



WOMEN AND CHILDREN

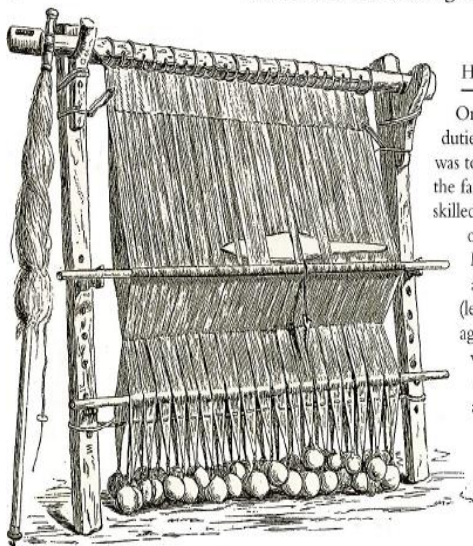
NEW COLONIES

Women did not always stay at home while their husbands were away. Sometimes they went with them, hoping to get land in one of the new colonies. They travelled with the men in the longships and sheltered somewhere safe until the fighting was over.

In Viking society, women enjoyed a lot of freedom. Although men were normally heads of their households, Viking women were independent-minded and strong-willed. When their husbands were away on raiding expeditions, the women ran the farms. During these times they carried out all the duties usually done by the men. Sometimes this might include having to fight. Although it is doubtful they took part in military attacks, women did help the men defend Viking colonies. The women were even able to attend the law-making assemblies.

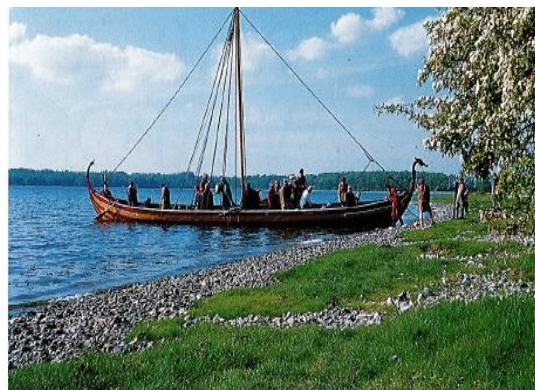
HOMESPUN

One of the main duties of Viking women was to make clothes for the family. They were skilled spinners and weavers of wool and linen. Most households had an upright hand-loom (left) which leaned against a wall. Stones were used to weigh down the threads and keep them taut while the material was woven.



A WARRIOR'S LIFE

From about the age of 12, boys began serious weapon training. Many went on raiding expeditions by the age of 16. There was no organized army, but each man owed allegiance to his chieftain and could be called to fight at any time. For young men, going on expeditions was the quickest way to get rich.



WELL-GROOMED

Viking women were proud of their appearance, especially their hair. Long hair was fashionable and women spent a great deal of time combing it. Combs were often made from antlers.



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Life in Viking society was hard. Weakness was not allowed, even in children. If a newborn baby was sickly, the father could expose it to the elements, or throw it into the sea, where it soon died.

Retrieval:

- 1) What were women proud of?
- 2) What were some women skilled at?
- 3) What were combs often made from?

Words in context:

- 4) Find a word that means to 'show loyalty and support to your king, chief, or country'.
- 5) Find a word that means 'a journey by a group of people with a particular purpose'.

Inference:

- 6) How do we know that life could be difficult in Viking times? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.