

# Finding a New Land

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# Contents

Introduction ..... v

## Unit 1

Biarni and Leif the Lucky Kindered Viking Spirits..... 1

The Girl Who Sailed a Dragon Ship Gudrid Ericsson .....9

## Unit 2

The Boy Christopher Columbus Loved Don Diego Columbus, Page..... 19

Columbus ..... 29

The Boy for Whom Our Country Was Named Amerigo Vespucci ..... 33

The French Settler Who Drew Pictures Samuel de Champlain in Canada ..... 43

## Unit 3

The Pink Tulip ..... 55

The Leak in the Dike..... 65

A Daughter of Plymouth Edward Winslow’s Adopted Daughter, Ellen More..... 73

## Unit 4

Plymouth’s Bad Boy John Billington Has an Adventure..... 83

Big Hawk’s Decoration ..... 91

The Soap Making of Remember Biddle..... 101

## Unit 5

The Foot Path..... 113

The Boy Who Grew Up to Discover a River Robert Cavalier La Salle ..... 121

Jonathan Edwards Top Whipping and the Preacher ..... 133

The Deacon’s Grasshopper ..... 147

**Unit 6**

The Boy Who Had Never Seen an Indian.....	155
The Iron Stove.....	165
Paul Revere's Ride .....	175
The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere .....	183
Concord Hymn .....	193

**Unit 7**

Richard, the Youngest Soldier.....	197
The Flag of Their Regiment.....	207
Patience Arnold's Sampler.....	217
The Star Lady.....	227

**Unit 8**

The Bravery of Elizabeth Zane .....	237
Phillis Wheatley: Poet and Slave.....	245
To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.....	257
The General and the Corporal.....	259
Sources and Permissions .....	263

# Introduction

History often seems dry and uninteresting to children. They think of it as only a list of events and dates. They tend to consider history to be something for and about adults. Children often do not realize that they are just as affected by history as adults.

*Finding a New Land* seeks to change that attitude by showing how young people were part of the exploration and settlement of the New World. This colorful reader is designed to provide children with a better understanding of how the events and personalities of early America affected the lives of the people who lived during this time in history. Through historical fiction, true stories, biographical accounts, and poems, *Finding a New Land* gives young readers a window into what life was like during the early days of America. This book will help children appreciate the blessings of freedom and liberty in America.

In addition to enjoyable and uplifting reading selections, this book provides young students with vocabulary definitions, enabling them to better understand the reading selections. Parents and teachers will be able to assess their students' reading comprehension through the use of the comprehension questions and additional activities within the text. Along with this reader, we have also developed an accompanying answer key to help instructors by providing answers to the reader's questions. Finally, we created a set of tests to help parents and teachers evaluate their students' understanding of the stories further.

We are confident that young readers will find this well-illustrated book to be both enjoyable and informative. More importantly, we trust that it will help them to gain a better understanding of how the events and personalities of colonial America affected the lives of young people many years ago.

May God bless you and your students in the use of *Finding a New Land*.

The Publishers  
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## Unit 1

# Biarni and Leif the Lucky

## Kindred Viking Spirits

Carolyn Sherwin Bailey

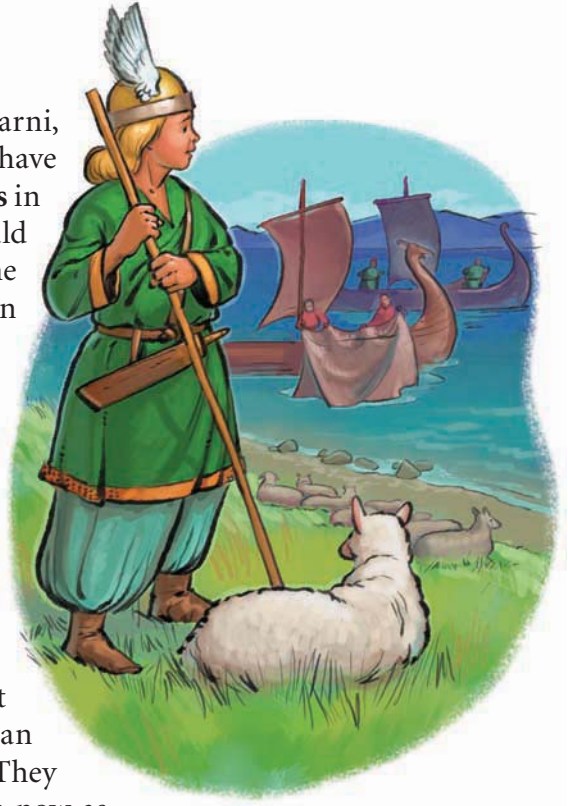
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*You may have heard of Leif Ericsson, the young Viking who sailed to America; but do you know what made him sail? It was a story of another Viking boy named Biarni Herjolfsson. Read to find out how Biarni influenced Leif to set sail and find the New World.*

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**H**is name was Biarni, and if you could have been one of the **Vikings** in the year 1000, you would have known him by the pair of wings he wore in his cap.

It seems hard for a boy of today to believe that Biarni Herjolfsson took a ship and tried to find his father, but those were days of our history when the brave Vikings were more at home on the seas than they were on land. They lived in what is known now as Norway and Sweden, bleak and cold and unsheltered.



The boy Biarni was a mountain lad. Tall, strong, fair, and with clear blue eyes, he roamed a **barren** country, tending a flock of sheep and cattle for a living. There was so little pasture land that the boy had to lead his flock from one place to another in order to find enough grass to keep them alive. While he was doing this, his father was fishing along the coast or taking short sailing trips for deep sea fishing.

Sometimes Biarni's father, Herjulf the Viking, joined a company of other **rovers** excited by a voyage of discovery. Since there was no way of letting his son know where he was—no mail, telephones, not even a messenger—there might be months when the two did not see each other.

The Viking boats were wonders of strength with adventure built into every plank and oar. Each of these **vessels** was at least fifty feet long with a high **bow** and **stern** so that it could ride the waves in safety. A huge dragon was carved at the bow, and there was a great square sail, as well as forty to sixty men taking their turns at the oars.

The crew was bravely dressed in skins and the winged caps such as Biarni wore. Armed against pirates, with only the sun by day and the stars at night to guide them, there were few such brave sailors in the world's history. Sometimes in storms and fogs they did not know where they were, nor if they would live to come home again.

It came about that some Vikings began to make trips to England and France, where they struck terror in the people on the seacoasts, robbing their huts and killing their cattle. They began to discover strange islands, and sometimes a few of the Vikings would decide to stay on one of these islands, particularly if it was warmer and offered better hunting and fishing than their homeland. After a while, **Greenland** and **Iceland** were settled by the Vikings.



Every boy is born with a love of adventure in his heart, and this long-ago Biarni was not different in this respect from the boys of today. He knew of Greenland and Iceland. Perhaps, he thought, his father might have gone to make a home for his family on some new and strange island. Possibly he was shipwrecked not so far from their own coast. Anyway, Biarni decided to take a journey to look for his father.

His was not a planned voyage, so he probably did not even have as much food as the average Viking ship carried. He was probably a **stowaway**, and when he was discovered at sea, he was put at the oar and made to work like a man for his passage. He had to **coax** very hard to get the owner of the ship to search for his father. Imagine, if you can, the freezing cold, the miles of icebergs and fog banks, the driftwood and floating timber that could easily have cut holes through the sides of the ship.

They could hardly tell where they were sailing. Biarni measured the distance in days; each was a threat of death on the next. However, they soon were astonished to come to less icy waters, and at last a thin line of gray land that turned to green met their eyes. After months of this dangerous voyage, Biarni saw a new island rising from the waters before his weary eyes.

This undiscovered land looked interesting. The dragon ship was rowed nearer until it could almost scrape the sands. Suddenly, Biarni saw a slight motion among the forest trees that stood thick and green not far from the beach.

“My father!” shouted Biarni, standing in the bow and holding out his arms toward the moving branches. But what did he see?

It was a sight that no Viking had ever seen before—an Indian! Long, straight, black hair braided with bright feath-

ers! Bronzed skin instead of the white skin of the Vikings! A bow and a **quiver** of poisoned arrows in place of a Viking's silver-handled sword of **hand-wrought** steel! It was not to be believed, this vision of a man different from any the northern races had ever seen.

Somehow, the crew believed that it was all the fault of the boy, Biarni, that they had taken this voyage and come upon this strange shore. They would have thrown the boy overboard then and there except that they had lost several good oarsmen by starvation and cold, and Biarni had strong arms.

They rowed away swiftly into the fog and the cold—wandering, half-starved adventurers of the sea.



**A**bout this time, there was another Viking rover who had left Norway named Eric Thorvaldson, better known as Eric the Red. This Viking had a reputation of wanting his own way and fighting for it. At last he had to flee Norway, and he sailed with some of his friends to try to discover a land of his own where he could live and die as he liked. He got a very fine dragon ship, set sail, and traveled until he came to a great land of ice and snow. They did not wish to stop there, but their supplies were gone. It was either stop in that cold, barren place, or **perish**.

“We will set up our own country here,” decided Eric the Red, “and call it Greenland, in order to attract other Vikings to join us.”

Like many other settlers, Eric and his group discovered that the troubles they had in their homeland were small compared to those they had now, but they went boldly to work building shelters, fishing, and hunting.

Eric had a son named Leif. Like Biarni, Leif loved adventure and spent his days exploring up and down the coast of Greenland. One day he sighted a tattered sail; then a broken, dragon prow **thrust** itself up over the skyline. At last Leif called Eric, his friend Herjulf, and the other men of the village to come down to the shore to rescue the battered ship drifting toward them. From among the half dead crew, Herjulf carried his son, Biarni, to land. At last, Biarni had found his father!

When he was fed and clothed, Biarni told the Vikings of the strange land and the red man he had seen. They could not believe him. It was a sick lad's imagination, they said; but the story stuck in Leif's mind. He was called "Leif the Lucky" because he had such success in fishing; perhaps he would be so fortunate as to find that wonderful land, he thought, if he were to study Biarni's record of the days, the stars, and the tides, and then set out toward it. In that same year, 1000, Leif prepared to start out.

How do we know all this?

The Vikings loved stories just as much as boys and girls of today. They called their stories *sagas*, and there were certain men of the Vikings whose whole business it was to remember all the important happenings of their life and put them into verses that they sang on feast days. Soon these songs were written instead of sung, and the stories of Biarni, Eric the Red, and Leif the Lucky appear in three of these old sagas.

Leif's ship was built to look like the great dragon of Viking fairy tales, and was seventy-seven feet long and sixteen feet wide. It was, of course, an open boat with no shelter for the crew except their sleeping bags that were made of oiled seal hide. Instead of ropes they used walrus hide, and the sail was made of hand-woven wool. Leif Ericsson set out in this boat for the land Biarni had told him about.

They tried to follow the same course, and after quite as difficult a voyage as that of Biarni, they came to a treeless, rocky waste of flat stones. Beyond this they found a coast covered with dense forests of pine and oak trees, extending down almost to the edge of the land. The beaches in front of these forests were white as snow, but warmer winds than of the north began to play in the ship's sail. We call that first land of stones Newfoundland and the next coast of the mighty forests, Nova Scotia.

After two days of sailing out in the open sea, they went ashore and decided to stay there for the winter. They built great shelters of logs and named this settlement **Vinland**. In the spring they started out again, sailing down this coast, passing north of Martha's Vineyard and sailing up into Vineyard Sound. They saw and traded with the strange red men, trading their trinkets of silver for **wampum** and the new hard woods to take back to Iceland. When one of them died, they set up a crude cross on a hill overlooking the sea. They touched even Cape Cod!

Leif the Lucky, son of Eric the Red, had discovered America almost 500 years before Columbus touched the West Indies!

The old Viking records tell us that Leif was but twenty-nine years old when he found America. Perhaps if he had come from a race that did not care so much about adventure, he would have stayed and built a kingdom on the red man's shore, but Leif was a son of the sea. It was enough for him that he had gone over the course that Biarni had taken when he was seeking his father; that he had landed and dealt with the red men that none except he and Biarni had seen before. He set off again on his way home to show his wampum and woods. When Eric the Red died twelve years later, Leif was made king in his place, and finished his days hunting walrus and polar bears.

So the long line of our discoverers started with a lad named Biarni, who left his cows and sheep to search for his father, and ends—ah, who shall ever know the end? The history of America was set down first in a saga of the Vikings, a story of grapes and green meadows told to the Norse girls and boys in their land of ice and snow.

## Vocabulary

**barren:** without trees

**bow:** the forward part of a ship

**coax:** to gently urge or flatter

**Greenland:** an island in the North Atlantic off the coast of North America

**hand-wrought:** made by hand

**Iceland:** an island southeast of Greenland

**perish:** die

**quiver:** a case for carrying arrows

**rovers:** people who like to wander and explore

**stern:** the rear end of a boat

**stowaway:** a person who hides aboard a ship

**thrust:** pushed; drove with force

**vessels:** ships

**Viking:** a trader, explorer, or warrior from Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark)

**Vinland:** what the Vikings called North America

**wampum:** beads of polished shells strung in strands, used as money by North American Indians

## Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Biarni's journey to find his father so difficult?
2. Where did Biarni and the crew land? Whom did they meet there?
3. What news did Biarni give the Vikings? Why didn't the Vikings believe this news?
4. What did Leif Ericsson do in the year 1000?
5. Name three of the places in North America that Leif Ericsson landed and explored.
6. How do we know about Leif Ericsson and the other Vikings?

## Extension Activity: Understanding Sequence

*Some stories, such as "Biarni and Leif the Lucky," are filled with many events. It is important to keep the story events in order as read so that you understand the story. Put the following story events in the correct sequence.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Leif Ericsson listens carefully to Biarni's tale of his adventure on the sea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Biarni finds his father and the other Vikings on the island of Greenland.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leif Ericsson travels back home to Iceland.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leif Ericsson sets out to find the land Biarni told about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Biarni takes a journey to find his father, Herjulf the Viking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leif Ericsson and his crew find America.