



POWELL CENTER FOR
ECONOMIC LITERACY

Lesson Plan

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Vikings Made Choices

Time Required

A 15 – 20 minute lesson to be given as an economics/review lesson on the Vikings.

Grade Level and Subject

Upper Elementary through Middle School; European History

Keystone Principles

Principle #1 – All People Make Choices

Principle #6 – Do What You Do Best, Trade For the Rest

Principle #8 – Quantity and Quality of Resources Impact Living Standards

Economic Concepts

Choices - *A selection among alternatives. Scarcity requires individuals, businesses and nations to make choices.*

Productive Resources - *That set of resources utilized in the process of production: natural, capital, and human.*

Scarcity - *The condition that occurs because people's wants and needs are unlimited, while the resources needed to produce goods and services to meet these wants and needs are limited.*

Trade - *The voluntary exchange of goods and services between individuals and firms. Trade can be local, national or international.*

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

Content #1: Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others. Benchmarks 4.1, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12

Overview

A cry of alarm arose in Europe whenever the Viking ships were sighted. The name itself is literally translated as “raider.” But viewing these fearsome warriors through an economic lens helps us understand that they were as much threatened as threatening. For the ninth century Vikings, there was a scarcity of productive farmland as well as a short growing season on the Scandinavian Peninsula, leading to a serious food shortage. Faced with the uncertainty of their very survival, they began to search for land beyond their homeland. They took the productive resources at their disposal and used them to obtain what they needed. In this lesson, students will learn about the economic concept of scarcity and the three different types of productive resources. Students will then use their knowledge of the Vikings and economics to fill out the grid on the Student Handout.

Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the economic concept of scarcity, and that people make choices in response to scarcity.
- Understand the three types of productive resources - human, capital, and natural - and how the Vikings employed the use of the productive resources available to them to respond to scarcity.
- Understand the difference between trading and raiding.

Materials and Handouts

- Student Handout #1, “Vikings Made Choices”
- Teacher answer key for Handout #1
- Student Handout #2, “Trading, Raiding, and Exploring”

Teaching Activity

1. Review the economic concepts with your students. Use examples to help make the definitions relevant as follows:

- **Scarcity:** Ask students whether they can do everything they want at recess. Why not? *They don't have enough time, video games, transportation, etc.* Tell them this is what it means to have a scarcity.
- **Choices:** Now that they understand scarcity, ask the students to choose as a group what they will play at their next recess. Use the various choices they make as a quick example of this concept. If there were no scarcity, would they need to make a choice?
- **Productive Resources:** Ask students if they can think of some productive resources they use during recess.
 - **human resources** – the skills they use in playing various games; the people who built the playground; the people who made the equipment.

- **natural resources** – the land on which the playground is built, the tree that provides shade, the sun that warms them
- **capital resources** – the equipment they use to play their games; the equipment used to build the playground.
- **Trade:** People trade because they benefit from what they get when they trade.
 - Example: Did anyone in this class ever trade anyone in here for anything? Why? Because you wanted what you traded for more than you wanted what you traded, right? Because the thing you traded for benefited you, helped you, more than the thing you traded for.
 - What if someone wants something but doesn't have anything to exchange for it? Will they still be able to obtain it? *It depends. To give something willingly, without recompense, is called a gift. Something given unwillingly is theft (or raiding, in the case of the Vikings).*

2. LESSON

- Review with your students what you have learned about the Vikings. Prior to the ninth century, the Vikings were peaceful farmers. An increase in population caused a **scarcity** of land serious enough to start deadly raids between clans. **When people face scarcity, they make choices.** The Vikings chose to use certain **productive resources** at their disposal to raid distant lands for gold and silver, **to trade** the gold and silver they had plundered all over Europe, and explore/colonize Greenland and Canada.
- Pass out Handout #1.
 - Ask the students to answer questions 1 and 2 on the Handout.
 - Lead the students through the Productive Resource part of Handout #1. What resources did they have at their disposal to enable them to become a seafaring people? Remind students that the Vikings used their resources primarily for three purposes: raiding, trading and exploring. See Teacher Answer Key for your answers.
- Pass out Handout #2. Help students find examples for each of the three categories.

Answer Key for Student Handout

1. What economic concept can we point to in order to understand why the Vikings left Scandinavia in the 9th Century? **Scarcity**

2. What two types of scarcity forced the Vikings to choose to leave Scandinavia?

Land: there was not enough land for the Vikings to feed all their people.

Time: the growing season in Scandinavia is very short because it is so far north.

3. Fill in the following chart with the Three Types of Productive Resources the Vikings had at their disposal to respond to scarcity of land and food by becoming international raiders/traders/explorers.

Natural Resources	Human Resources	Capital Resources
<i>Ocean and rivers (to travel on)</i>	<i>Navigation skills</i>	<i>Ships</i>
<i>Wood (for ships and ship building tools, and weapons)</i>	<i>Ship building skills</i>	<i>Ship and weapon making tools, and farming tools</i>
<i>Sheep: for clothes and food</i>	<i>Tool making skills</i>	<i>Looms</i>
<i>Fish: for food</i>	<i>Weapon making skills</i>	<i>Fishing tools</i>
<i>Birds: Which the Vikings brought on board and released to follow to land as a navigational technique.</i>	<i>Fighting skills</i>	<i>Blacksmith tools</i>
<i>Iron ore: to fashion into tools and weapons.</i>	<i>Weaving skills (sails/clothes)</i>	<i>Weapons</i>
<i>Cotton: For sails</i>	<i>Farming: plants and animals used for food, clothes, sails, etc.</i>	<i>Farming tools</i>
	<i>Fishing skills</i>	<i>Sails</i>
	<i>Exploring skills</i>	<i>Ship sailing tools</i>
	<i>Communication skills</i>	

Trading, Raiding, and Exploring

The Vikings tried many different things to help their problem of scarcity.
How many examples can you find for each of these?

Trading

Raiding

Exploring