

Vikings: The Last Barbarians

Fashion, Costume, and Culture: Clothing, Headwear, Body Decorations, and Footwear through the Ages, 2004

Vikings: The Last Barbarians

Long after plundering hordes of Huns and Goths had brought the Roman Empire to its knees in 476 C.E., and long after these same barbarian tribes had been absorbed into the emerging kingdoms of Europe, a new band of people from the north swept down into Europe, looting and pillaging and terrorizing the people of northern Britain and northern France. These new barbarians came from Scandinavia and are known to us as the Vikings.

Viking conquerors first began to descend upon Europe at the end of the eighth century. Historians believe that they ventured south because of the difficulties of providing food for their growing population in the extreme climate of Scandinavia. Unlike the earlier barbarians, who were primarily small bands of nomads, the Vikings had already developed a fairly complex agricultural society. Most of the people were farmers, and the Vikings had developed extensive trading networks in eastern Europe that brought goods from as far away as the Orient. Viking men, however, joined together for voyages of plunder. Venturing out in their well-made ships, they attacked lightly defended seaside towns and stole what they could.

Beginning in the late eighth century, and proceeding for several hundred years, Vikings ransacked coastal towns in Britain and France and established settlements. They were so powerful that for a time they conquered all of England, establishing the Danish king Canute (d. 1035) briefly as king of England. They also voyaged as far as North America, briefly landing in present-day Canada in about the year 1000. Eventually the Vikings were converted to Christianity and absorbed into their respective societies.

Viking clothing was much like that of other Europeans from the same time period. Men wore trousers, a tunic, and perhaps a coat or a large cloak. Women dressed similarly, though their tunic was long, reaching all the way to the feet. Viking clothing was made primarily of wool, and sometimes of linen, and was often brightly colored, with purples, blues, and greens. Like other clothing from this period, however, few actual garments have survived, leaving much of what is known to secondhand accounts from other societies.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2004 U*X*L, COPYRIGHT 2006 Gale, Cengage Learning.

Source Citation:

"Vikings: The Last Barbarians." *Fashion, Costume, and Culture: Clothing, Headwear, Body Decorations, and Footwear through the Ages*. Ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast. Vol. 2: Early Cultures Across the Globe. Detroit: UXL, 2004. 278. *Gale World History In Context*. Web. 6 Jan. 2011.

Document URL

<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/whic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=K12->

[Reference&prodId=WHIC&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CCX3425500175&mode=view&userGroupName=m1in_s_ccreg&jsid=603f3fd634a5844dc4822323d92627c5](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/whic/ReferenceDetailsPage/ReferenceDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=K12-Reference&prodId=WHIC&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CCX3425500175&mode=view&userGroupName=m1in_s_ccreg&jsid=603f3fd634a5844dc4822323d92627c5)

Gale Document Number: GALE|CX3425500175