

Establishment of the settlement

EXERCISE

C

**Subject** History  
**Level** medium  
**Duration** 40 minutes

Learning Opportunity

Competences	Detailed description
Social and civic competences	The pupils are aware of different reasons for migration and can explain, how the social structures in the settlements of the Vikings have evolved.
Scientific competences	The pupils can judge the quality of (historical) sources

Overview

Min.	Topic	Tasks for the pupils	Tasks for the teacher	Material
10	Reasons for settling on Greenland	Sorting of reasons for migrations according to their probability		Cards (resource C 1) with various reasons for migration: refugees of conflict, being outlawed, food shortage, economic/ trade opportunities, adventure and fame, rule over land, research interests
10	Comparison of the Saga and its interpretation	Reading of the Saga and the interpretation and compare the reasons for Erik the Red to settle on Greenland mentioned	Explain to pupils the words, they did not understand	Copy of the Saga (resource C 2)
5	Discussion about the different descriptions of Erik the Red	Speculation about the reasons for the differences	Ask the pupils, why the same person is described differently, and support them finding crucial aspects in relation to source quality	
5	Ways to Greenland	Pupils may look up central points of the journey on Google-Earth	Presentation of the routes	Maps of the routes (presentation C 4), GPS coordinates of central points
10	Choice of farming land	Naming criteria for suitable places for settling, selection of farms eventually after having looked up these places on Google Earth	Ask for criteria for suitable places to settle	List of criteria and map with the locations of the 6 farms (presentation), cards with the pictures of the 6 farms (resource C 3), using computers with Google Earth and the coordinates of the 6 farms

## Detailed Description:

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### STEP 1

The students shall speculate about the reasons why the Vikings settled in a harsh place like Greenland. Two groups are made. Cards (resource C1) with the different reasons for migration are handed to the groups to be sorted according to which are the most probable reasons for the Norse to settle on Greenland?

### STEP 2

There is no certainty about the reasons why the Vikings settled on Greenland. The only available sources are the Sagas. One group should read the extract of the Saga of Erik the Red and the other the interpretation (resource C2). Ask whether there are words not understood and clarify the meaning. The pupils re-sort their cards and afterwards, present which reasons are mentioned in their text.

### STEP 3

The texts deal with the same person but present a different image. Use this to reflect on the source quality. Therefore we recommend the tasks:

- Compare, how Eric the Red is presented.
- Name possible reasons for the differences in how he is presented.

The outcome should include the following three reasons:

- Like many historical texts the saga reflects the perspectives of the top of the society. It describes the life of the rulers, while the way ordinary people experienced the times is not documented. In the case of Erik the Red the text documents the view of his opponents on Iceland.
- The text was written by a person from Iceland. From the perspective of an Icelander, Icelandic practices are the norm and Greenland was a distant and exotic place. In fact the conditions of the settlements on Greenland were not worse than on some sites on Iceland (e.g. Westfjord).
- The text is linked to the typical medieval way of story telling. To entertain the audience, the stories of knights/ heroes and their adventures were told, while ordinary biographies are much less entertaining.

#### STEP 4

On Google Earth the class looks for typical places on the journey to Greenland. Starting point for the journey was usually Bergen. The intermediary stop is Sneffelsnes (64°43'18.13"N/ 22°19'47.32"W). Herjolfsnes (59°59'2.71"N/ 44°45'12.43"W) was an important point of orientation and Sandhavn (59°59'51.80"N/ 44°47'34.60"W) the southernmost settlement on Greenland. Afterwards show the map of the Viking routes (worksheet B4) to the pupils. It's possible, although not necessary, to discuss briefly what have been the advantages of sailing along the coast or straight across the ocean.

#### In the ancient texts both routes are indicated:

- "Whoever wishes to make the land should sail around the ice to the southwest and west, till he has come past all those places where ice may be looked for, and approach the land on that side." (King's Mirror)
- "Sailing from Iceland, one should set out from Sneffelsnes which lies in Iceland a dozen rowing shifts north-west of Rockesnes, and sail one day and night south-west to avoid the ice at Gunberneskeere." (14<sup>th</sup> century description of Greenland)

#### STEP 5

Ask the pupils for criteria to choose a site to settle on Greenland. Write down all mentioned aspects and then introduce the key aspects described in the presentation (presentation C4).

The class is divided into six groups. All farm cards are displayed in the classrooms. Each group has to use the maps to decide, which place they would settle. Because the ice core suggests that today's climate is approximately the same as during the time the Norse settled at Greenland, they may also use Google Earth to check out the locations.

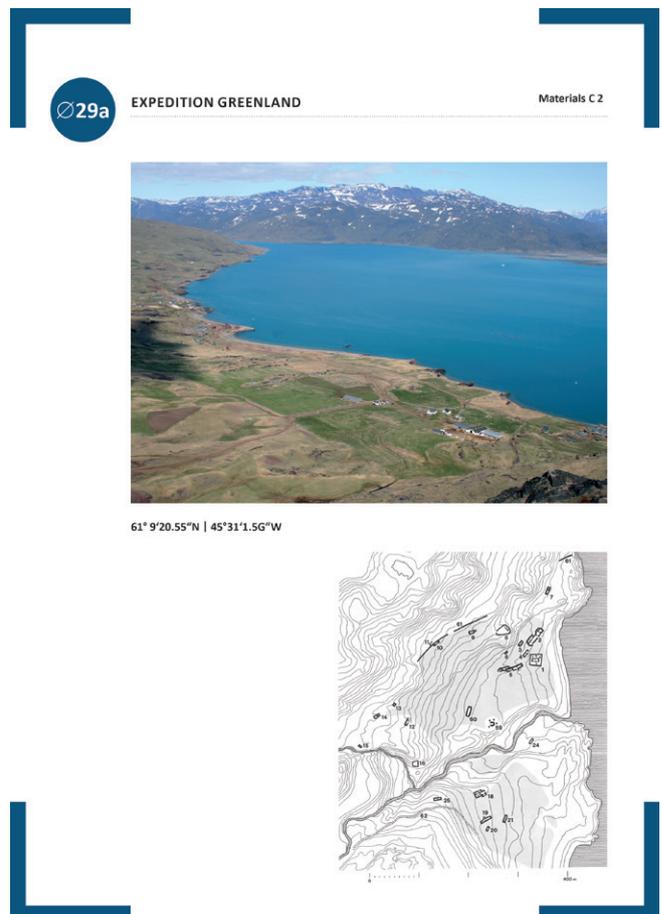


Figure 1: Material C3

Maps: Roussel, A. (1941) „Farms and Churches in the Medieval Norse Settlements of Greenland.“ *Meddelelser om Grønland* 89: 1-354.

PICTURES: CHRISTIAN KOCH MADSEN

## 1.C LEARNING SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE VIKINGS

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Geographical positions of the 6 farms:

Ø29a	61° 9'20.55"N   45°31'1.56"W
Ø71	60°50'50.58"N   45°22'7.72"W
Ø188	60°41'7.19"N   45°58'14.08"W
V16	64°25'46.87"N   49°51'4.74"W
V51	64°14'38.03"N   50°10'35.29"W
V53c	64°12'58.47"N   49°50'59.19"W

**There are a number of options regarding how to run the selection of farms:**

- The groups start at different times, locations which have been chosen, cannot be chosen again (most realistic),
- The groups start at the same time and those who pick a location first have secured this farm for themselves but are not allowed to change afterwards,
- The groups can choose their location no matter if it has been already selected by others,
- The teacher assigns farms to the pupils groups (e.g. give the high-status farm to the dominant pupils, as they will probably behave like the high-class Norse).

The chosen farm will be the base for the simulation which follows as exercise D.