's a short introduction. The result is a very dense, somewhat dry in places introduction to a history of a people over a few hundred years and a huge geographical reach. A few more maps or diagrams would be useful, but otherwise this left me wanting to read more, particularly about the Viking settlements on Greenland. This gets 3/5 since although it was interesting, since for the most part it wasn't the most compelling and the lack of flair (as expected from such a short guide), meant the lists of people and dates was somewhat hard to remember.

Kadri says

Very informative with great further reading section. The book gives an introduction to who were vikings, where they lived, explored and raided and how the idea of vikings became prominent in 19th century. Very interesting.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Vikings: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions #137), Julian D. Richards

The Viking reputation is one of bloodthirsty seafaring warriors, repeatedly plundering the British Isles and the North Atlantic throughout the early Middle Ages. Yet Vikings were also traders, settlers, and farmers, with a complex artistic and linguistic culture, whose expansion overseas led them to cross the Atlantic for the first time in European history

Linda says

A very short introduction indeed, but also a pretty dry one. It was a bit of a slog in places - the author focuses

on what we KNOW about the vikings, instead of the stereotypes, meaning most is about archaeological evidence. Interesting, but also pretty dry, and not everything was equally as interesting.

Still, a good introduction, and since it's pretty short it's also a nice jumping off point for further research.

Nat says

Every single AVSI book is supposed to give the reader unfamiliar with the topic at hand a good insight. This book however is truly only of interest for those who are actually interested in who the vikings really were, and does not expect a mythic picture of all the rumors, tales, sagas and ideas of vikings going around. But that is the purpose of all AVSI

I find it very interesting, but a bit long-winded know and then.

Greg says

Contrary to pop culture depictions, there is no recorded evidence that viking longboats were adorned with dragon heads. And the iconic horned helmets were popularized in 19th century theater productions, despite having no historical foundation. These are two of the more interesting facts I learned in this very short introduction.

Julian Richards is meticulous in his research and findings. However, to achieve this he strays from a historical narrative style and relies heavily on descriptions of archaeological finds. I found this presentation style to be dry and mostly unengaging. Richards presents various misconceptions about vikings, the history of their conquests, and their culture, so by the end I understood why he felt it necessary to avoid perpetuating misinformation.

I was left with a basic - and I can confidently say historically accurate - knowledge of vikings, but less interest and enthusiasm in the topic than I had prior to reading.

3/5

Ronsank says

It gives a short introductory account of 9th to 10th century Scandinavia , which is recently regarded as " the Viking age". The book shows how this Viking conception is comparatively new and politically motivated in nature. It also deals with the archeological findings of Viking age burial sites and items which scattered throughout Northern Europe and North Artics as well as in North America.

Tyrannosaurus regina says

I found this book with a bookmark in the middle, probably indicating that I'd read a substantial portion of it years ago, but I still started back at the beginning because I had little to no recollection of that. While this does broadly cover the history and settlement patterns of the Vikings, I'd hoped to get more of Viking culture

and tradition out of it, so it was a bit of a mismatch between expectations and reality. Still, it was an interesting survey, and I particularly liked the 'Reinventing the Vikings' chapter that explored the 19th–21st century rebirth of interest in the Vikings and confronted some of the racial issues tied up in that.

Ian Wills says

Painfully tedious, much of the book is little more than lists of archaeological excavations with precious little on the history and culture of the Vikings

Monica Willyard says

I enjoyed reading and learning about this often misunderstood culture. This book is written by a professor who has been involved with many archaeological digs. I believe I would enjoy being a student in one of his classes. He has brought a Culture II life in this book, giving flesh and bone to eight people who are mostly shown in movies as on thinking, barbaric monsters Who delight only in rape, plunder, and battle. As is often the case, reality is much more interesting and unusual than fiction.
