

GRIM GRUESOME

VIKING VILLAIN

ENGLISH TEACHING IDEAS



**Grim Gruesome is an exciting new historical fiction series
for boys and girls aged 7 - 11.**

**It's accessible for all reading abilities,
totally gripping and historically authentic.**

**It's ideal for use in Literacy lessons –
please see the ideas in the pages below.**

The **GRIM GRUESOME** books have been highly acclaimed in *The Times* - comparing them to Roald Dahl - *School Librarian*, *Books for Keeps*, *Junior Education*, *Scholastic Literacy Time Plus*, *TES-Connect*, *Waterstones booksellers* (5-star review) and www.writeaway.org.uk They have received two award listings to date, and children report that they can't put the books down.

To find out more about the books and read all the glowing reviews,
please go to: www.grimgruesome.com

??? FAQs ???

Q? Which ages and reading abilities are the books aimed at?

A. The books are enjoyed by girls and boys aged 7 - 12.

They are ideal for all reading abilities. Less confident readers appreciate the short chapters, well spaced out text and accessible sentence structures. Readers of all abilities are quickly drawn into the fast moving stories and relish the rich descriptions, twisting and turning plots, and colourful characters.

Q? Do you have to read the books in a particular order?



A. No.

The Grim Gruesome books are an ongoing series, but each volume also works perfectly as a 'stand alone' novel.

Each story is set in a dramatically different part of the Viking North Lands, with different characters - only Grim Gruesome himself appears in every story - each time in a different disguise! However, children who read the books in the correct order will have the fun of seeing the villain becoming more and more gruesome as the series develops.

Q? Are the stories historically accurate?

A. Yes.

Although Grim Gruesome himself is pure invention and somewhat larger than life, all the background descriptions in the books have been diligently researched through many sources and made as historically accurate as possible.

The supposedly supernatural elements in the stories exist only in the characters' minds. For example, in *The Queen's Poison*, the children have heard rumours (widely recorded as being current in Viking times) that 'berserk' warriors can shape-shift. So when Grim Gruesome appears as a berserk, it is natural for them to believe that he really does have shape-shifting powers, and they interpret subsequent events from this perspective.



GRIM GRUESOME IN THE LITERACY CLASSROOM

IDEAS FOR USING THE GRIM GRUESOME BOOKS FOR TEACHING TEXTS

WITHIN THE NATIONAL LITERACY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



Year 3

Adventure and mystery stories

This works with all the Grim Gruesome books, which are pure adventure from start to finish, incorporating many elements of mystery.

- Read one of the stories as a serial, as an example of the genre
- Explore significant aspects of the text, eg. opening, build-up, climax and final resolution, atmosphere, twists and turns of plot. Are the events credible?
- Discuss the characters' feelings, behaviour and relationships and how they resolve dilemmas.
- Plan the plot for a new Grim Gruesome story including: Grim Gruesome appearing in disguise; trapping his victims; how they escape and overcome him.
- 'Become' one of the characters and write a first person account of what happens to them in the story
- Write a review of the book.

Year 4

Historical stories and short novels **ALSO** Stories that raise dilemmas (on next page)

Historical stories and short novels would work especially well with *The Queen's Poison* which is set in Jorvik (Viking York), with many vivid descriptions of the town which could be linked in with History teaching. For further information go to www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk.

- Read one of the books as a serial, as an example of the genre.
- Investigate how historical settings and characters are built up from small details. What can be learned about life in the Viking Age from the story?
- Identify the main characteristics of the key characters. How do they differ from 'modern' characters?
- Explore chronology and narrative order
- Prepare a playscript based on one of the scenes
- Write character sketches
- Write about one of the incidents in the story and "how I would have responded"

YEAR 4 Continued...

Stories that raise dilemmas would work especially well with *Trolls Treasure*. In this book, the boy hero has the opportunity of saving his own life - but only on condition that he joins forces with the evil Grim Gruesome! Further dilemmas for all the child characters unfold as the story develops, each time exploring good versus evil decisions.

- Read as a serial story and record each dilemma as it appears. What are the possible solutions?
- Predict outcome of the dilemmas and write your own ending, then finish reading original story and compare these.
- Dramatise relevant 'dilemma' scenes, exploring possible outcomes.
- Take on the role of a Viking child and write advice for one of the characters on how to resolve their dilemma.



Year 5

Novels and stories by significant children's writers

Compare any two of the Grim Gruesome stories, and look at the author's other books.

- Compare the different Grim Gruesome stories, with their diverse characters and settings. What unites them into a single series?
- Compare with the author's other books of myths, legends and fairy tales and explore how these might have inspired the Grim Gruesome stories.
- Record ideas, reflections and predictions about the stories in a reading log

Year 6

Historical Genre Novels would work with any of the Grim Gruesome books, but especially with *The Queen's Poison* which is set in Jorvik (Viking York), with many vivid descriptions of the town which could be linked in with History teaching. For further information go to www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk.

- Explore narrative style, plot structure, characterisation, description, dialogue, cover and frontispiece. How do these evoke the historical setting?
- Does the historical setting facilitate elements that would not be included in a modern novel (e.g. children taking part in sword fights; children taking responsibility for decision making)?
- Write a brief synopsis or review of the story, discussing how it works as a historical novel.
- Write your own narrative set in the Viking Age, using ideas from the story.

DISCUSSION GROUP TOPICS



After your class or group has read one or more of the Grim Gruesome stories, try these discussion topics with them.

- ★ Grim Gruesome always keeps his face hidden. Why do you think this is? What do you think his face looks like? What do we know about Grim's appearance from the descriptions in the book?
- ★ What would you do if you met Grim Gruesome? Would you see through his disguise? Would he succeed in trapping you? How could you escape him?
- ★ Who is your favourite character in the stories and why?
- ★ What role does Grim Gruesome's horse, Haski, play in the stories?
- ★ Do the stories make you wish you had lived in Viking times? Why or why not?



Please click on these two links for some excellent classroom activities based on Grim Gruesome, designed for and by teachers and literacy experts:

<http://magazines.scholastic.co.uk/content/5234>

<http://www.theliteracyclub.com/authors.html> (also includes Rosalind Kerven author interview about the Grim Gruesome books)

ALSO LOOK OUT FOR AUTHENTIC VIKING PROVERBS

scattered throughout the stories, prefaced by a phrase such as *“Remember what Odin All-Father said”*

These are taken from *Hávamál*, (*Sayings of the High One*) a mystical poem believed to date from the 8th - 10th Centuries, and supposedly recording the words of Odin, the Viking god of magic, wisdom, poetry and warfare.