



Plotting the Course

This MysteryQuest investigates Norse travel from Scandinavia to Vinland and culminates in the creation of an annotated route for Norse travel. Students learn that the Norse voyages to North America were long, difficult, and often perilous.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History **Where Is Vinland?**

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/28/indexen.html>

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*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)
www.tc2.ca*

Ages

11–14

Courses

Canadian history, social studies, geography

Key Topics

- Viking navigation and travel
- historical geography of the North Atlantic

Critical Challenges

- Draw inferences about Viking navigation and travel from evidence in textual sources.
- Plot and annotate a reasonable route for the Norse people to have taken when travelling from Scandinavia to Vinland.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn to find evidence about Viking travel in textual sources.
- Students will learn that Viking travel was challenging and perilous, especially given the conditions and lack of directional aids.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of the historical geography of the North Atlantic
- knowledge of the details of Viking travel between Scandinavia and Vinland



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for identifying a reasonable route to Vinland (e.g., safe, efficient, uses available resources)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- evidence



Thinking strategies

- data chart
- plot on a map



Habits of mind

- attention to detail

Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/28/indexen.html>.

Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each item of support material and a set of procedures are linked to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Set the context

- Provide students with a map containing lots of details (such as an illustrated map of the local community or city). Introduce a set of directions that will take them from a point of origin (which you explicitly identify) to a destination (which you refer to only as a secret meeting place). The directions should not refer to any place names, but simply to directions taken, approximate travel times, notable features they will pass (e.g., a busy highway, a noisy part of town, lots of parking lots, or tall buildings). Ask students to use your directions to plot the precise route on the map.
- In a class discussion, invite students to reflect on what is needed to make a good set of directions (e.g., clear instructions, attention to detail, descriptive yet succinct). Ask what they think it might have been like to travel in the tenth century when there was no directional equipment, and very little to rely on other than experience, observation, and luck. Ask students to imagine setting out on a journey—one that might take weeks to complete—with a set of directions like the ones provided in the above activity.
- Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, explain to students the context surrounding their investigation of Norse travel.

Discuss the challenge

- Using [The Task](#) as a guide, explain to students that their challenge, working collaboratively in pairs or small groups, is to plot the routes (or at least locate the places) described in the historical documents and record useful information that will help them propose a detailed route for Norse explorers to follow when travelling from Norway to Vinland.

Learn about the Norse people

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the Norse people](#) as a guide, orient students to the Norse people, their navigational capabilities, and the origin and nature of the Viking sagas. You might want to distribute the three documents mentioned, or simply use these as the basis for a short presentation to the class.

Gather evidence about Norse travel

- Distribute copies of [North Atlantic](#) and [Looking for Clues](#) to each pair or small group of students.
- Use an LCD or overhead projector to display the map of the [North Atlantic](#). As a class, locate as many familiar place names as possible on the map and connect the Norse place names with the more familiar English words (e.g., the Aroc Ocean is the Arctic Ocean).
- Using [Step 2: Look for clues](#) as a guide, instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to examine seven documents looking for evidence about Norse travel. On the map, students are

to plot each of the routes (or at least locate the places) described in the seven documents and, on the chart, record information related to each of the listed categories.

Identify criteria for plotting a reasonable route

- Using [Step 3: Identify criteria for plotting a reasonable route](#) as a guide, review the criteria for planning a reasonable route.

Prepare for plotting the course

- Using [Step 4: Prepare your map](#) as a guide, explain to students that they are to use their completed charts and information sheets as guides to help them determine a reasonable route for Viking travel from Stad, Norway to Vinland.
- Duplicate and distribute to student groups enlarged copies (11 x 17) of [North Atlantic](#) to record their finished work.
- Remind students to indicate on the map short but informative annotations about key features or landmarks along the route, and to offer a rationale for their choice of route on a separate sheet of paper.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [Assessing the Evidence](#) to evaluate students' gathering of evidence from the documents and plotting of routes described in the documents.
- Use the rubric [Assessing the Proposed Route](#) to evaluate students' annotated map of a proposed route to travel from Norway to Vinland.

Extension

- Invite students individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in [Extension](#).