

7



Source 7.1 This Viking helmet, made around AD 950, is evidence of the skilled craftsmanship of Vikings.

THE VIKINGS

Towards the end of the 8th century, Norsemen ('men from the north') began carrying out a series of violent raids across northern Europe, terrifying many people in the region. During these lightning raids, they ransacked monasteries and towns, killing countless numbers of people or taking them prisoner.

Over time, Norsemen came to be more commonly known as 'Vikings', a word that comes from the old Norwegian word *Vik*, meaning 'inlet of the sea'. The Vikings were skilled sailors and shipbuilders, and their feats of exploration across the sea are still admired today.

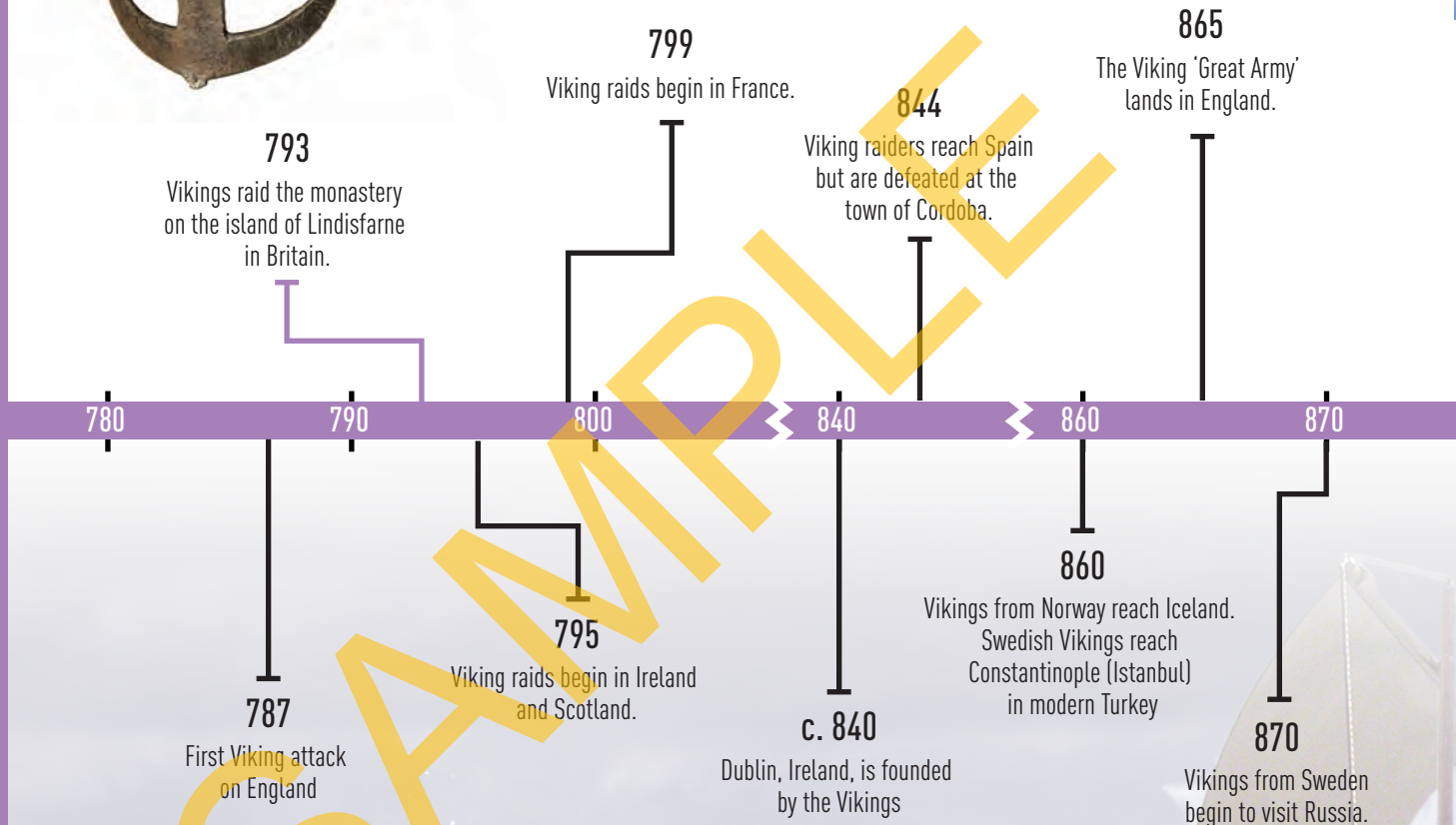
By around the AD 1000, the Vikings were settling in many of the places they had raided, and most had stopped worshipping the Norse gods and adopted Christianity.

THE VIKINGS – A TIMELINE



Source 7.2 Viking helmets such as this were commonly worn on raids

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Source 7.4 An artist's impression of a Viking longboat carrying warriors to a raid

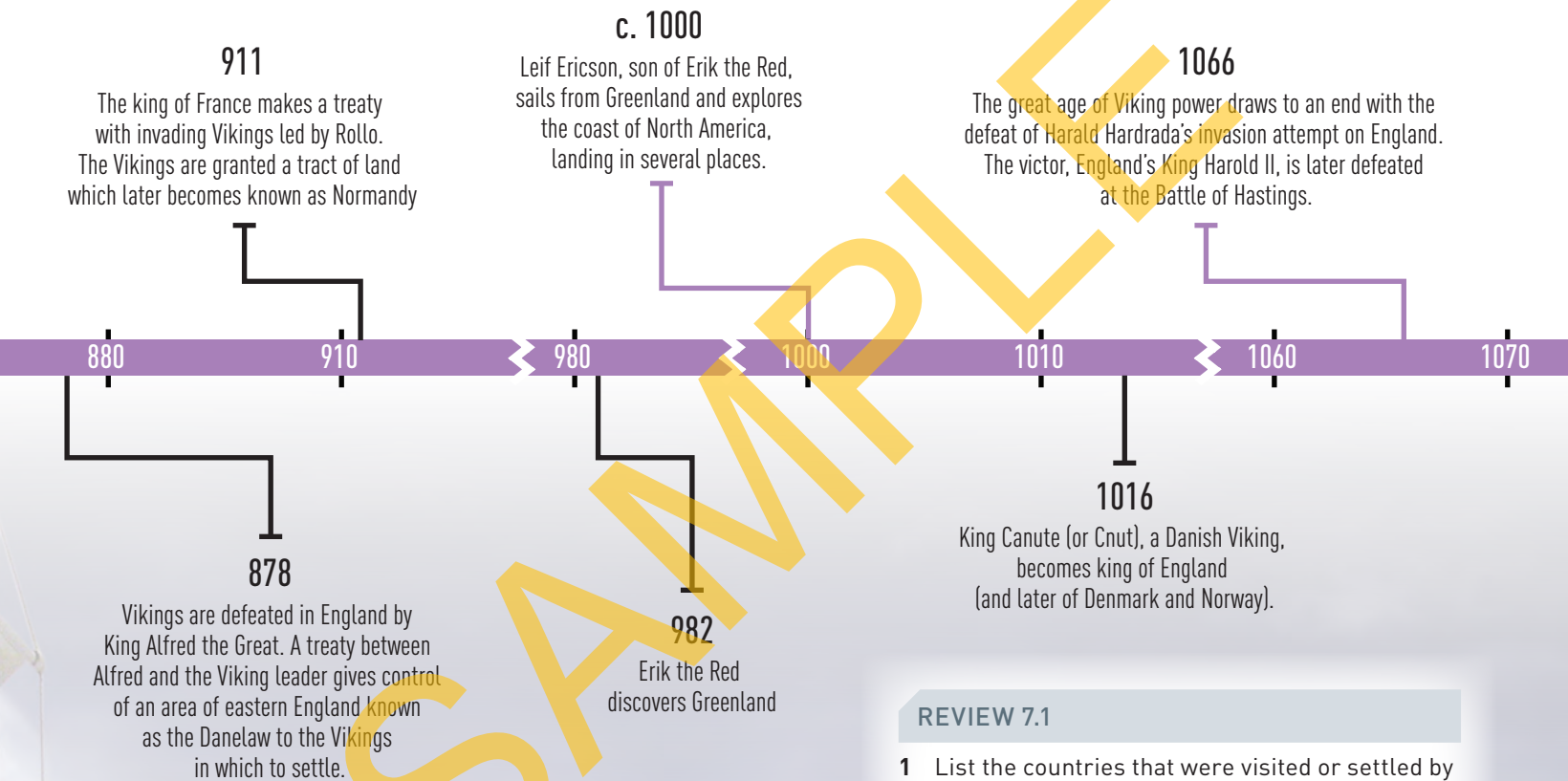




Source 7.3 A statue of Leif Ericson in the capital of Iceland, Reykjavik



Source 7.5 A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry. This famous medieval embroidery shows events that led to the victory of the Normans over the English at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.



REVIEW 7.1

- 1 List the countries that were visited or settled by the Vikings.
- 2 What was the Danelaw?
- 3 Which Viking leader was defeated by England's King Harold II?
- 4 For how many years did the Viking Age last?



7.1

SECTION

WHAT WERE THE KEY FEATURES OF VIKING SOCIETY AND WAY OF LIFE?

In this section, you will be learning about the structure of Viking society and their many accomplishments. The 'men from the north' were more than just fierce fighters looking for loot. Their society had a rich culture, and many people in Viking communities were mostly involved in peaceful activities, such as farming and creating works of fine craftsmanship.

APPLY 7.1

- 1 Find a physical map of Scandinavia in an atlas. Estimate the proportion of land in Norway, Denmark and Sweden that is mountainous, forested or used to grow crops. Compare your estimate with a partner's.
- 2 Conduct research to find the facts about Scandinavia's climate, including temperature ranges in different seasons.



Source 7.7 A typical landscape in many parts of Scandinavia

THE VIKING HOMELANDS

The Viking homelands were located in northern Europe, in the modern-day Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway (see Source 7.6). The geographical location and natural features of Scandinavia helped shape Viking society and way of life. Their great distance from southern and central Europe meant that they were not heavily influenced by other European societies up to around AD 790 – the beginning of what is called the Viking Age. For example, the Vikings were not Christian. Their religious beliefs were **polytheistic**, meaning they believed in many gods.

The Scandinavian landscape features long coastlines, many islands and narrow inland waterways called fjords (pronounced *fyords*). Dense forests and high mountains were natural barriers to much of inland Scandinavia. This meant that it was easier for the Vikings to travel between their settlements by boat, and they became expert sailors and shipbuilders. It also meant that only narrow strips of land on the coast or beside the fjords were suitable for farming.

When the Vikings began to explore beyond their homelands, geography was also a factor influencing their movements. Vikings in present-day Norway explored to the west; those in present-day Sweden turned to the east, and those in present-day Denmark directed their attention to the coastlines of the North Sea,



Source 7.6 The location of the Viking homelands

REVIEW 7.2

- 1 Where were the Viking homelands located?
- 2 List some of the natural features of the Viking homelands.
- 3 Explain why the Vikings were a seafaring people.

VIKING SOCIETY

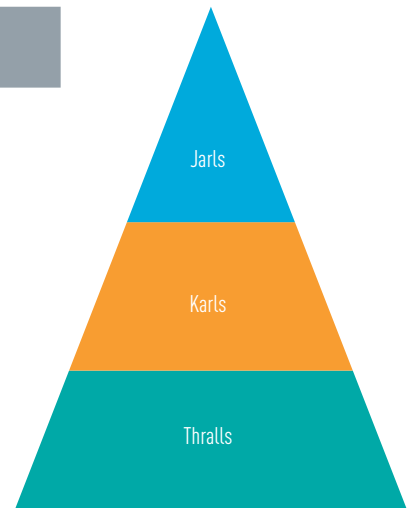
The Viking homelands were made up of a number of independent kingdoms. Within these Viking communities, each group knew its role and responsibilities. Individuals were influenced by a set of laws, an economic system, and a set of beliefs and values.

Viking social structure

Viking society was divided into three main classes. At the top were the *jarls* (pronounced *yarls*) who were the rulers, and the wealthiest members of the community. Their wealth and authority came through inheriting land or being successful in battle. The title *konungr* (king) was given to the *jarl* who was chief of his community. The power of Viking kings varied: some ruled over small regions, while others ruled over people rather than specific areas of land. Each king depended on the support of the *jarls* in his community.

At the middle level of society were the *karls*, who made up the majority in Viking communities. There was a broad range of wealth within this group. *Karls* could be farmers, merchants, hunters, fishermen, shipbuilders, weavers or blacksmiths – to name just a few occupations. Some Vikings belonged to a class of professional warriors; however, most of the Vikings who went on raids were *karls*. They took part in raids for the adventure, as well to bring back wealth.

Thralls were slaves. They had few rights and were not permitted to own land. Some *thralls* were foreigners who had been captured in raids and then traded as slaves. Others had become *thralls* because they had been unable to pay their debts. The Vikings generally believed *thralls* should be treated well. However, if a *thrall* broke the law, instead of being fined like other members of the community, they could be beaten, maimed or killed. A master who killed a *thrall* would not be punished.



Source 7.8 The structure of Viking society

The roles of a Viking *karl*

Source 7.9

Winter he would spend at home on Gairsay, where he entertained some 80 men at his own expense ... In the spring he had ... a great deal of seed to sow ... Then when that job was done he would go off plundering in the Hebrides [islands off the coast of Scotland] and in Ireland ... then back home just after mid summer, where he stayed until the cornfields had been reaped [harvested] and the grain was safely in. After that he would go off raiding again, and never came back till the first month of winter was ended.

A translated extract from the *Orkneyinga saga*, an Icelandic saga written in the 1100s. It provides a perspective on a Viking named Svein Asleifarson, who lived on one of the Orkney Islands (off the coast of Scotland)



Source 7.10 An artist's impression of the dual roles of a Viking *karl*

SOURCE STUDY

INTERPRET 7.1

- 1 What are the two roles of a Viking *karl*, as presented in Source 7.9 and Source 7.10?
- 2 For each of these roles, describe the typical clothing and the 'tools of the trade'.
- 3 Suggest the different reasons why a farmer would leave his fields and family to take part in a raid?
- 4 Use the information in Source 7.9 to create a 'yearly planner', showing the months when the *karl* farmed and those when he went on raids. Remember to reverse the seasons for the northern hemisphere.

Viking law

The Vikings had a system of strict laws that guided behaviour in their communities. Each community had an assembly, known as a *thing*, which was like a combination parliament and court. All adults, except *thralls* and people who were living in exile from their communities, attended *things* once a year, to settle disputes and make new laws. Viking laws were not written down until the 12th century because most Vikings could not read or write. Instead, laws were preserved in the memory of a law speaker. It was his job to remember all laws and recite them loudly at each *thing*. Viking codes of behaviour and values are also evident in their **sagas** (long stories or accounts of history told in verse).

The Vikings respected their laws. This is because the honour and reputation of each individual was important, and because some punishments were very harsh. There were several ways of settling disputes, apart from attending the annual *thing* assembly:

- **Feuds.** If a man was killed, his family felt it was their duty to avenge his death. This could lead to further revenge killings, and a feud could go on for many years.
- **Duels.** Sometimes quarrels were settled by duels. The duellists struck each other in turn. A dueller was defeated as soon as his blood touched the ground. To win a duel was regarded as proof that you were right, because the gods always helped the right man to win.
- **Fines.** Some quarrels were ended by the guilty party paying a fine. The money had to be paid in public, in front of witnesses. All Viking goods were valued at a certain amount. The value of an item was its *wergild*. Anyone caught stealing had to pay back the value of what they had taken.
- **Outlaw.** For a serious crime, a person might be made an outlaw ('outside the law'). Outlaws had to live in the wilderness and no-one was allowed to help them in any way. If they were hunted down and killed there was no penalty for the person who killed them.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Today Iceland's parliament is still called the *Althing*. Every year Icelanders gather at a rocky outcrop called the Lögberg (Law Rock), to commemorate the site where the law speaker first stood to proclaim the laws in AD 930.

EXTEND 7.1

- 1 Imagine you were outlawed and sent away from your community. List the different ways it would affect you. Then list the ways it would have affected a Viking living in 8th-century Scandinavia. Comment on why being made an outlaw was such a harsh punishment.

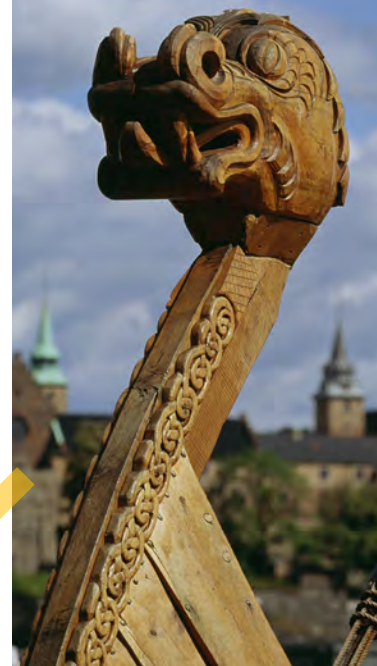
The law of the Vikings

SOURCE STUDY

Source 7.11

You who would be a Viking, these things you must know,
The old grow weak in battle, the sword shakes in their hand.
When the ice wind blows, the bones of old men are cold, and will not move.
When the seas grow wild, the bones of old men are weak.
Old men should tell tales to the young, the Viking life is not for old men.
The great sea is strong, the great wind is cold, the battle is too fierce.
Old men will stay on the shores and tell tales to young boys.
No man of fifty summers or more may be a Viking.
No boy of less than eighteen winters may be a Viking.
In battle, a Viking sees his foes.
He does not turn his back in fear and cry like a child when death is before him.
The worth of a man is in his arm, and in his sword.
On a Viking ship all men are brothers, brothers in battle, sword for sword.
And when the wind dies and the sea is still, then all must pull the boat to land,
Brothers at the oars.
And when there is food, or gold, or silk, or good wine, or strong beer, it is the same for each. No man will take more than any other.
And if one breaks this rule and is found out, he will be sent away.
When the sky is black and the seas like mountains, and Death rides down from the clouds in blackness, with his voice of thunder on a sheet of lightning,
No man will speak of fear.
And although the sun burns and the lips crack, and the seas are glass, and the winds are still, and there be no food or water,
No man will speak of fear.
And in battle, no man will speak of fear.
No prisoners will be taken in battle – not even women or children.
It is better to die free than to live in chains.
You who would be a Viking, this you must know:
The law of the Viking must not be broken.

Extract from a Viking saga



Source 7.12 A dragon head on the prow (front end) of a replica Viking longship in Norway

INTERPRET 7.2

According to the saga:

- 1 What are the age limits to be a Viking warrior?
- 2 What is meant by the sentence 'The worth of a man is in his arm, and in his sword'?
- 3 What is the most important characteristic of life on board a Viking ship?
- 4 List the difficulties that could be faced by Viking warriors.
- 5 Why do you think that Viking law dictated that no prisoners were to be taken in battle? What other guideline in Source 7.11 might be the reason?

Economy and trade

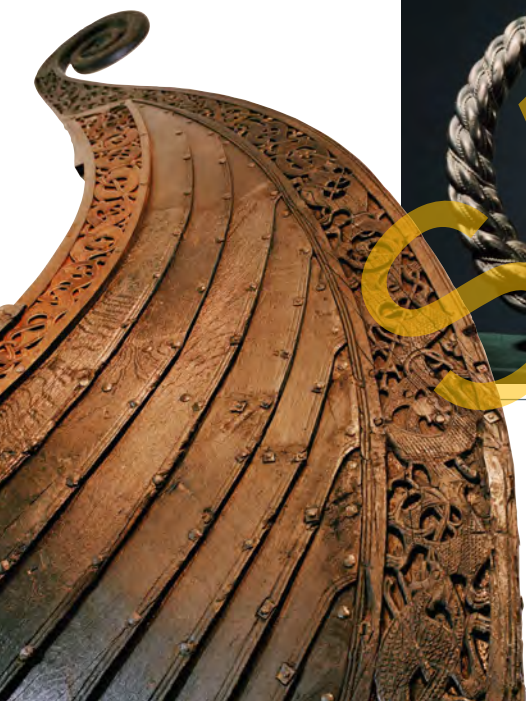
Early in the Viking Age, the economy was based mainly on agriculture. However, as Viking societies grew larger, the lack of good farming land meant that local agriculture was not enough to meet the needs of the larger population. Viking merchants travelled across the seas and down rivers, carrying timber, leather shoes and bags, smoked fish, ambergris (from whale intestines), fur, artefacts carved from walrus tusks and whale bones, jewellery and slaves. These were exchanged for goods such as wheat, iron, silverware, wine, spices, silks, salt, weapons and glassware. At first, trade was conducted through a process of bartering (exchanging goods for other goods of similar value). Later, goods were bought and sold with coins. Coins found by archaeologists in Sweden have provided evidence that Vikings traded as far away as parts of modern-day Russia and Central Asia. We investigate the extent of Viking trade in Section 7.2.

Viking culture

The Vikings were accomplished craftspeople, poets and musicians. As well as making everyday items and weapons, Viking craftspeople produced luxury items such as fine gold and silver jewellery. The silver armlet shown in Source 7.13 is an example of the distinctive Viking style, with spirals ending in wolf's heads. Jewellery was highly decorative, frequently using symbols from Viking mythology and religion. The Vikings were also expert shipbuilders and woodcarvers. The detail of their carving is evident in the ship's prow (front), shown in Source 7.15.

SOURCE STUDY

Viking culture



Source 7.13 An 11th-century silver armlet, featuring a spiral design common in Viking work



Source 7.14 A wooden game board thought to have been used by the Vikings to play a strategic game similar to chess, known as *hnefatafl*

INTERPRET 7.3

- 1 What evidence do Sources 7.13 to 7.15 provide about Viking society?
- 2 In terms of its design and craftsmanship, how does the armlet shown in Source 7.13 compare with modern jewellery?

REVIEW 7.3

- 1 Outline the Viking social structure. Which social class made up the majority in a Viking community?
- 2 How were Viking laws remembered and communicated? Explain the reasons for this. **overmatter**

Source 7.15 The prow of a Viking ship

VIKING BELIEFS

APPLY 7.2

Vikings worshipped many different gods, although these beliefs died out once many converted to Christianity towards the end of the 9th century. The traditional stories about gods, giants and monsters are known as Norse or Viking mythology. Many of these stories tell of the creation of the world (see Source 7.16). Some of the stories about the gods of Viking mythology are presented in Source 7.17.

Source 7.16

In the beginning there was a world of ice and a world of fire. These collided and produced a giant named Ymir and a cow named Audhumla. The cow licked the ice and eventually revealed a man – Buri – who had been embedded in the ice. Buri married a giantess and their three grandsons – Odin, Vili and Ve – slew Ymir and from his body made the world. His blood became the lakes and seas, his flesh became the surface of the earth, his bones became the mountains, and rocks and pebbles were made from the teeth and jaws and any bones that were broken. They flung his brains into the air and they became the clouds.

Extract from a Viking creation myth

The Vikings believed that different gods were responsible for different areas of daily life. There were gods for harvests, love, family, fertility and war. It is thought that the Vikings made animal or human sacrifices to the gods to get something they needed, such as a good harvest or success in a battle.

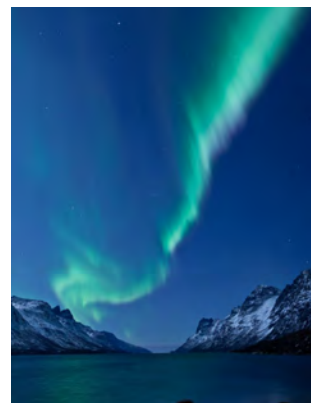
Source 7.17 Tales from Viking mythology

Chief of the gods is the one-eyed Odin (also known as Wodin), the god of death, war and wisdom. He traded his other eye for wisdom. With his two brothers, Odin created the nine worlds of the cosmos (universe). Midgard is the world of men, one of four worlds in the middle level of the cosmos. The other three are the worlds of dwarves, giants and dark elves. At the bottom level are the worlds of the dead, Hel and Niflheim.



Source 7.18 Odin

The home of the Norse gods is Asgard, filled with halls and palaces. The most splendid is Valhalla, the hall of the bravest of slain warriors. The slain warriors are brought to Asgard by the Valkyries, beautiful warrior women who ride flying horses. A colourful display of the Aurora Borealis (the northern lights sometimes seen in the northern hemisphere) is a sign they are riding the skies. At Valhalla, the warriors train for Ragnarok, the final battle that will end the cosmos. By day, they hack and chop at each other with swords and axes. At night, their bodies mend and they drink and feast with Odin.



Source 7.19 The aurora borealis, seen from Norway

- 1 Conduct research to create a presentation about five of the Norse gods. Describe the role and appearance of each god, and his or her relationships to other gods.

EXTEND 7.2

- 1 Compare the Viking creation myth in Source 7.16 with other creation myths, from the Bible or from the dreamtime stories of Indigenous Australians. How are the stories similar? How do they differ?
- 2 Compose your own creation myth. Remember that you are trying to explain to a non-scientific audience how the world, natural features, animals and people came to be.

overmatter

STRANGE BUT TRUE

In Viking York, people threw their rubbish, including food remains and human waste, into their back yards. Layers of deposited rubbish have provided archaeologists with evidence of Viking daily life. Shoes, socks and broken

overmatter

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE VIKING WORLD

Most Vikings lived in small villages made up of a few family groups who worked as farmers and craftspeople. Viking villages were often located near water – on a coastline or beside a river – making it easier to load and unload ships. Among the cluster of **longhouses** were barns to house animals and smoke fish, the workshops of village craftsmen, and an open area where markets were held.

Some Vikings lived in towns and cities, in their homelands or in foreign territories they had conquered and established themselves in. In these towns and cities, such as in Viking York in England (known as Jorvick), houses were built close together, and the streets were long and narrow. Homes doubled as workshops and people lived in cramped and dirty conditions.

SOURCE STUDY

Viking town and village



Source 7.21 The reconstructed Viking village at Fotevikens Museum, in Höllviken, Sweden. The museum is classified as an archaeological open-air museum, which means its buildings are true-to-scale reconstructions, built to be historically accurate and using original patterns.



Source 7.22 A reconstruction of a street scene in a Viking town, from the Jorvik Viking Centre, in York, England

INTERPRET 7.4

- 1 Describe the scenes shown in Sources 7.21 and 7.22, including materials used to make the buildings.
- 2 What might be a great danger when houses are grouped so closely together, as shown in Source 7.22?
- 3 Choose one of these images as the cover of an imaginary magazine called *Viking town and village*. Write some inventive and eye-catching headlines that would encourage people to want to live in the selected place.

Longhouses

Longhouses were rectangular buildings with rounded ends. Most people lived in longhouses that were around 5 metres wide and 12 metres long. The king or the most important *jarls* in a Viking community, however, lived in larger and more elaborately decorated longhouses that were around 30 to 60 metres long. Remnants of the longest known longhouse were found near Lofoten, in Norway. This longhouse had a length of 83 metres (see Source 7.23). Noisy feasts would be held in the longhouse of a *jarl* after successful raids, with men getting drunk for days on ale or mead (a drink of fermented honey). Entertainment might include dancing, poetry recitals and music played on fiddle-like instruments or animal horns.



Source 7.23 A reconstruction of the 83 metre longhouse found near Lofoten, Norway. It shows how earth was piled along walls, and sometimes over the roof, to insulate longhouses.

Longhouses were made of whatever materials were locally available, such as wood and stone. Walls could be made of wattle (sticks woven together and covered with mud), and roofs made of straw, reeds or turf (a thick mat of soil and grass). Longhouses had dirt floors. The sometimes (but rarely) had small windows, with animal bladders stretched across them to let in the light but keep out the cold. Usually the only opening in the longhouse, other than the doors, was a small hole in the roof to let out smoke from the fireplace below. Although the fireplace provided warmth, light and a means to cook, it also made the longhouse very smoky. Longhouses would have been dark, smelly, dirty places. With few openings, smoke, and the smells of sweat, sour milk and cooking mingled together and would hang in the air.

More modest longhouses usually had only one room for a family to live in. Wealthier Vikings improved their homes with a separate kitchen and storeroom, and partitioned sleeping places. The head of the family slept in a box bed and everyone else slept on raised platforms around the sides of the room.

Little furniture was used, often no more than a roughly made table and some benches covered in animal skins or with cloth bags filled with duck or goose feathers. (In fact, the word *doona* comes from the Norse word *dunn*, meaning 'feather down'.) Toilets were holes in the ground outside, as shown in Source 7.26. They may have been dug near wells that provided drinking water.



Source 7.24 A reproduction of a more modest Viking longhouse in a coastal village, at the Fotevikens Museum, in Sweden

APPLY 7.3

- 1 Which social classes would the people who used the longhouses of Sources 7.23 and 7.24 belong to? Make a table to list the possible similarities and differences between the two longhouses. Include comments on construction and uses.

APPLY 7.4

- 1 Draw a sketch of the interior of a typical Viking home, using content from the text and also drawing on your own research. Include detailed labels, and use an organisation chart to keep a record of key sources you used as references (see Source HT.xx in 'The Historian's toolkit' for a discussion of organisation charts).

Living in a longhouse

INTERPRET 7.5

- 1 Describe the interior of the longhouse shown in Source 7.25, and then use your observations to explain why longhouses would have been dark and smelly.
- 2 Considering both Sources 7.25 and 7.26, what health problems may have resulted from Viking living conditions?



Source 7.25 The interior of a reconstructed longhouse, at L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, where an 11th-century Viking settlement was discovered in the 1960s



Source 7.26 A reproduction of a Viking toilet, exhibited at the Jorvik Viking Centre, in York, England

APPLY 7.5

- 1 How does the Viking diet differ from yours? Use a Venn diagram to compare the similarities and differences in the types of foods eaten today and in the Viking world.

Food and diet

Fish and meat formed the basis of most Viking meals. Vikings ate mutton, goat meat, horse meat, beef and pork. They preferred to have their meat boiled. Other main foods were bread, porridge, eggs, milk, butter and cheese. Knives and spoons were used, but there were no forks. Bread and porridge were made from harvested grains, such as wheat, barley and rye. Vegetables such as onions, leeks, peas and cabbage were used in stews. The Vikings also collected fruits and berries from nearby forests, and hunted animals such as wild boar, seabirds, hare and elk. During the summer months, fish and meat would be smoked, dried and salted, then stored to last through the long winter.

A piece of fossilised Viking excrement, discovered by archaeologists at Jorvik, in England, has provided evidence about the diet and health of Vikings. It revealed that one particular Viking was not a great vegetable eater, instead living mainly on meat and grains such as bran. His fossilised poo also contains the traces of several hundred parasite eggs, which means that his stomach and intestines were full of worms.



Source 7.27 The simple and typical diet of Vikings



Source 7.28 Fossilised excrement on display at the Jorvik Viking Centre, in York, England

Vikings at work

Farming was the primary occupation of most Vikings. Whole families would take part in the various seasonal jobs involved in running a farm. Crops would be grown during the summer, harvested in autumn, and then stored for the long winter.

Some Vikings were builders, blacksmiths or craftspeople. Their furniture-making and house-construction were essential to the community. Ordinary metalworkers produced farming tools, while the most skilled craftsmen would specialise in making the finest weapons, such as swords. Boat builders created everything from fishing boats to the longships that carried Viking raiders to distant lands.



Source 7.29 An re-enactment of a Viking blacksmith at work, at the Fotevikens Museum

Viking women and children

Viking women who were left behind when their men went raiding or trading had to manage on their own. This might mean taking on farm chores, tending to and **butchering** animals, and overseeing slaves. As a result, Viking women were very independent. This was unusual compared with many other societies in Europe at this time. Viking women could choose husbands for themselves, decide to divorce their husbands, or **buy** land. A woman's main role, whether her husband was at home or not, was to **look after children** and **manage** the home. Common tasks for all but the wealthiest women (**who might have the help of slaves**) included spinning and weaving, collecting firewood and **preparing food stores for** the winter.

Viking children did not go to school or have a **formal education**. Sons helped their fathers on the farm or in the workshop, and learned **Viking history, religion** and law from spoken

overmatter



Source 7.30 A reconstruction of a Viking craftsman using animal bone and deer antler to make things to sell at the market; from the Jorvik Viking Centre in York, England



Source 7.31 A reconstruction of the inside of a Viking home, showing a woman spinning wool while seated at a weaving loom



Source 7.32 A reconstruction of Viking children playing a game similar to modern-day checkers

APPLY 7.6

- 1 Use information and sources from the text and from your own research to create a work titled 'My Viking day'. It could be in the form of diary entries, or of a short story or storyboard. Start by introducing yourself: are you a Viking leader; a farmer and part-time raider; a mother, or a child? Include relevant sources to provide 'snapshots' of your life.

REVIEW 7.5

- 1 Why were Viking villages often located near coasts and rivers?
- 2 Describe a typical Viking longhouse.
- 3 What foods made up the majority of a Viking diet?
- 4 Why were Viking women more independent than women in other societies of the time?

7.1

CHECKPOINT

WHAT WERE THE KEY FEATURES OF VIKING SOCIETY AND WAY OF LIFE?

» Locate the Viking homelands

1 What are the names of the modern-day countries where the Viking homelands were located? What is this region of the world called? (5 marks)

» Identify geographical features that helped shape Viking society and history

2 List the geographical features of the Viking homelands. (5 marks)

3 Explain how the location and geographical features of the homelands influenced Viking society. (10 marks)

» Use sources to outline key social, cultural, economic and political features of Viking society

4 Complete the table below to identify sources that relate to key features of Viking society. Describe the evidence that each source provides. (20 marks)

Key feature of Viking society	Sources	Evidence provided
Role and status of <i>jarls</i> and <i>karls</i>		
Viking <i>things</i> , laws and codes of behaviour		
Viking trade		
Viking culture		

» Describe the everyday life of men, women and children in Viking society

5 Describe the typical lifestyle of Viking families living in villages in their homeland, including:

- a housing and home life
- b daily occupations
- c food and diet
- d entertainment and games (20 marks)

» Discuss the role of Norse gods in Viking society

6 What religious beliefs did the Vikings hold at the start of the Viking Age? Why and when did these beliefs start to change? (5 marks)

7 What were gods responsible for, according to Viking beliefs? What rituals were associated with these beliefs? (5 marks)

8 Retell one story from Norse mythology. (10 marks)

TOTAL MARKS [/80 MARKS]

RICH TASKS

Viking burials

Early in the Viking Age some Viking rulers were given ship-burials, accompanied to the after-life by their favourite dogs and horses, treasure and weapons. Sometimes, Viking rulers were even buried with human sacrifices, as described in Source 7.33. After converting to Christianity, the Vikings adopted different burial practices, similar to those followed by Christians to this day.

- 1 Investigate Viking burial methods and rituals before the adoption of Christian beliefs. Prepare a report that describes burial rituals and how they relate to Viking beliefs about the gods and what happens after death. Include sources from the text and from your own research, and explain the evidence they provide.
- 2 Research the discovery of a Viking burial ship, such as that of the *Oseberg* (see Source 7.34). Create a presentation that describes what artefacts and human remains were found in the burial ship. What methods have scientists and archaeologists used to date and analyse the findings?

Source 7.33

The dead chieftain was put in a temporary grave that was covered for ten days until new clothes were prepared for him. They asked which of his thrall [slave] women wanted to join him in the afterlife and one of the girls volunteered ... When the time had arrived for cremation, his longship was pulled ashore ... an old woman named the 'angel of death' put cushions on the bed. She was an old witch, stocky and dark. She would be responsible for the ritual and would be the one to kill the thrall [slave] girl.

An extract from an account of a human sacrifice at a Viking funeral, by the Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan

Writing the runes

In Viking society there was a strong tradition of storytelling, rather than widespread writing. However, the Vikings did leave examples of short written messages, in the form of inscriptions in wood, bone or stone. To do this, they used the 'runic' alphabet. Source 7.35 shows a stone inscribed using this alphabet, called a runestone. As the letters *f, u, t, h, a, r* and *k* begin the runic alphabet, the Vikings called it *Futhark*. Source 7.36 shows the Danish version of *Futhark*. Create your own inscription using the letters. Then swap inscriptions with a partner and try to read each other's message.



Source 7.34 The reconstructed Viking burial-ship *Oseberg*. The original ship was built in AD 820 and discovered in Norway in 1903.



Source 7.35 The Runestone of Rök



Source 7.36 *Futhark* letters with their modern equivalents

In these Rich Tasks, you will be learning and applying the following historical skills:

- » Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
- » Analysis and use of sources
- » Research
- » Explanation and communication.

For more information about these skills, refer to 'The historian's toolkit'.

CHECKPOINT

7.2

SECTION

WHAT DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS LED TO VIKING EXPANSION?

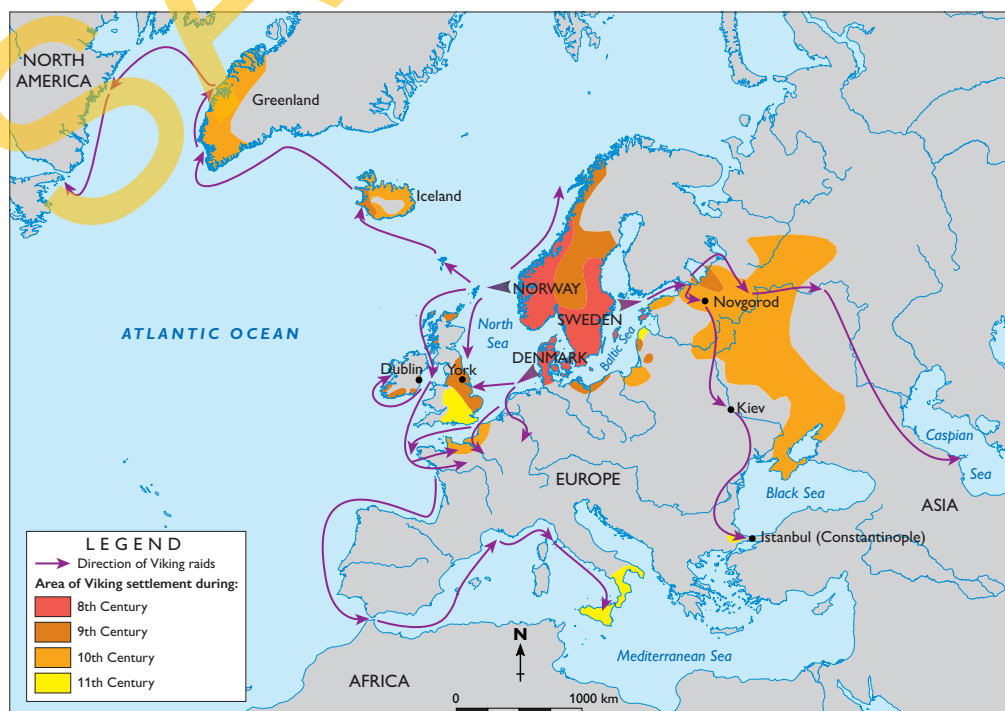
In this section, we examine how much of the world was affected by Viking expansion. Viking explorers, raiders and traders travelled great distances over land and sea. They conquered people in other lands and settled in places outside their homelands. We also explore the weapons and methods used by Viking raiders, and examine why their attacks were so successful.

THE EXTENT OF VIKING TRADE AND EXPANSION

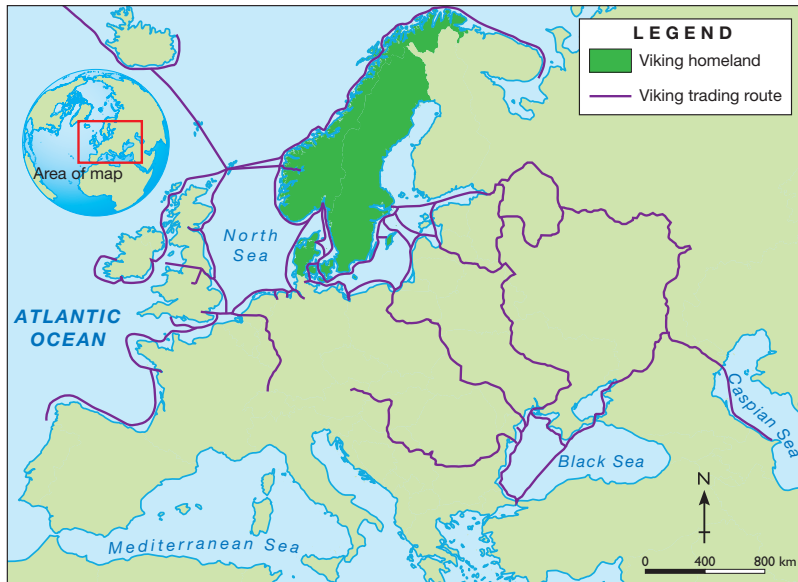
Source 7.38 shows the major Viking trade routes. To the east, Viking merchants travelled as far as Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) where they could meet up with traders from lands even further east along the Silk Road. Up until the late 8th century, the Vikings were known as traders with peoples outside of Scandinavia. But this changed significantly as they began attacking villages, towns and monasteries, plundering their wealth and capturing prisoners. For the next 200 years, the Vikings became more feared, as they pushed outwards from their homelands. Source 7.37 shows the directions the Vikings travelled in raids around Britain, Ireland, southern and eastern Europe, and the areas they settled and colonised, from the 8th to the 11th century. It also shows the direction of Viking exploration and settlement around the North Atlantic Ocean.

SOURCE STUDY

The extent of Viking trade and expansion



Source 7.37 The direction of Viking raids to the east and west of the Viking homelands, and areas settled by Vikings from the 8th to the 11th century



Source 7.38 Major Viking trade routes

INTERPRET 7.6

- Use Sources 7.37 and 7.38 and an atlas to list five modern-day countries:
 - that are in areas where the Vikings traded
 - where the Vikings established settlements.
- Write a statement to describe the extent of Viking trade.
- Write a paragraph to describe the expansion of Viking settlement from the 8th to the 11th century. Do you think there is a link between the Viking trade routes and the direction of Viking raids and settlement?

Why did the Vikings become raiders?

Historians still argue today about what motivated the Vikings to change from honest traders to violent raiders. Several reasons have been put forward to explain this shift.

Necessity

Resorting to raids may have become necessary for the survival of some Viking communities that were located on poor farmland in a cold climate. As populations grew, the pressure on the farmland would have increased.

Knowledge of other lands gained through trade

Reports by well-travelled merchants would have helped the Vikings piece together an accurate picture of surrounding regions. They would have heard about the riches that were held in towns and monasteries outside their homelands, which may have motivated Viking attacks. Some historians also suggest the Vikings attacked areas that they knew had weak and divided rule.

Developments in weaponry and shipbuilding

By the 8th century, Viking shipbuilding and navigational skills were highly advanced. The Vikings had the expertise needed to make and sail efficient warships – the **longships** used for their fast and brutal raids. The Vikings had also become highly skilled metalworkers, able to sharpen the steel edges of their swords until they were razor sharp. Wealthier Vikings could afford metal armour, including chain mail and helmets with nose bridges.

Desire for wealth and glory

Historians also argue that the change in Viking behaviour could have been linked to a desire for quick and easy wealth. *Jarls* and kings could use stolen riches to reward their men and increase their influence and power. Some historians believe the Vikings were also driven by a desire for glory and adventure.

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Source 7.39 Reproductions of authentic Viking armour, including helmets and chain mail on show at a battle re-enactment in Iceland



Source 7.40 Viking swords

VIKING RAIDS AND SETTLEMENTS



Source 7.42

The remains of the monastery in Lindisfarne, Northumberland, England. A famous Viking raid took place here on 6 January 793.

According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, AD 787 was the year of the first Viking attack on England. Three ships manned by Vikings (from what is now Denmark) came ashore in the south of the country. An official rode to meet the strangers, assuming they were merchants and intending to escort them to town to pay the required taxes. Instead, the Vikings killed him.

In AD 793 the monastery on the holy island of Lindisfarne, off the English coast, was attacked. Viking raiders now began to regularly attack the coasts of Britain and Ireland, concentrating on the monasteries where gold and silver riches were to be found. Raiding parties also reached southern France, Spain and Italy. They did not always have everything their way. In 844, a ruler in Cordoba, in Spain, captured hundreds of Viking prisoners and hanged them. Over time, Viking raiders extended their plundering missions into what are now Wales and Scotland. They pushed deeper into Europe and Central Asia, travelling along rivers.

Source 7.41

And they came to the church of Lindisfarne and laid everything to waste. They plundered, they trampled upon holy places with filthy feet, they dug up the altars and seized all the treasures of the holy church. They killed some of the monks, and took others away with them in chains; they drove many out, naked and loaded with insults, and some they drowned in the sea.

Symeon of Durham, writing in the 12th century

STRANGE BUT TRUE

The penalty for not paying taxes to the Viking rulers in Ireland during the 8th century was to have your nostrils slit with a knife. This is where the saying 'paying through your nose' – meaning to pay a very high price – comes from.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Ragnar Lodbrok's adventures came to an end after he was shipwrecked on the English coast. He was captured by the Northumbrian king Ælla and put to death by being thrown into a pit of poisonous snakes.

Raiders become settlers

The first Viking raids were hit-and-run affairs, with no long-term plan behind them. Then, in England, Scotland, Ireland and other parts of Western Europe, the Vikings gradually moved from rapid attacks in 'raiding seasons' to establishing settlements that would become permanent. Rather than sailing straight back to their homelands with their loot, they started building houses to live in during the winter. They would then resume attacks in the surrounding area in the spring. Viking leaders began to establish themselves as rulers in areas they had previously attacked. In Ireland, Vikings established the city of Dublin. Swedish Vikings ruled the cities of Kiev and Novgorod, and eventually formed a kingdom in modern-day Russia.

The beginning of Viking settlement in England and Normandy

In the decade following AD 830, the Vikings started to arrive on England's coast in small armies, 30 ship-loads strong. Under leaders such as Ragnar Lodbrok (Hairy-Breeks) and his sons Bjorn Ironside and Ivar the Boneless, the Vikings began to settle in the northern and eastern parts of England, demanding **Danegeld**, from the English (money paid in return for a promise from the Vikings not to attack their lands). In 865, Britain was invaded by a huge Viking army from Denmark. The Great Army arrived in a fleet of 350 ships. This time, the motive was conquest, not plunder. Within a year, the Vikings controlled the city of Jorvik (now known as York), which became a Viking capital. Vikings were to control large areas of England in the next centuries. The impact of this is explored in Section 7.3.

In a region of the Frankish kingdom which is today part of France, a Viking leader known as Rollo had repeatedly attacked settlements along the Seine River. In 911, he came to an agreement with the Frankish king, Charles the Simple. Charles gave Rollo an area of land called Normandy. In exchange, Rollo agreed to stop his attacks, become a Christian and acknowledge Charles as his superior. About 150 years later, Duke William of Normandy, a descendent of Rollo, would invade Britain and become the king of England.

Viking raids

SOURCE STUDY

Source 7.43

In the year 841 the Danish pirates invaded the territory of Rouen and killed the monks and the people. They devastated the monasteries and only left after they had been bought off with much silver.

In the year 842 a fleet of Northmen entered Amiens at dawn. They plundered, captured and killed people of both sexes and only left a building standing if the owner ransomed it.

In the year 843 the Northmen attacked Nantes with a fleet of sixty-seven ships. Having killed the bishop and many of the other people, they pillaged the city. Finally they built house for the winter (on an island) and settled down as if they meant to stay forever.

From the diary of Saint Bertin, a Frenchman

Source 7.44

The number of ships grows: the endless flood of Vikings never ceases to grow. Everywhere Christ's people are the victims of massacres, burnings and plunderings. The Vikings conquer all in their path and nothing resists them.

A translation from the writing of the Frankish monk Ermentarius of Noirmoutier, AD 860



Source 7.45 The Lindisfarne Gospels, an 8th-century manuscript bound in silver and jewels. The original binding was lost during the Viking raid on the Lindisfarne monastery in 793, but the manuscript survived the attack. A replacement binding was made in 1852.



Source 7.46 A stockpile of Viking loot found in a field in Yorkshire, England, in 2007. The stash, which had been buried for over 1000 years, included 617 coins.

INTERPRET 7.7

- 1 Describe the artefacts shown in Sources 7.45 and 7.46.
- 2 What evidence do Sources 7.43 to 7.46 provide about what motivated the Vikings' raids in the years 841 and 842?
- 3 What change in Viking raiding patterns occurred in France in the year 843? Why was this significant?
- 4 What does Source 7.44 reveal about people's responses to the Viking attacks?
- 5 Suggest why a Viking raider might have left the treasure shown in Source 7.46 buried underground. Why might he not have returned to retrieve the treasure?

REVIEW 7.7

- 1 How do historians know that people in England were unafraid of Vikings before AD 787?
- 2 What was the purpose of the first Viking raids? How was this different to the purpose of later raids in the 9th century?
- 3 Explain why the Viking Rollo was given a large area of land in France.

VIKING RAIDERS

The Vikings fought on foot, wearing chain mail under leather jerkins (jackets). Each warrior had a sword, which was highly prized and passed on from father to son. Vikings often gave their swords names, such as 'leg-biter'. Swords were used more for hacking and slashing, rather than for stabbing at enemies. The battle-axe was another favourite weapon, which could do fearful damage with its large curved blade and long handle. The Vikings also used spears, bows and arrows, and round shields made of wooden boards, bound together by iron bars.

The most terrifying of all Viking warriors were the *berserkers* – fierce fighters who were clad in the skins of bears or wolves (the word *berserker* means 'bear coat'). Believing they were protected by Odin, *berserkers* went into battle without fear of death or injury. Monks' accounts noted they seemed not to notice the pain of wounds. Before a fight, they worked themselves into a mad rage and usually fought to the death.

At first, Viking raids were hit-and-run events, planned to cause maximum panic.

After a raid, Viking longships would quickly disappear with their loot.

The loot they took was often gold, silver and jewelled items, such as candlesticks, goblets, crucifixes and Bible covers.

In Viking society, to be a thief was a great dishonour. To Vikings, however, raiding and plundering was not considered stealing. Instead, it was seen as an honourable way of gaining wealth and fame.

The Viking raiders killed innocent people, raped women and took many people (including monks) as slaves. Some were sold, others were put to work on Viking farms and building projects.

Skilled fighters could catch and return a flying spear, or throw two at once – one in each hand.

Source 7.47 An artist's impression of a Viking raid on an English monastery

APPLY 7.7

- 1 Write or tell the story of the Viking raid illustrated in Source 7.47 from the point of view of a Viking boy on his first raid. Then write or tell the story from the point of view of a young shepherd who lives in the village near the monastery being raided.

Viking berserkers

SOURCE STUDY

Source 7.48

When Hardbeen [a *berserker*] heard this, a demonical frenzy suddenly took him; he furiously bit and devoured the edges of his shield; he kept gulping down fiery coals ... he rushed through the perils of crackling fires; and at last, when he had raved through every sort of madness, he turned his sword with raging hand against the hearts of six of his champions [fellow Vikings].

An extract from a 1905 translation of *The Nine Books of the Danish History*, by the 12th-century Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus



Source 7.50 A 6th-century stone carving from Sweden, showing one man with a helmet adorned with the heads of birds. The other is depicted with the head of a wolf or bear. Bear skins were typically worn by the *berserkers*



Source 7.51 A 12th-century chess piece showing a Viking *berserker* biting his shields

Source 7.49

Men saw that a great bear [a *berserker*] went before King Hrolf's men ... keeping always near the king. He slew [killed] more men with his forepaws [bare hands] than any five of the king's champions. Blades and weapons glanced off him and he brought down both men and horses in King Hjorvard's forces, and everything which came in his path, he crushed to death with his teeth ...

An extract from *Erik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*, Gwyn Jones (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 313

INTERPRET 7.8

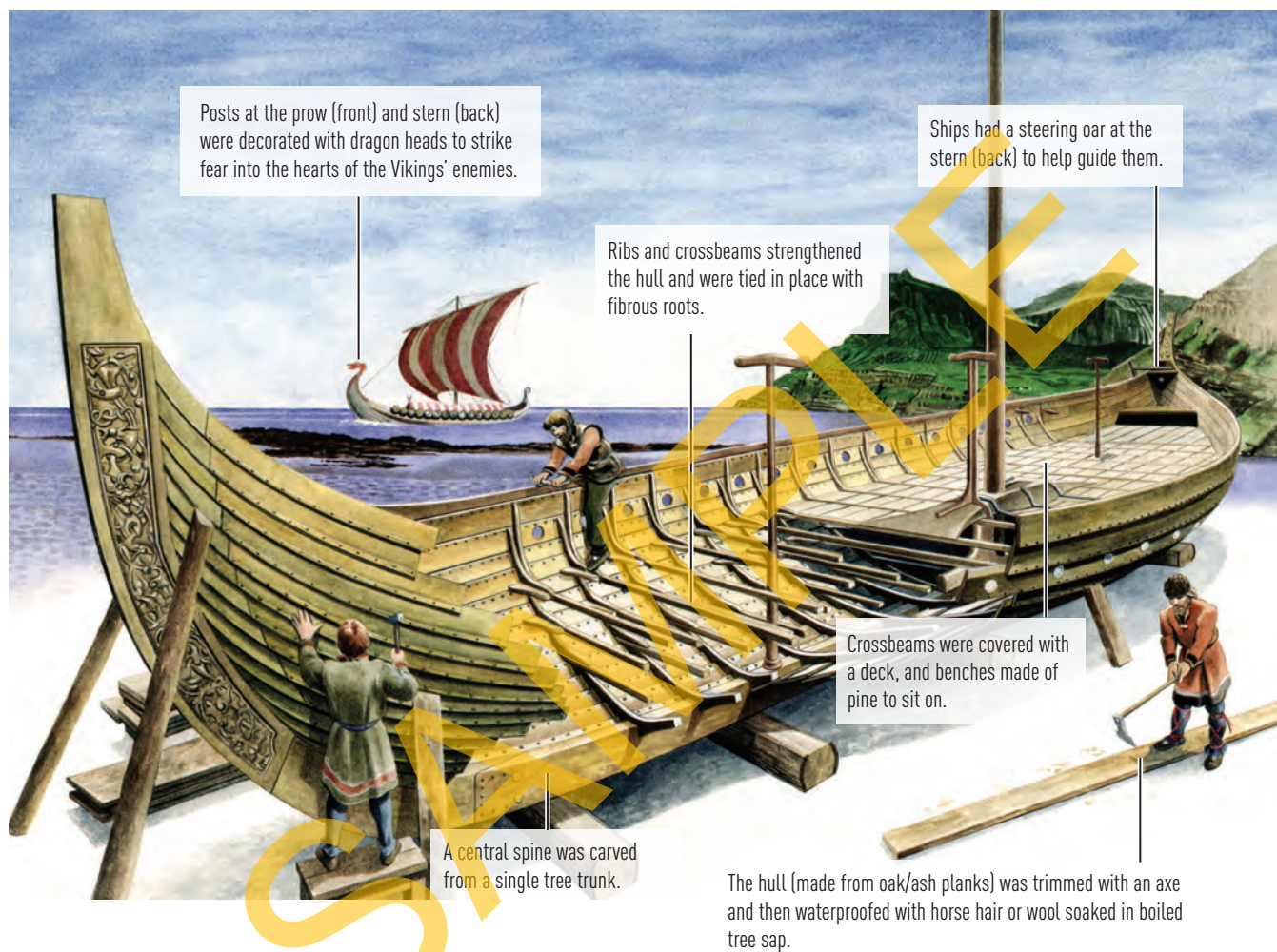
- 1 In your own words, describe the behaviour of the *berserkers*, as recounted in Sources 7.48 and 7.49.
- 2 Describe the artefacts shown in Sources 7.50 and 7.51. Explain whether or not they support the evidence provided in Sources 7.48 and 7.49.
- 3 Based on these sources, what do you think was the effect of the *berserkers* on the inhabitants of the monasteries and settlements they attacked?

Viking longships – built for raiding

The design and expert craftsmanship of longships gave Viking raiders great advantages when they travelled long distances and executed lightning raids. Longships were long and thin. They were twice as long as trade ships (up to 37 metres in length) and with a thinner and lighter hull. They could carry 100 warriors, 68 of whom were oarsmen. Being so light, longships were able to be carried or dragged overland for miles if necessary. This allowed Viking raiders to take their ships up any river and sail very close to shore, from where they could wade in quickly for a surprise attack.

The longships' huge square sails were made from pieces of woollen or linen fabric stitched together. The fabric was usually dyed blood red and coated in animal fat to make it more water resistant. In strong winds, the sail allowed for a fast sea or ocean crossing. Longships were also equipped with oars. If there was no wind, the sail could be lowered and the men could row instead. Rowing was also necessary to navigate rivers.

The blood red sail, together with the dragon heads at the prow (front) and stern (back) of a longship, helped to heighten the terror for raid victims. Vikings also believed that the dragonheads would frighten away evil spirits or monsters during sea crossings.



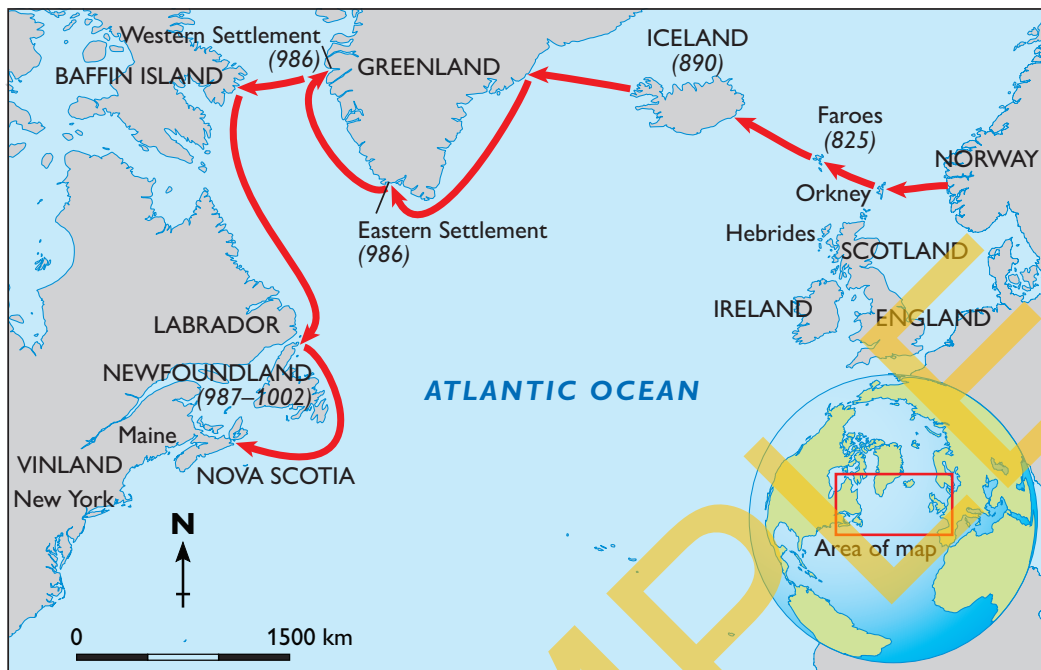
Source 7.52 An artist's impression of Viking shipbuilders constructing a longship

REVIEW 7.8

- 1 Describe the weapons and fighting style of Viking warriors.
- 2 What is the origin of the term *berserker*?
- 3 What advantages would a Viking leader have if his fighters included *berserkers*?
- 4 Explain how the design of longships helped the Vikings successfully execute their lightning raids.

VIKING EXPLORERS

The Vikings travelled great distances over land and sea. No-one can be sure of the exact routes they took, but the places they visited are known from objects and building remnants that have been found.

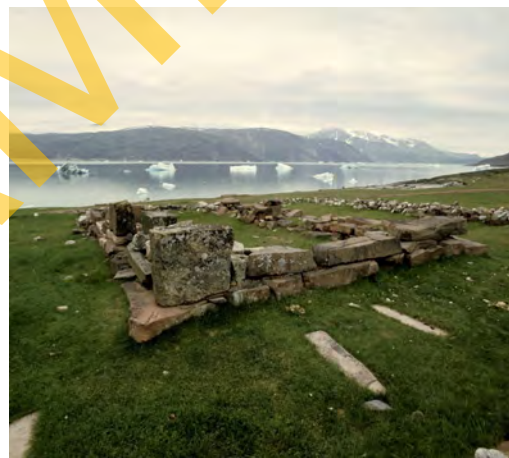


Source 7.53 Viking explorations in the Atlantic and dates of first settlements in this region

The discovery and settlement of Iceland and Greenland

Iceland was discovered by Viking travellers in 890. It was a land of volcanoes, glaciers, mountains and forests. However, the hills and valleys near the coast had good pastures for livestock, and the lakes and rivers were full of salmon and other fish. One of the first Vikings to settle in Iceland was Ingolf Arnasson, who had been exiled from Norway after committing murder. By 930, about 50 000 Vikings were living in Iceland.

Erik Thorvaldsson, known as Eric the Red, also lived in Iceland after being exiled from Norway. But after repeatedly feuding with his neighbours in Iceland he was exiled again. So he sailed even further west in search of a new land. After finding land near a glacier called Blaserk, Erik spent two years exploring. In the summer of the third year he returned to Iceland. He called the land he had discovered 'Greenland', a name he hoped would tempt new settlers. In 986, he sailed back to Greenland with a fleet of 25 ships, only 14 of which survived the trip. Greenland must have been a great disappointment to the new colonists – it was even icier than Iceland. However, two settlements developed there (see Source 7.54), and eventually, around 3000 people made the country their home, exporting furs, hides, ropes, oils, woollens and sea ivory. But over the next centuries, Greenland was gradually abandoned



Source 7.54 Remnants of the eastern settlement on Greenland, founded by Erik the Red

STRANGE BUT TRUE

By analysing human bones found in Greenland, scientists learned that seal meat made up 80 per cent of the settlers' diet by the 14th century. The cooling climate had thinned out the pastures and meadows required to feed livestock, leading to a decline in the herds of cattle and sheep.

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APPLY 7.8

- Two different accounts of Leif's discovery of North America, the *Saga of Erik the Red* and the *Greenlanders Saga*, were written 200 to 300 years after the event. Conduct research on these sagas. Draw flow charts to outline the events according to the two different versions. Which saga do most historians believe to be the most reliable and why?

The Vikings in North America

In 986, the Viking Bjarni Herjulfsson was sailing for Greenland when his ship was blown off course in a storm. When the skies cleared he saw an unfamiliar landscape of tree-covered hills. He sailed along the coast for two days, without landing, before he turned back to the more familiar barren shores of Greenland.

Leif Eriksson, the son of Erik the Red, set out to follow up the tales that Herjulfsson had brought back. He became the first European explorer on the North American continent (if Greenland is not included). After landing at Baffin Island and at Labrador, Leif sailed further south to a more hospitable region. The Greenland saga (Source 7.55) records Leif's first landing in North America and how he and his companions spent the winter there. In the spring they found wild vines, and called the place Vinland.

Source 7.55

... they went ashore and looked about them. The weather was fine. There was dew on the grass, and the first thing they did was to get some of it on their hands and put it to their lips. It seemed the sweetest thing they had ever tasted! Then they went back to their ship and sailed into the sound [narrow waterway] that lay between the island and the headland jutting out to the north. ...

There was no lack of salmon in the river, bigger salmon than they had ever seen. The country seemed so favourable to them that no winter fodder would be needed for the livestock. There was no frost all winter and the grass hardly withered at all.

An extract from the Greenland saga

Historians cannot say for certain exactly where Leif Ericson's expedition landed in North America, but most agree it was probably somewhere on the east coast of Canada – possibly in Newfoundland. In 1963, archaeologists discovered the remains of a Viking settlement in a place now called L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal found at the site indicates it was inhabited around AD 1000.

After Leif returned to Greenland, his brother and other family members made trips to the settlement he had established. Leif never returned though, and died in 1020. The new Viking settlement remained for a few years, but faced increasingly hostile attacks from the native people of the area. Eventually these attacks forced the Vikings to abandon the settlement and return to Greenland.



Source 7.56 The heritage-listed site of L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, Canada (with its reconstructed dwellings)

REVIEW 7.9

- What was one of the consequences of the Vikings punishing crime by exile?
- Explain why Erik the Red called the land he discovered 'Greenland'.
- Why was Greenland eventually abandoned by the Viking settlers?
- What is Leif Eriksson famous for?
- What was the significance of the archaeologists' discovery at L'Anse aux Meadows?

7.2

CHECKPOINT

In this Rich Task, you will be learning and applying the following historical skills:

- » Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
- » Analysis and use of sources
- » Perspectives and interpretations
- » Research
- » Explanation and communication.

For more information about these skills, refer to 'The historian's toolkit'.

CHECKPOINT

WHAT DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS LED TO VIKING EXPANSION?

» Identify the extent of Viking exploration and trade

- 1 On a blank copy of a world map, mark the routes Viking merchants used for travel and the routes thought to be taken by Viking explorers in the Atlantic Ocean (use two different colours). Include a legend and write a caption for the map. (20 marks)

» Identify the regions conquered or settled by the Vikings

- 2 On the map drawn for Question 1, mark the routes used by Viking raiders and shade the areas settled by Vikings by the 11th century. Add to the map's legend and caption. (20 marks)

» Explain how and why Viking expansion occurred, including developments in weaponry and shipbuilding technologies

- 3 Outline the possible reasons why Vikings began to raid surrounding lands in the 8th century. What do you think was the main reason for Viking expansion? Explain your reasoning. (10 marks)

» Discuss the theory that Vikings discovered America

- 4 What evidence exists about the discovery of America by Viking explorers? (5 marks)
- 5 What difficulties do historians face in forming conclusions about exactly where Vikings landed and lived on the North American coast? (5 marks)

» Outline what sources reveal about different perspectives on the Vikings

- 6 Use your knowledge of the Vikings to discuss the topic 'Vikings – savage or civilised?' Refer to written and visual sources throughout the text, including those below. What do the sources reveal about Viking culture? In your answer, consider how the perspective of the person who wrote or created a particular source affects its interpretation. (20 marks)

Source 7.57

A nation dwelling far from our country, barbarous, unchallenged, has ... like a wave of the sea, poured over our frontiers and like a wild boar has gobbled up our people as if they were grass or straw. Babies were torn away from the breast ... their mothers were slaughtered as well as oxen, horses and fowl. There lay an ox and a man by its side; a child and a horse found in a common grave ... Everywhere dead bodies.

Photius, bishop of Constantinople in the 9th century

Source 7.58

The lady of the house spread an embroidered cloth of white linen on the table and placed loaves of white wheaten bread on it. Then, she set out many dishes of fine ham and roasted fowls as well as silver jugs containing wine. They ate, drank and talked until the day was done.

From *Egils saga*, a story of the Vikings

TOTAL MARKS [/80 MARKS]

RICH TASK

Viking inquiries

- 1 Develop three inquiry questions about one aspect of the Viking Age that especially interests you – for example, weaponry, methods of attack, longships, or a specific *Overmatter*

7.3

WHICH SOCIETIES DID THE VIKINGS CONQUER AND HOW WERE THE PEOPLE THERE AFFECTED?

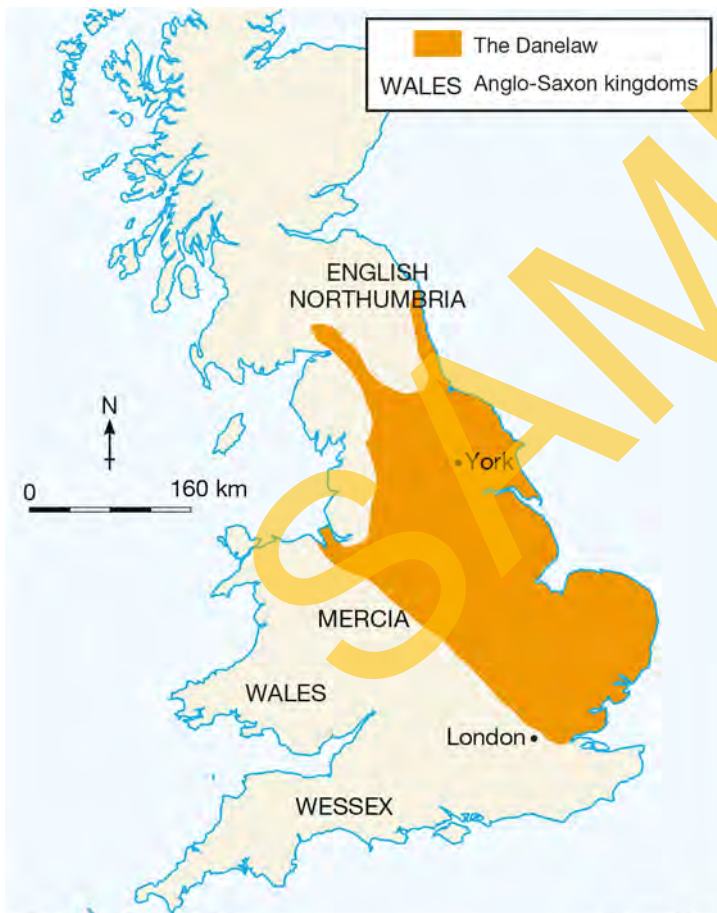
SECTION

EXTEND 7.4

- 1 Conduct research to find out the names and territories of England's kingdoms in the 9th century.

In this section, you will be learning about the effects that the Vikings had on the peoples they conquered. Although Vikings certainly raided and then left many communities, in some places they stayed and settled there. In England and northern Europe, deals struck with local rulers gave the Vikings grants of land as well as payments of money. As the Viking settlers began to mix with the local people, the language, customs and beliefs of both societies began to change.

IMPACT OF THE VIKINGS IN ENGLAND



When the Viking's Great Army arrived in 865, England was not a unified nation but a number of separate kingdoms. Alfred, who ruled the kingdom of Wessex, fiercely resisted attacks from Danish Vikings. By 878, he had forced the Viking leader Guthrum to accept a truce. The Vikings agreed to convert to Christianity, and King Alfred allowed them to take an area in England as their own. This area of land became known as the **Danelaw** – meaning 'the area where the law of the Danes is enforced'. Vikings settled here as farmers and traders. Over the next 100 years or so, their laws, traditions, beliefs and language took hold in former Anglo-Saxon communities. Vikings and Anglo-Saxons intermarried and mingled as they were brought together through trade and commerce. The language and customs of the Viking settlers also began to change, especially as a result of their adoption of Christian beliefs.

Eventually, the Viking hold of the Danelaw was broken by English attacks. The last Viking ruler of the Danelaw was Erik Bloodaxe. He was driven from the Viking capital of Jorvik in 954, and areas in northern England formerly controlled by the Vikings returned to English rule.

Source 7.59 The area of the Danelaw in AD 878 and some Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

But rebellions and attacks from Scandinavia continued over the next 100 years. A Danish king – Sweyn Forkbeard – briefly ruled England in 1013–1014 before an English king retook the throne. Then, in 1016, the Canute (or Cnut) – son of Sweyn Forkbeard – became king of England until 1035. After his death, his sons Harold Harefoot and then Hardicanute also ruled England. But after Hardicanute's death in 1042, the Viking dynasty ended. The Anglo-Saxon Edward became king of England. He was known as Edward the Confessor because of his fondness for religion and prayer.

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THE RACE FOR THE CROWN OF ENGLAND: 1066

In 1066, King Harald Hardrada of Norway led the Vikings in a final attempt at invasion of England. This ended with the defeat of Hardrada, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, a site close to York (see Source 7.59). But only a few weeks later, after the Battle of Hastings, England would be ruled by William of Normandy, himself a descendant of Vikings (he was a great-great grandson of Rollo).

Who should be king?

At the start of the year 1066, Edward the Confessor was the king of England, but he was not the most powerful man in England. That position was held by Earl Harold Godwinson of Wessex. Godwinson's sister Edith was married to King Edward and Godwinson himself was Edward's most senior advisor. Edward and Edith had no children, so when Edward died, on 5 January 1066, an assembly of nobles (called the Witan) met to decide who would succeed him. There were four possible candidates: Harald Hardrada, the Duke of Normandy, Edgar Atheling and Harold Godwinson. Their claims are discussed below.

The four men vying for England's throne in 1066

Harald Hardrada

The Viking Harald had become King of Norway in 1047 and soon became known as Hardrada (meaning 'hard ruler'). Harald claimed the throne because he said that his father and his descendants had been promised it by King Hardicanute, the son of King Canute, and the last Viking king of England. Harald was a violent man. He had had great experience in battle and was a renowned soldier of his time.

William, Duke of Normandy

Duke William of Normandy was a powerful ruler and distant relative of the English king, Edward the Confessor. William claimed that in 1052 Edward had promised the throne of England would go to him after his death. William also made a claim about Harold Godwinson. He said that, in 1064, Harold Godwinson's ship had been blown by a storm onto the Normandy coast, where Harold had been taken prisoner by a local lord. William had used his influence to demand Harold's release. Before returning home Harold had accepted a knighthood from William (which showed that Harold recognised William as his superior) and Harold had also sworn a solemn oath to support William's claim to the English throne when Edward the Confessor died. This story was denied by Harold Godwinson.

Edgar Atheling

Edgar Atheling was born in exile in Hungary, in 1052, of English parents. He was Edward the Confessor's great nephew and a descendant of Alfred the Great. Edgar had returned to England in 1057 and was 14 years old when Edward the Confessor died.

Harold Godwinson

Harold Godwinson was the most powerful Earl in England. His sister Edith was Edward the Confessor's queen. Harold had proven himself in battle when he had led Edward's army against the Welsh in 1063. He claimed that Edward, just before his death, had promised the throne to him by saying, 'I commend this woman [Queen Edith] and all the kingdom to your protection'. However, there were no independent witnesses to this claim. Earlier, in 1036, Harold himself had joined his father in a minor rebellion against Edward. Some

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Source 7.62
A stained-glass window showing an image of Harald Hardrada (c.1015–1066)



Source 7.63 Duke William of Normandy (1028–1087)



Source 7.64 Edgar Atheling (1052–1125)



Source 7.65
Harold Godwinson (c.1020–1066)

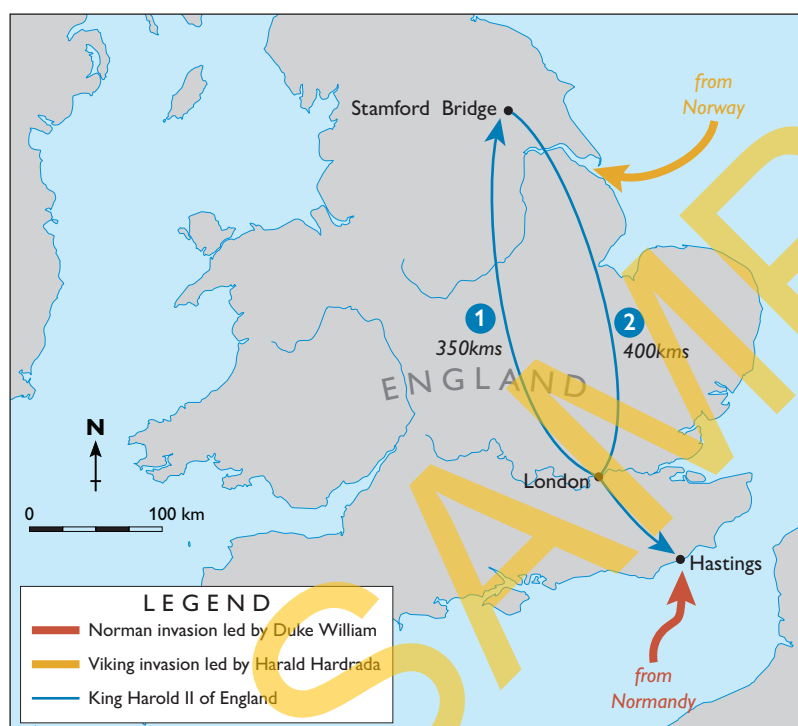
Two battles for the throne

The Witan chose Harold as the new king after Edward's death. He became King Harold II. Messages soon came from Normandy expressing William's anger. Harold assembled an army to meet this challenge. Apart from his personal bodyguard of full-time soldiers, known as the *housecarls*, most of Harold's army was made up of the *fyrð* – village men who were obliged to fight for their lord when called upon. These men were mainly farmers whose only weapons were farm implements. From June to September 1066, Harold's army waited on the cliffs of southern England – but William did not come. He and his army were still in Normandy, waiting for the southerly wind needed to sail their ships across the English Channel. With no sign of William, Harold was forced to disband his army on 8 September, releasing men to return to their villages to take in their harvests.

EXTEND 7.5

- 1 With Hardrada was Tostig, King Harold's brother. Find out why Tostig landed and fought with Harald Hardrada.

Just as the danger seemed to have passed, news came that shocked King Harold. On 20 September, Harald Hardrada had landed in Yorkshire in the north of England. His Viking army was proceeding to devastate the region and was about to capture the important city of York.



The Battle of Stamford Bridge

King Harold had to decide whether to wait on the south coast for the greater Norman threat, or move north to deal with Hardrada. He decided to march north, gathering an army as he went. The army of 7000 men marched 350 kilometres in four days. Reaching York on 25 September, Harold found that the Vikings had left the city to rest in fields on either side of a river at a place called Stamford Bridge. Harold's men attacked their surprised enemies and slaughtered them. Although it had taken 300 ships to bring Hardrada's invasion force to England, only 24 were needed to carry the remaining Vikings home. Hardrada was not among them.

Harold and his army celebrated a great victory. An exhausting march had been followed by a successful battle, and now they needed to rest. However, in the middle of their celebrations news came that William had landed on the south coast on 28 September. The Norman invasion had arrived, and Harold had not been there to meet it.

Source 7.66 The site of the two invasions that King Harold II faced in 1066

STRANGE BUT TRUE

William of Normandy had a musician called Taillifer, who rode into battle singing songs in Latin, and repeatedly throwing his sword into the air. He died in the first charge.

The Battle of Hastings

Harold began the journey south, leaving behind soldiers who were wounded or exhausted, including some who had been his best fighting men. He scraped together another army of about 7000 men. They stood on the ridge of a hill near the port of Hastings, blocking the road to London. At 9 a.m., on 14 October 1066, the battle started when William ordered his archers to fire on the English line. The arrows did little damage because the Saxons were protected by their wall of shields. William then sent his cavalry forward in a series of charges, but they too were unsuccessful against the English. The battle stretched into the afternoon. During its course, William had three horses killed under him and at one point a rumour

Overmatter

spread among the Norman soldiers that William had been killed. To prevent his followers losing heart, William raised his helmet to show them his face.

In a final push, William ordered his archers to fire their arrows into the sky so that they would drop like an iron rain on to the English soldiers. At the same time, his foot-soldiers and cavalry were sent forward. The Saxons' shield wall broke and Harold's brothers Gyrth and Leofwine were killed, protecting their king. Then Harold himself was killed. Some reports suggested he was hit in the eye by one of the falling arrows; others suggested he was ridden down and killed by the thrust of a sword. The Normans pursued the fleeing Saxons until darkness fell. William had won.

The Battle of Hastings was a turning point in English history. If Harold had held on and prevented William from reaching London and other parts of the country, William's campaign might have been unsuccessful. But as it was, Norman lords replaced Anglo-Saxon lords and became established as England's ruling class.

APPLY 7.11

- 1 Use the information in the text to create a timeline of the Viking and Norman invasions of England in 1066.

The Battle of Hastings

SOURCE STUDY

Sources 7.67 and 7.68 show scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered pictorial account of the Battle of Hastings and events leading up to it. It was made in England between 1070 and 1080, by order of Odo, who was the Bishop of Bayeux and also William's half-brother. The work is made from woollen yard embroidered on fine linen (it is not a true tapestry). It is 70 metres long and 50 centimetres wide. Only the final scene is missing, either lost or never completed. It was displayed in Bayeux Cathedral. A key message of the work is that anyone who breaks a solemn oath would be judged by God and die.



Source 7.67 Harold swears an oath on holy relics that he will accept William as King of England; a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry

Source 7.69

Those who fought with him [Harold] at the end were but a fragment of England; thegns [nobles] who ... came from Worcestershire or Huntingdon, Winchester monks who were found dead with robes under their armour, or the sheriff and thegns of Berkshire who were wiped out almost to a man.

K. Feiling, *A History of England*, 1966, p. 93



- Source 7.68 The death of Harold, as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry. He is shown twice, first plucking an arrow from his eye, and then being hacked down by a Norman knight.

INTERPRET 7.9

- 1 What does Source 7.69 tell us about the quality of Harold's army at the Battle of Hastings?
- 2 Remembering how Harold came to the throne, what does Source 7.69 suggest about the image of Harold as the king of all England standing against the Norman invader?
- 3 Describe what is happening in the scenes shown in Sources 7.67 and 7.68.
- 4 Whose perspective of the battle does the Bayeux Tapestry represent? Suggest why the scene shown in Source 7.68 would be significant for them.
- 5 Why do you think Bishop Odo ordered the story of the battle to be told in pictures rather than words?

THE LEGACY OF THE VIKINGS

After Harald Hardrada was killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, his defeated army sailed away. For historians, this marks the end of the Viking Age, although Viking attacks persisted into the 12th century. And a Viking descendant, King William, went on to conquer England at the Battle of Hastings. Although Vikings no longer spread terror from the northern seas, their influence on European culture would continue in a variety of ways.

EXTEND 7.6

1 Have a class discussion about why Christians include so many non-Christian traditions in their celebrations and rituals.

Christmas traditions

Christmas is a Christian festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, but many of its rituals and customs are 'borrowed' from other religions and civilisations. Viking customs have had a substantial influence, particularly the Viking 'Yule' celebrations which took place around the winter solstice (the longest night and shortest day of the year).

Source 7.70 A comparison of modern Christmas traditions and the practices of Vikings

Christmas celebrations and traditions	Yule celebrations and Viking traditions
A feast, which includes a Christmas ham or roast turkey	Feasting, which often included a roast boar
Takes place in late December, though Christ was probably not born then	Coincided with the winter solstice, which was celebrated by many pagan peoples
Santa rides a flying sleigh pulled by magic reindeer	The Viking god Thor rode a flying chariot pulled by magic goats
A 'Yule log' – a log-shaped cake that is sometimes eaten at Christmas	The Yule log was a large log of wood that burned in the hearth during Yule celebrations
The 12 days of Christmas	Celebrations of Yule lasted for 12 days
Decorated Christmas trees	Vikings used to decorate evergreen trees with clothing, food and other ornaments
Father Christmas (Santa) brings gifts	The Viking god Odin was thought to visit families in secret during winter and leave gifts

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Bluetooth technology (used to communicate wirelessly) is named after Harald Bluetooth, a 10th-century king who united and ruled Denmark and Norway. Legend has it that Harald's fondness for blueberries stained his teeth blue. The Bluetooth logo consists of the Nordic runes for Harald's initials, H and B.



Source 7.71 A battle scene from the movie *The Lord of the Rings*

Viking myths and legends

Many writers have been inspired by Norse mythology. They include J. R. R. Tolkien, whose novel *The Lord of the Rings* includes dwarves, elves, trolls, dragons and monsters, all of which are found in Viking myths. Epic battles that take place in Tolkien's novel are similar to battles in Norse sagas. Even the turf-covered homes of Tolkien's Middle Earth are inspired by the turf-insulated longhouses of Vikings.

APPLY 7.12

1 Conduct research on the Viking origins of the names of the days of the week. Create a three-column table that shows the English name, the Norse name it is derived from and the meaning of the Norse name.

7.3

CHECKPOINT

In this Rich Task, you will be learning and applying the following historical skills:

- » Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts
- » Analysis and use of sources
- » Research
- » Explanation and communication.

For more information about these skills, refer to 'The historian's toolkit'.

CHECKPOINT

WHICH SOCIETIES DID THE VIKINGS CONQUER AND HOW WERE THE PEOPLE THERE AFFECTED?

» Explain and assess the impact of the Vikings on subject peoples in England and northern Europe, including the Danelaw

- 1 Outline when and how the Vikings came to control an area of England known as the Danelaw. For how long did the Danelaw last? (5 marks)
- 2 What was the impact of Viking control on Anglo-Saxon communities who lived in the area of the Danelaw? (10 marks)

» Discuss the significance of the Viking and Norman invasions of England in 1066

- 3 a Use a table format such as the one below to outline the major events, results and significance of the two invasions of England in 1066
- b Then write a paragraph to discuss the significance of the invasions both for England and for the invaders. (30 marks)

Events and result of the Viking invasion	Significance of the Viking invasion	Events and result of the Norman invasion	Significance of the Norman invasion

» Investigate and assess the role of significant individuals involved in Viking expansion, and use sources to identify different perspectives about them

- 4 Identify a significant Viking leader or explorer and:
 - a assess their role during the Viking Age
 - b identify sources that provide different perspectives about their achievements and the events in their lives. Explain the different perspectives.
 - c suggest which sources about their lives historians find most reliable, and outline the interpretation of events in their lives that is most commonly believed. (20 marks)

» Discuss how the Vikings have influenced the world today

- 5 Identify and describe at least three areas in which Vikings have left their mark. For each area, explain how the Viking legacy has influenced the modern world. (15 marks)

TOTAL [/80 MARKS]

RICH TASK

Investigating the Bayeux Tapestry

Conduct research to find images of scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry. Select one scene, and use your own words to write a caption that describes what is happening (including images around the borders of the scene). Add your observations about the events, and comment on the evidence provided about the clothing and weapons of the two armies.



Source 7.73 A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry