The Middle Ages: The Viking Era

Background
- Scandinavians
  - Norway, Sweden, Denmark
- Agriculture based
  - Limited farmland
  - Fishermen
- Traders
  - Used longboats to trade all across Europe and into western Asia.
    - Boats specially designed to work in rivers and oceans
      - Fitted with Oars, & Sails
      - Shallow draughts
    - First civilization with capability to navigate away from shore
- Polytheistic
  - Gods similar to classical civilizations’
    - Different names
  - Explained origins of earth
    - Creation
    - Natural occurrences
  - Insight into human nature
  - Tales of Sagas
    - Made good stories during long winters
  - Religion passed orally
    - Recorded in Prose Edda around 1220 C.E.
- Legacy
  - Runestones
    - Writing system carved into rocks
  - Archeological Finds
    - Especially burial ships
  - Primary Sources
    - Many contacts with other cultures
      - Ibn Fadlan

Viking Expansion
- Reasons for raid unclear
  - Possibly trade disputes
  - Possibly because of over population
- Viking Age begins in 793 C.E.
  - Attack of Lindisfarne Monastery in Northern England
    - Monasteries easy targets
      - Full of riches
- Viking Raiders
  - With ships could attack anywhere near water
    - Rivers included
  - Equipment as raiders
    - Meant to move fast
  - Ferocious Warriors
    - Berserkers
- Early Raids
  - 793 – 864 C.E.
- Into British Isles
  - East Anglia
  - Ireland
  - Looking for slaves and plunder
- Protection
  - States able to pay Vikings off
    - Often close to 100% of total income
  - England
    - 864 – 871 C.E.
      - All over British Isles
    - Great Heathen Army
      - Led by Ivar the Boneless
      - Established settlement of Jorvik
    - Stopped 8 Jan, 971 C.E.
      - Battle of Ashdown
        - Stopped by Alfred of Wessex
        - Viking leaders killed
        - Vikings keep Northumbria
  - Erik Bloodaxe
    - 947 C.E.
    - Captures York
  - End of Era
    - Harold Hardrada
      - Builds city of Oslo to be new Kiev
  - Russia
    - 862 C.E.
      - Rurik invited by Slavs and Finns in Eastern Russia
      - “to come and rule them”
      - Settled near city of Novgorod where they built trade network
    - 882 C.E.
      - Established Kievan Rus
  - France
    - Took control of Northern France
      - Territory of Normandy
        - Land of the Northmen
- North Atlantic
  - Iceland
    - Discovered in 9th Century C.E.
    - Mostly settled by Norwegians
    - Very few impressed with island
  - Greenland
    - Erik the Red
      - Late 900s
      - Banished from Iceland
      - Calls land “Greenland” as advertisement
    - Government
      - Public Assembly
- Equal voice for all citizens
  - Fails
    - Good Fishing
    - Harsh land
- North America
  - Leif Erickson
    - 1000 C.E.
    - Wanted to Explore
    - Follows rumors to North America
  - Established colony at L’Anse Aux Meadows
    - Fails
      - Too far from home
      - Fighting with natives?

End of Viking Era
- Conversion to Christianity
  - Not allowed to make slaves out of other Christians
    - Eliminates half the need of plunder
- Military Defeats
  - Stamford Bridge
    - 1066 C.E.
  - Castles
    - Fortifications made raiding difficult
- Kingdoms of Norway, Swede, and Denmark formed