



0. VIKING SHIPS and SETTLEMENTS - Story Preface

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Dragon-head post found in the Oseberg Viking Ship when it was discovered at a burial site in Norway. Copyright, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway, all rights reserved. Permission to reuse granted if [specific instructions are followed](#).

What does the word "Viking" actually mean? A *vikingur* was "a hit and run raider."

After [building their ships](#), these Norsemen would sail to places like Britain where they would terrify monks and [loot their treasures](#). (When Vikings first [landed on British shores](#), the defenders did not yet have the sophisticated [weapons](#) they would develop later.) "[Going Viking](#)" meant to sail away on a plunder-and-loot trip. It wasn't just full-time sailors who embarked on such raiding (or [trading](#)) adventures. (Click on "Thorkel and the trading voyage.") Sometimes farmers, or craftsmen, also joined in. After a raid, the men returned to their normal occupations either [at home](#) or in a [new settlement](#).

For a [Viking-settlement](#) overview, take a look at this map. [Areas in green](#) depict the locations of frequent raids. You can also see when Vikings were most active:

- Eighth-century Viking settlements are noted in brown;
- Ninth-century settlements are red;
- Tenth-century settlements are orange; and
- Eleventh-century Viking settlements are yellow.

Norsemen [invented the longship](#), among [other vessels](#), which they sailed to distant places. Archeological evidence reveals that Vikings - just like Anglo-Saxons - occasionally used their ships for [underground burials](#).

One of the most rare, and exciting, [discoveries](#) in Britain was the burial ship at [Sutton Hoo](#). Measuring 85 feet (27 meters) long, and 15 feet (4.5 meters) at its widest, the [Anglo-Saxon ship](#) (the link depicts an artist's conception) was placed into the ground sometime during, or shortly after, 625 AD - predating the first Viking incursions. It remained [undisturbed](#) until [excavations](#) in 1939. (To see many of the solid-gold artifacts found at the site, visit the "[British Museum Compass](#)" and search for "sutton hoo.")

Scholars believe Sutton Hoo's ship burial took place in the 7th century. Are we able to date when Vikings built [their boats](#)? Since [Viking ships](#) were made from wood, experts can reasonably fix [the time frame](#) by using the

science of "tree rings." With that method, referred to as Dendrochronology, we can also create a tree-ring chronology with this animated game.

Vikings relied on ships to reach, and explore, new territories. But a Shoshone teenager, named Sacagawea, used a different means of transportation as she helped Lewis and Clark with their Corps of Discovery expedition.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream

Dragon Head - Viking Ship

This dragon-head post was found in the Oseberg Viking Ship when it was discovered inside a burial mound at the Osberg farm near Tønsberg in Vestfold County, Norway. Scholars believe the ship was buried around 834 AD. It was excavated between 1904-05.

The ship, and the post, are now part of the collections at the Viking Ship Museum located on Oslo's beautiful Bygdøy Peninsula.

Although replicas of the Oseberg ship have been built, it has been difficult to keep them afloat.

Scholars are not sure about the purpose of this dragon-head post.

Click on the image for a better view.

Photo of dragon-head post, online via Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway. Copyright, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway.

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Viking Settlements - 8th to 11th Centuries

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Anglo-Saxon Ship - An Artist's Conception

Image online, courtesy Texas A & M University website.

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Sutton Hoo - Anglo-Saxon Burial Ship

Image online, courtesy the world-archaeology.com website.

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Viking Ships

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