

Assignment Discovery Lesson Plan Viking Discoveries

Subject:

World History

Grade level

9-12

Duration

Three class periods

Objectives

Students will

- create a model of a Viking longship; and
- write an account of life as a Viking.

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Map of the world
- Print materials about the Vikings (See procedure #8)
- Paper, pens
- Paint, markers
- Styrofoam egg cartons, glue, scissors, straws, string, and other materials as needed to create model Viking longships
- Basin or sink, water

Procedures

1. Engage students in a discussion of the Vikings. Ask where the Vikings originated (Scandinavia), what the Vikings are perhaps best known for (raiding, shipbuilding, sailing), and what they are perhaps less known for (farming, fishing, iron work, trade, writing).
2. Ask for volunteers to identify Scandinavia and the present-day countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway on the world map. Have other volunteers trace on the map possible Viking routes to Germany, France, and other European countries; to Russia; to Constantinople (today Istanbul, Turkey); and to Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland.
3. Ask students to describe the Viking vessels known as longships. They should understand that the longships were extremely seaworthy and swift, could be outfitted to carry tons of cargo, and were designed with a shallow draft that enabled the ships to enter small harbors and shallow waterways. Have the class speculate about how these design characteristics may have helped the Vikings in their surprise raids. Longships were the warship dragons of Viking sagas, and raids by longships struck fear into the hearts of the enemy.

4. Tell students that they are going to work in pairs or small groups to construct their own longships. The approximate ratio of a longship's length to width was four to one—about that of an egg carton, which is what students will use to create their longships.
5. Students should first carefully cut the top off a Styrofoam egg carton. The bottom portion will represent the longship. Glue pieces of the top portion over any holes on the bottom portion. Allow the glue to dry completely. Students can then modify, decorate, or outfit their ships as they wish, perhaps attaching a straw to the hull to serve as a mast and fashioning a Viking-style sail out of paper or lightweight material; or adding a Viking-style prow to the bow of the ship.
6. Fill a basin or sink with about 2 inches of water. To demonstrate the efficiency of the longship, float the egg carton in the water, and then gradually fill it with any convenient items to represent weight. (Small plastic toy farm animals and other realistic pieces will make the cargo more authentic.). Although the flotation qualities of the Styrofoam may enhance the models' carrying capacity, students should discover that the carton holds a surprisingly large cargo.
7. Tell students they are now going to research Viking life and write a short essay or other piece of creative writing about their experiences as a Viking. Sample subjects include
 - an account of a Viking trade voyage or raid;
 - the experiences of Erik the Red or Leif Eriksson in discovering and settling in a new land;
 - a Viking funeral, complete with a burning longship and a short tribute to the departed;
 - a Viking saga; and
 - a journal about life on a Viking farm.

Encourage students to sign their name on their paper in runes.

8. Students should use both print and online resources for their research. The following Web sites may be helpful:
 - <http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/>
The National Museum of Natural History's Discover Vikings: The North American Saga site celebrates the 1,000-year anniversary of Leif Eriksson's arrival in North America.
 - <http://pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings>
PBS's The Vikings site offers a vast amount of information, including a model Viking town and how to write your name as a rune.
9. Have students share what they wrote about life as a Viking with the rest of the class.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work.

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions; worked efficiently and cooperatively to create a model Viking longship; demonstrated thoroughness and initiative in their research; wrote a compelling piece that reflected a clear understanding of life as a Viking.

2 points: Students participated somewhat in class discussions; worked somewhat efficiently and cooperatively to create a model Viking longship; demonstrated a degree of thoroughness and initiative in their research; wrote a piece that reflected some understanding of life as a Viking.

1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; did not work efficiently or cooperatively to create a model Viking longship; demonstrated poor or uninspired research skills; wrote a piece that reflected some understanding of life as a Viking.

Vocabulary

hull

Definition: The frame or body of a ship, exclusive of masts, engines, or superstructure

Context: Ancient Norse vessels had skins covering their hulls.

keel

Definition: The principal structural member of a ship, running lengthwise along the centerline from bow to stern, to which the frames are attached

Context: The keel of a ship maintains its stability in the water.

nautical

Definition: Of, relating to, or characteristic of ships, shipping, sailors, or navigation on a body of water

Context: The nautical skills of the Vikings allowed them to sail great distances.

navigable

Definition: Sufficiently deep or wide to provide passage for vessels

Context: The shallow draft of a Viking longship made the smallest rivers navigable.

Nordic

Definition: Of, relating to, or characteristic of Scandinavia or its peoples, languages, or cultures

Context: The Nordic gods Tir and Thor lend their names to our calendar as Tuesday and Thursday.

raid

Definition: A surprise attack by a small armed force

Context: People living along the northern coast of Europe lived in fear of Viking raids.

Viking

Definition: A seafaring Scandinavian people who plundered the coasts of northern and western Europe from the 8th through the 10th centuries

Context: Viking raiders eventually settled in the area of northern France now called Normandy.

National Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- People, Places, and Environment
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Science, Technology, and Society

Credit

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