

THE VIKINGS

Mark It on the Map

Have students study each map on pages 24–25. Have them point out the location of each civilization already studied in this unit (Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece) and note how far it is from the areas explored by the Vikings. As students read the main articles, have them refer to the appropriate map and note the location of each site.

Vocabulary

rune	longship
mercenary	ballast
saga	tree ring
iron slag	

Introduction

Have students read “Message From the Editors” on pages 2–3 and then flip through the issue to see whether any of the illustrations seem familiar to them. Let those who find a familiar photo explain where they have seen it. Before turning to page 4, ask students what aspect of Viking life interests them most and what they hope to learn from reading this issue.

Questions for Discussion

- How do rune stones help historians?
- What especially contributed to the success of the early Viking raiders?
- Why did Vikings leave their homeland and sail east seeking new lands?
- What finds at L’Anse aux Meadows prove that it was an ancient Viking settlement?
- What was the basic design of a Viking longship, and how was it constructed?
- Who were the Varangians, and what was the Varangian Guard?
- How did the people of Constantinople repel the three Viking attempts to conquer the city?

Writing Workout

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- List several areas in which the Viking heritage is evident today. Be specific and give examples.
- Read “Meet the Vikings” on pages 44–45. Write to the Press and Public Relations Department of the York Archaeological Trust asking for brochures about the trust’s work and for any information about new and recent finds.

Viewpoints

The Vikings earned a reputation for raiding and fighting that has lasted through the centuries. Ask students whether they think this is a fair assessment of Viking culture. Why or why not?

Then and Now

The Up-Helly-Aa festival is a continuing tradition among the people of the Shetland Islands. Have students list as many ways as possible in which such a tradition benefits a people and a culture. Make sure they explain each entry on the list in detail.

Get Into Art

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- *Handsala* (page 14) was a Viking tradition to seal business transactions. Make a collage of pictures showing people today shaking hands to show their agreement.
- After reading “The Hope of the Volsungs” on pages 18–21, illustrate the story using your imagination and creativity.

Class Projects

- Arrange to take a walk with the class in a nearby wooded area. Look for old tree stumps and broken limbs. Have students count the rings of each, taking notes all the time. Back in the classroom, have students compare and contrast their finds.
- Have students carefully note dates mentioned in the time line on pages 44–45. Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to find out what important events occurred in other parts of the world at the time the Vikings were heading south and west. Ask the other group to find out what important events occurred in other parts of the world at the time the Vikings were heading east. Then have each group make a time line with Viking events on one side of the line and other events on the other side. Hang the two time lines in the classroom.
- Divide students into groups and have each group think about a festival or tradition it would like to see preserved for centuries. This may be done as a roundtable discussion with a spokesperson for each group, or each group may design a chart that expresses their thoughts. Make sure students clearly explain why they chose their festival, why it should become a continuing tradition, and the manner in which it should be celebrated.

Research Project

Have students find out where on the Thames River the bridge destroyed by the Vikings was located and when a new London Bridge was built to replace it. Also have them research subsequent London Bridges. The final section of their report should include what happened to the proverbial bridge in the twentieth century and where it can be found today.

Map Activity

Have students draw the outline of Scandinavia, Great Britain, France, and the Iberian Peninsula on a large piece of paper (poster size). Make sure they include the islands off England and Scotland. Then ask them to read “The Vikings Head South” on pages 7–11 and mark each conquest and its date with a different-colored magic marker, crayon, or pen. Also have them write the name of the Viking who led the raid and conquered the territory.

Literature Enrichment

Get a copy of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Tales of a Wayside Inn* and read out loud his version of the “Saga of King Olaf.”

Just for Fun

Students may complete one or both of the following activities:

- Form a small group and follow the directions on pages 22–23 to make a Hnefatafl board and *hnefi* figures. Then take some time to play the game.
- After reading about the Varangians, fill in the blanks in the puzzle on page 38.

Follow These Footsteps

Alfred the Great	Gudrid	Rurik	Hrólf
Ragnar Thorseth	Olaf Haraldsson	Eirik the Red	Igor
Andrew E. Douglass	Harald of Norway	Oleg	Thorvald
Bjarni Herjolfsson	Harald Hardraada	Leif Eiriksson	Vladimir
Snorri	William, Duke of Normandy		