

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 2 - ©

The Vikings and Erik the Red

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Learning



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Explorers and Settlers

Have you ever thought about what lies on the far side of the sea?

We didn't always have maps to show us. Once people had to sail in boats to discover what was there.



A Viking

Some of the greatest explorers were the Vikings. They lived in Northern Europe more than a thousand years ago.

They sailed from their homes and settled across Europe and all the way to North America!



A map showing Northern Europe and some places where the Vikings settled



Viking ships



A Viking attacking from a ship

The word Viking means “pirate.” That is because the Vikings sailed across the sea looking for places to attack.

These fighters arrived at a faraway coast ready to fight. Their axes and swords were sharp. They wore helmets, too. Some of them may even have been women.



A Viking helmet, sword, and shield

Imagine these frightening people arriving on the beach and charging toward you to kill you! Some of their warriors would howl like wolves!

The Life of a Viking

What was life like for a Viking?

The Vikings ate two meals a day. They ate mostly fish, meat, and bread. They didn't have forks. Instead, they ate with knives. They also had spoons.

The Vikings were also very clean. They had combs and ear-cleaners. They took baths about once a week, more than most people at that time. They valued blond hair, and even dyed their hair blond.



A Viking village



A Viking ship with oars for rowing

The Vikings built beautiful sailing ships that were very fast. They could travel up to two hundred kilometers a day!

They could also row the boats if they needed to. These ships allowed the Vikings to travel quickly across the sea.

Usually, the Vikings buried their dead heroes in their boats. They often set these on fire.



A Viking house



A Viking warrior

Their Influence

The Vikings stayed in many of the countries they attacked. They built new homes in Russia, the United Kingdom, and Iceland.

They had an important influence on the places they settled. In particular, they changed the language and the culture. For example, many English words come from the Viking language. “Thursday” was named after the Viking god of thunder called Thor. It used to be called “Thor’s day.”



The Viking god of thunder, Thor



The remains of a Viking ship

The Most Famous Viking of All

One famous Viking explorer and adventurer was called Erik the Red. He was named after his red hair.

Erik the Red was born in Norway but moved to Iceland when he was about 10 years old. As an adult, he had a bad temper. And he was kicked out of Iceland for murder. He was forced to leave in about the year 982.



A map of Northern Europe showing Norway and Iceland



A pretty town in Iceland today

Comprehension Questions

1. Where did the Vikings come from?
 - (a) Central Europe
 - (b) Northern Europe
 - (c) North America
 - (d) South America
2. Were the Viking warriors women?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) All of them were
 - (d) Some of them may have been
3. How clean were the Vikings?
 - (a) As clean as most people today
 - (b) Not very clean
 - (c) Cleaner than most people at the time
 - (d) All of the above
4. How fast could the Viking ships travel?
 - (a) Up to 200 kilometers a day
 - (b) 20 kilometers a day
 - (c) Not very fast
 - (d) 150 kilometers an hour
5. Why was Erik called “the Red”?
 - (a) He had a bad temper.
 - (b) His boat had a red sail.
 - (c) He wore red clothes.
 - (d) His hair was red.
6. Why did Erik choose the name Greenland?
 - (a) It had many green plants.
 - (b) Its grass was very green.
 - (c) He wanted to encourage people to go there.
 - (d) Green was his favorite color.
7. Where did the Vikings believe their heroes went after death?
 - (a) Into the earth
 - (b) To heaven
 - (c) To Valhalla
 - (d) To a burning ship
8. Where was Vinland probably located?
 - (a) New York
 - (b) South America
 - (c) Newfoundland
 - (d) All of the above
9. Why did the Vikings abandon Greenland?
 - (a) It became colder.
 - (b) They missed their homes.
 - (c) The Inuit people scared them away.
 - (d) Their animals died.
10. Who are most Greenlanders descended from?
 - (a) Erik the Red
 - (b) Leif Erikson
 - (c) The Vikings
 - (d) The Inuit

Glossary

- **adapt** to change in order to fit a new situation
- **ax** a tool with a sharp metal edge used to chop wood
- **be descended from** to be a child, grandchild, great-grandchild, etc. of a person
- **charge** to attack someone or something by moving forward quickly
- **comb** a small, flat tool with a line of long teeth used to tidy your hair
- **dye** to change the color of something
- **faraway** very far; in the distance
- **howl** to cry or wail loudly
- **ice age** a time when the earth’s surface is covered with ice
- **influence** the power to change people, actions, or events
- **Inuit** native peoples of the Arctic region
- **pirate** a person who attacks ships in order to steal things
- **saga** a long, detailed story
- **survive** to remain alive
- **sword** a long metal weapon with sharp edges and a point
- **temper** an angry mood or fit
- **Viking** a person belonging to a race of Scandinavian people who attacked the coasts of Europe long ago
- **warrior** a courageous or skilled fighter in a battle or war
- **wolf** a wild animal like a large dog

Key

1. (b) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (c) 5. (d) 6. (c) 7. (c) 8. (c) 9. (a) 10. (d)