

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# The Vikings - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. The Vikings, also called Northmen or Norsemen, inhabited parts of modern-day Scandinavia, a region that includes Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, for hundreds of years. The Norse people struggled to survive the area's long, brutal winters. Some lived so far north that the sun barely rose during the winter at all. Many lived by the sea along fjords, where glaciers had left steep cliffs towering above the water. This was not great land for farming, but being so close to the sea, they built ships. Over time they perfected the art of shipbuilding. It was these longships that made the Vikings famous—and allowed them to trade with and raid communities throughout Europe.

According to the passage, what were Vikings best known for?

A. Farming



B.

Shipbuilding

*According to the text, the Vikings “perfected the art of shipbuilding,” and “It was these longships that made the Vikings famous.”*

C. Their long winters

D. The art of storytelling

2. During the Viking age, most Scandinavians were pagan. The Norse religion was polytheistic: there were many gods instead of just one. Odin was a one-eyed father god with a long white beard. Thor was the god of thunder and the sky who protected humans from evil. He had a war hammer that always came back to him when he threw it. The word “Thursday” comes from Thor: it's Thor's day. In fact, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday are all named after Norse gods, as well. The Norse believed that warriors who died in battle would be lifted into heaven by Valkyries, winged warrior goddesses. Heaven, for these warriors, was called Valhalla, a giant hall where all the dead warriors would feast every night. But if you died in your bed of old age, you wouldn't go to heaven at all. The Vikings believed you'd go to a colorless underworld. With a religion so focused on rewarding battle heroes, it is no wonder Viking warriors were fearless.

With which statement would the author of this passage most likely agree?

- A. We don't know a lot about the Vikings' religious beliefs.
- B. The days of the week should have different names.
- C. The Vikings' religion did not affect their daily lives.
- ✓ D. The Vikings' religion may have encouraged them to be warriors.

*The text states, “With a religion so focused on rewarding battle heroes, it is no wonder Viking warriors were fearless.”*

3. The Vikings didn't always take land by force. When the land was unoccupied, they didn't have to. The Vikings island-hopped from Norway to reach Iceland, a volcanic island in the North Atlantic that no one had ever reached. They set up a colony there. Iceland became an important place for the development of Viking democracy. Each year everyone was invited to gather by a big rock where the laws were read and conflicts resolved. The Icelandic word for these gatherings is “things.” In the 900s, Erik the Red sailed farther west and discovered a huge island, almost entirely covered with glaciers and snow. He decided to build a colony there. He named it Greenland, hoping that others would hear the name and decide to come live with him on the island. Not that many people did. To this day, Greenland has one of the smallest populations of any country.

Based on the passage, why didn't the Vikings take Iceland by force?

- ✓ A. Because no one was living there when they arrived
- B. Because the land was too snowy and icy to be useful

*The text states, “The Vikings didn't always take land by force. When the land was unoccupied, they didn't have to.” Iceland was “a volcanic island in the North Atlantic that no one had ever reached.”*

- C. Because the king of Iceland gave up without a battle
- D. Because there was only one small colony of people living there

4. Erik the Red's son, Leif Erikson, was also a Norse explorer. He left Greenland around the year 1000 and headed west. He landed in northern Canada and was perhaps the first European explorer to reach what is now the United States. Erikson saw vines with grapes on the land, so he named the area Vinland (or "vine land"). He and his crew set up a small settlement and spent the winter there. He then returned to Greenland, bringing along timber and grapes. They probably returned once more, but the settlement was eventually abandoned. ^^If Erikson reached North America 500 years before Christopher Columbus did, then why is Columbus the more famous figure?^^ The answer is simple: Columbus's voyage transformed the world in major ways. It led to an age of European exploration and settlement in the Americas, which shaped these regions into what we know today. Meanwhile, Erikson's voyage didn't result in any major social changes.

In the passage above, what is the purpose of the underlined sentence?

- A. To ask a question that no one knows the answer to
- B. To suggest that Erikson may not have reached North America
- C. To ask a question that the rest of the passage will answer
- D. To show one question that Viking scholars are researching today



*The author opens the second paragraph with the question of why Columbus is "the more famous figure" if "Leif Erikson reached North America 500 years before" he did. The rest of the passage provides one answer, detailing how Columbus's voyage influenced others and reshaped the world, while "Erikson's voyage didn't result in any major social changes."*