

## Thematic Courses

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### **Vikings: Vicious and Victorious** (Middle School & High School)

In “Vikings: Vicious & Victorious, students have embarked upon a world tour of Viking conquest and colonization of Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa as part of their Scandinavian thematic curriculum. They soon learned that Vikings neither wore horned helmets nor were they simply raiders. Through the explorations of Erik the Red and Leif Eriksson, it became quite clear that the Vikings were also serious about farming and colonization. Students have already created detailed PowerPoints about the Viking’s longship technology covering navigation to elaborate depictions of these ships on the Bayeux Tapestry. They also created PowerPoints discussing the hierarchical social structure of Viking chieftains, warriors, merchants, craftsmen, farmers, and slaves.

This thematic course also features multiple modalities to address varying learning styles. Along with reading assignments and PowerPoint presentations, students have been able to analyze and reinterpret Norse myths about Viking deities, giants, dwarves, and other fantastic creatures. They compared the film 2011 film *Thor* to 13<sup>th</sup> century myths. They also recently scripted and performed the apocalyptic tale of “Ragnarok” as a group in the Digital Studio’s theater.

### **Scandinavian Cinema** (Middle School & High School)

This film course explores the subgenres that figure prominently in films about Scandinavia. Students have already seen film adaptations of Hans Christian Andersen’s *Frozen* (2013) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). Norse mythology and the Middle Ages was included as part of discussion of Ingmar Bergman’s 1957 *Seventh Seal*. Virtues such as loyalty are now being addressed in Lasse Hallström’s 2009 drama, *Hachi*. We will soon cover the resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II in *Casablanca* (featuring Swedish actress, Ingrid Bergman) and in the 2003 films, *The Danish Solution* and *I am David*. We will finish the year with films made by such noted Danes as Lars Van Trier (*Dancer in the Dark*), Susan Bier (*In a Better World*), and Henrik Ruben Genz (*Terribly Happy*).

The objective of the film course is to discuss various directors’ individual styles, provide historical information about Scandinavian cinema, and hone students’ skills in analyzing and writing about visual media. After students watch the daily segment, I provide a series of discussion points about the director’s choices to help students analyze or critique the director’s use of camera angles, sound design, storyline, setting, character development, lighting, genre, and more. These assignments often lead to lively class discussions with multiple interpretations expressed.

### **Tribes to Parliament** (Middle School & High School)

In this civics course, students have already learned how tribal Viking chieftains also participated in one of the earliest examples of a parliamentary system of government. The Viking freemen assembled at regular intervals at regional and national meetings. This Viking governing assembly was referred to as “The Thing.” When the Thing met, the assembly could decide who would be the next king, conduct trials and sentencing of criminals, as well as resolve arguments over

property, marriage, and divorce. To better understand the proceedings, the students staged a mock trial of "The Thing."

By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Vikings were replaced by a monarchy (king or queen) in much of Scandinavia so our course also shifted its focus to discussing different types of government from absolute monarchy to dictatorship to democracy. Students are now using the textbook, *Civics for Today*.

They are currently looking closely at the Declaration of Independence and will soon discuss the creation of The United States Constitution. Next, we will examine how the new founding fathers modeled some of its political offices after British Parliament but also look at where they also rejected the British structure too. We will also cover the powers and roles of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of U.S. Federal Government.