

THE VIKING AGE: AN OVERVIEW

When a band of raiders from Scandinavia attacked the English monastery at Lindisfarne, in Northumbria, in 793 AD, the



The church and norman abbey ruins at Lindisfarne, England, site of the first recorded Viking raid in Europe

time. In fact, their raids on monasteries are mainly explained by the fact that they were not Christian at the time, and thus felt no sacrilege in attacking these wealthy, unprotected places.

VIKING SOCIETY

Overall, most of the Norse people were peaceful farmers, attached to the land and particularly able to raise cattle and livestock which they even traded to their neighbors. Throughout the Viking Age, there was also a lot of peaceful trading between Scandinavia and the surrounding countries, even as raids and wars of conquest continued all over Europe.

Social organization was dominated by the power of local chieftains who came together at regional levels through assemblies called Things, which served to resolve disputes, and to establish and enforce law. It was a national assembly of chieftains, called the Althing, that was established in Iceland in the year 930, an institution that is now considered the oldest continuously running parliament in the world.

Norse or Vikings?

Although we generally refer to medieval Scandinavians as Vikings, people in their time called them the Norse, Danes, Rus or simply, the Northmen. The word Viking largely emerged in the last 200 years, even though it has its roots in the old Norse word vik or “bay”, or in the expression “i viking” which meant to go raiding. To better represent the importance of farmers, traders or craftsmen in the “Viking” world, it is more exact to use the word “Norse”, which emphasizes the common Nordic culture of these peoples who settled everywhere from Russia to Greenland.

terror they caused was so great that news of it quickly spread all around Europe. The fact that they had attacked a house of God made the men from the North seem like particularly ruthless warriors, a reputation that still dominates our vision of the Vikings today. Their raids and conquests in Scotland, Ireland, England, France, Spain, and even in the Mediterranean, strongly contributed to this persistent image.

The Vikings, however, were much more than just seafaring pirates intent on looting defenseless monks and villagers. Even as warriors, they were hardly more ruthless than other peoples of their



VIKINGS

A Sky High Entertainment Production

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Although free men enjoyed many privileges and rights, Norse society was by no means equalitarian. Slavery was common in the Viking world, and raids often served to bring slaves home. Simple farmers often had to submit to the authority of the chieftains.



The beautifully illuminated saga manuscripts kept in Iceland like the *Flatayjarbók* (above) are very precious and often beautifully illustrated documents.

Women had no official role in public life, although they could fully take over their husband's business when their husbands were away or when they became widows. Strong female characters are omnipresent in the Icelandic sagas, like Aud the Wise, a

clan leader who played a central part in the settlement of western Iceland.

Scandinavian societies changed considerably during the Viking Age: Norway, Sweden and Denmark organized more and more into kingdoms, while all Norse lands had largely converted to Christianity by the beginning of the 11th Century. Trade, raids and conquests brought new riches, helping population growth and expansion beyond the borders of Scandinavia itself.

THE VIKINGS IN EUROPE

Although relations between the Vikings and Western European countries began with seasonal raids, it soon intensified considerably. In England, France, Ireland and Scotland, the Norse gradually moved from pillaging to establishing themselves as rulers in the areas they attacked. York, in Northeast England, was a Viking capital known as Jorvik, from 866 to 954 AD, and Vikings regularly controlled large areas of England (especially an area known as the Danelaw) until the middle of the 11th Century.

In the Northwest of France, they were constantly present throughout the 9th Century. They then ruled as dukes of Normandy, the land of the Northmen, after their leader Rollo signed a peace treaty with king Charles the Simple, in the year 911.

The high point of Viking presence in Europe came under the reign of king Cnut the Great, from 1016

to 1035. Cnut managed to become king of Denmark, Norway and England, as well as overlord of Sweden. This empire was short-lived, however, and by the time his son Harthacnut died in 1042, it had fallen apart once again.

THE EASTERN ROUTE

In Sweden, Norse traders and adventurers preferred to make their way east, towards trading routes that put them in contact with the riches of the Muslim world and of the Orient. In so doing, these people, known as the Rus to the Slav populations they met along the way, also imposed their rule on cities like Kiev and Novgorod, forming a kingdom that came to be known as Russia.

Thanks to this growing power base and the riches they accumulated, the Rus even mounted expeditions against Constantinople (today's Istanbul). Their attacks on the capital of the Byzantine Empire – which they called Mikligard, “the great city” – were always pushed back, but the valor of these warriors from the North so impressed the emperors that they arranged to have a group of them become their personal guard, known as the Varangian Guard.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC SAGAS

In many ways, the most exceptional feat of the Norse people was their expansion into the North Atlantic. Their settlement of the Faeroe Islands in the early 800s, of Iceland starting in 870, and of Greenland by Erik the Red around 985, as well as the expeditions to Vinland by his son Leif around the year 1000, expanded the European world well beyond its known limits. The news of these discoveries soon made its way to Europe, and although attempts to settle Vinland were short-lived, due to conflict with native populations, travels to the North American coast apparently continued well after the voyages of Leif Eriksson and his relatives.

In the year 1347, the Annals of Iceland report that a group of Greenlanders came ashore in Iceland, after being blown off course from an expedition to gather lumber in Markland – today's Labrador. The fact that the author of the annals feels no need to explain what Markland is – or why Greenlanders would travel there for lumber – seems to confirm that such expeditions were fairly normal events.

THE END OF THE VIKING AGE

Most scholars place the end of the Viking Age in Europe around the year 1066, when a Viking descendant, duke William of Normandy, conquered England just after a Viking army led by Norwegian king Harald Hardrad had been defeated by the Anglo-Saxon army. By that date, Viking raids had essentially ceased in Europe.

The Viking descendants in Normandy, in the British Isles or in Russia had become Christian, and had largely assimilated into the local populations. Even the kingdoms in Sweden, Denmark and Norway had become very much like other European kingdoms. When Norman warriors took over the Kingdom of Sicily in the late 11th Century, they did so as European noblemen, more than as the Viking raiders who had attacked the Mediterranean coasts two centuries earlier.

In the North Atlantic, however, the situation was somewhat different. Although they had also become Christians, Norse populations in the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland remained very independent and certainly as headstrong as the people who had originally settled these new lands. In the late 1200s, Iceland and Greenland had to fully recognize Norwegian authority over them, but even then, a daring spirit remained, as illustrated by the expeditions mounted in the far north by Greenlanders, every summer, to hunt walruses and gather birds of prey, among other things, for trade with Europe.

Even the Viking spirit could not overcome the effects of a cooling climate and of declining trade with Europe, however. By the year 1500, the Norse colony in Greenland was abandoned, and Iceland was facing a period of poverty marked by recurrent famine, epidemics and volcanic eruptions, that would last until the early 19th Century. The fact that Iceland survived, and now shows



The Viking memorial, in Reykjavik, Iceland, is a stylish testimony to the spirit of the Norse navigators who sailed all the way to America.

considerable dynamism and prosperity (the country has one of the highest standards of living in the world) is in many ways a modern testimony to the spirit of the Norse people.

ACTIVITY

SOMETHING SOMETHINGSSON?

In the Viking age, people were known by their first name and the first name of their father. Leif, son of Erik the Red, for instance, was known as Leif Eriksson – the son of Erik, while Erik was known as Erik Thorvaldsson – the son of Thorvald. If a man called Olaf had a daughter called Gudrid, she would become known as Gudrid Olafsdottir – the daughter of Olaf. This naming system is still in use today in Iceland. Perhaps because this produced many similar names, people were also known by a nickname that said something funny or terrifying about them: Erik the Red, Leif the Lucky, Aud the Wise, Ivar the Boneless or Eric Bloodaxe. Write up your proper Viking name, and think of a nickname that would be appropriate for you.

My Viking name is:

My nickname is:

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you know of any Viking words or names used in your region? Have you ever seen Viking names used on products or to name a place or company?
2. Which way of naming do you prefer: the one used for your name or the Viking way? Why?
3. Do you know words or names that are used in English today, but actually come from other languages? Can you name some examples?

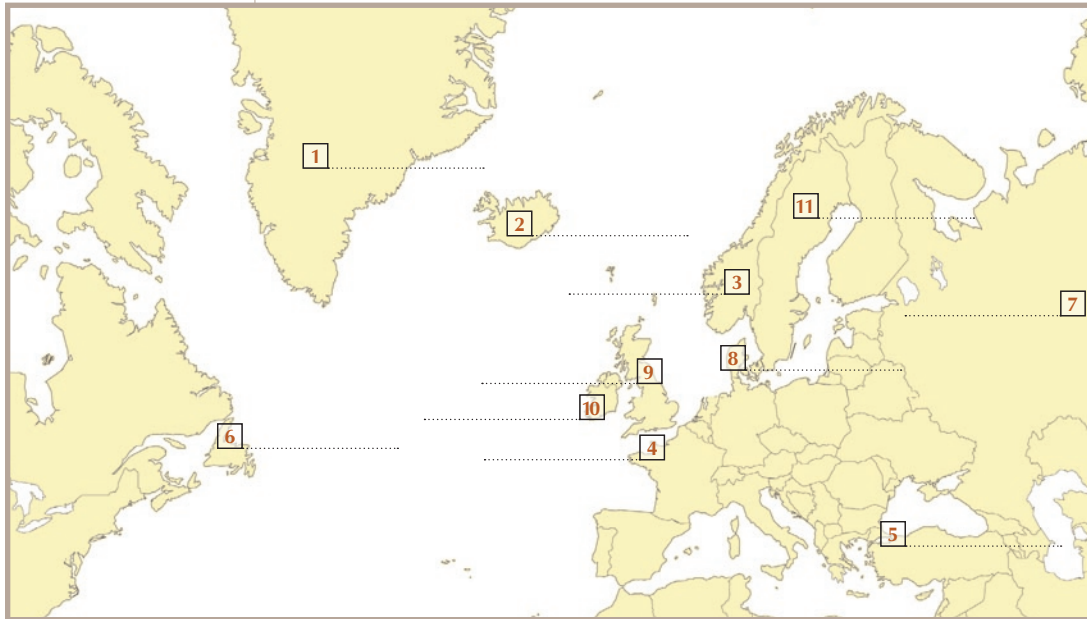
THE VIKING WORLD

The Viking Age was a time of great geographical expansion for the people in the Norse homelands of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In less than three centuries, Viking warriors, merchants, explorers and settlers expanded the limit of the world known to Europeans of the time.

They traveled to every part of Europe, reached Asia to the East, touched Northern Africa to the South, and reached America, to the West.

Taking a look at a world map quickly reveals how much the Norse were exceptional travelers, who

dared to take small ships across thousands of miles of open sea. Their example is all the more remarkable, when you take into account that they established regular maritime traffic across the ocean, five hundred years before the explorations of the likes of Columbus, Cartier, Cabot and Hudson opened the way to European colonization of the Americas.



ACTIVITY

FINDING THE RIGHT LAND

Using the clues and the corresponding numbers on the map above, find the name of each of these geographical locations where the Norse lived or traveled during the Viking Age.

- 1 It was given a pleasant and colorful name, so that people would want to live there.
- 2 It has a cool name, but a lot of hot water just waiting to burst from the ground.
- 3 Erik the Red's father was banned from this country, and most of the settlers to Iceland originally came from there.
- 4 In this country, a region bears the name of the Northmen who took it over, 1100 years ago.
- 5 The Vikings who attacked it (and later served as an imperial guard) called it "Mikligard", which means the Great City.
- 6 It is there that the only authentic Norse archeological site in North America was found by Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine, in 1961.
- 7 It was named after the « Rus », the Scandinavian tribe that came to rule its cities.
- 8 This smallest of the Viking homelands saw many of its warriors and kings head for England.
- 9 The Vikings ruled large parts of this country for many years, before Viking descendants from France took it over in 1066
- 10 The Vikings founded its capital city, Dublin
- 11 Most of the Vikings in this easternmost Norse homeland headed east towards Russia and the Black Sea.

Answers: 1. Greenland, 2. Iceland, 3. Norway, 4. Denmark, 5. Constantinople (Istanbul), 6. L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Newfoundland, Canada, 7. Russia, 8. Sweden, 9. England, 10. Ireland, 11. Sweden.

VIKING SHIPS

There would have been no Viking age without Viking ships. By far, the light, flexible and maneuverable ships created by Norse navigators were the best of their age. This allowed the Vikings to become feared raiders in Europe, and to travel all across the North Atlantic Ocean.

Our knowledge of these remarkable ships, comes essentially from archeological discoveries made all over the Viking world. The first such findings were made in the late 19th Century in the Norwegian towns of Gokstad and Öseberg: rich Norse characters from the 9th Century had been buried with their boats and many other objects, following ancient, pagan rituals. These two, remarkably well-preserved ships, are displayed today in Oslo's Viking Ship Museum.

These discoveries have allowed us to find out that early Viking ships were "all purpose" vessels, used for trade as well as military operations, and always able to quickly go far up river, thanks to a very shallow draft. As the Viking expansion continued, ship designs became more specific to the role they were meant to play.

Deeper, wider ships called the knarrs were designed to carry cargo, cattle and livestock and people across the open sea – a crucial development as Norse settlers headed towards the Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Vinland.

Meanwhile, longships became longer and lighter, reaching as much as 120 feet (36 meters) in length and able to carry as many as 200 warriors. The most famous of these ships, the Ormrinn langi or "Long Serpent" built by Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvason, was reputed as the best longship ever built and featured a gold-plated prowhead. Archeological digs conducted near another Viking ship museum, in Roskilde, Denmark, in 1997, confirmed that such ships were not the stuff of legends.

Over the last century, many Viking ship replicas were built by enlightened reenactors, curious to see if the ships were up to their reputation. In 1998, a 54-foot (16-meter) knarr called the Snorri, built in Maine the year before, sailed from Greenland to L'Anse-aux-Meadows following the route described in the sagas. The trip proved that such expeditions were possible, but also difficult: the Snorri's trip took a full three months. When the Norse made their way to North America, they had no choice but to winter in Vinland.



A 53-foot (17-meter) longship was built in studio, for the many seagoing scenes included in the film.

ACTIVITY

ENOUGH ROOM ON THE SHIP?

Viking ships were efficient, reliable sailing vessels, but they were by no means luxury cruisers. There were no cabins, no galleys (onboard kitchens) or any other comforts. If possible, ships would stop ashore at night, but generally, rain or shine, you sailed, worked or slept in open air. The space available to the men and women on board was fairly limited: at most, there was about 12 square feet (1.1 square meter) per person, with all their equipment. To get a sense of what that space represents, measure the classroom and divide the surface obtained by the number of people in the class: compare the space available per person with the space on a Viking ship. Also, measure several 12 square feet (1.1 square meter) spaces, marking them on the floor with tape, and place a student with a chair in each of these spaces: try to get a sense of how crowded these ships were, often for weeks at a time.

QUESTIONS:

1. Would you cross the Atlantic Ocean on a 50-foot sailboat without a motor?
2. Why were longships used along coastlines and the knarr on the open sea?
3. Why were the Vikings able to mount surprise attacks so easily?
4. What are the main differences between Viking ships and modern sailboats?
5. What would be the main difficulties that Viking sailors would face on the sea?

HEARING ABOUT HISTORY



The beautifully illuminated saga manuscripts kept in Iceland like the Flateyjarbók (above) are very precious and often beautifully illustrated documents.

Much of our knowledge about the Viking age comes from the Icelandic sagas. Beginning in the 12th Century, the sagas (an old Norse word meaning “what was said”) were gradually written down, after being passed down from generation to generation for more than 200 years.

It is through these sagas, preserved in manuscripts kept at the Arni Magnusson Institute in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, that we know about the colonization of Ice-

land and Greenland, about the kings of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, and of course, about the voyages to “Vinland”.

However, because it took so long for the sagas to be written down, interpreting the stories they contain is sometimes difficult. There are sometimes different or contradictory versions of the same story, as well as magical or fantastic anecdotes. Because of this, when the sagas began to be translated and published, about 150 years ago, some people thought that events like the discovery of America by Leif Eiriksson were just legends.

Confirmation that most of these stories were based on actual facts was obtained through another source: archeological discoveries. For instance, the discovery of Viking longhouses at L’Anse-aux-Meadows, in Newfoundland, confirmed that the Vinland sagas described actual historical events.

ACTIVITIES

1. WRITING A SAGA

The teacher tells the class a short story (two to six sentences, depending on the age group) about a particular event. After the story has been repeated three times, students are asked to write it down from memory. Once this is done, the teacher re-reads the story one last time, and finds out how much the students managed to write down.

2. BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY.

The teacher tells a student a sentence, so that others will not hear it. This first student quietly repeats the sentence to a second student, and so on until a predetermined number of students (8 to 10 is usually enough). The last student in this chain is then asked to repeat it out loud, and his version is then compared with the original sentence. Optionally, it is possible to go back up the chain, to find out where and how the sentence changed – as it usually does.

QUESTIONS:

1. Can we always rely on memory to know the details of a given event?
2. Judging on this exercise, how much should you trust hearsay?
3. Have you ever experienced a situation where something was wrongly reported about you or someone you know? How did it affect you?
4. Are written sources of information always better than the spoken word?
5. Since Vikings relied strongly on oral tradition, do you think they remembered stories and facts better than we do?



DIGGING UP HISTORY

When Norwegian adventurer Helge Ingstad and his wife Anne Stine found the remains of three Norse longhouses at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, in Newfoundland, it ended a century of speculation and proved that the Vinland sagas were rooted in actual fact.

Although the sagas were believable, it had been previously impossible to prove that they were more than legends. When studying history, physical proof is the most reliable evidence, and this is what archeology provided in the case of the Vinland voyages.

Archeology plays a central role in our growing knowledge of the Viking Age. Despite all the sagas offer, much of the history of the Viking world was never recorded, leaving archeological finds as the only source of information. In the case of Norse Greenland, for instance, written facts are few and far between, beyond the tales of its foundation by Erik the Red and its first few years. Almost everything we know about the colony, until it was abandoned somewhere in the 15th Century, comes from decades of archeological digs.

Although it still starts with digging holes in the ground to find objects, buildings and human re-

mains, archeology has also become a very high tech field. Specialists from various disciplines work together to extract all types of information, determining what the ancient Norse ate, what type of flies buzzed about their homes, or where their firestarter stones came from. They even use modern forensic techniques to determine what may have killed someone, where this person came from, and whether he or she suffered from disease or malnutrition. Plant and animal remains are also analyzed from every angle.

Still, even with all these recent developments, having as many different sources as possible is always greatly helpful. Without the sagas, for instance, it is hard to believe that anyone would have thought about digging up the ruins in L'Anse-aux-Meadows.



It was only through archeology that many facts about the Viking Age were confirmed, like the location of Erikstadir, Erik the Red's farm in Western Iceland.

ACTIVITY

HISTORY IN LAYERS

This activity allows teachers to create a miniature archeological site for students to explore. The materials needed are: a large, relatively shallow container (preferably transparent or translucent), at least two types of sand or small gravel, small utensils or garden tools for digging, and several small objects used as archeological artifacts.

Pour a first layer of one type of sand or gravel at the bottom of the container. Place some of the small objects you selected in this first layer. Cover them and pack the layer with your hands. Pour a second layer of a different type of sand or gravel, to form a second "archeological" layer, and place another set of "artifacts" in this new layer. Repeat a third and/or fourth time if desired.

Students should dig carefully, to avoid making too much of a mess, and so they can tell how many layers are in the site, what each layer contained, and what this tells us about the site. The precise location of objects should be recorded as they are found. For example, a first layer containing stone and wood objects, an empty second layer and a third layer containing iron objects could tell us that, after occupation in the stone age, the site was abandoned, before finally being occupied again in the iron age. The types of objects and their placement can be varied at will to create the desired story of a particular site.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you know any archeological sites in your area?
2. Have you ever visited an archeological site or a museum featuring archeological exhibits?
3. Have you ever found an old object in the ground? What was your reaction?
4. Did it tell you anything about the place you found it?

MEETING NEW PEOPLE

When the Vikings exploring Vinland met with the Native American native people they called the “skraelings”, they hardly knew that they had taken part in a major event in the history of humanity. For the first time since it had started migrating from its birthplace in Africa, towards Asia, Europe and eventually, America, humanity had now come full circle.

The people who had crossed the Bering Straits 20,000 years ago to people North America and the tribes who had come to Western Europe from Central Asia in several waves over several thousand years had both been stopped in their expansion by the same natural barrier: the Atlantic Ocean. When the Vikings came ashore in Vinland, they had bridged that very last gap, making the human presence a full circle around the Earth.

This meeting between radically different cultures was far from simple, however. The sagas tell us stories of trade and conflict, with the death of Thorvald, the brother of Leif Eriksson, marking a turning point in Norse attempts to settle North America.

Traditional stories told by the Inuit of Greenland and archeological finds made in the Arctic by Canadian and Danish researchers have shown that contact between the Norse of Greenland and the

Native people of America continued over the centuries, and may have been fairly extensive. They also tell us that this relation probably alternated from peaceful trade to conflicts.

This difficulty in establishing a relationship between cultures was by no means exceptional. History tells us that, everywhere in the world, meetings between people that had never met before had as much chance of turning into conflict than of generating trade and mutual trust.

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ACTIVITY

A MEETING BEYOND WORDS

This activity aims to make students understand the difficulty of communicating with a previously unknown people whose language and culture are radically different from their own. Two students or two groups of students stand face to face. One person or group in this meeting must obtain something from or offer something to the other: water, food, directions, goods, establishing trade, an alliance, etc. No words can be used, or only invented words that do not correspond to the other party's language. To spice things up, one group can also have a strange custom known only to it (patting the other person on the head or sticking your tongue out to say hello, or offering something as a greeting): it can be decided that the reaction of the other party to this offering (refusing the gift, for instance) can provoke conflict, to show that first contact can easily go wrong.

QUESTIONS :

1. Have you ever been in a situation where no one could understand your language? If so, how did that make you feel?
2. How would you resolve a situation like the one in the activity?
3. What is most important when trying to establish first contact with another culture?
4. How many languages do you speak?
5. Do you think it's important to speak other languages? If so, what languages would you want to learn



CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE VIKING AGE

When the Vikings sailed westwards across the North Atlantic Ocean, they benefited from an exceptionally warm period that lasted from the late 9th Century to the 12th Century. Warmer weather meant that the sailing season and the growing season were longer, making travel and trade easier and agriculture more productive.

This is how the people that settled Greenland with Erik the Red could even grow cereals in some of the most southerly fjords in the colony. In the 14th Century, however, Earth entered a period known as the Little Ice Age, with shorter summers and exceptionally harsh winters. This sudden cooling down made life much more difficult for Norse populations in Greenland and Iceland.

In the 14th and 15th Century, some fjords in Greenland could stay blocked by ice for years at a time, preventing contact with the outside world, and making trade difficult if not impossible. The people who were married at Hvalsey church in 1408, the very last event recorded about the Norse colonies in the area, remained in Greenland for two years before they were able to sail out to Iceland.

Archeologists have shown that the Greenlanders' diet changed considerably as the climate cooled. Early on, Greenlanders ate a fair amount of meat and almost no fish, as they raised cattle and livestock that supplied them with a large amount of their food supply. As time went by, however, fish

and sea mammals gradually made their appearance in the food supply, compensating for the trouble Greenlanders had in feeding their animals. Hunting game also became more prevalent. Most of the population still could find enough food for its needs, but it had to adapt substantially in order to survive.

While it may have strongly contributed to the end of the Norse presence in Greenland, it also paved the way for its occupation by the Inuit populations that are still present today in the largest island in the world. The Inuit, unlike the Norse, had long adapted to the extreme weather of polar regions, allowing them to prosper in conditions that others would find impossible.



Greenland can be very green in summertime, but not enough to raise cattle and sheep as the Norse tried to do in the Middle Ages

ACTIVITY

WHAT'S THE WEATHER REALLY LIKE?

Everyone always has a lot to say about the weather, but our impressions are often deceiving. Comparing years or decades is especially difficult without concrete numbers to rely on. Have the students do some research, by contacting local or national weather services (or searching their web sites), or looking up news stories about changes in weather patterns and climate in your area. Try to determine if there are changes in the climate in your region and what their effects are on everything from transportation to agriculture, mortality rates and economic activity. In doing so, one can find out that even though modern technology makes us much less vulnerable to its effects, climate and weather still have a strong influence on our lives.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you believe in global warming and climate change?
2. Have you noticed changes in the climate in your area? Is it warmer? Colder? Drier? Rainier?
3. If so, what do you think is causing the current changes in weather patterns and climate?
4. Have you experienced unusual or extreme weather?
5. What do you think would happen in your area if the weather got warmer? What about if it became colder?
6. What would you do to adjust to cooler or warmer weather?
7. Do you listen to the weather reports? How much do you trust them?

VIKINGS IN THE MODERN WORLD



Many groups work to make the spirit of the Vikings live again, like the British society Regia Anglorum, seen here at the Jorvik Festival in York, England.

In many ways, the Vikings are still with us today. Of course, they stir up our imagination with their great adventures – enough to inspire countless novels, comic books, documentaries, reenactor societies and... a giant-screen film. But we also regularly use Viking words and

names today, for everything from the days of the week to a wireless computer technology called Bluetooth, after Danish king Harald Bluetooth.

Three English weekdays are named after Norse gods: Wednesday after Odin, Thursday after Thor, and Friday after Frey. The word starboard, used for the right side of a ship, comes from the Norse word “styrbord”, referring to the side of the ship to which the “styri” or rudder was attached.

In France and England, hundreds of towns and villages have names derived from old Norse words. In Normandy, for instance, many town names end with “-bec” (like Orbec), derived from the Norse word for stream (“bekk”). In Northeast-

ern England, there are dozens of place-names ending in “-by” (like Grimsby), the Norse word for farmstead.

The word Viking itself is regularly used in a modern context. Two of the space probes sent to Mars by NASA were called Viking. The football team from Minnesota, a state where many Scandinavians immigrated to, is also called The Vikings. And a quick Internet search will show up dozens of very different Viking companies: Viking Insurance, Viking Office Products, Viking Sewing Machines, Viking Mortgage, Viking Pumps, as well as Viking publishing and the Viking brand of home appliances.

For all your insurance needs, call Leif Eriksson at 555-1212? All this may not be what the first Vikings imagined when they set out for the raid on Lindisfarne or the voyages to Vinland, but it certainly shows how they still inspire us as examples of strength, ingenuity and determination.

ACTIVITY

YOUR NAME IN RUNES

In the Viking age, people wrote in runes, using a different alphabet than the one now in use in the western world. The main runic alphabet is known as the « futhark » alphabet, after its first six letters.

Use the grid below to write your real name, as well as your Viking name, in runic letters.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	th	ei	ng
F	B	C	D	M	F	X	N	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	TH	EI	NG

My real name is:

My Viking name is:

FURTHER READING

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, (Penguin)

A concise and up to date history of the Viking era, with chapters on all the main aspects of Norse politics, culture, society and foreign relations.

James Graham-Campbell, ed., *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Andromeda)

A broad look at everything that composed the Viking world, including a solid look at the periods that preceded the Viking age, and illustrated overviews of Norse art, geography, literature, daily life and social organization.

John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Viking World* (Penguin)

A geographically-based overview of the Viking world, providing, as the title indicates, numerous maps illustrating the Viking presence from Scandinavia itself to Constantinople in the East and Vinland in the West.

William J. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, eds., *Vikings : The North Atlantic Saga* (Smithsonian Institution Press)

A serious, scientific overview of the current state of our knowledge of the Norse, focusing on their exploration and colonization of the North Atlantic. Often complex, but also remarkably well-illustrated.

The Vinland Sagas (Penguin)

A basic edition of the original text of *The Greenlanders' Saga* and *Erik the Red's Saga* in English translation.

INTERNET RESOURCES



<http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/>

The official web site of the major exhibition *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* organized by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in the year 2000.

http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/nl/meadows/index_e.asp

The official web site of L'Anse-aux-Meadows National Historical Landmark, the only recognized Norse archeological site in North America.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/>

An extensive web site from the British Broadcasting Corporation, offering much information and interactive activities, as well as a wide-ranging educational section.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/>

A highly educational web site created as a companion to the documentary series on the Viking Age produced by PBS in the late 1990s.

<http://www.civilization.ca/archo/helluland/str0001e.html>

The web site for the Canadian Museum of Civilisations' Project Helluland, a scientific research project that has been demonstrating extensive links between Greenland Norse populations and the paleo-Inuit populations in the Middle Ages.

<http://www.ukm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/indexe.shtml>

The web site for the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, Norway, where the most famous excavated Viking ships of all, the Gokstad and Öseberg ships, are displayed.

<http://www.mindwave.co.uk/vikings/>

A comprehensive list of resources on the Viking Age, including numerous links to other Internet resources on this subject.

<http://viking.no/e/>

A Norwegian-based web site for the Viking Network, with many interesting basic texts on various aspects of the Viking Age and a list of Internet links.

www.regia.org/vikings.htm

The website of Regia Anglorum, the principal Viking and Anglo-Saxon reenactment society in Great Britain, with information on how to put together a realistic recreation of the Viking Age.

ABOUT VIKINGS

Sky High Entertainment has traveled thousands of miles to bring audiences back one thousand years

Following some of the greatest explorers in human history took a lot of careful research, a bit of imagination, and a large amount of traveling, around the North Atlantic Ocean, in the footsteps of the Vikings.



Filming on location at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Newfoundland.

Work began with several months of research, including visits to and e-mail discussions with experts from Canada, the United States, Iceland, Greenland, Norway and England, in order to get the most up-to-date research and most precise information available on various aspects of the Viking Age. Experts consulted included archeologists, scholars of the Icelandic sagas and historians of the Middle Ages. Members of the Vikings team traveled to Iceland, to Lindisfarne and York, in England, and, of course, to L'Anse-aux-Meadows, in Newfoundland, in the months preceding shooting, to get a feeling of the actual locations where this era of human adventure took place.

This preparation allowed for the filming of Vikings, both on location and in the studio. A 53-foot (17-

meter) longship, following the proportions and appearance of actual historical ships found in Norway, was built in studio, while a Viking sod house and part of the Lindisfarne monastery were built up on the shores of the St-Lawrence River, in Quebec, to create some of the scenes set in Iceland, Greenland and England. Historical reenactments were also filmed at L'Anse-aux-Meadows itself. Dozens of Viking reenactors were also dressed up in full Viking gear, to recreate a credible feeling for events that had happened a thousand years ago. Experts like archeologist Birgitta Wallace, who conducted digs for several years at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, were on hand to ensure that the scenes would be historically correct as possible.

There were, of course, some difficulties... so to speak. When filming in Iceland took place, it was planned that certain shots would involve time-lapse photography, showing the clouds rolling over locations, using the ever changing Icelandic weather to give a sense of the passage of time. The weather, however, remained stubbornly sunny and stable – something which, on the other hand, was all the more useful for the aerial shots of the stunning landscapes of Iceland and Greenland.

As the production team for this production visited the locations that were actually explored and settled, one thing was clear to everyone: with such larger than life adventures, the Viking Age certainly belongs on the world's largest film screens.

Vikings is a production of Sky High Entertainment, a film production company based in Quebec City in Canada. You can learn more about the company and about the company's production by visiting the Sky High website at:

<http://www.shemovie.com>