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**Level: Grades 3-5**

**Subjects:** English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Visual & Performing Arts

**Skills:** Observing, recording, following directions, cooperation, writing, describing, listening reading, communicating

## Lesson 2: Did the Vikings Visit Maine?

*Mary Dickinson Bird, PhD, author - Created through the MAITC Ag Literacy Grant made possible by the Ag License Plate*



The Vikings were explorers and warriors who sailed the seas around Europe about 1,000 years ago, carrying out raids and establishing outposts in England, Ireland, and other areas. Soon they set sail across the Atlantic, to regions we now know as Iceland, Greenland, and Eastern Canada. Some researchers suspect that the Norsemen also explored the coast of Maine under their legendary leader, Leif Ericsson.

It is likely that any Viking seafarers who visited our region were wearing clothes made of handspun wool or linen cloth. They, like many other peoples of Europe, Asia, North Africa and the Middle East so long ago, had discovered a way to use simple wooden spindles for twisting animal and plant fibers into yarn or thread. Sheep's wool was spun into yarn to make caps, mittens, and socks. From the flax plant, the Vikings spun linen threads which they wove into cloth to be made into clothing and even the sails of ships!

Spinning yarn and weaving cloth were both considered women's work among the Vikings. It could take a woman an entire year, working non-stop, to spin enough linen thread to weave a sail for a Viking ship!

There were no sheep in Maine at the time of the Viking explorations, or for hundreds of years afterward. There were no farms to grow flax then, either. Any wool or linen clothing worn by the Vikings or the explorers who came later were made of materials brought from their homes in Europe.

Archaeologists still search for evidence that Vikings visited Maine. Perhaps one day, you will be the one to discover a clue that unlocks the secret of Maine's Viking explorers!

