

The Vikings

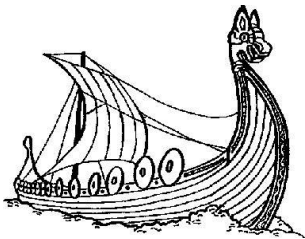


From around 700 to 1100 AD there existed a group of people who left their mark on European history. The Vikings were a fierce group of people whose lifestyle and footnote in history was determined as much by the geography in which they grew up in as their violent way of life.

The Vikings came from the modern-day countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and many parts of these regions are defined by coastal **fjords** or rocky, mountainous coastal inlets. These inlets made farming difficult and transportation difficult unless it was made by water. Consequently, the Vikings became great sailors who would look to other areas of Europe to take what they couldn't provide for themselves but needed.

Innovation and Mastering the Waters

Taking an existing invention, such as the boat, and re-designing it or improving it in order to meet new or specific needs is called **innovation** and human history is full of innovators who literally changed the course of history by looking at a problem and applying old knowledge and technology in a new way. The Vikings were great innovators, and they developed a new style of ship called a "longboat" that was perfect, not only for coastal transportation, but river travel as well. The shallow, wide style of construction would be perfect for navigating inland and would enable them to find new ways to support themselves, specifically by **raiding**. In the beginning, raiding became the preferred way in which the Vikings supported them and their families. The land they came from was not good for farming, so they looked to other lands around Europe that were good farming lands and they raided or attacked them and took what they wanted and needed.



A Viking Longboat

The Vikings were fierce warriors and much of their success came from being able to guide their ships inland up rivers that were too shallow for traditional ships and surprise villages and towns that thought they were safe from invaders. The name "Viking" comes from an old Norse word meaning "pirate raid". To go "Viking" was to raid and plunder, much like a pirate. The Vikings used their longboats to raid all over Europe and travelled even as far as North America. Even though the Vikings didn't mind navigating the rivers of Europe, raiding as far away as Russia, they found easier and closer riches in the modern-day country of Great Britain. Here they would find a Christian land that they could hate and take from. The Vikings were pagans who believed in "the old gods" and saw no harm in taking from and killing the Christian Anglo-Saxons who were living there.

Fjord - the geographical term used to describe long coastal inlets surrounded by mountains, similar to the coastline of northern British Columbia.

Innovation - the term used to describe the process of taking a known invention and re-designing it or use it in a new way to serve a new purpose.

Raiding - a military practice of surprising an opponent with a determined force who would then loot and pillage from those who they attacked.

Viking Craftsmanship

The Vikings were not only great sailors and shipbuilders. They were also fine craftsmen with some of their best work being in metal. They took particular care in the making of their weapons such as swords, spears, javelins, battle axes and their distinctive round shields. They liked to give special names to their favorite weapon. A battle axe for instance might be called the "brain-biter", or they would name their arrows "wound bees". Viking helmets were made of beaten metal with wings on either side, but not the horns of popular myth. Viking craftsmen liked working in precious metals often using the gold and silver they stole from monasteries to make, gold collars, arm bands and other forms of jewelry. Their craftsmanship extended to other harder metals as well and it was common for them to decorate their shields and sword handles with intricate designs.

The Vikings in Britain

The Vikings started by raiding English Christian **monasteries** because the monasteries had lots of gold and food and were run by religious monks who did not know how to defend themselves very well. The Vikings soon realized that the riches of England also came in the form of their rich farmland. Soon, the Vikings not only raided English villages, but they began to settle in them as well. So many Vikings settled in Eastern and Northern Britain that for a while these lands came to be known as Danelaw and was ruled by Danish or Viking Kings. The Vikings would remain powerful in Britain until the Saxon King Alfred (The Great) began to re-claim England for the Saxons. Today, many people in Britain can lay claim to Viking ancestors and modern **geneticists**, or scientists who study the hereditary history that is mapped out in our genes support the idea that many Vikings stayed and continued to have families in England after their defeat.

After the Vikings, the Saxons would rule most of Britain until 1066 AD when an invader would come across the English Channel for a final time. William The Conqueror would conquer England and set forth a new system of governing called the Feudal system which would dominate how Britain and most of Europe was run for the next 300 years.

The Vikings played a large role in the history of Europe and Britain and even a small role in the history of Canada. Viking settlements have been found in Newfoundland, providing evidence that they were great explorers as well. It was this, the Viking ability to master the seas and their violent culture of raiding that enabled them to be successful for so long.

Monastery - a religious based community that worked the land to provide for themselves everything they needed in order to devote themselves to their faith. They were "easy pickings" for the Vikings.

Geneticists - Scientists who use modern-day technology to make, analyze and study the human genome or a person's DNA. They can use this information to study diseases or find out a person's ancestral background.



The Vikings

Directions: READ the handout entitled: "Early Middle Ages - The Vikings" and then answer the following questions:

1. Use your handout to provide definitions for the following terms: (1 mark each)

Fjord *Innovation* *Raiding*
Monastery *Geneticist*

2. On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions using **COMPLETE SENTENCES**:

- a. In your own words, describe why the Vikings became such good sailors and why did they become the violent raiders of Europe? (2 marks for quality of response and inclusion of details)
- b. In your own words, describe how the innovation of the Viking longboat helped them. Aside from shipbuilding what else were they good at? (2 marks for the quality of your response and evidence of thought and effort)
- c. In your own words, describe why the Vikings began to settle in Britain. Who would be the Saxon who would eventually re-claim Britain for the Saxons? (2 marks for quality of response and evidence of insight)

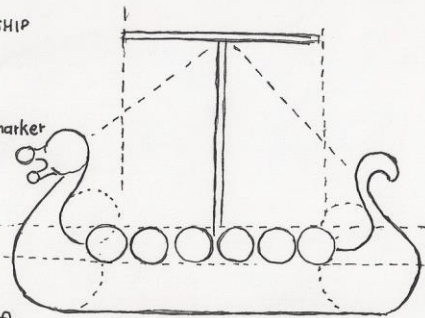
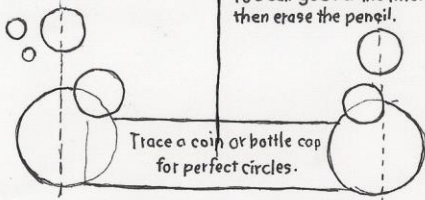
3. Draw your own Viking Longboat. Use the following instructions to draw **AND COLOUR** your own Viking Longboat

You will be marked out of 15 for quality of work, and evidence of effort

HOW TO DRAW A VIKING SHIP

It is ok to use a ruler.

Draw lightly so you can erase later.
You can go over the lines with a fine marker
then erase the pencil.

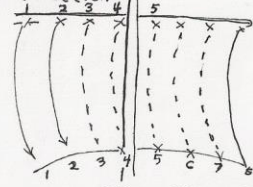


The tongue and the eyebrow are shaped like the letter "S".



Color the stripes red.

Mark the top and bottom of the sail so the stripes will be even.

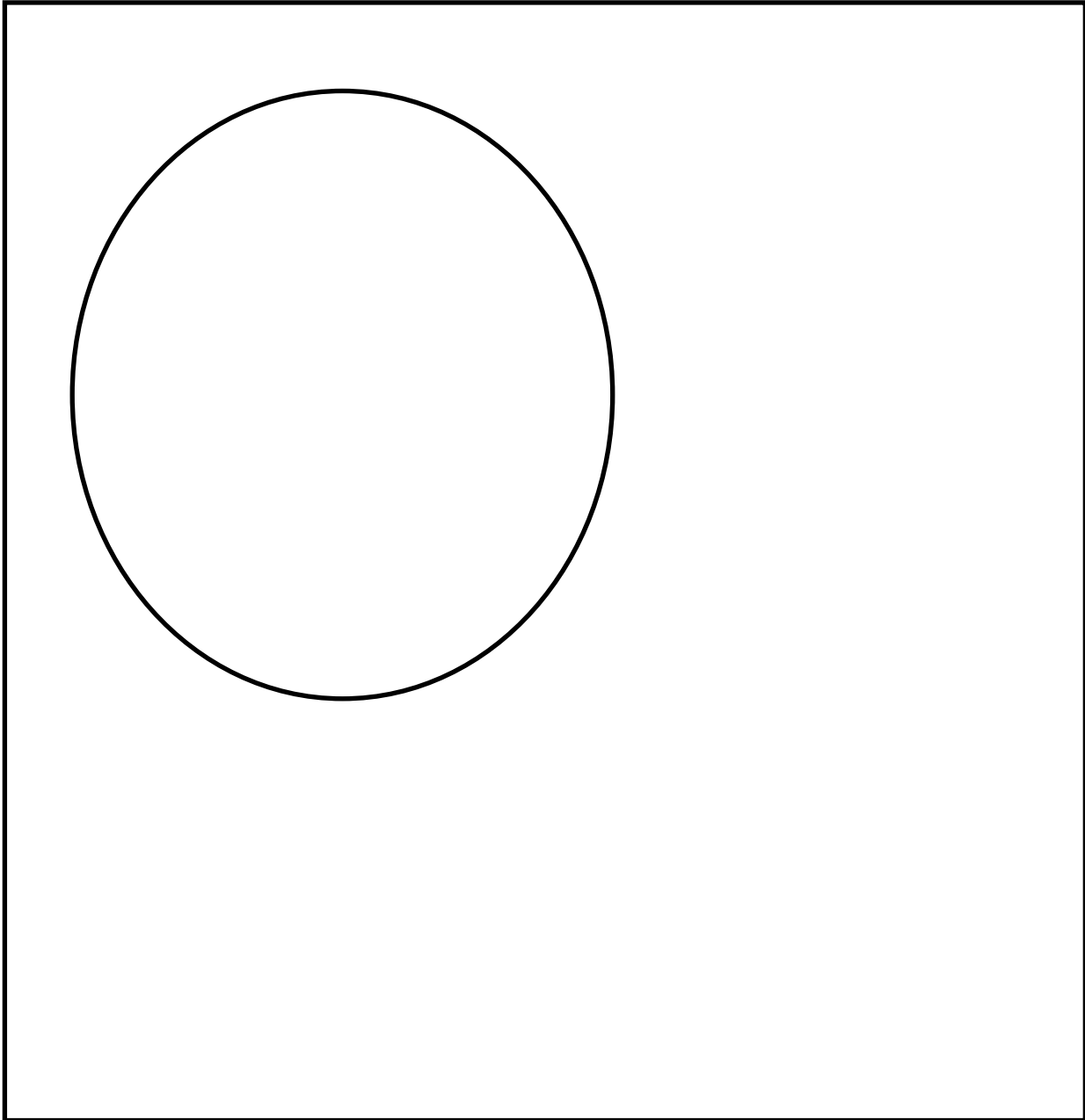


Draw the Vikings last.
Keep the heads simple.



4. In the following box, design, colour, and name your own Viking shield and weapon:

You will be marked out of 10 for quality of work, and evidence of effort



Name of your Viking shield and weapon: _____ (shield) and
_____ (weapon).

Total: ____ /36