

LEARNING GUIDE

THE
**INDIGO IONA
SAGA**
AND
**THE SETTLEMENT
OF ICELAND**

EPISODE 1



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Objectives

The Indigo Iona Saga and the Settlement of Iceland is inspired by two books, the *Lamdnámabók* – the “book of settlements” – and *The Sagas of Icelanders*, which tell the story of Norse expansion west from Norway to Iceland. The film tells the fictional story of two women who participated in the discovery of this new land and the establishment of the first settlements there.

This Learning Guide is intended to help educators raise awareness about the Norse seafarers colonizing the United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland and England. en route to settling Iceland, as described in the medieval Icelandic sagas. It should also help stimulate students’ curiosity about the Norse and Icelandic cultures and serve as a launching point for discussions of gender roles and the use of symbolism and the other narrative and film techniques used to tell the story.



Before Screening the Video

- 1 How common is it for people of different cultures to interact in today's world? What normally happens when this meeting of cultures occurs? What do you think happened when the Norse interacted with people in Scotland, Ireland, and Iceland from 870 to 930? Why would their meetings be different from those of today?
- 2 How did people travel long distances before the advent of the car, train, or airplane? What sorts of things do you think they brought with them on these journeys? What were the risks involved with this sort of travel?
- 3 What types of things do you associate with the Norse culture? Why do think there are elements of Norse culture found over a large part of Europe and in Iceland?
- 4 Consider life in the years from 870 to 930. What kinds of things would be different from life today? Name some technologies that you use today that did not exist then. What kinds of technologies did exist at that time? Do you think survival would be more difficult at that time? Why?
- 5 How was Iceland different before the arrival of Norse? Who discovered Iceland? Why did they and the Norse first come to Iceland?
- 6 What do you know about Iceland? Where is it, and why would this location make it a likely landing place for people from Europe?



After Screening the Video



- 1** Why do you think the screenwriter and director had a woman narrate the film? How would the film have been different if the central characters had been male?
- 2** We see ravens in the film. What were they used for? What other tools are used for navigation? What are some of the other symbols used in the film?
- 3** What kind of animal is used by the Norse for trade? What games are made from this material? Why was this kind of trade important?
- 4** Why did the Norse stop over in their Norse colonies in Scotland and Ireland on their way to Iceland?
- 5** Why were women predominantly taken from Scotland and Ireland to settle Iceland?
- 6** How did the Norse live in their colonies? What did they build their long houses with? What was their impact on these landscapes?

Follow-up Projects



- 1 Many people alive today have Hiberno-Norse ancestry (coming from an intermingling of Scandinavian (Norse/Viking) settlers and native Gaelic people. How did these two cultures come to mix? What was the outcome of these two cultures meeting?



- 2 Research the Norse culture. Where did the Norse originate? Why did they travel so extensively and what other places did they visit? What is the culture most widely known for? Report your findings to your class.

- 3 Boats were an important part of Norse culture. Research the boats constructed and used by the Norse. Describe the types of boats, highlighting their benefits and drawbacks and the materials and type of construction used. Report your findings to your class.



- 4 Research rune stones and talismans. What were they used for and where have they been found? Make a miniature version of a rune stone using the runic alphabet, or a talisman with a symbolic inscription. Write your name out in runes. Present these items and your findings to your class.

- 5 Beyond being the narrators of the film, women played a critical role in the settlement of Iceland. Why? Research the roles of women in Viking-Age Celtic and Norse societies and cultures. Prepare a report on your findings to share with your class.



- 6 What geological activities made Iceland different from other islands in the North Atlantic. Research these important geological activities in Iceland and their effect on the Norse settlers. Describe your findings to your class.



* For a list of educational resources, including websites, books, and films on the Norse and for further information on the making of the film, consult the Production Notes, available for download from these websites:

www.theindigoionasaga.com

www.macleod9.com/norsewomenssaga/



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