Queen Emma

Emma.

She lived about 1,000 years ago.

She was descended from Danish Vikings, but born in Normandy.

Her Dad was Richard the Fearless, and he was Duke of Normandy.

A very important man.

He had five boys.

One became a duke, three became counts and one became an archbishop.

He also had three girls.

One married a duke, one married a count.

Quite a family!

Then there was Emma.

She was married to two English Kings. (Not at the same time!)

Two of her sons became English Kings.

Quite a lady!

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Student: Queen Emma?

*Tutor: Yes.*

A play about Queen Emma?

*Yes.*

Why?

*I don’t know, really.*

Nobody seems to know much about her.

*Queen Emma?*

Yes.

*No. we don’t, really. Not much.*

Is that why we’ve got this play?

*I suppose it is.*

There’s a Queen Emma’s school in Witney.

*Yes. And one in Cambridge too.*

So it’s a bit funny.

*Funny? How do you mean, ‘funny’?*

It’s funny nobody seems to know much about her.

*Well...*

Who was she?

*She was born in Normandy.*

In Northern France?

*Yes.*

So she was a Norman.

*Well, yes, but from Viking stock.*

Viking stock?

*She was descended from Vikings.*

Oh. Right.

*The Vikings had invaded Normandy.*

They seem to have invaded everywhere!

*Pretty much.*

And some of them settled?

*Lots of Vikings settled in Normandy.*

And England too?

*Yes. England too.*

Right.

*And the King of England wanted peace.*

Peace with the Vikings?

*And the Normans.*

Who was the King of England then?

*Aethelred the Unready.*

Aethelred the Unready?

*Yes.*

Why was he called “unready”?

*Well, ummmmm…*

Sounds like he was always late.

*Mmmm…*

Or got up very late, or something

*Well, yes, it does.*

But it probably doesn’t really mean that.

*Well, no.*

What does it really mean?

*It probably means “badly advised”.*

Oh.

*Words change, over time.*

Their meaning changes?

*Yes.*

Mmmm...

*He was quite a good king, in fact.*

Aethelred?

*The Unready, yes.*

Well, he wanted peace anyway.

*Yes.*

With the Vikings.

*Yes.*

And the Normans.

*That’s why he married Emma.*

Because she came from Normandy?

*And she was descended from Vikings.*

Just the job, really.

*Emma?*

Yes.

*A Viking and a Norman, you mean.*

Yes.

*She was just the job.*

That’s what Aethelred hoped, anyway.

*But the Vikings kept coming.*

In their longboats.

*And their helmets.*

Waving their swords.

*And their axes.*

They just kept on coming.

*And then Aethelred somehow got the idea there was a plot against him.*

A plot?

*Yes.*

What kind of plot?

*A plot to kill him.*

Who did he suspect?

*Danish men.*

Danish men? How come?

*Well, the Vikings were Danish.*

I suppose they were.

*Mostly Danish, anyway.*

So what did he do?

*Who?*

The King!

*Aethelred?*

Yes. What did he do?

*He ordered all Danish men in England to be killed.*

Some of them had settled in England?

*Quite a lot, actually.*

And the King ordered them all to be killed?

*Yes.*

All of them?

*The whole lot.*

Not very nice.

*No.*

Not very nice at all.

*Not very clever either.*

Oh. Why?

*Well, it made the King of Denmark very cross.*

Well, yes, I suppose it would do.

*The King of Denmark was Sweyn Forkbeard.*

That’s a real Viking name!

*Well, he was a real Viking King.*

And now he’s a very cross Viking King!

*Very cross indeed.*

Dangerous!

*Very.*

So what happened?

*Sweyn Forkbeard invaded again.*

Who won?

*Sweyn Forkbeard, mostly.*

And what happened?

*Well, he took over large parts of the north of England.*

Oh. So now he was King of England?

*Large parts of the north of England, anyway.*

Right.

*And Aethelred had to pay money to the Danes.*

I’ve heard about that.

*It was called the Danegeld.*

They had to pay it every year, didn’t they?

*They did.*

And then what happened?

*Well, Sweyn Forkbeard died.*

In battle?

*Old age, I think.*

Oh.

*And his son, Knud took over.*

Knud?

*Canute, in English.*

And he took over England?

*Pretty much.*

He was King of all England?

*Once Aethelred died, he was.*

When did Aethelred die?

*1016.*

That’s about 1,000 years ago!

*Indeed it is.*

And then what happened?

*Well, Knud, or Canute, was King of England, Denmark and Norway.*

A Viking King.

*Who needed an English Queen.*

So he married Emma?

*Yes.*

Right.

*Knud married Emma to make it easier to rule England.*

Not for love?

*Not to begin with.*

Oh.

*But they grew to love each other.*

That’s nice!

*And unusual.*

Unusual?

*Well, mostly kings didn’t marry for love.*

I suppose not.

*They had to marry for other reasons.*

Like making it easier to rule a country.

*Yes. That sort of thing.*

So Knud and Emma were lucky, really.

*Apparently so.*

And Emma was Queen of England again.

*With her new husband Knud.*

Or Canute.

*Yes, or Canute.*

Known as “The Great”.

*Yes. Knud the Great.*

So that’s how Emma was married to two English Kings.

*She married one.*

Aethelred. Aethelred the Unready.

*Yes.*

But he died.

*Then there was a new King.*

Canute. Knud the Great.

*Yes.*

And she married him.

*Aethelred the Unready first.*

And King Canute second.

*And that wasn’t the end of it.*

Oh?

*Emma went on to be mother to two more English Kings.*

How was that?

*Well, she had a son with Canute.*

What was his name?

*Harthacnut.*

Very Viking.

*And she had already had a son with Aethelred.*

Before she was married to Canute?

*Well, yes.*

And what was his name?

*Edward.*

Very English.

*And then King Canute died.*

Oh. When?

*In 1035.*

Before Emma did?

*Long before.*

Oh.

*She lived for 17 years after Canute died.*

I suppose Canute’s son became King when he died?

*Yes.*

He wasn’t very old, was he?

*Harthacnut? No. About 17.*

Can you be King at 17?

*With help.*

Maybe his mum helped him.

*Queen Emma? She probably did. Behind the scenes.*

Behind the scenes?

*It probably looked better that way.*

I suppose so.

*She also got his brother to help.*

Edward?

*Yes.*

Right.

*She got Edward and Harthacnut to rule together.*

Oh.

*We think.*

Right.

*So two Kings ruled England together for a while.*

That’s a bit strange.

*It’s very unusual.*

Maybe Queen Emma was really in charge!

*Behind the scenes?*

Yes. Behind the scenes.

*She was their Mum, after all.*

Well, yes. She was.

*But then Harthacnut died.*

Did he?

*Yes. He died young.*

So then Edward was King on his own.

*Yes.*

But Queen Emma was still alive.

*Very much so.*

So she probably helped.

*I’m sure she did.*

Behind the scenes.

*So she was still Queen Emma, really.*

Sort of.

*Until she died.*

Oh. When did she die?

*In 1052.*

And what happened next?

*Well, we are almost at 1066.*

Why is that date important?

*That’s the date of the Norman Conquest.*

I’ve heard of the Norman Conquest!

*Edward the Confessor died in January 1066.*

Edward the Confessor?

*That’s what Edward became known as.*

Edward the Confessor? Why?

*He was a very holy man.*

Oh.

*But he left no children.*

Oh.

*And he didn’t really have a firm grip on England.*

How do you mean?

*Well, he sort of let things slip.*

If his mum had been alive she would have helped him.

*Queen Emma?*

Maybe he would have been a better king.

*He probably would.*

Anyway, what happened in 1066?

*A bloke called Harold had become King of England.*

When King Edward died?

*Harold was crowned King the very same day.*

He was in a hurry, then!

*He was.*

But Harold couldn’t stop the Normans?

*No.*

Oh.

*The story goes he was hit by an arrow in his eye.*

Which killed him?

*At the battle of Hastings.*

I’ve heard of the battle of Hastings, too.

*The battle of Hastings was in 1066.*

And the Normans won it?

*Yes.*

So they took England over?

*Absolutely.*

Right.

*The Norman leader was called William the Conqueror.*

I’ve heard of him, too.

*He was the Duke of Normandy.*

And he was King of England now.

*Yes. King William I.*

A Norman king.

*And Queen Emma’s line had died out.*

Sad, really.

*Yes.*

Edward the Confessor was the last of her line.

*Yes.*

But she had been Queen for 50 years.

*One way or another.*

She had been married to two Kings.

*Aethelred the Unready.*

And Knud the Great.

*And she had been mother to two more Kings.*

She had.

*Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor.*

Queen Emma was quite a lady!

*She must have been.*

Quite a lady!