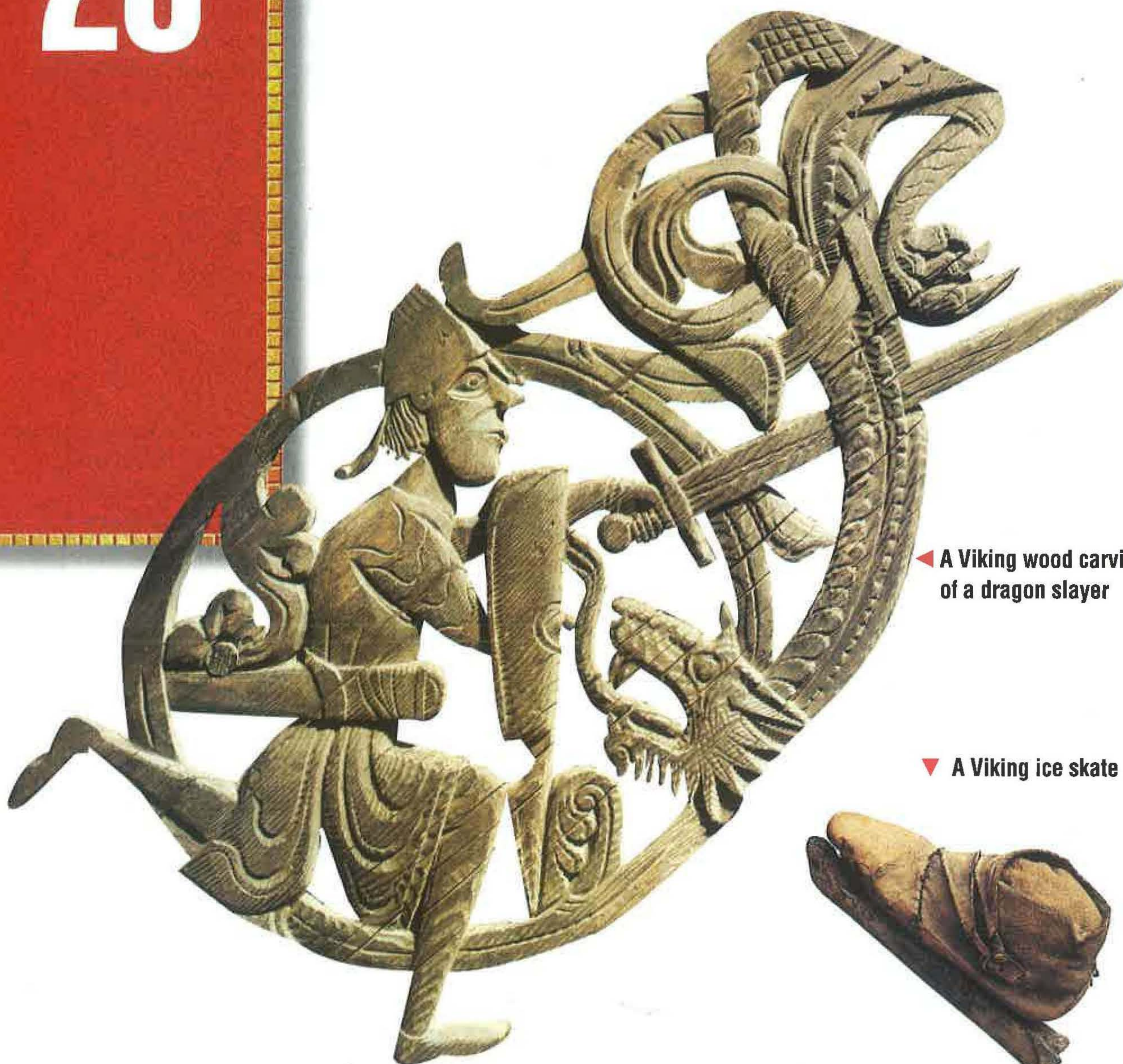


# The Vikings

900 A.D.—1035 A.D.



◀ A Viking wood carving of a dragon slayer

▼ A Viking ice skate



862 A.D.

Vikings found  
Kievan Rus

911 A.D.

Danes win  
Norselaw in France

986 A.D.

Vikings establish a  
colony in Greenland

1016 A.D.

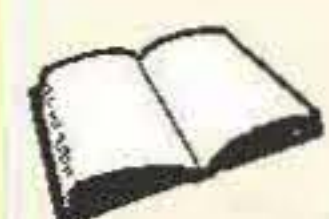
Canute conquers  
England

1036 A.D.

Danish control of  
England ends



# Chapter Focus



## Read to Discover

- How the Vikings earned a living.
- What daily life was like for the Vikings.
- How Viking warriors and adventurers traded and raided.
- What role the Danish Vikings played in the histories of England and France.



## Terms to Learn

jarls  
berserkers  
Eddas  
runes



## People to Know

Rurik  
Erik the Red  
Leif Eriksson  
Canute  
Rollo



## Places to Locate

Scandinavia  
Jutland  
Vinland  
Norselaw



## Chapter Overview

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 20—Chapter Overviews** to preview this chapter.

**Why It's Important** During the 900s, Charlemagne's empire and Anglo-Saxon England were attacked by new invaders known as Norseman, or Vikings (vī' kēngs). They came from the far northern part of Europe in an area now called Scandinavia (skan duh nā'vē uh). The tall, fair-skinned Vikings were brutal fighters and robbers. They spread fear and destruction throughout western Europe for several hundred years. However, they opened up new trade routes and taught seafaring skills to other Europeans.

The Vikings captured parts of Britain and France. They ruled cities in Russia and set up colonies on islands in the North Atlantic. They even paid a visit to North America. Those who went abroad married the people they conquered and accepted a new religion and new customs. Others stayed in Scandinavia and set up the kingdoms of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

## SECTION 1 The Land

The Viking homeland of Scandinavia was an area mostly of forests and long, rugged coastlines. The southern part, known as Jutland (juht' luhnd), or Denmark, had many natural harbors and was well suited for farming. It had large plains where the Vikings grew grains and pastured their cattle, sheep, and pigs.

The rest of Scandinavia was not as well suited to farming. The soil was rocky, and the growing season was short. The coastline, however, had many *fjords* (fē yōrdz'), or narrow bays. Because of this, the people turned to the sea to make a living.



## Student Web Activity

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 20—Student Web Activities** to find out more about the Vikings.

**Ships and Trade** The Vikings built ships with timber from the dense forests. These ships were large and well suited for long voyages. The bodies were long and narrow. The sides, where a single row of 16 oars was placed, were usually decorated with black or yellow shields. The tall bows were carved in the shape of a dragon's head. This was supposed to frighten both enemies and the evil spirits of the ocean. The strongly sewn sails were square and often striped red and yellow. The ships bore names like "Snake of the Sea," "Raven of the Wind," and "Lion of the Waves."

An awning in the forepart of the ship protected sailors from bad weather. They slept in leather sleeping bags and carried bronze pots in which to cook meals. Whenever possible, they cooked meals ashore to avoid the danger of a fire on board ship.

The Vikings plotted their courses by the positions of the sun and the stars. They sailed far out into the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean in search of good fishing areas and trade. They did most of their traveling and trading in spring after their fields were sown or in fall after their crops were harvested. They spent the long winters repairing their boats and weapons.

The Vikings were as successful in trade as the Phoenicians. Viking traders carried furs, hides, fish, and enslaved people to western Europe and the Mediterranean. They returned from these areas with silk, wine, wheat, and silver.

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**VIKING TRADE** The Vikings traveled very far in order to trade. They sailed to the Mediterranean and traded for Arabic silver coins. The Vikings then melted down the coins and used the silver to make jewelry. **What other items did the Vikings trade for?**

## Then... & Now

**Berserk** Of the many words that entered English from Old Norse, one of the most threatening is *berserk*. It comes from the Viking warriors known as *berserkers*, who rushed headlong into battle shrieking, leaping, and seemingly unaware of pain.






**Towns, Villages, and Jarls** Trade led to the growth of market towns in Scandinavia. These towns generally had two main streets that ran along the water's edge. Buyers and sellers set up booths along these streets where they showed their wares. The towns were protected on their land side by mounds of earth surrounded by wooden walls with towers.

Most Vikings lived in villages scattered all through the country. Their houses were made of logs or boards. The roofs, which were made of sod-covered wood, slanted deeply to shed the heavy winter snows. Carved dragons decorated the roofs at either end. Each house had a small porch at its front that was held up by carved pillars.

Distance and the cold winters isolated the people of one village from those of another. Because of this, there was no central government. The people were divided into groups ruled by military chiefs called *jarls* (yahrlz). Some jarls were elected, while others inherited their position. Sometimes, a jarl became strong enough to take over neighboring lands. When a jarl had enough land under his rule, he was looked upon as a king.

 **Reading Check**  
Who were the *jarls*, and how were they selected?

## Section 1 Assessment

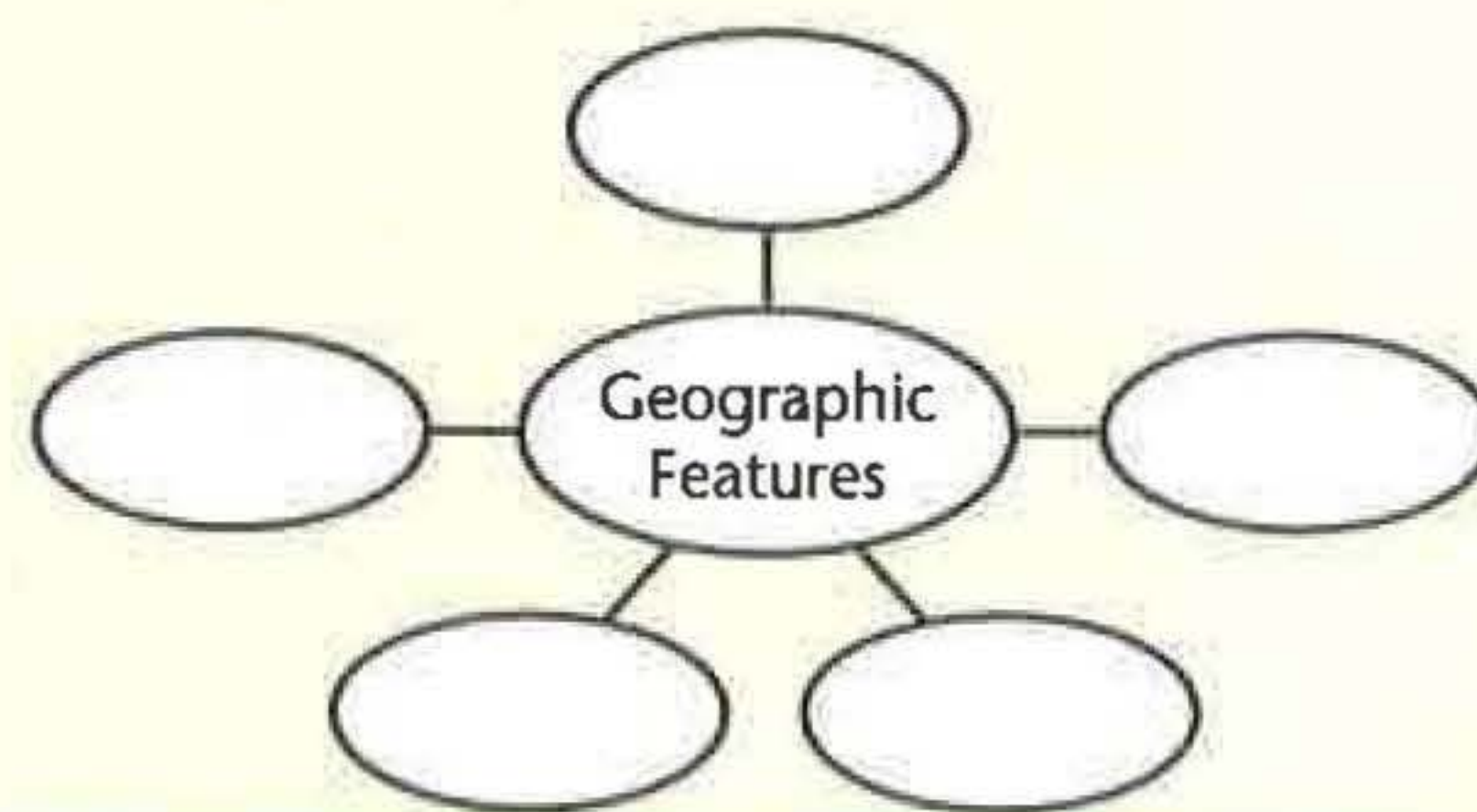
1. **Define:** *jarls*.
2. How did people in Scandinavia make a living?
3. What were some of the features of Viking towns?

### Critical Thinking

4. **Making Generalizations** How did the Vikings use their natural resources?

## Graphic Organizer Activity

5. Draw this diagram, and use it to describe geographic features of the Viking homeland.




## SECTION 2 Daily Life

Family life was important to the Vikings. Most households had 20 to 30 members, including parents, grandparents, married children, and grandchildren. Families often fought bloody feuds to defend their honor. The payment of fines later ended such feuds.

**The People** Viking warriors were called *berserkers* (ber zerk' erz). They believed in a life of action and valued deeds that called for strength and courage. They fought to gain wealth, honor, and fame. They believed that a liking for war brought special honors from the gods.

To call their warriors to battle, the Vikings lit bonfires on the tops of mountains. Those who saw a fire would light a new one to

 **Reading Check**  
Who were the Viking *berserkers*, and why did they fight?





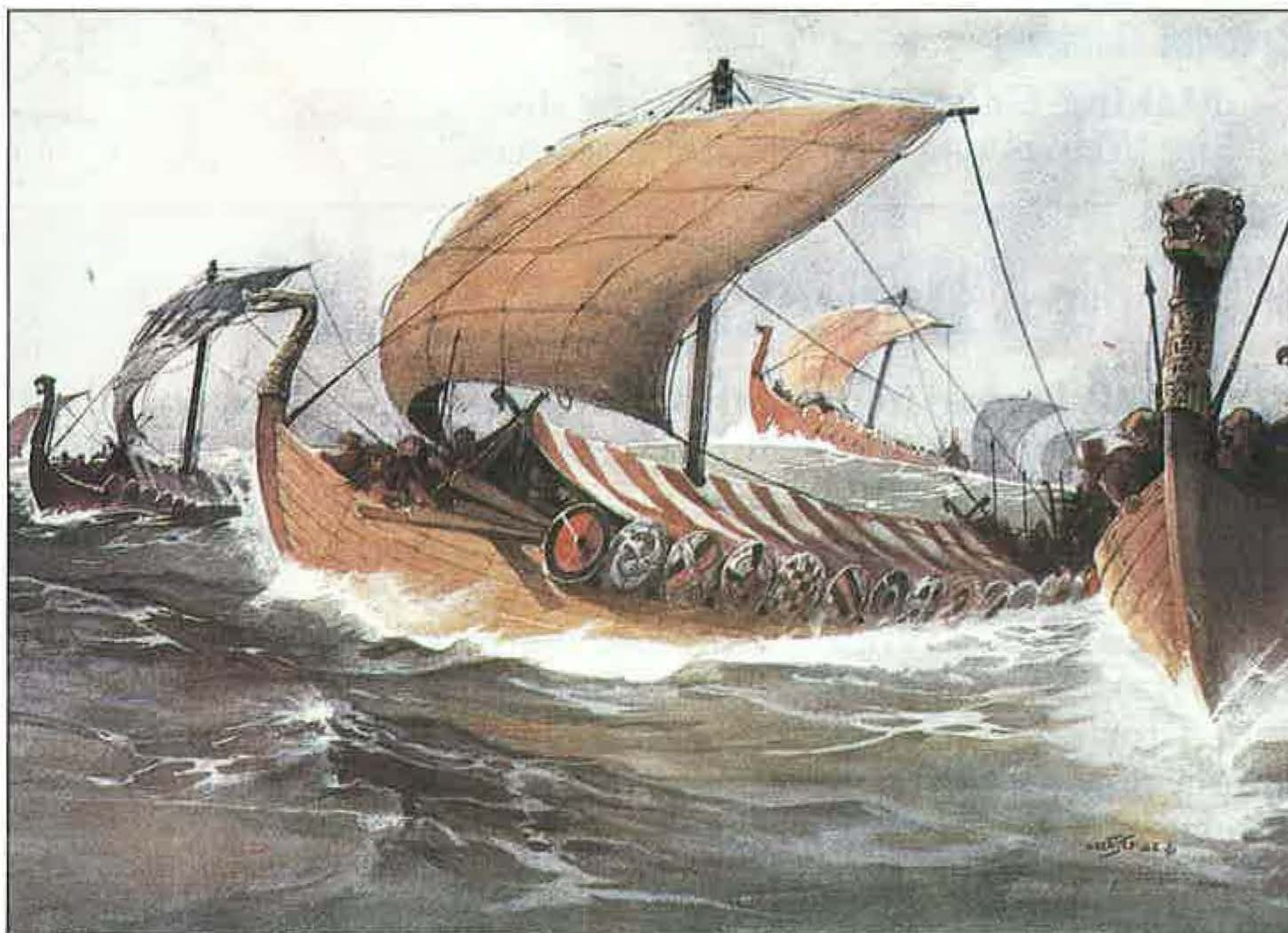
Viking Sword Hilt

spread the message. Warriors fought with battle axes, swords, and spears. Metal helmets decorated with animal figures protected their heads. Shirts made of iron rings and covered by a large cloth protected their bodies. Warriors preferred to die by their own hand rather than give their enemies the satisfaction of capturing or killing them.

The women encouraged their men to fight. A Viking groom bought his wife from her family on their wedding day. If he was not pleased with her, he could sell her. Yet, the position of Viking women was quite high. They took complete charge of the home. They could attend public meetings and talk with men other than their husbands. They could own property and get a divorce. Many Viking women grew herbs that were used as medicine.

Both men and women liked fine clothes. Men usually dressed in trousers and woolen shirts covered by knee-length tunics. Broad leather belts held the clothing in place. Sheepskin hoods and caps kept their heads warm. For special events, men wore red cloaks with brooches and carried decorated swords and daggers. Women also wore tunics held in place by a belt. They covered their heads with woolen or linen caps and wore large brooches, pins, and bracelets. Both men and women wore their hair long. The men took great pride in their mustaches and beards. Calling a

**VIKING ADVENTURES** This painting of Vikings at sea shows the detail and decoration these north people put into their ships. The bows of their ships were usually elaborately carved. Why did many Viking ships display the head of a dragon on the bow?





Viking man “beardless” was an insult that could be wiped out only by death.

The Vikings had no schools. Girls were taught household skills, such as spinning, weaving, and sewing, by their mothers. Boys were taught to use the bow and arrow and to be good fighters by their fathers. Boys also memorized tales of heroes and gods and competed in games that tested their strength and endurance.

**Religion** The Vikings worshiped many gods that at first were similar to the Germanic gods. Over time, they changed their gods to suit the hard life of Scandinavia. The Vikings believed that the gods were responsible for the weather and for the growth of crops. Since the gods liked to hunt, fish, and play tricks on one another, the Vikings viewed them as extra-powerful humans.

The Vikings bargained with their gods to get what they wanted. Priests offered sacrifices of crops and animals for the whole village. Most Vikings also had small shrines in their homes where they could pray or offer sacrifices.


The Vikings were proud of their gods and told stories of the gods’ great deeds. These stories later became written poems called *Eddas* (ed’ uhz). The Vikings also made up *sagas* (sah’ guhz), or long tales. At first, storytellers used to recite them at special feasts. One such tale took 12 days to recite. After 1100, the Vikings wrote down their sagas. With the coming of Christianity, however, the people lost interest in them. Many were forgotten or were forbidden by the Church. Only the people on the isolated island of Iceland passed on the old tales.

Early on, the Vikings spoke a language similar to that of the Germans. In time, the one language developed into four—Danish, Norwegian (nor wē’ juhn), Swedish, and Icelandic. These languages were written with letters called *runes* (rūnz), which few people except priests could understand or use. The Vikings used the runes as magic charms. They wrote the runes in metal and carved them in bone in the hope that they would bring good luck. When the Vikings accepted Christianity, they began to write their languages with Roman letters.



Viking Rune Stone

 **Reading Check**  
What were the *Eddas*?

 **Reading Check**  
What were some of the ways that the Vikings used *runes*?

## Section 2 Assessment

1. **Define:** *berserkers*, *Eddas*, *runes*.
2. What kind of education did Viking children receive?
3. How did the Vikings view their gods?

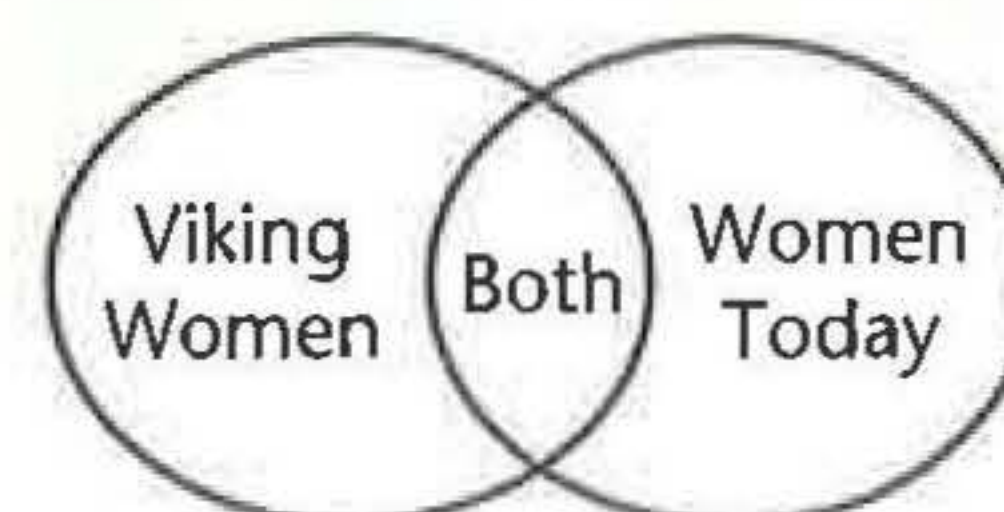
### Critical Thinking

4. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment**  
What might have been some of the

advantages and disadvantages of living in the large Viking households?

### Graphic Organizer Activity

5. Draw this diagram, and use it to compare the role of Viking women with the role of women in the United States today.







Name	Realm
Odin (or Wodan)	king of the gods; sky god; god of war and wisdom, <i>Wodan's day became Wednesday.</i>
Balder	god of light, joy, and spring
Bragi	god of poetry and stories
Freya	goddess of love and beauty
Freyr	god of rain, sunshine, and the harvest
Frigg	goddess of earth, marriages, and motherly love; Odin's wife; <i>Frigg's day became Friday.</i>
Hel (or Hela)	goddess of the dead
Idun	goddess of youth
Loki	god of fire; the mischief-maker
Njord	god of the sea
Thor	god of thunder, lightning, and the tides; <i>Thor's day became Thursday.</i>
Tyr	god of legal contracts and of truth; <i>Tyr's day became Tuesday.</i>

## SECTION 3 Raiders and Adventurers

Scandinavia's population kept increasing. By the end of the 800s, many Viking villages were overcrowded, and there was not enough food for everyone. Since there was no central government, the kings constantly fought one another and made life difficult for their enemies. Before long, many Viking warriors began to seek their fortunes in other lands. They set sail on their long, deckless ships that were propelled through the water with oars. On them, the Vikings could safely sail the deep water of the Atlantic Ocean or the shallow rivers of Europe.

**From East Europe to North America** Viking adventurers traveled to and raided areas from east Europe to North America. Swedish Vikings crossed the Baltic Sea and traveled down the rivers toward what is now Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. They established a trade water route from the Baltic to the



Black Sea and on to the wealthy city of Byzantium (bi zan' tē uhm). This water route became known as the Varangian (vah rahng ē'uhn) Route. In 862, a Swedish chief named Rurik (rū' rik) founded a Viking settlement that became the Kievan Rus state.

Norwegian Vikings set up trading towns in Ireland, explored the North Atlantic, and founded a colony on Iceland. Led by an adventurer named Erik the Red, they founded a colony on the island of Greenland in 986. Then, Erik's son, Leif Eriksson (lēf er' ik suhn), landed on the northeast coast of North America. He and his followers named the spot where they landed Vinland because of the wild grapes they found growing there. Today, the area is called Newfoundland (nū' fuhn luhnd). The Vikings did not set up a colony in Vinland because it was so far away from home and because they were repeatedly attacked by Native Americans.

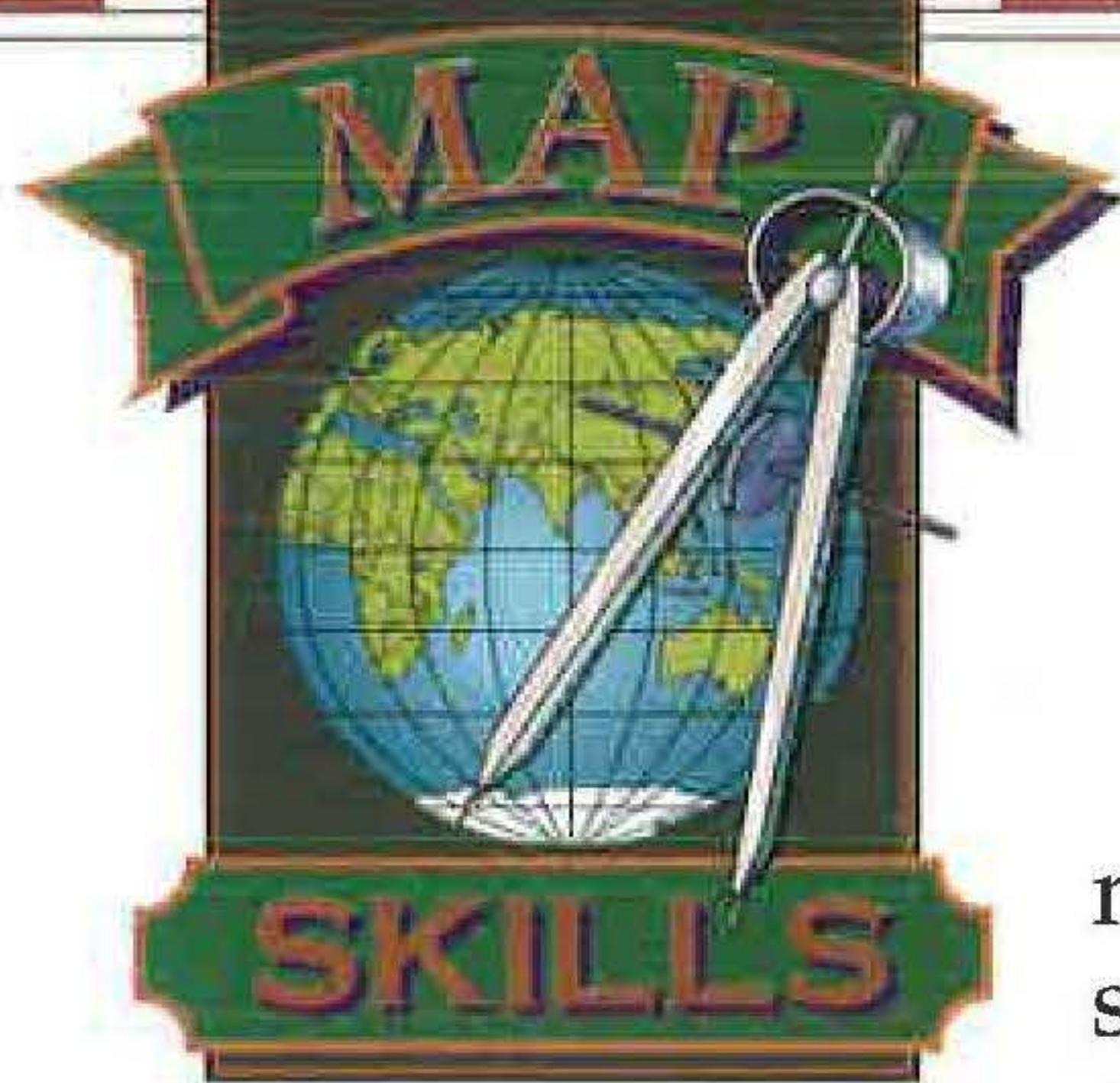
Most Viking adventurers, however, went to western and southern Europe in search of food and valuables. They disguised their ships to look like wooded islands by covering them with tree

## Linking Across Time

**Iceland** Viking settlers braved frozen seas to settle in Iceland during the late 800s and early 900s. Around 930, they drew up a constitution that provided for a legislative assembly called the Althing (left). The Althing still meets today (right), making it the oldest practicing legislative assembly in the world. **What conditions in Scandinavia led the Vikings to settle in Iceland?**







# Tracing Historical Routes

Lines on maps generally show boundaries or rivers.

On some maps, however, lines may show other things, such as **historical routes**. These are roads or courses over which people or goods have traveled all through history.

Such routes are often colored to make the map easier to read. A colored line may have arrows to point out the direction taken by people or goods. If there is a legend on the map, it may provide clues to the meaning of the different lines and colors.

For example, on the map of "Viking Trade and Expansion" below, the legend shows that the brown line is the Varangian Route. The two arrows along the line point out that the route began in Sweden and ended in Byzantium.

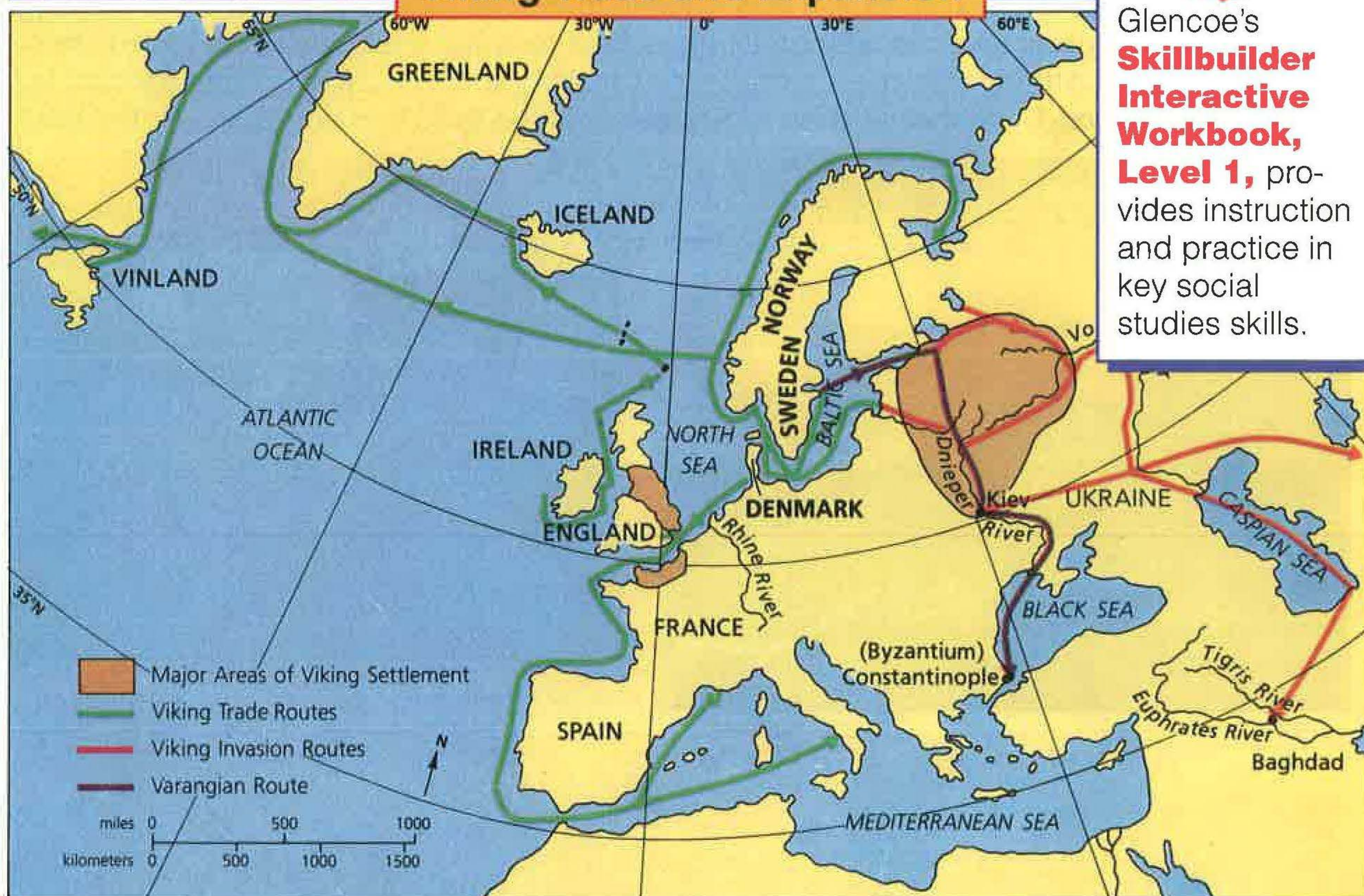
## Map Practice

1. What were some places visited by Vikings along their trade routes?
2. Which routes ran through the largest area of Viking settlement?
3. What two cities lay along Viking invasion routes?



Glencoe's **Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook, Level 1**, provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

## Viking Trade and Expansion







**VIKING SHIPS** The Vikings were among the best shipbuilders of their time. At sea, the Vikings depended on the wind and sails for power. On a river, rowers powered the ship. The Viking ships in this painting pursue enemy trading ships. **How did Vikings disguise their ships on rivers?**

attacks. They stole goods, destroyed homes, burned churches, and killed or enslaved people they captured. All Europe feared the Vikings. In their churches, the people prayed, "From the fury of the Norsemen, Good Lord, deliver us!"

**The Danes** The Danes were among those Vikings who raided western and southern Europe. One group invaded England and set up settlements there in the Danelaw. Their right to rule this area had been recognized by Alfred the Great. In 954, an heir of Alfred the Great forced the Danes to leave. In 978, Ethelred (eth' uhl red), nicknamed the Unready, became king of England. The Danes saw their chance and began raiding England again. At first, Ethelred was able to buy them off with silver. In 1016, however, a Danish king called Knut, or Canute (kuh nūt'), conquered England and made it part of his North Sea Empire. Canute was a powerful and just ruler. He converted to Christianity and brought peace and prosperity to England. Soon after his death in 1035, however, Danish control of the country came to an end. Some Danes left England. Those who remained became a part of the English people and culture.

Another group of Danes tried to take the city of Paris in France, but the French managed to fight them off. In 885, the

## People in History



**Canute**  
c. 995–1035

### Danish King

Canute followed in the footsteps of his father, who conquered England in 1013. When his father died, the Anglo-Saxons refused to make Canute king, so he led the Danes in a second war of conquest. In 1016, he became the sole king of England. In 1018 he inherited the Danish throne, and in 1028 he seized the throne of Norway. Although Canute's sons lost England, a distant kinsman from Normandy—William the Conqueror—would reclaim it in 1066.



Danes tried again. The people of Paris held them off for ten months. Finally, the French king paid the Danes gold to abandon their attack.

Led by a warrior named Rollo (rahl' ō), the Danes began settling along the French coast opposite England. In 911, the French king signed a treaty with Rollo. He gave the Danes this land. In return, the Danes became Christians and promised to be loyal to the French king. The region in which the Danes settled became known first as the Norselaw and then as Normandy (nōr' muhn dē). The people became known as Normans.

## Section 3 Assessment

1. Why did many Vikings leave Scandinavia?
2. Why did Europeans fear the Vikings?
3. What happened to the Danes who settled in England?

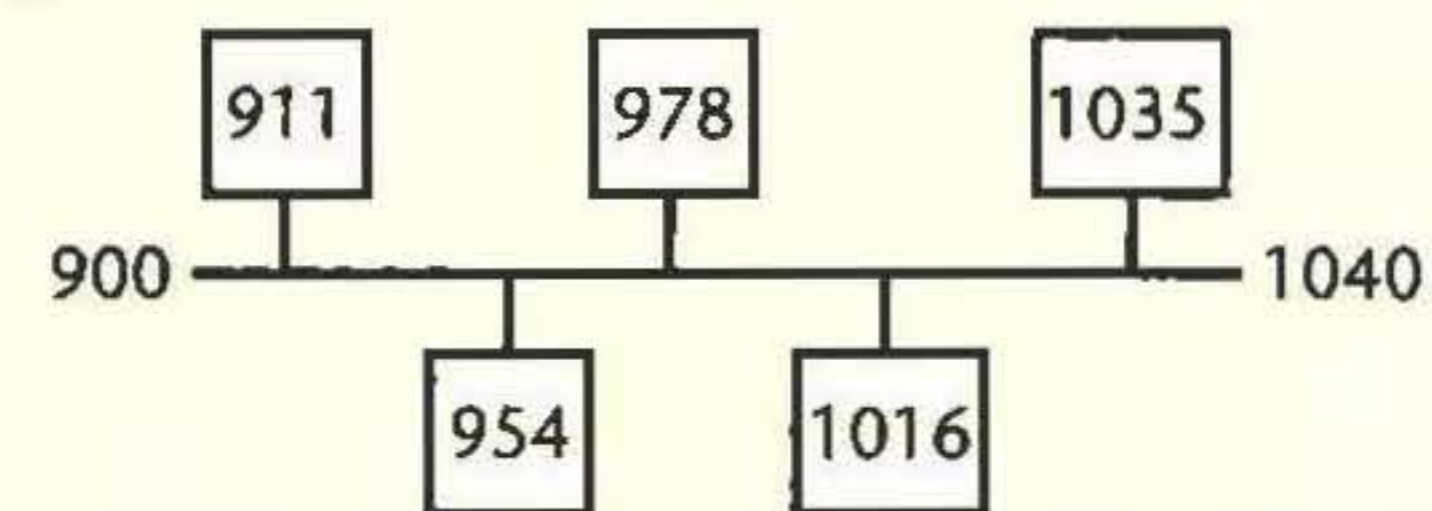
## Critical Thinking

4. **Predicting Consequences** How might life have been different for the

Vikings if there had been a central government in Scandinavia?

## Graphic Organizer Activity

5. Draw the following diagram, and use it to summarize key dates in Viking history.



# Chapter Summary & Study Guide

1. The Vikings lived in northern Europe in an area called Scandinavia.
2. The geography of the Viking homeland led people to become excellent sailors who earned their living through fishing, trading, and raiding.
3. The Vikings worshiped many gods and often told stories about them.
4. When the Vikings accepted Christianity, they stopped writing their languages in runes and began using Roman letters.
5. Overpopulation in Scandinavia in the 800s led many Vikings to establish settlements elsewhere, including Kievan Rus and Greenland.
6. In 1016, a Danish king called Canute conquered England, but after his death, Danish control of the country came to an end.
7. After besieging Paris, Danish Vikings settled along the French coast in an area known as Norselaw.



## Self-Check Quiz

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 20—Self-Check Quiz** to assess your understanding of this chapter.