

## Map Based Exploration: Vikings Visit North America

Vikings were tremendous explorers, always in search of new lands to conquer and colonize. Around 1000 CE, they crossed the Atlantic Ocean in wooden longboats, and established colonies in Vinland, Labrador, the Baffin Islands, and Newfoundland. The Viking colonies may not have lasted as long as the later European colonies did, but the stories of their voyages spread southward throughout Europe. We know about Viking journeys from two Norse sagas, the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, and *the Saga of Erik the Red*. The *Saga of the Greenlanders* describes an explorer named Bjarni Herjulfsson as the first to reach North America. The *Saga of Erik the Red* claims that Leif Eriksson was the first to reach North America.

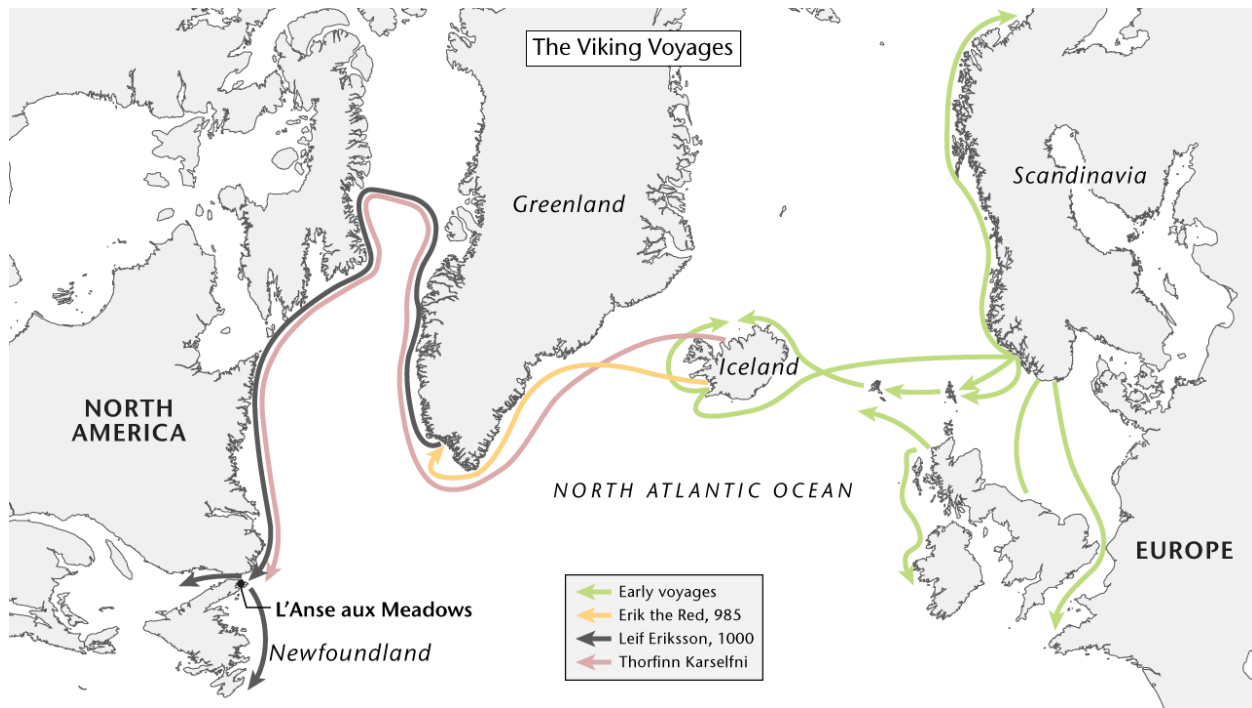
The Vikings would have found the landscape of Helluland, in modern-day Baffin Island, to be barren, rocky, and inhospitable. Markland, in modern-day Labrador, was heavily forested. The wood was a valuable trade good, especially since the Greenland colonies had very little trees. The settlement in Vinland means “Wine land,” and Thorfinn reported finding “wine berries.” This led other Vikings to believe that the land was rich in grapes. But those who came to Vinland a grape harvest were disappointed. Some scholars believe that what Thorfinn had actually found were cranberries.

Viking explorers did not find North America uninhabited. Thorfinn referred to the native people of North America as *skraelings*, or “wretched people.” The natives apparently felt no kinder towards the Vikings, as numerous arrows have been found in the remains of the Vinland settlements. Only three years after Thorfinn’s journey and the founding of Vinland, all the North American settlements were abandoned. Relations with the native people had grown increasingly hostile, and trade routes

were dangerous and therefore no longer profitable. Additionally, the existing colonies in Greenland couldn't support colonies that were several weeks away. The Vikings continued to make a small number of trading runs across the Atlantic, but did not try to settle there again.

## Instructions

In this activity you will look at maps and images of early Viking settlements. Use the information presented to write a short paragraph explaining why you believe the Viking colonies in North America did not last.





**Explain**

In the space below, explain why you believe the Viking settlements in North America did not last.

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### **Expand**

Using a separate sheet of paper, describe how you would go about establishing a colony in North America compared to the Vikings. Use evidence from this worksheet to support your answer.