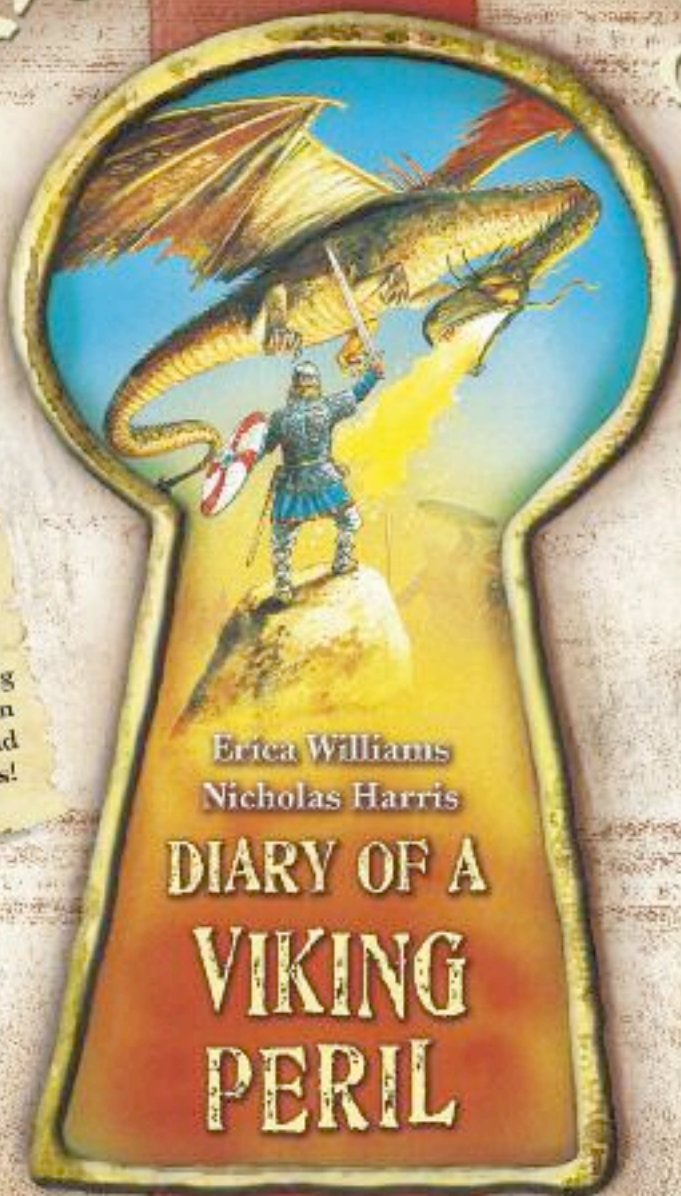


The Time Key



Erica Williams

Nicholas Harris

DIARY OF A VIKING PERIL

Take an exciting
journey back in
time to the land
of the vikings!

The Time Key

DIARY OF A VIKING PERIL



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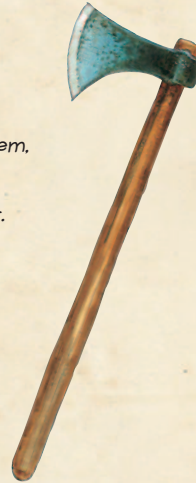
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Dear Reader,

So how would YOU like to be chased by a REAL,
LIVE, DRAGON? Scary thought, eh? Well that's
EXACTLY what happened to us. No, we didn't
believe in them either, until we somehow
managed to travel back more than 1000 years
to the time of the Vikings. Yes, VIKINGS! Big,
fierce guys with pointy helmets and battle-
axes, longships with stripy sails and shields
along the sides. Actually, most of the Vikings
were really friendly, but we were all
TERRIFIED of fire-breathing, flying monsters
with BIG TEETH!!

So we decided to write down everything that
happened to us and keep all the cool stuff we
found while we were there in this diary. Now
we think you'll have to agree that we must be
telling the truth about our AMAZING
adventure—and discover what it was REALLY
like to be a Viking!

Josh and Maisie

The Time Key

DIARY OF A VIKING PERIL



 Orpheus

"Josh, that looks great!"

It was a rainy Saturday afternoon and my sister Maisie and I were in our Granddad's study. I had been working for ages building a model of a Viking boat, complete with a carved dragon's head, while Maisie read some of Granddad's old books.



We were really interested in the Vikings ever since we'd begun learning about them at school. We found out that they weren't just ruthless raiders. They were also farmers and expert craftsmen.

Suddenly, a book fell out of the bookcase on to the floor. "Well, that's odd," said Maisie, "I didn't go near that shelf". It was an old book about Viking legends. A page had fallen out. On it was an old Viking tale about a dragon that guarded a hoard of treasure.

A TREASURE-LOVING DRAGON
IN VIKING TIMES, people lived in fear of dragons. They featured in the stories they told constantly. These terrible creatures, it was said, craved treasure, not just out of greed, but also as a means of self-defence. Dragons' bellies were not protected by the scales that covered the rest of their bodies. This left them vulnerable to attack from beneath. Dragons discovered that if they lay on top of treasure, some of the pieces would stick to their bellies, providing a protective shield. One of the most notorious dragons was said to be particularly fond of silver. It hoarded what it had stolen from a nearby village. Many men had lost their lives trying to take back the treasure. None, it would seem, however brave, could escape from its giant jaws. One day, the dragon suddenly disappeared, presumed slain. But, as some historians have pointed out, the sword that was used to kill it must have had exceptional qualities, and the man who wielded it blessed with extraordinary fortune.



FIG 17. The dragon lies atop its treasure board

As we were reading about how the dragon terrorized the people of a nearby village, we felt a draught of cold air coming from the space on the shelves. Curious, we pulled some more books off the shelf until we could see, at the back of the bookcase, a tiny wooden door, locked with a small key.



I turned the key and eased the door open. "URRGH!" I said. "Smells like a farmyard in there. Hey, listen — did you hear that? Sounds like a pig!" "Don't be silly Josh. We're in Granddad's house. But let's go see what's actually behind that door. You first!" whispered Maisie, excitedly.

We squeezed through and found ourselves in what looked like a gloomy old barn, full of straw, yucky smells — and loads of animals getting a bit too close ... WHOAAA!!! Something definitely licked my ear! Some chickens clucked down by our feet, and, yes, there was even a pig and her piglets. Where were we?



We looked round the corner. This was a very long barn. There was quite a bit of smoke, smells of cooking and the sound of chatting. People were living here! They were wearing strange clothes and were busying themselves cooking over a fire, carrying buckets of water, making bread and tending to their children. There were long benches along each wall. "This looks EXACTLY like a longhouse", Maisie whispered. "A VIKING longhouse."



THE AGE OF THE VIKINGS

The Vikings, also known as Norsemen, were seafaring peoples from Scandinavia (modern-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden). Their name came from the old Norse word *vikigr*, meaning “pirate”. Between the years 750 and 1100, they were a constant menace, raiding and looting coastal towns and villages all over Europe. One reason was that their population grew rapidly, leading to shortages in farmland, so the Vikings set out to conquer and settle new lands. Another was that many young warriors saw raiding simply as a way of gaining wealth and honour.

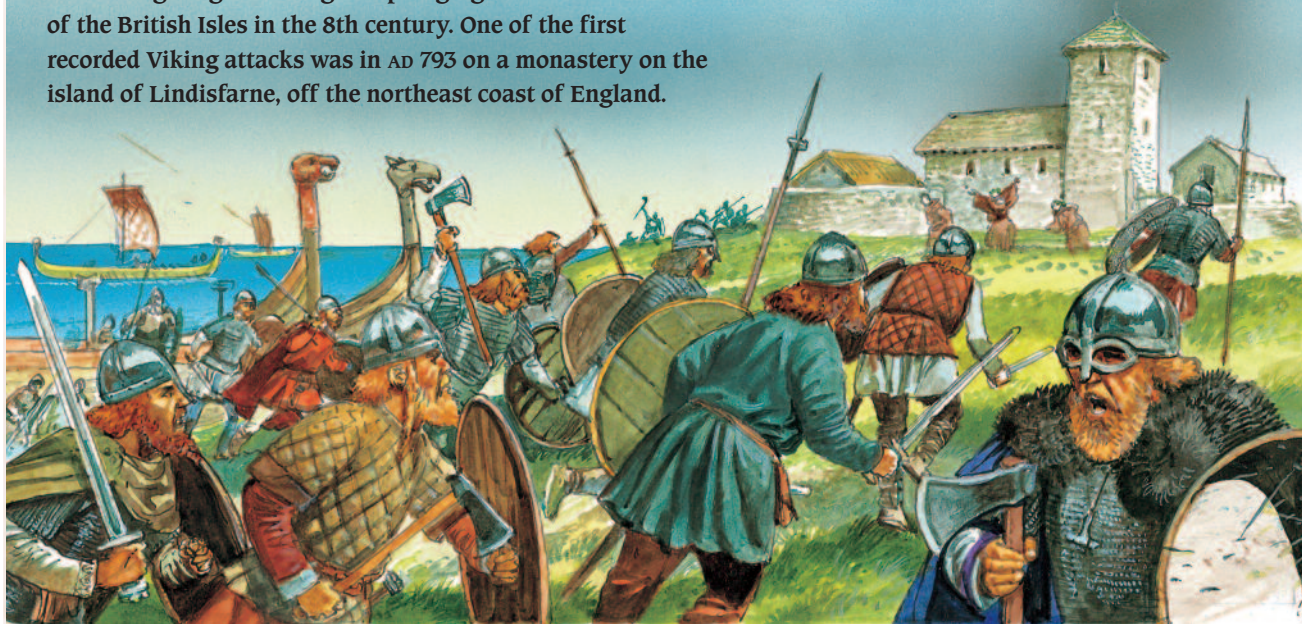
The Vikings were skilled boatbuilders and sailors. Their warships, known as longships,



A Viking fortress. Circular embankments of wood and soil protected the wooden buildings.

were sleek and fast, and could be rowed right up on to the shore. They frequently made surprise attacks on churches and monasteries, stealing valuables and farm animals. Their terrified victims were shown little mercy.

The Vikings began raiding and pillaging coastal settlements of the British Isles in the 8th century. One of the first recorded Viking attacks was in AD 793 on a monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, off the northeast coast of England.



Later, the Vikings became settlers of the lands they once raided. Some Norwegian Vikings sailed west to Scotland, Orkney, Shetland, Faroe Islands and Ireland. Many Danes settled in England, Netherlands and a region of France called Normandy (the name is from “Norseman”). Viking seafarers sailed further still, travelling thousands of kilometres across the North Atlantic Ocean to colonize first Iceland, then Greenland. They even went on to explore the coasts of North America.

As well as being fearsome warriors, the Vikings were great traders.



Bronze case for a merchant's scales.

The superiority of their shipbuilding skills enabled them to trade with distant lands. They built cargo ships, called *knarrs*, that were specifically designed to carry heavy goods, such as timber, livestock and

silver. With their strong hulls, the ships were able to travel through the rapids of European rivers and make long-haul journeys across the stormy Atlantic Ocean. Viking traders took furs and skins and exchanged them for cloth, wine and pottery. Some travelled to Russia and the Middle East, where they traded furs, honey, weapons and amber for silver, silks and spices. They also supplied slaves to the Arabs in exchange for silver. Merchants would weigh out pieces of silver using sets



Today, coins represent a certain value, but in Viking times merchants calculated payment by measuring the weight of the coins using portable scales. The coins were often later melted down and crafted into jewellery.

of scales they carried with them. Trading markets, where merchants came to trade various goods, soon grew up along the trade routes to the south and east. It was not long before these markets turned into permanent settlements. They began to flourish as Viking trading towns.



A Viking knarr



Outside there was a street market in full swing. A kind-looking boy came up to us. "I've not seen you two before. Hi, I'm Erik". We muttered something about how our family were visiting. Erik told us that life for the villagers was not easy, "Everyone works as hard as ever, but the silver people earn for their goods seems to go missing."

Cave
Forest
Great Hall
Farm
Main street
Harbour
Sea

this is a map we drew of the village. It shows the main street, the harbour, the farm, the place where they held the "thing" and, of course, the path that led up through the forest to the cave.

As we walked around the village, we saw people busy making different things. Some women were weaving cloth on a large loom. Maisie went over for a closer look. One of them showed her how to weave wool using the giant wooden loom. Elsewhere there were

craftsmen making jewellery and ornaments. Erik took us out of the village to a farm.

"Where we live there is not enough farmland for everyone", he said, shrugging. "Some people have even sailed away to new lands across the sea to try their luck somewhere else."



A VIKING TOWN

Nearly all the houses and workshops in a Viking town were made of timber. The roofs were made of reeds or straw thatch. Other than at the blacksmith's forge, there were no chimneys, only openings to allow smoke from the hearth to escape. Some poorer dwellings may have had just a single room with a hearth in the centre. With no windows, interiors were gloomy, lit by simple oil lamps or candles.

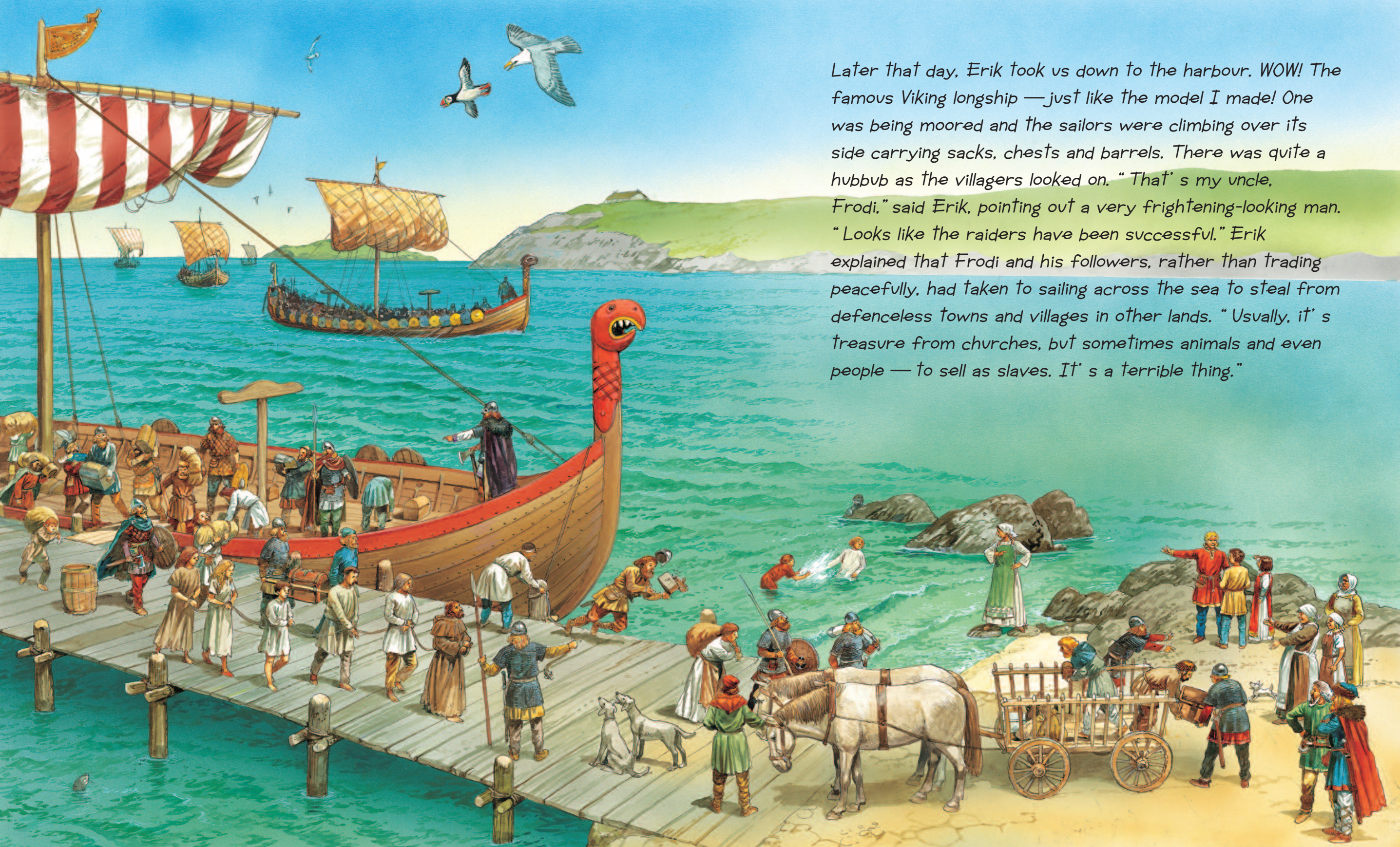
In many houses there was a weaving loom. Cooking pots were hung over the hearth from a frame. There was an ever-present risk of fire with so much wood and straw about.

People busied themselves cooking; drying, salting, smoking and pickling food; tanning leather; blacksmithing; scouring and dyeing cloth. Most of their food came from the surrounding countryside and sold at markets; the townspeople had too little room to produce their own food—only small, fenced yards for keeping pigs and chickens.



This craftsman carves a head-post for a ship in the form of a dragon.





Later that day, Erik took us down to the harbour. WOW! The famous Viking longship — just like the model I made! One was being moored and the sailors were climbing over its side carrying sacks, chests and barrels. There was quite a hubbub as the villagers looked on. “That’s my uncle, Frodi,” said Erik, pointing out a very frightening-looking man. “Looks like the raiders have been successful.” Erik explained that Frodi and his followers, rather than trading peacefully, had taken to sailing across the sea to steal from defenceless towns and villages in other lands. “Usually, it’s treasure from churches, but sometimes animals and even people — to sell as slaves. It’s a terrible thing.”



“FRODI!” bellowed a deep voice. An important-looking man walked up to Erik’s uncle. He was shaking with anger. “What’s this? In this village we trade our goods for silver honestly and fairly. The council agreed that we will NOT steal from innocent people.” Frodi glowered back at him.

“Your peaceful ways are all very well, but there’s not enough to live on,” he snarled. “Over the sea, there’s plenty of silver and gold for everyone. We fight to earn our living!” Frodi’s young henchmen murmured in approval, and they stalked off.

Later, Erik explained everything. The important-looking man was his father, Harald, the chieftain. Harald and Frodi were half-brothers. Ever since their father had died, the two of them had quarrelled. Harald had become chieftain, but Frodi believed that he should be instead.

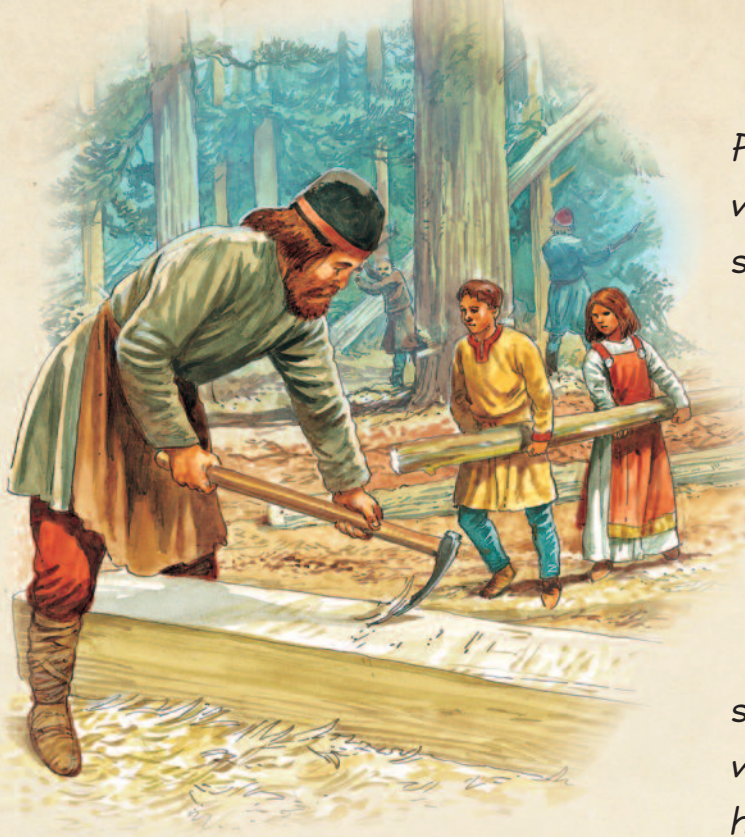
Erik showed us his sword. “This is what everyone calls ‘Dragon-Slayer’. It always passes to the chieftain’s son and heir. That’s me! With this sword I pledge to protect our people from harm.”



That evening, Maisie and I spotted Frodi and his friends setting off through the forest. “They look a bit shifty,” said Maisie. “Let’s follow them.” Frodi was carrying one of the chests we’d seen being unloaded from the ship earlier. Hiding

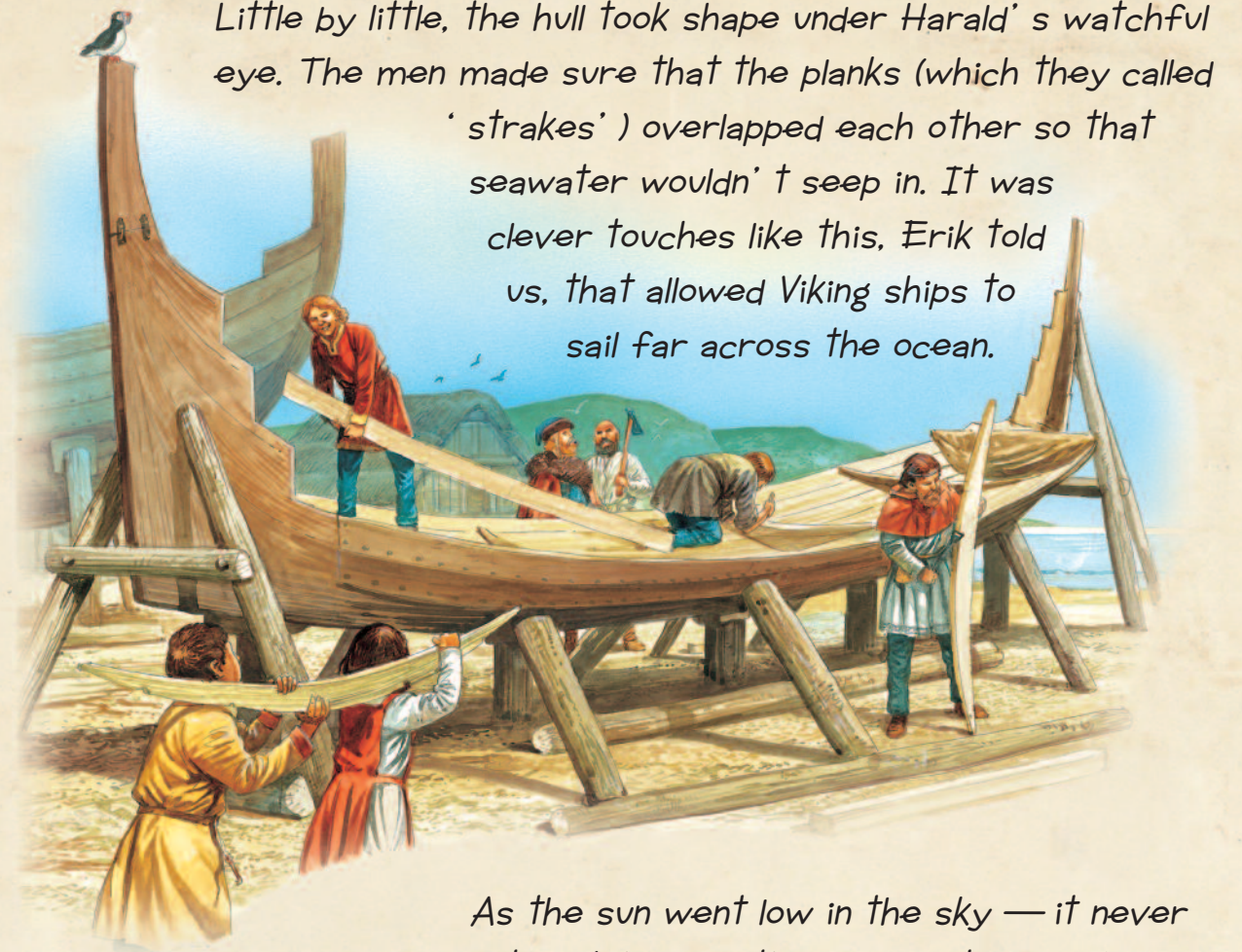
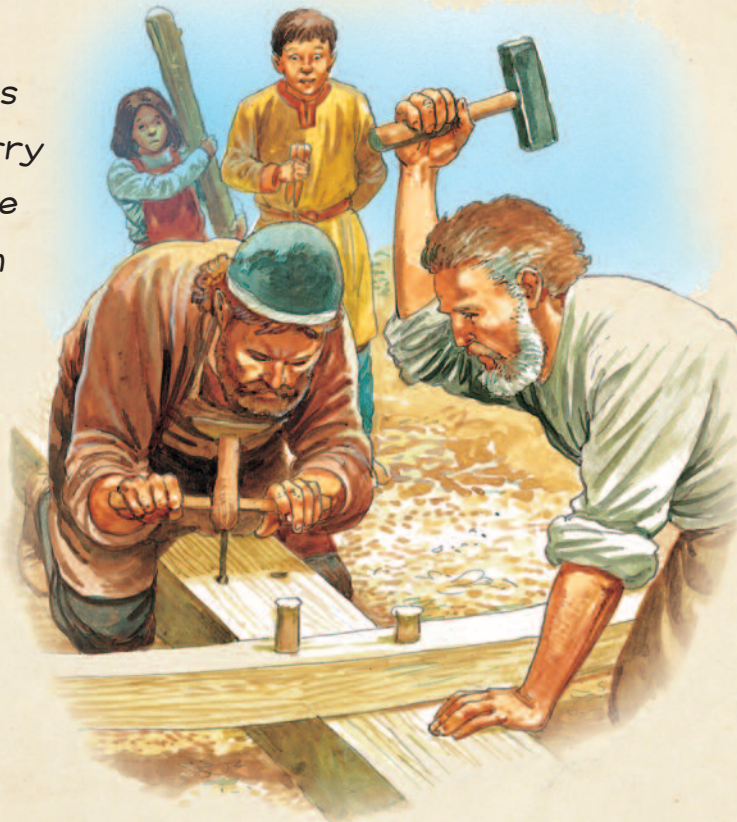
behind a rock, we watched him take it into a cave. “Do you hear those snorting noises?” I whispered to Maisie. “Yes, and check out that smoke,” she hissed back. Just then, I stepped on a twig. The boys swung round and began to chase us. We had to move — FAST.





PHEW! That was close!! Luckily we could run faster than them, so we escaped. But we were too scared to tell ANYONE, even Erik, what we had seen. The next day, Harald ordered the villagers to begin building cargo ships — not warships. There would be no more pirate raids or stealing. Instead, his people would trade their goods honestly to the lands overseas.

Some men went into the woods to chop down trees for timber. We helped carry some logs. We watched the men shape the wood with wedges and axes. Then they joined the pieces together using nails and wooden pegs ('treenails') to form the keel, the backbone of the ship.



Little by little, the hull took shape under Harald's watchful eye. The men made sure that the planks (which they called 'strakes') overlapped each other so that seawater wouldn't seep in. It was clever touches like this, Erik told us, that allowed Viking ships to sail far across the ocean.

As the sun went low in the sky — it never really got dark here in the summertime — Harald told us our work was finished for the day. We were just collecting up our tools when we noticed a couple of boys skulking around one of the ships. Oh no! It was Frodi's boys again, the ones who had chased us in the woods. We rushed to hide. But what could they be up to NOW, we wondered?



VIKING CRAFTS

The Vikings were skilled craftsmen. They used materials traded with other peoples in their crafts, including silver, jet (a hard, black stone), amber and glass, along with local wood. Leatherworkers, carpenters, blacksmiths and other craftspeople made everything needed for daily life. They carved wood for their ships, shields and toys, and fashioned metal for swords, tools, armour and jewellery. Their crafts were long-lasting, but also beautiful with elaborate decoration.

Brooches worn by nobles were often made from gold or silver.

The Vikings loved jewellery and wore ornate pendants, bracelets and pins made from precious metals, especially silver. Both men and women wore brooches to fasten their clothes at the shoulder. Wearing jewellery crafted from precious metals was a sign of wealth. The less well-off wore pieces made of cheaper bronze or pewter, a mixture of silver and other metals. Necklaces of glass beads were also popular.



The Vikings were very particular about their appearance. Both men and women wore make-up around their eyes and used combs made from antler or bone to comb their hair.

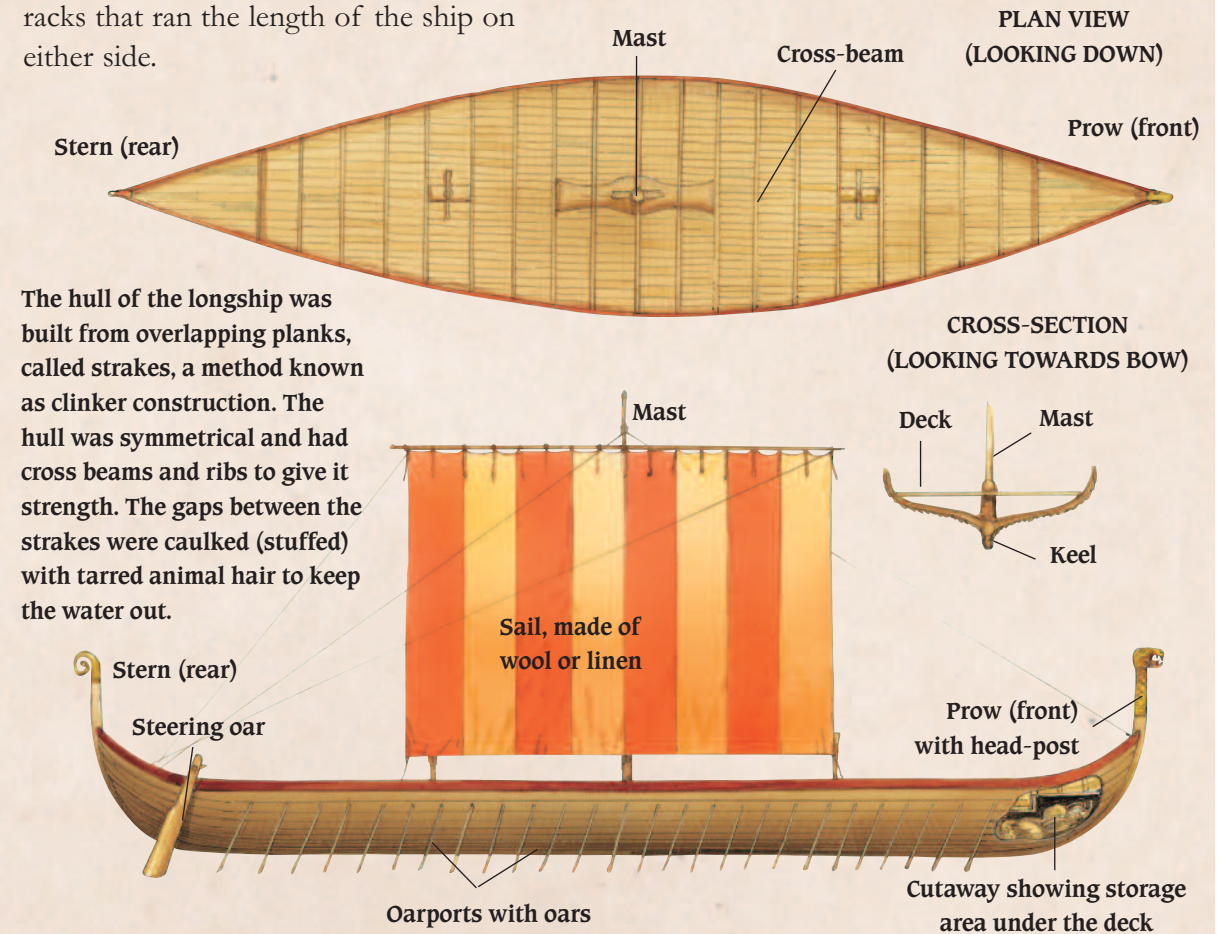


Wealthy and powerful Viking warriors were buried with superbly crafted weapons, such as battle-axes with blades inlaid with silver, and swords with highly decorated hilts.

The Vikings used their fastest ships, the longships, for raids. These ships were long and slender, and had flat bottoms. Their shape allowed them to be navigated up narrow inlets and to be landed on beaches – good for surprise attacks and quick getaways.

The ships were fitted with sails but could also be rowed: some had 50 oars. A steering oar, fastened by leather bands to the hull, worked as a rudder. The helmsman steered using a tiller, which was attached to it. Brightly painted shields were slotted into racks that ran the length of the ship on either side.

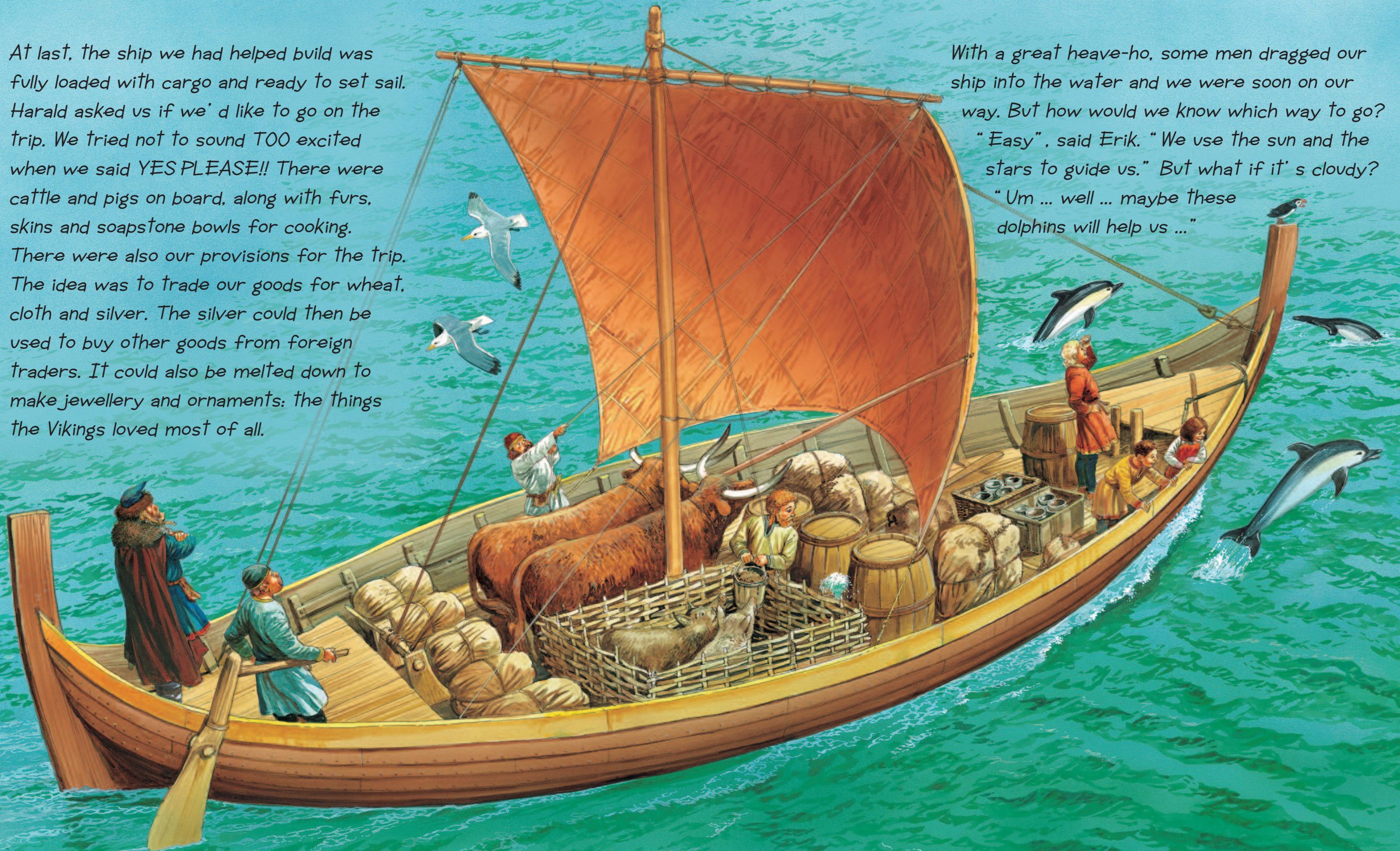
The Vikings used a system of writing called runes. Runes carved into stone, which lasts longer than wood or bone, were intended to mark boundaries, glorify an ancestor's bravery in battle, or to record stories called sagas.



The hull of the longship was built from overlapping planks, called strakes, a method known as clinker construction. The hull was symmetrical and had cross beams and ribs to give it strength. The gaps between the strakes were caulked (stuffed) with tarred animal hair to keep the water out.

At last, the ship we had helped build was fully loaded with cargo and ready to set sail. Harald asked us if we'd like to go on the trip. We tried not to sound TOO excited when we said YES PLEASE!! There were cattle and pigs on board, along with furs, skins and soapstone bowls for cooking. There were also our provisions for the trip. The idea was to trade our goods for wheat, cloth and silver. The silver could then be used to buy other goods from foreign traders. It could also be melted down to make jewellery and ornaments: the things the Vikings loved most of all.

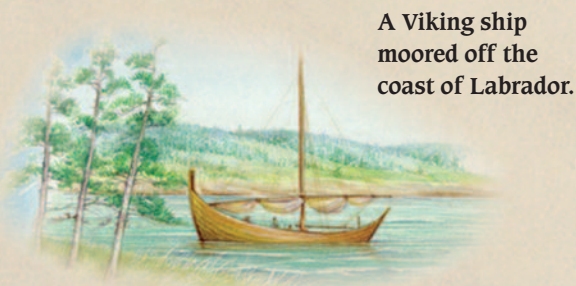
With a great heave-ho, some men dragged our ship into the water and we were soon on our way. But how would we know which way to go? "Easy", said Erik. "We use the sun and the stars to guide us." But what if it's cloudy? "Um ... well ... maybe these dolphins will help us ..."



VOYAGES OF EXPLORATION

The design of their ships enabled the Vikings to make long voyages across seas and oceans as well as sail up the shallowest of rivers. The Vikings travelled all over Europe and beyond in their quest for trade and for new lands to settle.

Around 860, Swedish Vikings began to venture across the Baltic Sea and along rivers, such as the Volga, into western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. These people were known as the Varangians. One group of Varangians, the Rus (from which the name "Russia" is derived), founded the towns of Novgorod and Kiev.



A Viking ship moored off the coast of Labrador.

These towns became major stations on the trading route between the Baltic Sea and the Caspian Sea. Varangian merchants also travelled down the River Dnieper and across the Black Sea to Istanbul, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. They even traded in Jerusalem, Baghdad and the wealthy Arab lands of the Middle East.



Viking explorers in Newfoundland were attacked by Native Americans, known to the Vikings as *skraelings*.

Meanwhile, some adventurers headed across the North Atlantic to settle in the Faroes and Iceland. In 985, Erik the Red discovered a large island to the west, which he named "Greenland". in the hope of to encouraging others to follow him.

From Greenland, his son, Leif, set out to explore the coast of North America in about AD 1000. Leif Eriksson explored the coasts of Baffin Island and Labrador. He became the first European to set foot on North American soil. Leif even founded a settlement on Newfoundland, known to them as Vinland, but it was abandoned after a only a few years.

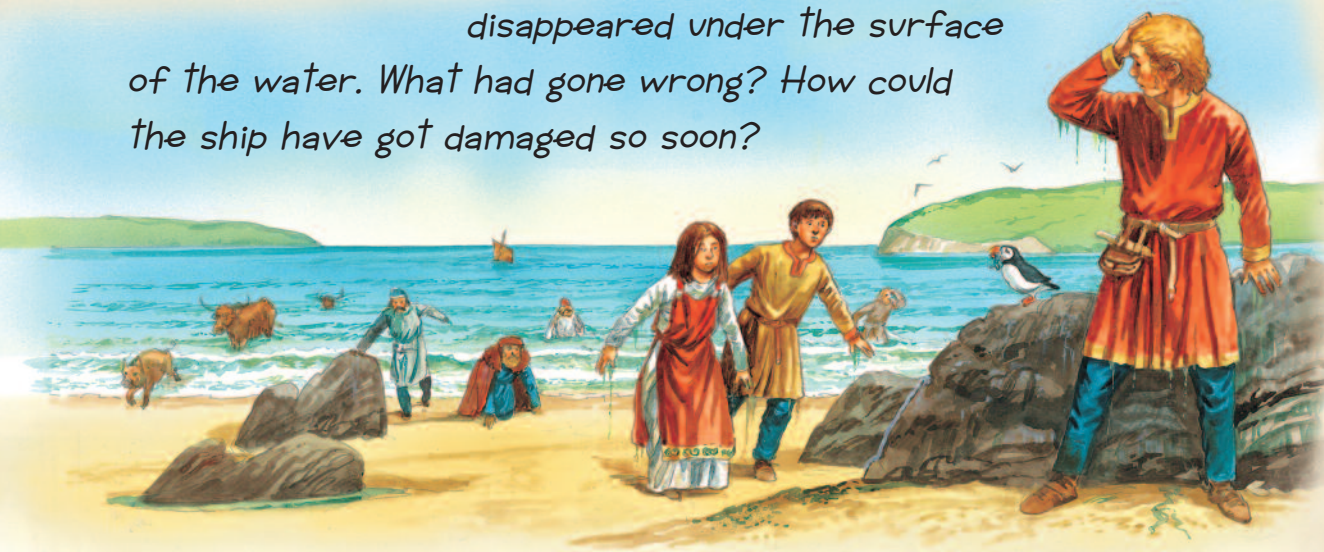


The Vikings found grapes, salmon streams and pastures in Newfoundland.

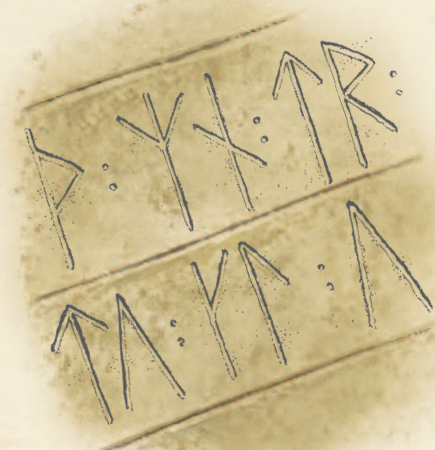




We had not gone very far when we felt cold water swilling around our ankles. Frantically, everyone on board tried to bail the water out, but it was no use: we were SINKING! "We'll have to swim!" Harald shouted. Luckily, the shore wasn't too far away, so over the side we jumped, animals and all. Some time later, soaking wet and shivering, we staggered on to the beach. We watched while, out to sea, the fantastic ship we had helped build disappeared under the surface of the water. What had gone wrong? How could the ship have got damaged so soon?



We were frightened but we were safe. It could have been MUCH worse! We wandered back to the village. By the side of the path, we noticed a large stone with strange markings carved into it.



"Hey, take a look at this, Josh," cried Maisie. "This is cool." Many of the swirly designs looked pretty old, like gravestones in the churchyard at home. But a few markings were clearly brand new. They looked a bit like writing ...

"It think it's some kind of message," I said. "Let's see if we can work out what it says." Our guide came in handy. "TH MN TRI TU KL U" read out Maisie. "That doesn't make much sense." "Probably because Viking writing doesn't use many vowels. Read it again, putting vowels in this time. "THE MEN TRY TO KILL YOU."

The 16-letter runic alphabet is called the *futhark*, after its first six letters. There were no letters for the vowels E or O, nor any for D, G or P, even though those sounds were used in the Norse language when it was spoken.

f	u	th	a
r	k	h	n
i	a	s	t
b	m	l	r

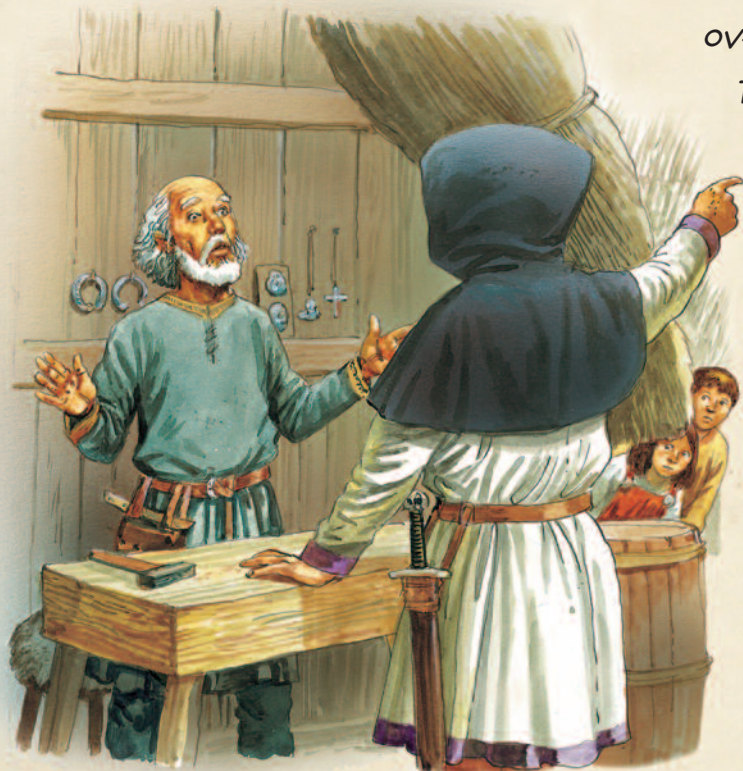
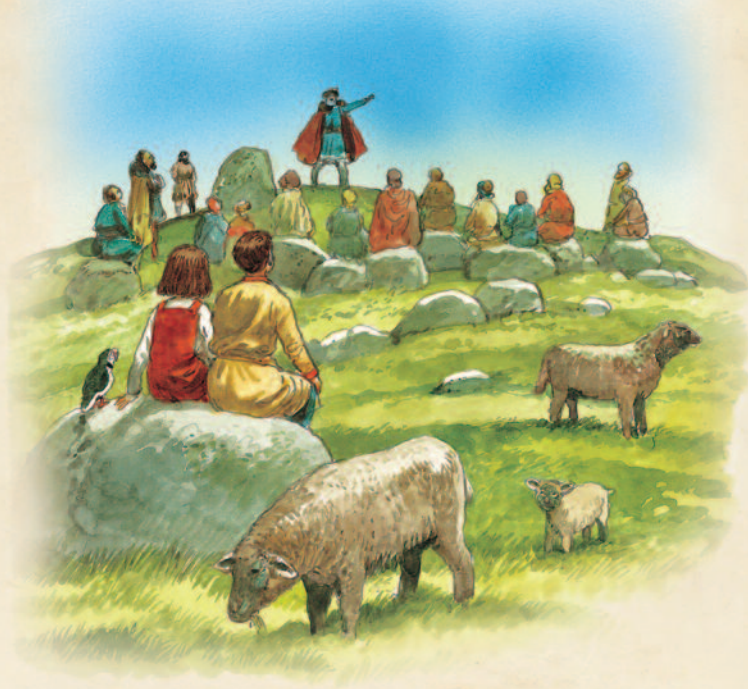
Frightened OUT OF OUR WITS, we rushed to find Erik. We told him everything we had seen: Frodi and the mysterious, smoking cave, and the time we saw the boys hanging round the ship. "My father must be told," said Erik, looking very serious.

Harald called a meeting of the Thing, a council made up of elders from the village. He said that Frodi and his gang deliberately holed his ship in an attempt to kill him. The Thing decided that Frodi must be banished for good.

As we walked back to the village, we overheard voices coming from the silversmith's cottage.

"I've no silver to work with", said the smith. "I'll be ruined." The other man wore a hood to hide his face. He pointed up the hillside and said: "Listen, I can tell you where you can find plenty of silver ..."

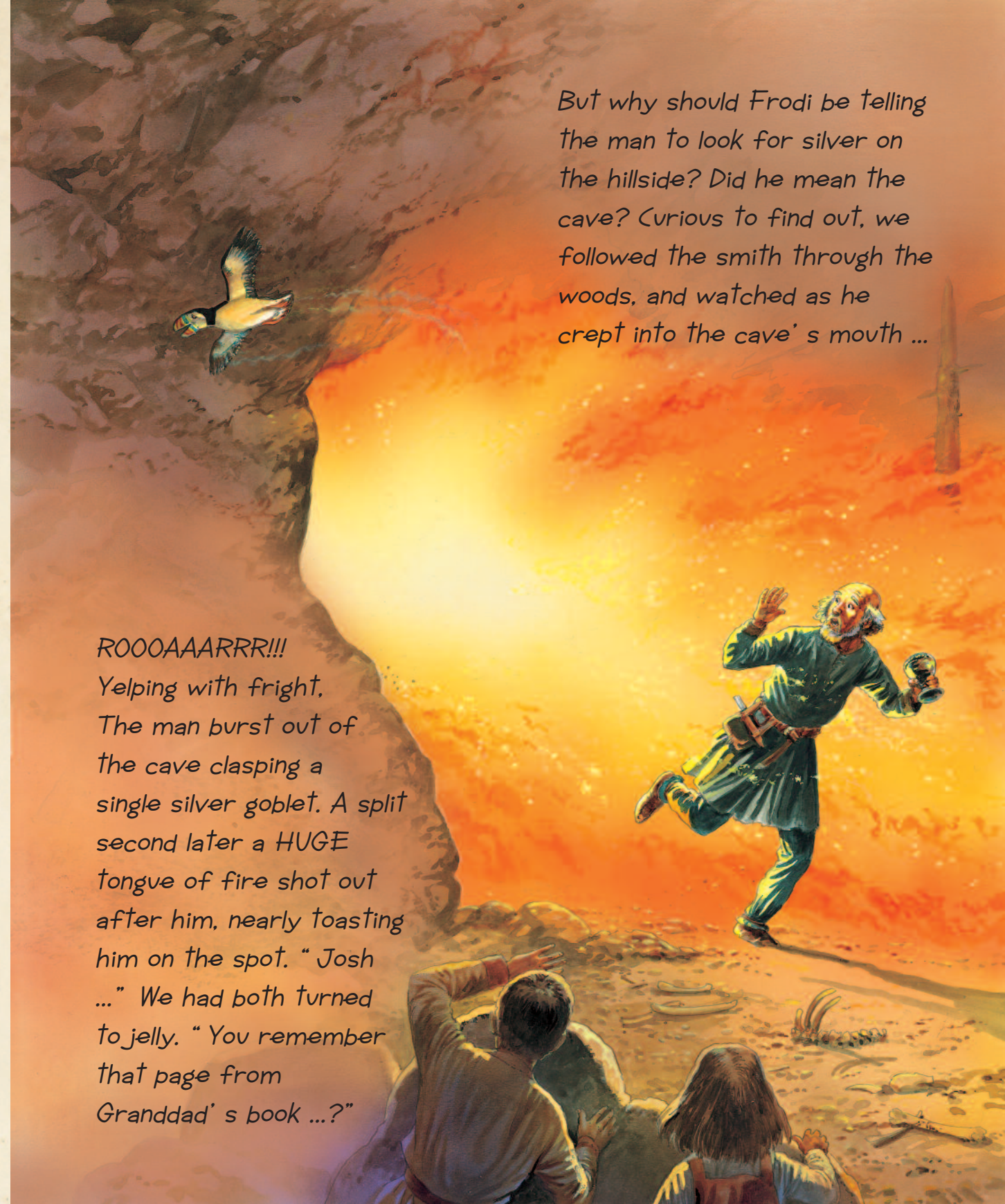
We recognized that voice. It was Frodi!



But why should Frodi be telling the man to look for silver on the hillside? Did he mean the cave? Curious to find out, we followed the smith through the woods, and watched as he crept into the cave's mouth ...

ROOOAAARRR!!!

Yelping with fright, The man burst out of the cave clasp ing a single silver goblet. A split second later a HUGE tongue of fire shot out after him, nearly toasting him on the spot. "Josh ..." We had both turned to jelly. "You remember that page from Granddad's book ...?"



THE DRAGON!!!

We ran as fast as our legs could carry us. But the great beast had surged out of its hiding place, launched itself into the sky and swooped down towards the village, bellowing and snorting jets of fire in all directions. The poor silversmith had clearly done something to make it VERY angry. Petrified, the villagers took to their heels, screaming with fright. It was MAYHEM!



MYTHS AND LEGENDS



GYLFI AND GEFJON

While travelling in disguise through his kingdom, King Gylfi met an old beggar woman at the roadside. She was kind and invited him to sit by her fire and share her food with him. As a reward, Gylfi offered her as much land as she could plough with four oxen in one day and night. She thanked him and accepted, not revealing that she was actually the goddess Gefjon, also in disguise.

The king was foolish, she thought, to give so much to someone so poor, so she decided to teach him a lesson. She called on her four sons, who had each been born as giant oxen, to help her plough a huge chunk of the king's land. They dragged it across the sea to Denmark, leaving behind a great hole in the landscape, which became a lake. The chunk of land is now known as the island of Zealand. The hole left behind in Sweden became Lake Malar.

THE VALKYRIES



The Valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain") were female warriors, who served Odin, the father of the gods. Given names like Shaker and Power, they flew over battlefields on horseback, deciding who would die. They chose the most valiant warriors to become heroes. These men would live on after death in Valhalla, the Hall of the Slain. Here they would be guests to Odin himself, who would eat and drink with them every evening.

THE DEATH OF BALDR

When Baldr began having nightmares about death, his mother, Frigg, was worried. She made all harmful things – fire, water, stones, plants, disease – promise never to hurt her son. Loki was jealous of Baldr. He tricked Frigg into admitting that one plant, mistletoe, had not made the promise. Loki made an arrow from a mistletoe branch and persuaded Baldr's blind brother, Hod, to shoot Baldr, assuring him he could not be harmed. But the arrow pierced Baldr's heart, killing him instantly. His body was placed on a ship piled with treasure and set alight. The giantess Hyrrokin pushed it out to sea. Frigg begged Hel to bring Baldr back to life. Hel agreed, but only if the entire world would weep for him. Everyone but an evil giantess – actually Loki in disguise – wept. So Baldr had to stay in the Underworld.



Baldr, god of light, beauty and happiness



Then, with one last roar, the dragon suddenly vanished. We rushed to find Erik and Harald. Maisie told them what we had overheard earlier.

"Maybe Frodi WANTED the man to steal from the dragon", she said, "so it would get REALLY angry and attack the village. Only Frodi, who has been giving it all that treasure, would be able to calm it. The villagers would then make him chieftain because only he could protect them."

"We'll see about that," said Harald.



We went straight to the village blacksmith. Harald commanded him to make a sword strong and sharp enough to slay the dragon. The blacksmith got to work right away, hammering the red-hot metal into shape. When the sword was finished, Harald held it high above his head. He was ready to fight. He called upon the gods to protect him, and to give him strength as he set out on his mission to save his people.

"Children, please show me the way to the cave." Shield in hand and sword at the ready, Harald followed us to the edge of the woods and the path that led up the hillside to the cave. There, Harald ordered us to stay behind. "It is too dangerous for you to go any further. I must fight the dragon alone."

(But of course we couldn't miss the chance to see a real hero slaying a dragon, so we followed him at a careful distance!)



ARMS AND WEAPONS

A noble Viking warrior (*below*) wore an iron helmet and a ring-mail tunic. Here he is carrying a spear and shield, with his sword in a sheath attached to his belt. Only the most important warriors wore iron helmets. These had guards around the eyes and over the nose for extra protection. Decorations on the helmet showed off the warrior's wealth. Poorer Vikings had helmets made of leather. They carried large knives called seaxes.



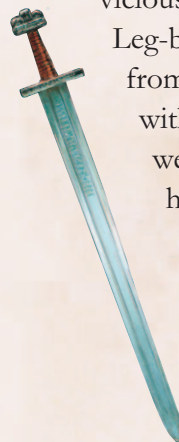
A Viking sword was made from iron bars, twisted, heated and hammered into a single blade.

Ring-mail tunics were highly treasured, but, again, only wealthy noble warriors could afford them. Handmade from thousands of linked iron rings, the tunics gave protection against swords and spears. The shield was made of thick wood with a metal centre called a boss, which guarded the hand.

The spear was the Viking warrior's most common weapon. Up to three metres long, it was used both as a throwing weapon and a thrusting weapon.

A sword gave its owner considerable prestige. Swords were often handed down from father to son and were thought to have magical powers. Usually double-edged, they were given vicious names, such as Skull-splitter or Leg-biter. When they died, warriors from wealthy families were buried with their beautifully crafted weapons, including iron swords with highly decorated hilts (handles).

One of the Viking warrior's favourite weapons was the battle-axe (*above*). This weapon could be either thrown or swung. With its sharp, deadly blade, it was much feared by the Vikings' enemies.



A battle-axe

In the face of the enemy, the Vikings would stand together behind a wall of shields. Then they would attack by firing arrows and throwing spears. Hand-to-hand combat with swords and axes followed.

If this did not result in victory, the Viking warriors would then attempt to break through enemy lines, capturing or killing their leaders if possible. To achieve this, the commander ordered some of his men to form a "wedge" of 20 to 30 warriors, with its point aimed towards the enemy line. The

men would then charge, hoping to succeed by sheer weight of numbers.

The Vikings believed that if a soldier died in battle he went to the hall of the god Odin. This was a great honour. The fiercest warriors were called *berserkers*, named after the Norse word for bearskins. Before fighting, a *berserker* would work himself into a wild, frenzied state (this is the origin of the modern expression "going berserk"). The frenzy would be so intense some would actually bite on the edges of their shields.





Outside the cave, Harald puffed out his chest and boomed: "Come out, vile creature!" A few moments later, the dragon's great head slowly emerged, as if wearily sizing up its next snack. Harald rushed at the dragon with his sword, but was driven back by its fiery breath. The dragon crept out

of its cave and circled its opponent

watchfully. Then suddenly it seized the chieftain's leg in its mighty jaws. "HARALD!!!" we both yelled.



The dragon dropped Harald and swung round to face us. It snarled and snorted fire. Uh-oh, we'd done it — the dragon would come for us now. But we had to save Harald first of all. Anyway, it would NEVER be able to catch us kids: we'd EASILY outrun it through the narrow gaps between the trees.



So we flapped our arms, shouting and screaming ... We didn't have to run. For all of a sudden there was Erik, leaping on to the beast's back, ready to plunge the blade of his great sword into its flesh. We were saved!





"It's not called Dragon-Slayer for nothing!" laughed Erik, as he stood beside the dead beast, proudly holding up his sword. When we returned in triumph to the village, everyone rushed out of their houses. They clapped and cheered

when we told them the dragon was no more. When they found out what Frodi had done, they drove him from the village. He and his friends were ordered to sail to a distant land, never to return.



Now everyone was in a mood to party! They held a great banquet in the hall in our honour. Harald thanked us for helping to defeat the dragon, and proposed a special toast to Erik the Dragon-Slayer. "You will make a most worthy chieftain one day, my son," he said.

Just then we remembered that Granddad would be wondering where we were. Although it would have been fun to stay with Erik and our new Viking friends forever, we decided we had to go back. I felt for the key on my belt ... but it WASN'T THERE!!



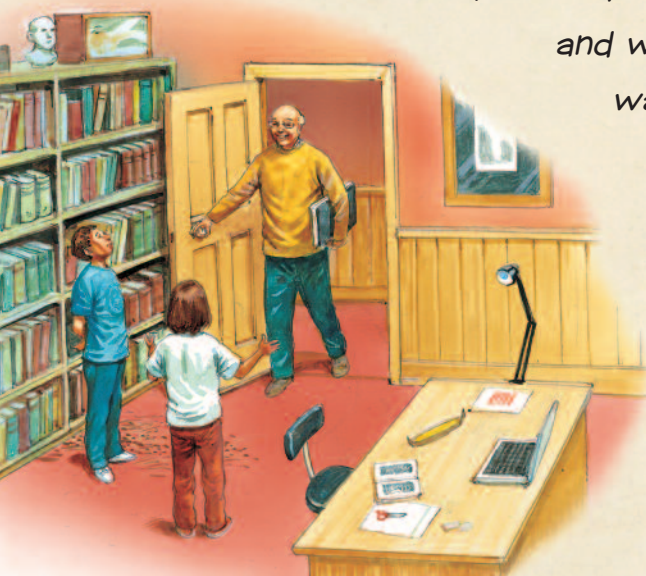
Erik noticed us and the worried looks on our faces. "Hey you guys! Where are you off to? What's wrong?" We told him how we had lost a key which was very important to us (I don't think he would have believed us if we had said we came from more than 1000 years into the future!).

"You mean this?" he said

with a smile. "I found it on the sea bed after our ship sank." What a relief! We told him how grateful we were. After saying goodbye we went to look for our little door. The cows, pigs and chickens were still there and we had to push our way through them while they mooed, oinked and clucked.



I turned the key, pushed the door open and we tumbled through just as Granddad was walking into the study. "Goodness!" he laughed. "Where have you been? Rolling around in a farmyard?" We looked at each other. We were back in our own clothes, but they were covered in bits of straw. "You're not far wrong, Granddad!" I laughed.



Odin



VIKING GODS

Much of what we know about Viking gods and goddesses comes from the Eddas, a collection of folk tales.

The most powerful god was Odin, the god of warfare, justice and wisdom. He was married to Frigg and was the father of Thor and Baldr. As he sat on his throne, news was brought to him by his ravens, Huginn and Muninn. He also had two wolves, Geri and Freki.

With his great hammer Mjollnir, Thor was the main defender of the gods against the giants. He was also the god of thunder. He rode on a chariot pulled by two goats, Tooth-gnasher and Tooth-grinder.

Freyr and Freyja, brother and sister, were the god and goddess of fertility. Freyr, also god of peace, rode in a chariot pulled by two goats. Freyja flew across the sky in a chariot drawn by cats. She was also goddess of love.



Thor

Hel was sent by Odin to the "lowest world" where she was to be in charge of all those who did not die a glorious death in battle: the sick and the old.

The great enemies of the gods were the giants, and there were always conflicts between the two.

Only Thor was a match for the giants in strength, so the gods relied on the cunning of Loki, fire-god and trickster.

The Vikings believed that the world would end with one final battle, Ragnarok, fought between the gods and the giants. One by one, the gods would meet their deaths and then a fire would sweep across the whole world. There would be just a few survivors of the great battle, ready to live in a new world in which evil would be banished and men and gods would live together peacefully. The human race would be descended from two humans, Líf and Lífþrasir, who hid inside a tree during Ragnarok.



Freyr



Freyja



Loki



Hel

GLOSSARY

Berserkr A Viking warrior. Berserkr prepared for battle by wearing bearskin shirts and working themselves up into a rage, known as “going berserk”.

Chieftain The leader of a village or of a group of Vikings.

Futhark The Viking alphabet, named after its first six letters: f, u, th, a, r and k.

Greenland A large, ice-covered island in the North Atlantic. Vikings discovered it 982.

Iceland A large, volcanic island in the North Atlantic. Vikings discovered Iceland in 870.

Jarl A nobleman. Jarls were the highest of the three classes of Viking society.

Karl A free man. Karls were the middle of the three classes of Viking society, and the largest. They worked as farmers, traders, craftsmen and warriors.

Knarr A wide ship used to carry goods for trading.



Longship A ship used to carry warriors into battle. Powered by a square sail or by oarsmen, it was sometimes called “dragon ship”.

Rune A Viking letter. Runes were formed of straight and diagonal lines, which were easy to carve into wood or stone.

Rus A group of Vikings who travelled to Russia in the 9th century, either as invaders or as peacekeepers.

Saga A story about Viking history or mythology. Some sagas were about gods and monsters. Others were about family history and Viking victories.

Thing A meeting held in a community to discuss the law. All free men were allowed to express their opinions at the thing.

Thrall A Viking slave. Slaves were often captured during the Viking’s raids.

Valhalla The Viking heaven for the souls of men that were killed in battle.

Valkyrie Mythological female warriors. They chose who would die in battle and who would fight on.

Varangian The Viking merchants who travelled south and east from Scandinavia in the 9th and 10th centuries. They traded wheat, wool and slaves for silver and furs.



