

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone”

**Curriculum Guide for Secondary Social Studies Classes
and College courses in anthropology, sociology, archeology, history, and geography**

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Based on the film written and directed by Pamela Berger

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone”

Curriculum Guide

The purpose of this teaching guide is to outline a four week unit of study based on themes and information from the film “Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” written and directed by Pamela Berger. This guide and the film are relevant to teaching about Native American historical interactions with people of other cultures, Viking exploration, cross cultural interactions, and media literacy at the high school and college freshman levels. Included in the guide are primary source documents for student use directed toward the study of several topics. Through study of the unit students will learn:

- historical perspective
- historical information as related to current issues
- film analysis skills which will transfer to other media
- research and analysis skills
- use of primary source documents and evaluation of evidence
- cross disciplinary analysis of broad themes and issues

In addition, the film highlights areas such as agriculture, linguistics, astronomy, navigation, trade, medicine, and social interactions. These fields are presented in this guide in order to facilitate cross-disciplinary teaching.

The basic framework for the unit is the research and analysis of major themes which can be studied throughout the course. The major themes addressed in this unit are:

- I. Cultural Interactions
- II. The Perpetuation of a Culture and the Ways it is Transmitted
- III. The Roles of Men and Women
- IV. Geography and Culture
- V. Life Patterns and Expectations: Work and Warfare
- VI. Social Structure and Slavery
- VII. Spiritual Beliefs and Values

The following sections are included in this guide.

- Teaching methods, theory and foundations
- Summary of the film plot
- Historical background of the tenth century AD
- Units of study (I - VII)
- Resources list
- Primary Documents

Theoretical Foundations

Five recent publications form the epistemological foundation to the guide.

- National Council of Social Studies Frameworks
- History Alive
- Co-operative Learning
- What is Evidence
- Models of teaching

Excerpts from each are included in Appendix A. We recommend that any teacher using this guide become familiar with the teaching philosophy and strategies explained in each of these five books. Read the excerpts before reading the unit outlines.

The research and theoretical foundation is based primarily on the work of Peter Sexias who has explained how students interpret and analyze popular film with respect to historical revisionism. References to his work are listed.

The guide is designed to work well in an active environment where students are responsible for their own learning. Students should also be provided with tools for documentation of the knowledge bases that they are constructing.

**SYNOPSIS OF
“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone”**

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” carries us back to a different beginning, five centuries before Columbus, when the Vikings were lost on these shores. To find their way home they needed the navigating stone, stolen by Killian, the Irish slave who escaped from their ship. This film tells the story of Killian's flight to freedom and his encounter with the original people of America. They rescued him. They healed him. He learned how they hunted, how they worshipped, and how they loved. He became a brother to the tribal hero Contacook; a friend to the youthful Kitchi; and a lover to the Indian girl named Turtle. Their people taught him that the earth does not forget the evil men do. For the Irish slave mentioned in the ancient Viking sagas, it was a time of danger and violence, as the native people fought the Viking intruders, and forced them out, except for one, Ivar, who was determined to settle an old score. This film, built on the fragments of an ancient Viking text, as well as on the spectacular archaeological discoveries in Newfoundland, will change forever the way we view our distant past. **“Killian’s Chronicle” --- the first story of America.**

History: Approaching the year 1000 A.D.

The following is an overview of the historical context of the film and some questions for students to consider when viewing it.

1. The Vikings

The events of the late 900's that brought the Vikings in contact with the Native Americans were the culmination of more than two hundred years of Viking exploration. In searching for land, goods, wealth, and "heroism", Viking merchants and sailors had sailed to ports on the Baltic and North Seas, and as far distant as the Black and Caspian Seas. They had also made settlements and established trading centers in present-day England and Ireland, as well as along the Atlantic coast of Europe. By the 860's they were settling Iceland, and in the 980's Eric the Red set out to settle Greenland. At around the same time, Bjarni Herjolfsson was blown off course from Greenland and sighted North America. Around the year 1000 Leif Eiriksson set out to investigate Bjarni's sightings and spent the winter somewhere along the coast of North America.

At some point around the year 1000 a Norse village was set up at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. Five dwellings and a forge were constructed there, and objects discovered at the site prove that women as well as men inhabited the site. They must have used the site to repair their ships as well, for wood shaving and nails have been found. We also know that they went farther south looking for foodstuffs, for they brought back to L'Anse les Meadows butternuts, a kind of walnut that does not grow any farther north than southern Maine or Nova Scotia.

The western explorations and settlements of the Vikings are recorded in material they set down as early as the mid-twelfth century. In those accounts, called the Icelandic Sagas, there are also accounts of five encounters that the Norse had with the native

people who lived in the area. Those people are called Woodland Indians (or Woodland Native Americans) by historians, (and Proto-Algonquians by linguists), and these are the people represented in the film. One of the early ships were two Celtic slaves, a man and a woman. Those two figures inspired the characters Killian and Brigid in the film.

Viking explorations resulted, in part, from the geography of Scandinavia, a land mass which offered its inhabitants both ready access to the sea through its striking fjords, as well as forests that grew strong oak timber for shipbuilding. As an added incentive for the men to go out "a Viking" the growing season in Scandinavia was short, and Norse farmers and merchants wanted more usable land. They also craved trading goods such as copper, tin, gold, silver, ceramics, fruit, jewels, and wine.

Despite differences among the Scandinavian peoples, during this period they all shared the Icelandic language, the Old Norse polytheistic religion, the "Thing" law, and a social organization consisting roughly of three classes: aristocracy, free people, and slaves or thralls. The thralls were most often captured peoples or debtors whose position was designated by the "Thing" laws.

Some Viking mariners had turned to piracy and, as early as the late eight-century began invading other lands such as Ireland. These Vikings stormed monasteries and villages, particularly those close to navigable rivers. They stole whatever silver they could lay their hands on (book covers, chalices, reliquaries) and sometimes took captives. They brought the precious metal and luxury goods back to Scandinavia, where it is sometimes discovered in buried hoard. Either they traded their slaves in such places and present-day England or Wales, or they brought them back to places like Iceland, Greenland, and, on one occasion at least, to "Vinland" or North America.

As we learn from the Sagas some groups of Vikings set out as explorers, and others, following upon them, wanted to build settlements in the new lands they had discovered. “Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” depicts such a group. The Vikings who have made their encampment as shown in the film, want to settle in this land. They have brought their cattle and their women (as proved by the spinning whorl that was uncovered at the site). The events and the dialogue in the Viking encampment sequence is practically lifted from the Icelandic Sagas. These people were obviously intent on making a home here, but, as shown in the film, were thwarted by their inability to get along with the Native Americans, and by their own internecine quarrels.

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” does not depict the settlement at L’Anse les Meadows. It shows at the beginning of the film one shipload of Vikings on their way to Greenland to trade their captives, Killian and Brigid, in exchange for tusks of walrus ivory and white falcons, luxury items greatly desired by wealthy chieftains in Europe. The ship is blown off course, and, in the imagination of the filmmaker, they arrive somewhere in present-day Nova Scotia. On a beach the Vikings encounter a group of native people sleeping under round boats made of animal skins. In the first recorded account of an encounter between Europeans and Native Americans, eight of nine native are killed. This bloody first encounter is shown in the film.

2. The Native Americans (or Woodland Indians)

The native people who lived on the coast of the Atlantic at the time of the Viking arrival in the tenth century spoke a language that linguists have called Proto-Algonquian. The Proto-Algonquian-speaking people are the ancestors of those who live on the coast of Canada and New England and who speak Micmac, Maleseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Narraganset, Wampanoag, Pequot, Mohegan, etc. They are also the ancestors of those people who spoke Massachusett before that language became defunct. The

Native Americans who speak some of the above languages to this day can usually understand one another, for their words are very similar and have many of the same roots. Many of the towns and rivers of New England still have their Native American names: Connecticut, Narragansett, Agawam, etc. Roger Williams, who lived with the Narragansetts after being ousted from Massachusetts, reported that native people from six hundred miles around him could understand each other quite well. In "Killian's Chronicle: The Magic Stone" the filmmaker envisioned that the first native people encountered by the Vikings were the Micmacs who lived, and still do live, primarily in present-day Nova Scotia.

Although their languages were somewhat different, these peoples shared similar understandings of the world around them and their place in it. Their relationship to the world was spiritual and everything was interrelated in an ongoing fashion best understood as a circle. Their myths and legends, based on an oral tradition, reveal many of the attitudes inherent in Native American culture. For example, young people in their early teens would spend some days alone in the woods as part of what we might call a "coming of age" experience. There they could expect to "meet" a kind of "guardian spirit", a figure who would protect them for their whole life. This figure could be in the form of an animal, such as a deer. In the film, when Kitchi sees Killian near the deer that first time, he thinks he has found his guardian spirit. He thus attaches himself to Killian in a very devoted manner.

As can be seen in the film, the Native Americans lived in a fairly fluid social structure. From what we can tell from the mythology and folklore, sometimes decisions were made by a chief, sometimes by a larger group of people. (There are records of women chieftains as well as men.) When, in the film, the men meet together to decide whether and how to fight back at the Vikings, the one who wishes to speak holds a "talking stick." When

someone else wants to speak, he takes the talking stick. In this way a variety of people could have a chance to contribute.

In this tenth-century world of the Native Americans, people did not conceive of land as something that could be owned. There was ample land for all, and there was no reason to "possess" it. The native people did make paths through the land (we know that their were trading route), and sometimes they would burn certain areas so that new green shoots would grow thus attracting deer whose meat could be used for food and whose skin could be worn for clothing.

Native Americans who lived in present-day New England would form settlements at the seacoast in warm weather, and in inland valleys in cold weather, and they would migrate back and forth. There was plenty of land for hunting, gathering plants, or growing corn. One did not need to put a fence around land that belonged to everyone.

Although they captured people from other tribal groups, amongst the Woodland Indians, no one was enslaved, or put in irons as in the European world, for the working of metal was unknown to Native American people at this time. Captives could be taken from their homes; but since human fertility was crucial to the survival of the tribe, and since children were its greatest wealth, captives were often brought into a family, and produced progeny of their own.

3. The Celts (Another name for the Early Medieval Irish and Scots)

We do not hear very much from the Sagas about the Celtic slaves who were on board one of the ships. But this man and woman were some of the first recorded Europeans to set foot on the shores of North America. For the purposes of "Killian's Chronicle: The Magic Stone", however, the filmmaker decided to make one of them, the male, the main

character through whom the story is told. The character was given the name Killian, and a whole "back story" was created for him and his sister.

Tenth-century Ireland, from which Killian and Brigid would have been taken, was, for a long time, little affected by outsiders. Its four provinces were governed by provincial kings, and other small groups were governed by territorial kings. Five somewhat fluid classes characterized early medieval Ireland: 1.) kings 2.) nobles, including the kings, 3.) non-noble free people who owned property, 4.) non-noble free people with little or no property, and 5.) non-free peoples, including both tenants with contracts, as well as slaves. The first three groups were privileged people in this society, but tenants with enough accumulated property could move up. Killian was envisioned as coming from a family of free people who owned a little property in a village near a monastery that was attacked by the Viking. During the attack Killian and his sister were taken as slaves.

Beginning in the 7th century Irish customs and laws were written down (codified) into the Brehon Laws, in particular the Senchus Mor, which regulated different classes' rights and privileges. Theoretically the land was held in common and different obligations were enumerated; over time more and more individuals owned their land outright.

By the late fifth century, Christian churchmen, building upon pagan traditions, gained the support of most Irish people, and soon Christianity was firmly entrenched in Ireland. Monasteries became important places for the preservation of culture, both Christian, (gospel books were copied and illustrated) and in some cases, pagan (the ancient Irish tales had been passed down orally, and, by the eighth century, were set down in written form). It was in the monasteries that monks taught many boys the rudiments of reading and writing, and it was here that Killian would have learned to read and write, since Irish families dependent on a monastery might have sent a child there to work and be educated. Brigid, his sister, might have sewn some of the vestments or altar clothes. It

was from this milieu that Killian and Brigid would have been taken by their Viking captors.

I. Cultural Interactions between *the Vikings, the Native Americans, and the Celts in “Killian’s Chronicle”*

From the Film

The film focuses on encounters between the Norsemen -- Viking explorers, merchants, and settlers--- and Native Americans, encounters that occurred in the late tenth century in present-day Nova Scotia and Southern Maine. Seen through the eyes of Killian, an Irish slave aboard one of the Viking ships, the story takes us to southern New England where Killian is befriended by a group of Native Americans. The following account explores the interactions of the groups represented in the film, and poses some questions for students to consider when watching it.

In the spring, around the year 1000, a Viking ship, owned by the merchant Ragnar, is on its way from Iceland to Greenland. It is blown off course and ends up on the shores of an unknown land (somewhere in present-day Nova Scotia). Ragnar puts ashore his Irish slave, Killian, to reconnoiter and determine if the land seems safe. When Killian reports no dangers, Ragnar orders several of his men ashore to get supplies. While on shore the Vikings discover an animal that they have never seen before, a porcupine, a creature that could not be found in Europe. Not knowing about the porcupine's quills, one of the Vikings, Ivar, taunts the animal and predictably gets a leg full of quills. Extracting them proves uncomfortable, but more importantly, such a wound could cause an infection that ultimately might lead to death. So the wound must be burned clean, or cauterizes. Knowing how painful cauterization will be, Ivar's friend Ole offer to give him some mushrooms that grow near the glaciers in Iceland. These mushrooms, which are known

to modern science as fly-agaric (or amanita muscaria) are an intoxicating substance and have the effect of making a person violent and crazy. Such a person in Viking lore is known as a berzerker. It is under the influence of these mushrooms that Ivar sees the first recorded group of Native Americans to have encountered Europeans. As set down in the sagas, the group, lying under "mounds or boats" are slaughtered by the Vikings, but one gets away.

When the Vikings return to the ship, the Native Americans come to seek revenge, and kill Ragnar their captain. But before he dies, he affirms that he intends to free Killian and his sister, Brigid. This grant of freedom, however, must be approved by the law courts back home in Iceland, the "Thing" Ivar refuses to accept this grant of freedom until after the legal ceremony has taken place. While watching Ragnar's funerary fire (his body has been laid amongst stones shaped like a ship, see Graham-Campbell, p. 19) Killian conceives of the idea of trying to escape. He tells Gunnar that Odin, a Viking god, has sent him a dream. In these early times all three cultures believed that gods and spirits would communicate with humans in dreams or in reverie. Killian convinces Gunnar that Odin will not accept the captain into the afterlife without the navigating stone and the book with the charts and sundial, and that he, Killian, must bring these things to his master in the other world, that is throw himself on Ragnar's funeral fire. (There are in fact accounts of slaves and goods being burned along with a Viking. See Jones, pp. 148-9)

When Killian and Brigid try to escape, Ivar kills Brigid. Killian takes the ax from his sister's body, and buries her off a cliff into the ocean. Then, continuing to flee, he is rescued from Ivar by a Micmac trading family, and they take him in their canoe to what is present-day southern New England. The animal-skin or birch bark canoes that native

people in this regions would use could carry them from Nova Scotia to the general area of southern New England in about five days.

With Ivar's ax Killian builds himself a shelter and begins to build a boat to return to Ireland. He is discovered by the Native American boy Kitchi who befriends him and starts to teach him his language. Killian witnesses a bear hunt, as well as a bear feast in which they worship the bear whose flesh they are about to eat. He notices how the native people just like the Europeans have also seen the image of a bear in the stars that make up one of the constellations in the sky.

Gradually Killian meets other members of Kitchi's tribe, including the young man Contacook, and Kitchi's sister, Turtle.

In learning that some strange-looking people with yellow hair have set up a camp five days travel to the north, and that these people have some beautiful red cloth to trade, the Native Americans decide to go there and trade with them as well. This trip north should also provide an opportunity for Killian to be handed over to his own people.

The Vikings they encounter in this encampment are led by the pioneer woman, Freydis. Ivar has been taken in by this group of Vikings as well. Through the two groups start off trading, the Vikings do not understand that the native people are there to trade for the red cloth, and the encounter quickly degenerates. Contacook is killed, and a battle between the Vikings and the Native Americans ensues.

The tribe returns to their own village with Contacook's body and there is a burial. After the burial Killian has a dream, and in the dream he understands Contacook so well that it is as if Contacook is speaking his own language. He realizes that in the several months that he has lived with the Native Americans, he has learned their language as well as his own. He realizes that when he hears them speak, it is as if they are speaking his

own tongue. This makes him feel much closer to the native people, but he is still determined to finish his boat and return home to Ireland.

He completes his boat with the assistance of Kitchi and Turtle, and while working together Killian and Turtle fall in love. But the summer is coming to an end and the tribe prepared to leave for winter camp. Killian prepares to return to Ireland, even though Turtle is carrying his child. The People, he is assured, will take care of the child; it will be hungry when they are hungry, and have food when they have food.

After the native people have left for summer camp, we learn that Ivar has tracked Killian to his encampment. He surprises Killian, gets him to hand back the navigating stone that is needed to get back across the ocean safely. But learning that one has to have special knowledge to "read" the stone, Ivar is determined to take Killian with him.

Unbeknownst to Killian, Ivar has kidnapped Kitchi, and taken him on the boat with him as hostage. (The sagas likewise recount the a kidnapping. Two native boys were kidnapped and taken to Greenland where they were eventually learned the Icelandic language. This "cultural interaction" reported by the sagas inspired the filmmaker to include kidnapping as a plot point in the film.) Knowing that Kitchi is an excellent swimmer, Killian tricks Ivar into throwing the boy overboard as a "sacrifice" to a Viking sky god. A fight ensues between Ivar and Killian, a fight which Killian has no chance to win, since Ivar is armed with an iron sword, and Killian has nothing but a wooden spear. Ivar unwittingly reveals that he intends to come back to the new world and capture the native people as slaves to trade back in Europe. This is the kind of "cultural interaction" -- one strong people victimizing a weaker people--- that Killian is all too familiar with and he will not let this happen to those he has come to understand and love. Even though it means he will lose his own life, Killian is determined to destroy Ivar so that he will never be able to carry out his plan. He steers the boat toward a huge rock that has

appeared in the ocean. Ivar sees that they are about to crash into the rock and that they will both be killed unless Killian turns the boat away. As Ivar lunges at Killian to kill him, we see that Kitchi has swum along near the boat the whole time. Kitchi takes in what is happening, grabs the navigating stone from the side of the boat where it was lodged, fits it into his slingshot, and shoots it at Ivar. The stone stuns Ivar, and Killian is able to deliver a final blow that sends Ivar reeling into the ocean just as the boat hits the gigantic rock. The fate of all three, Killian, Kitchi, and Ivar hangs in the balance.

We soon learn, however, that Killian and Kitchi have been able to make their way to shore. The navigating stone is lost, but when Kitchi presents Killian with another like it, Killian makes a decision to stay in the new world and cast his fate with the Native Americans. With the boy at his side, he heads off to find the people who have befriended him and saved his life.

Thus the film shows encounters between three very different peoples. It allows students to grapple with questions about similar encounters; about the American past, present, and future; and it allows them to question what our true values are.

Some general questions to consider when viewing the film:

- 1.) Why did the filmmaker have Killian and the Vikings speak English? Is that realistic -- are Killian and the Vikings able to communicate with one another without misunderstandings? Why is Brigid mute?
- 2.) What do the conflicts between Ragnar, Gunnar, and Ivar reveal about Viking values?
- 3.) What kind of person is Killian?
- 4.) Why does Kitchi think that Killian is special?

- 5.) Why is Killian interested in learning Kitchi's language?
- 6.) Why do the Native Americans accept Killian? Describe Contacook and Turtle.
- 7.) Why are the Vikings and the Native Americans unable to trade with one another?
Describe Freydis.
- 8.) Why does Killian ultimately stay with the Native Americans?
- 9.) What is the film's perspective on the ability of people from different backgrounds to communicate with one another? Do you agree with it?

Bibliography:

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Jones, Gwyn, A History of the Vikings, London, 1968.

Williams, Roger, A Key into the Languages of America, Detroit, 1973.

II. The perpetuation of a culture and the ways culture is transmitted

From the Film:

The film shows how people maintain their culture, as well as the successes and problems of trans-cultural contact between peoples whose beliefs, values, language, and other forms of expression differ. In so doing, it raises questions about the continuation of a culture and how people with different cultural backgrounds and assumptions influence one another.

Killian is presented as a learner and observer. He picks up key aspects of the Vikings' language and culture and later of the Native Americans' language and culture. The Vikings in this film are seen as more remote since they learn little of the Woodland Native American culture. In the surviving texts we have about the encounters between the

Vikings and Native Americans, they at first make their interests known to each other when they start to trade, but when the native people are not longer interested in trading furs for milk products, misunderstandings ensue. The lack of a common language led to miscommunication, and no doubt was one of the reasons for the battle that took place.

The film raises the issue as to how we as Americans process information and our expectations about language. At the beginning of the film, the Vikings and Killian converse in the English language, while all the symbols and ways of thinking are connected either to the Icelandic or Irish ways of thinking. Students may want to explore advantages of the filmmaker's decision to have the characters all speak English, as well as any possible disadvantages.

Historical Background:

All peoples have language and a variety of ways of sharing information. Since some ancient cultures did not have a written language, the work of uncovering information about them becomes more challenging. In some cases, as in the case of the Irish, older legends and myths were written down after Ireland was exposed to Christianity and after monks learned the Latin alphabet so they could copy the Gospel. Ancient Viking history and mythology were written down in Icelandic, starting about eight hundred years ago.

Sometimes folklore and old stories have been passed down orally and recorded in written form many centuries later, when pre-literate cultures came in contact with a culture with a written language. Many of the ancient Native American stories remained part of their oral history until they were written down in the nineteenth and twentieth century by priests, ministers, or travelers.

Other ways of learning about peoples such as the Native Americans, who left no written sources, include: Examining their language for clues about their thought in the

structure of their words; looking at customs that have been passed down; listening to the music that has been passed down; investigating recipes for food preparation and medical remedies; studying the objects that have been found either by archaeologists digging in ancient Indian villages or by people who discover Native American artifacts at random spots.

Our knowledge of pre-literate peoples can also be augmented by the descriptions of observers from literate cultures. These, however, have to be studied very carefully, for the observers often have their own prejudices and preconceived notions that they superimpose on the culture they are viewing.

These issues are complicated in the development of transcultural societies. The concepts transcend the 10th century; they also relate to our assumptions today. A question to be asked is: how do we process information and what expectations do we have when we encounter someone from another culture.

Class Activities and Research:

In this unit students grapple with questions about how a society attempts to ensure that it is further transmitted both to those who are a part of it and those who are not. The broad question is: What are different ways to transmit one's culture? Are some more effective than others? Why? Are such methods able to be understood by others from different cultural and language backgrounds? Why? In addition, students will answer a more specific version: In what ways did Viking merchants and sailors, Irish peasants, and Woodland Native American peoples transmit their cultures? Were some ways more effective than others? Did some ways encourage or discourage cross-cultural contact?

This unit and accompanying materials allow students to begin to investigate some of the questions about the transmission of culture. In looking at the attached documents,

students may want to consider how each culture attempts to transmit its culture further. Are there similarities or differences depending on the culture? Do the methods of a particular culture appear to encourage or discourage contact with others from different cultures.

- Document the elements, gender roles, religion, work of each of the three cultures.
- Each student group will portray that culture and react within role to teacher or student generated scenarios.

Primary Documents:

For the Vikings, see the following:

- 1.) for some stories, see "The Greenlanders' Saga" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga, 195-7 & "Eirik the Red's Saga" in Jones, 208-210
- 2.) for some laws, see "The Older Law of the Frosthathing" in The Earliest Norwegian Laws trans. by Laurence M. Larson, 257-63
- 3.) for medicinal practices, see Henning Larsen, An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany, check

For the Irish, see the following:

- 1.) for language, see Charles H. Stanley Davis, An Chead Leabhar Gaedhilge: First Irish Book (although it focuses on modern Irish, there are parallels with Old Irish), 12-18, 35, & 37
- 2.) for stories and legends, see Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends of Ireland, 10-12 & 107-114

3.) for laws, see Ancient Laws of Ireland: Senchus Mor, Vol. II, 297-9; Vol. V., 427-47

4.) for medicinal practice, see Wilde, 181-213

For the Native Americans, see the following:

1.) for language, see Roger Williams, A Key Into the Language of America, 93-9, 110-3, & 134-40

2.) for stories and legends, see Robert M. Leavitt, Maliseet & Micmac, 13, 100, 12-3, & 136; & Charles Leland, The Algonquin Legends of New England, 359-62

For meeting a guardian spirit in the woods see Alfred Kiyana, "Legend of the Owl Sacred Pack" translated from the Fox (an Algonquian language), Smithsonian Institute Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, # 72, 1921.

3.) for medicinal practices, see Gladys Tantaquidgeon, A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs, 53-7 & 64-7 and Barrie Kavasch, Native Harvests, 142-4

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III. The Roles of Men and Women

Though gender roles in pre-literate cultures are very difficult to determine, the film makes some assumptions based on literature, folklore and anthropology about the expected roles men and women had in the three tenth century cultures: the Viking, the Irish, and the Woodland Native American. Based on the role of women in some Native American mythology, the film posits a Native American attitude about women that led to some confusion for Killian. Once Killian adapted to some of these differences, he appeared to like them.

In this unit students grapple with the ways in which boys and girls are socialized in their societies and the roles they have as adult men and women. One of the broad questions that might be addressed is: "Do men and women have significantly different

roles in the U.S. today and in the recent past? Why? Has this changed over time? Are such roles different in other cultures than in the U.S. and still different from each other?" They will also grapple with what the film attempts to show about these cultures of the tenth century: "How were expectations different for men and women, in the Viking, Irish, or Woodland Native American cultures?"

From the Film:

"Killian's Chronicle: The Magic Stone" has numerous starting points from which to look at the issue of gender. Killian's sister Brigid has a small and special role in this film. Having been taken as a slave, she experienced considerable trauma and as Killian says "... she's not uttered a word since the terror of that day." There is a tradition in Irish culture of "the mute woman," one who has suffered a great wrong and remains silent forever after. In this special context, Killian's attitude towards her is one of a protective brother. We also get the sense from the film of Killian's great concern for his family. One of the reasons Killian wants to go home is to let his parents know that he is alive. Another reason is to let all the people in his village know that he has escaped from the Vikings and is a free man.

Only two Viking women are shown in the film. Freydis is named after a woman who appears in the Icelandic sagas, where, as in the film, she grabs a sword, strikes it against her bare breast, and gets ready to fight. In the film she is shown as a pioneering woman who wants the land for the child she is carrying. She is also depicted as an astute trader. In Viking culture, women were often left alone to manage the household and the farming

while the men were at sea, off "a-viking" as it was called and Freydis could have built up her strong independence in that setting.

Male roles in the Viking world could be seen in a number of characters. Ragnar was a merchant who could have sailed as far east as Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). In the film he was on a voyage to Greenland when his ship got blown off course and drifted for nine days. His likely heir was Gunnar, who is presented as a fair-minded merchant and mariner. Ivar, who had himself been a galley slave, is shown as poisoned by his early suffering. He tells us that after he escaped from the galley ship he fought his way to a fortune of silver, and then, with Ragnar, bought a half interest in the ship. He wants to continue on as a merchant, get his ship back from Gunnar, and come back to this new land and trade for furs and slaves. It is when Killian hears those words that he makes the super-human effort to go up against Ivar even though he knows it will mean his own death. Ivar, like other Viking men, would have trained himself to be an excellent swordsman and fighter, and Killian has ample evidence of Ivar's brutality and strength.

The film shows in some detail the roles of men and women in the Native Americans' culture. Through the Medicine Women and Turtle we come to understand two important roles of women. Medicine woman is a healer. She knows how to make potions which she hands to Turtle to give to Killian. Turtle is learning the skills and the healing arts of the medicine women. We see her hanging herbs to dry and gathering various leaves and berry. But Turtle is also what we would call a craftsperson, or an artist. Several times we have evidence that she paints on rocks. Such rock paintings as well as rock carvings still exist from the Native American world. They are mostly of animals or geometric shapes.

Other women in the village are also shown making objects of beauty such as baskets. Basketry is a traditional art that was passed down for many generations, and is still continued by the elders of some east coast tribes. The women are also shown gathering clams, smoking meat, and planting corn, all traditional roles of women in Algonquin culture.

Male roles among the Native Americans are seen for instance in the actions of Contacook who is a young tribal warrior and hero. We first see him as a hunter when he makes the final sword thrust which kills the bear. We then see that he is the tribal "story teller." In a very intricate sign-language dance he recreates the story of the hunt for Killian. When the tribe is attacked by another tribe, which attempts to steal their corn, all the men of the tribe fulfill their role as warriors. They fight the intruders, and then go out after them.

The film also shows men as parents and teachers. White Eagle disciplines Kitchi for acting rashly at the hunt. He ostracizes the boy from the dancing, feasting group. White Eagle also acts as a teacher to Kitchi when he passes down the skill of making weapons, for we see him showing Kitchi how to haft the arrowhead to the shaft.

Classroom Activities and Research:

- Each student group can research the role of women in one of the three cultures and 1) write a play about a friendship between women of the three groups, 2) interact with each other based on teacher generated scenarios, 3) write poems based on their lives and culture.

Before looking at the Viking, Irish and Native American tenth century expectations of appropriate gender roles, it is useful to look at oneself. Students can start by looking at the following issues: how they were socialized, what expectations they have as teenagers, what roles they anticipate they will have as adult women and men, and whether they believe that these roles have changed since the time of their parents. The collaborative activities in History Alive! and Griswold and Rogers' Cooperative Learning Basics are useful approaches to access these concepts.

The following documents are a basis to look at these issues in their complexity.

For the Vikings, see the following:

- 1.) About the dangers of love from "The Book of the Icelanders" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga, 172-3
- 2.) About relationships between men and women, including Freydis, from "The Greenlanders' Saga" in Jones, 197-206
- 3.) About relationships between men and women from "Eirik the Red's Saga" in Jones, 212-21 & 226-9
- 4.) About laws of marriage and inheritance from "The Older Law of the Gulathing" in Laurence Larson, The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 72-8
- 5.) About laws of inheritance and property from the "The Older Law of the Frostathing" in Larson, 330-5 & 363-8

For the Irish:

- 1.) About legends and potions about men and women in Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends of Ireland, 71-4 & 185-6
- 2.) About Christian expectations of sexual behavior, in Bieler, Ludwig, (ed.), The Irish Penitentials, 89
- 3.) About laws affecting marriage and property in Ancient Laws of Ireland, Vol. II, 381-409 & Vol. III, 17; children; Vol. III, 39-49; widows and property, Vol. V, 449-57 & 487-9

For the Native Americans:

- 1.) Legends about marriage in Gladys Tantaquidgeon, 59-63
- 2.) Masculinity and femininity in Robert Leavitt, Maliseet & Micmac, 99
- 3.) Love in Charles Leland, Algonquin Legends of New England, 295-9
- 4.) About mothering, 9-10, & hunting, 113-8 in James Axtell, The Indian Peoples of Eastern America.

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Wilde, Lady, Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland London: Chatto & Windus, 1919.

IV. Geographic Knowledge, Forms of Travel, and Navigational Skills

Objectives:

Students will develop an understanding of spatial awareness and of geographic concepts. They will learn to analyze how different geographical and geophysical environments influence cultural development.

From the Film:

The film provides examples of the importance of geography in the Irish, Viking and Woodland Native American cultures. For different reasons the Vikings and the Native Americans were trader/travelers. The Vikings traded as far East as Constantinople, (present-day Istanbul), and as far west as present-day Canada and perhaps New England. In order to do so, they learned how to utilize important navigational aids. The Native Americans traded up and down the Atlantic coast, from Labrador to Southern New England. They also moved periodically in search of food and shelter. In contrast to these two peoples, the Irish tended to be more stationary. But individual monks and small groups of holy men traveled to the European continent and west at least as far as Iceland to set up monasteries or small religious settlements.

The depiction of the fictional Killian as being highly adaptable illustrates that as a slave who was taken from port to port by his Viking captors, he would have witnessed different cultures. As one who had been taught in a monastery school how to read and write, Killian could understand and interpret those navigational aids that were written down. No doubt individuals in all three cultures who were able to utilize geographic concepts had important standing not only in their respective societies, but also in the larger sphere of their travels.

There are several scenes in the film which pertain to geographical concepts:

1. At the beginning of the film Ragnar and Killian, using a "navigating stone," determine that the storm has brought them much farther south than the port in Greenland, which was their destination. This type of navigational stone, a quartz called cordierite, was used by Norwegian seamen until the twentieth century. It works by refracting light. When you are out at sea, and the day is cloudy, and you can not see where the sun is, the navigational stone can help you find the sun. You hold it up and move it to the area of the sky where you think the sun is, and when the stone is between you and the sun, it refracts the sun's light. Once you know where the sun is on the horizon, you can determine how far north or south you are. In order to do this Viking seafarers used a sun dial (azimuth) navigating chart. The chart, pictured in the film, helped indicate the latitude by the length of the shadow of the small stick. Since the shadow Ragnar and Killian saw was shorter than it would have been near Greenland, they concluded that they were much farther south.
2. Upon arriving in the new environment, Killian adapts to his surroundings by finding things to eat such as birds' eggs and nuts, and he also finds materials to make his boat. He witnesses the Native Americans making use of clams from the ocean as a source of food and learns about different foods sources that were available in North America and not in Ireland.
3. The Native Americans accept the climatic conditions of their environment and adapt by moving inland in the winter to a more sheltered location. In the summer they would make use of the foods from the ocean.

Geography Fundamentals:

Before students investigate specific geographical issues, they may need to review some geographic skills. According to the authors of Geography for Life: National Geography Standards, there are particular geographic skills students need to learn by the end of the twelfth grade. Students learn these skills in the specific context of the two geographical perspectives -- spatial and ecological -- and in conjunction with the two complementary perspectives, historical and economic (National Geographic Society, 1994: 53-8). Standard Seventeen is relevant to this unit. It states: "The geographically informed person knows and understands how to apply geography to interpret the past" (101). General questions emerging from the standard include:

- * How do processes of spatial change affect events and conditions?
- * How do changing perceptions of places and environments affect people's spatial behavior?
- * What is the fundamental role that geographical context has played in affecting events in history?" (219)

Once students are comfortable with these geographical concepts they can also use them when solving current and future problems (221).

Class Activities and Research:

The broad question for this unit is: What role does geography and peoples' ability to use geographic concepts have in understanding the historical past, the present, and in predicting the future?

Students who have acquired these geographical skills, can examine the encounters between the Vikings, the Irish, and the Native Americans. In this unit students grapple with questions about the importance of geography and its relationship to the past, present, and future.

Questions specific to the film include:

- * How did the Vikings, Irish, and Native Americans use geographic knowledge in the tenth century to their advantage?
- * How did the people of these three cultures understand the world around them, how did they adapt to it, and how did they try to change their environment to suit their needs?
- * How did the geographical conditions of what is now known as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark encourage the Vikings to become traders and explorers?
- * How and why was each group better versed in specific kinds of knowledge than others?

Activities that students might pursue include:

- * Create (or use) maps to explain various events shown in the film. For example, one map might show where we now know the Vikings lived and traveled in North America. Another map might show the Native American trade route along the coast of present-day

Canada and New England. Another might show both confirmed and contested locations of Viking settlements in North America, Europe and Asia Minor.

* Collect maps and photographs from various sources to illustrate student hypotheses about the affects of geography on the lives of the Vikings, Irish and Woodland Native American.

* Examine the relationship between the designs of the Viking boats and the geography of their travel routes (hint: Some of the boats could be carried overland others could be beached right up on the banks of a river.)

* Analyze a modern encounter or issue in geographical terms (e.g. The U.S. Civil War, the consolidation and dissolution of the U.S.S. R.)

Primary Documents

The following documents provide sources for the investigation of the geographic knowledge of the Vikings, the Irish, and the Woodland Native American. They also provide a basis for students to create a historical map that shows different routes people took.

For the Vikings, see the following:

- 1.) From "The Greenlanders' Saga" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga, 191-5
- 2.) From "Eirik the Red's Saga" in Jones, 208-10, 222-6
- 3.) From King Olaf Trygvesson's Saga in Heimskringla: The Olaf Sagas ed. by Snorre Sturlason, 101-5
- 3.) About the debate over the value of the navigating stone or "solarsteinn", see Peter Foote, The Viking Achievement, 255, & Alan Binns in Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia, 429

4.) from Helge Ingstad, Westward to Vinland: The Discovery of Pre-Columbian Norse House-Sites in North America, 24-5, 61

For the Irish, see the following:

- 1.) From the Annals of Ulster, 339-40, 347, 363-9, 383
- 2.) From Ancient Irish Tales, 588-93

For the Native Americans, see the following:

- 1.) From a legend about strangers, see Clark, Indian Legends of Canada, 151-2
- 2.) From a legend about a pregnant woman and traveling, see Whitehead, The Old Man Told Us, 61
- 3.) From legends on weather, see Tantaguideon, A Study of Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs, 57-8
- 4.) From a legend about land and ancestors, see Leavitt, Maliseet and Micmac, 111

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Life Patterns and Expectations:

Work and Warfare

From the Film:

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” provides numerous avenues through which one can start exploring life patterns and expectations as they manifest themselves in work and warfare. At the beginning of the film, Viking interest in exploration, trade, and profit are shown through the dialogue between Ragnar and Ivar who argue about who owns the slaves, whether or not they should be sacrificed, and how much they are worth in trade. Before a storm blew their ship off course, the goal of Ragnar, Ivar and Gunnar was to get to Greenland and to trade the slaves and other goods they carried in exchange for ivory and white falcons, rare in Europe and destined for princely families who would pay

dearly for them. In this section of the film the mercantile/exploratory spirit of the Vikings is dramatized.

The beginning of the film also shows that Killian is indeed a "valuable" property to trade because he has literacy, a skill nurtured in the monasteries of Ireland at a time when few other areas of Europe preserved the tradition of reading and writing. Though this period is known in Europe as the dark ages, in Ireland it is called the Golden Age, since that island was one of the few places where books were read, studied and copied. One of the major tasks assigned to monks in the monasteries was to copy these books, and boys such as Killian were sent to the monasteries to learn everything from the preparation of parchment to the ingredients needed to create ink and colors for the illustrations.

Killian's knowledge of reading and writing seemed almost "magical" to Ivar and Ole, illiterate Vikings who did not understand how the navigating stone worked in conjunction with the sun dial drawn in the book. They taunted Killian by calling him "one who scratches on parchment". But Killian, along with Ragnar, understood the meaning of the information provided by the navigating stone and could read the implications of that information on the sun dial. Ivar and Ole, as representatives of more typical Vikings, did not know how to read, but may have been able to make out the meaning of runic signs, a form of writing that was only used for short inscriptions.

The type of work engaged in by Brigid on board ship was stitching sails. Women throughout history have been associated with the making and adornment of textiles, as well as with the creation of garments. Brigid, using a pierced fish bone as a needle, would be doing the same work done by Scandinavian women who created the sails in the first place. Some of those sails were adorned with embroidery and dyed bright colors by the Viking women.

In the Viking encampment later in the film, we see a Viking woman in the process of using a drop spindle, and another woman milking a cow. The milking of animals and the making of milk products such as butter and cheese were the tasks of women in both Scandinavia and Ireland. Native American people did not have cows or sheep, and they would not have understood the milking process. That is the source of the comic discussion between Killian and Contacook, who wonders why the woman needs an animal in order to get milk, and asks doesn't she have breasts of her own?

In addition to trading and exploring, another important kind of work engaged in by Viking men was shipbuilding, and they were certainly masters of the craft. The remains of the solidly constructed vessels attest to the enormous expertise of their builders. The whole of the Viking trading economy rested on the easy navigability of these sturdy ships.

The Irish were also good boat builders. Many medieval Irish voyage tales attest to their sea-going prowess, the most well-known being the story of Saint Brendan, one of the earliest Irishmen known to have sailed west. In the film Killian makes reference to the boat-building skills he learned from his father, whom the filmmaker envisioned as being adept at making an ancient Irish boat called currach or coracle.

The Native Americans' views of work and warfare are portrayed in a number of different episodes. Two of the major occupations of the Woodland Native American males were hunting and making weapons. As shown in the film, Native American men would go hunting whenever there was need for meat or whenever they learned that there was big game around, such as a bear. They would teach these skills to their sons when the boys were the right age. Until then boys could learn from their fathers how to make and repair weapons. In the film we see White Eagle teaching his son Kitchi how to make and repair an arrow. We also see him punish the boy who wanted to participate in a

dangerous bear hunt though he was too young. The father, White Eagle, excludes the boy from participation in the feast thereby shaming him in front of all the tribe.

When meat was brought home to the village, the villagers would consume what they could. The women would cut up the rest and smoke it to preserve it, as we see them doing in the background when Killian accompanies Turtle into the village. In the winter, meat from the hunt would be one of the only sources of food. In the summer, the diet was supplemented by fish and seafood, as well as by roots and berries gathered chiefly by the women. And, of course, there was corn.

By the tenth century archaeologists have found evidence that corn was cultivated in New England. As shown in the film, small patches would be planted, harvested and ground up to be preserved. Archaeologists believe that the Native Americans of this area received the knowledge about corn from the peoples of the mid-west and/or the southwest with whom they traded.

The native people moved freely over the land, hunting where they wanted to, settling near the coast in small villages of straw wigwams in the summer, and moving inland to live in bark wigwams in winter. Their villages were usually not composed of more than five wigwams, and so each village could not have contained more than four or five extended families. They had ample opportunity to mix with other groups, however, for their trading route ranged far and wide. Objects or materials from as far north as Labrador or as far west as Ohio are found in the area of present-day New England.

The warfare among the Native Americans did not involve large armies as it did in some areas of Europe at this time. Native American peoples on the east coast were rather widely scattered and fighting was in the form of raids and skirmishes such as we see in the film, where a neighboring tribe comes to steal corn.

In these far-distant times the making of what we would today call Art was not usually seen as an activity differing from other necessary work activities. The weapons and boats crafted by the men, as well as the jewelry, baskets, vessels, garments, or blankets created by the women were based on knowledge that had been passed down through a tradition. Most of those objects, when and if they are uncovered today, would be placed in a museum, not only because they are "old" but also because they demonstrate the level of skill attained by people working with tools they had to make themselves, tools far more primitive than ours. But that did not stop them from "making art", works that have an aesthetic value when judged by any standard.

Some of the objects made by all three peoples related to their desire to be protected by divine powers. Ivar wore a Thor's hammer, a talisman meant to protect him from his enemies. He is pounding it to his chest at the beginning of the film. Kitchi wears an amulet with a deer on it, his guardian spirit. Later he makes a similar one for Killian whom he sees as embodying his guardian spirit. These object in the film are based on actual models from the period.

Undoubtedly community survival dominated concerns of all of these peoples as they sought ways to receive protection from the divine powers, as well as feed, house, and clothe themselves and their kin.

Historical and Anthropological Background:

In all three of these cultures survival depended on each person's contribution to his or her family or tribe. Families expected each member to contribute in ways that depended on age and gender.

In the Viking world many families reared cattle, sheep, and pigs, or engaged in farming activities, growing barley, rye, oats, and cabbage. Another way Viking men

could contribute to their families was through going off "a viking" -- to trade and, sometimes, to raid. In the spring of the year, as the ice was breaking up, the Vikings would sail out of the fiords towards far-distant ports in strange lands. In so doing they broke through the constraints imposed by geography (a northern climate with a short growing season), practiced their navigational skills, and ultimately were able to trade in lands as far distant as present-day Istanbul or as far west as present-day Canada. During this time they explored and settled Iceland (only a few Irish monks had set foot there before the Vikings arrived); they established settlements on Greenland; and they founded the village at L'Anse aux Meadows in Labrador on the coast of North America.

When the Vikings arrived in Greenland and Iceland they encountered no resistance because the land was largely uninhabited or because there was plenty of space for them to share with the indigenous peoples of Greenland. The few Irish monks whom the Vikings saw in Iceland when they first arrived are reported to have scurried quickly away. When the Vikings came to the Atlantic coast of North America, however, the stories they passed down in their Sagas tell of several encounters with the Native Peoples (whom they called skrealings), encounters that resulted in bloody clashes and deaths, not only for the Native Americans, but also for the Vikings. Since accounts of these battles and deaths were recorded by the Vikings, and since the filmmaker wanted to recreate them from a neutral position, she chose to tell the story from the point of view of one of the people aboard one of the first Viking ships to get lost here. Two Irish slaves are reported to have been put ashore to see if the land held any danger. After they came back to the ship, the Vikings themselves came ashore. This Irish slave provided the filmmaker with a person who had a unique perspective. He was European with all the advantages of European iron age, metal-working, literate culture, yet he was also an outsider, a captive, and therefore a victim, someone who could be more open to another culture, one where he might be accepted as different, yet not "inferior."

When the Vikings arrived here they brought with them weapons of iron, swords, spears, and knives. The Proto-Algonquians had weapons of stone and wood: arrows and bows, or lances with arrows at their tips. The Vikings report that the native people also had a kind of missile, which they were able to launch in attacks against the Vikings. The missiles were said to be the size of "a sheep's belly". In the film we see the Native Americans launching this type of missile with an implement that resembles a lacrosse stick, an object that was to find its place as a part of Native American culture.

One of the main "weapons" the Native Americans were able to use in this encounter was the knowledge they had of the land. The Sagas tell us that the native people were able to lure the Vikings into an ambush in a cul-de-sac. When the Vikings were trapped, the native people pelted them with rocks and force them into an attempted retreat. Though part of a Viking's "identity" was being a skilled fighter, faced with a people who were on their own territory, the Vikings were not able to conquer or destroy them.

Eventually, the Vikings realized that they could not maintain their settlement on the coast of North America. They were too far from their base of support in Europe, and perhaps, as indicated in the Sagas, they realized that this land was inhabited, and that they had not been able to maintain friendly trading relations with its people.

Class Activities and Research:

A broad question is: "What kinds of work do people do? Is some work preferable than other? For whom? Does this change during a person's lifetime? How do we reach those goals when they are outside of our control?"

In this unit students grapple with questions of work, personal and community expectations, and the ways to reach these intertwined goals. As students begin to investigate these issues, it may helpful to look first at present culture. Students should

consider their own expectations involving work, limits imposed by society and geography, and relationships with people of other cultures.

Specific questions related to the film are:

- What kinds of work did the Vikings, Irish, and Native Americans engage in? Did these things change over time?
- What factors led any of these people to violence to try to achieve their goals?"

Primary Documents:

The following documents are a basis to look at some of these issues in their complexity.

For the Vikings, see the following:

- 1.) About trade from "The Story of Einar Sökkason" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga, 238-46
- 2.) About laws affecting merchants and tenants in "The Book of the Gulathing" in Laurence Larson, The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 62-9 & 89-9
- 3.) About laws affecting merchants in "The Older Law of the Frostathing" in Larson, 339-47

For the Irish, see the following:

- 1.) About farming, see Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends of Ireland, 49-55
- 2.) About laws affecting farming and trade, see Ancient Laws of Ireland, Vol. II, 87-9; 137-143; 289-95; & 359-79

For the Native Americans, see the following:

- 1.) About food gathering, see Charles Leland, Algonquin Legends of New England, 233-46.
- 2.) About hunting, see James Axtell, The Indian Peoples of Eastern America, 111-8.

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VI. Social Structure and Slavery

From the Film:

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” provides numerous starting points for discussions about social structure, slavery, and community organization. The discussions on the ship between Gunnar and Ivar reveal that each of them has chosen to interpret the Icelandic law in regard to slavery differently. Ragnar, at his death, set Killian and Brigid

free. And he gave them money for a freedom feast at which their release from slavery would be announced. When the ship returned to Iceland, the freedom feast would be held before the *Thing*, or district assembly. Gunnar at first interpreted this as meaning that the slaves, who had been Ragnar's property, were immediately free, and he wanted to unchain Killian. Ivar protested that this was illegal, that they were officially slaves until after the freedom feast and the announcement to the assembly. Gunnar acquiesced. Even in far-distant lands, the law of the *Thing* had to prevail.

Throughout the film Killian focuses on regaining his freedom and returning to his place as a free man in Ireland. There he hopes to be one of those people who possessed a small portion of land. Though little is known about early medieval farming in Ireland, photos from the air show what were fenced-off land holdings, especially around ecclesiastical establishments and forts. Some of this was given to cattle, some to planting.

The social structure in Ireland in the 10th century would have a king at the top. There were over one hundred such kings in Ireland during the early Middle Ages. Beneath the kings were lords, (wealthy landholders), and freedmen, people with smaller land holdings. The church also possessed land holdings. At the lowest level of the social hierarchy were, of course, the slaves.

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” raises questions about the role of slavery in all three of these societies. Killian's and Brigid's captivity is central to the story. They would have been taken as slaves during a Viking raid on their village, which the filmmaker pictured as near a monastery. In the imagination of the filmmaker, Killian and Brigid were freemen, whose family held a small land holding. When Killian was a child, he would have been sent to the monastery to learn to read and write. Brigid would have worked on the farm, planting and helping with the milking and cheese making. People in

Ireland at this time often lived in large extended families or clans. The few towns that had been established in Ireland by the tenth century were set up by Viking traders.

There were kings in the Viking world as well at this time. And when they conquered an area, such as they did in England in the 9th century, royal rulers tried to assume power. In Iceland, from whence came the Viking traders in the film, local leadership was assumed by wealthy chieftains who offered protection to smaller landholders. These chieftains presided over the *Thing*, the district assembly. The Native Americans did not have kings, but did have chieftains. We see one portrayed in the film when he takes the gift meant for medicine woman. But the extensive formal hierarchy that is recorded amongst the Vikings and Irish at this time probably did not exist among the Native Americans.

In respect to slavery, the Native Americans would have taken captive from defeated tribes, but they could not have supported slavery as it was known in Europe, when iron manacles were used. Examples of such manacles have been found in the Viking world. Thus, in the film, the Native Americans' inability to understand the meaning of the word "slave" results from this different type of social organization.

Historical Background:

During the tenth century the Vikings had their outpost as far west as Canada where their settlement, L'Anse les Meadows, has now been reconstructed. They had penetrated many ports in the Mediterranean; they had established towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and had begun mixing with those populations. They also settled and formed communities in Normandy as well as in Brittany.

Much of this power relied upon the Viking's great skill as mariners able to reach far-distant lands to trade. Some of their ships would be powered by galley slaves who would

row when the winds were not full enough to fill the sails. Slaves would also work back at home, and, as household and farm servants, help the women run the farms.

Irish society was also hierarchical, emphasizing the traditional places that people and their families had inhabited for centuries. The Irish, the English, the Welsh,--- all of these peoples both captured slaves and held slaves. Saint Patrick himself was brought as a slave to Ireland, where he learned the language and was eventually able to come back and teach the people Christianity.

The Native Americans lived in more mobile social groups. Though they occasionally built large wigwams, they did not have the "palace halls" or forts that European chieftains and kings built in Ireland or Scandinavia. From what we know of their social structure we would have to say that they are the least hierarchical of the three.

Class Activities and Research:

The broad question is: "How is the U.S. society organized today and in the recent past? What, if any, social obligations connect people together? In what ways is this different from other societies?"

In this unit students grapple with issues of freedom, hierarchy, social obligation and responsibility, and forms of slavery in the 10th century. The more specific question relating to the film is: "How did the Vikings, the Irish, and the Native Americans organize their respective societies? Why? Did one or another version work more harmoniously? Why?"

Before students look at issues from the 10th century, it is useful to look at oneself. The following questions are useful starting points: What is a perfect society? Why? What is the relationship between equality and hierarchy? What social obligations, if any, do those in positions of power and authority have in regards to those with less power? Under what principles should society be organized. In order to begin to investigate these issues, both History Alive! and Griswold and Rogers' Cooperative Learning Basics provide useful classroom strategies.

Primary Documents:

The following documents are a basis to look at these issues from the 10th century in their complexity.

For the Vikings, see the following:

- 1.) About slaves, or as the Vikings called them "thralls", from "The Book of Settlements" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga, 175-8 & from "Eirik the Red's Saga" in Jones, 208-10
- 2.) About the laws affecting thralls, from "The Older Law of the Gulathing" in Laurence Larson, The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 76-88; & from "The Older Law of the Frostathing", 280-1, 289-90, 334-5, 339, & 358

For the Irish, see the following:

- 1.) About the role of kings, from Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends of Ireland, 130-1
- 2.) About laws affecting social classes, from Ancient Laws of Ireland, Vol. IV, 299-303, 345-69, & Vol. V., 459-81, 485, & 491-3.

For the Native Americans, see the following:

- 1.) About the death of a new chief and the arrival of a new one, from Leavitt, Maliseet & Micmac, 327-8.
- 2.) About the roles of chiefs, from Leland, Algonquin Legends of New England, 311-9.

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VII. World Views, Spiritual Beliefs and Values

From the Film:

“Killian’s Chronicle: The Magic Stone” provides numerous examples of the beliefs and values held by people of the Viking, Irish, and Native American cultures. At the beginning of the film we learn that some of the Vikings believe that the navigating stone (which reflects the light of a sun hidden behind dense clouds) works through "magic"

rather than through the physical properties of the quartz itself. Killian and Ragnar both understand those properties, and their knowledge poses a threat to Ole and especially to Ivar, who jealously remarks that the monks must have taught Killian this magic. We can see that Ivar is ignorant of what Christianity would have taught Killian, but Killian on the other hand is able to use his knowledge of the Vikings' belief system to outsmart them.

As Killian and Brigid watch Ragnar's corpse burned within standing stones shaped like a ship, Killian conceives of a way to trick Gunnar into releasing him and his sister. He tells Gunnar that the Norse god Odin sent him a dream: that he must take the navigating stone and the book with the sundial and bring these things to Ragnar in the other world. Gunnar knows this means that Killian intends to throw himself and his sister on Ragnar's funeral fire, thereby passing with Ragnar into the other world, a world called Valhalla by the Vikings. Gunnar accepts that Killian and Brigid will do this because grave goods, and even slaves, were burned with Viking captains. (Gwyn Jones, 148-149, and 426 - 427)

We see another example of Killian's ability to manipulate the Vikings on the basis of his knowledge of their religious practices when Ivar has kidnapped Kitchi. The three are sailing along the coast, not far from land, and Ivar has his knife at Kitchi's throat. Killian sets up a ruse: He pretends that his Christian god wants a human sacrifice. Ivar is able to accept this because the Vikings believed that when they were in trouble at sea, --- when it was too stormy or too calm --- their sky god, Thor, wanted a human sacrifice before he would set things aright. (Ivar wanted to sacrifice Killian in this manner at the beginning of the film.) Ivar is thus ready to "sacrifice" Kitchi and prepares to kill him first. But Killian explains that not a drop of blood must be spilled, for the Christian god wants all of it. So Ivar cuts the ropes binding Kitchi's hands and feet, and, as they throw him overboard, Killian, knowing that Kitchi is an excellent swimmer, screams "Swim to the

break in the clouds, the land's beneath it." Then Killian faces Ivar and, as the truly free man he has become, he makes a decision to sacrifice his own life in order to kill Ivar, so that Ivar will not be able to come back to these shores and capture Native Americans to sell as slaves in Europe.

The Native Americans are shown as having another set of beliefs. We first come in contact with them in a very quick shot when the Vikings burst down upon the Native American men. One man, in defense, reaches for a rattle, and starts to shake it against the attacking Viking. He is immediately slaughtered by Ivar.

Talismans of various kinds have been used by almost all peoples. They are meant to enlist the aid of spiritual powers. The spiritual world of the Native Americans is shown in different ways. Kitchi's understanding of Killian, a stranger, is derived from his understanding of the world as a place inhabited by guardian spirits. These spirits are sometimes associated with animals, and in some tribes a boy, at puberty, is supposed to go out into the woods, fast, and seek his guardian animal spirit. Kitchi, when he meets Killian and sees him talking to the deer, believes that Killian is associated with the deer and is his guardian spirit.

Killian's religion is Christianity. At one point he prays to the Irish saint Brigette and asked her to guard over the soul of his dead sister. At another point he explains to Contacook the Christian belief that after death people go up to heaven, in the sky. This contrasts with Contacook's belief that after death people go to the land of the ancestors.

Throughout the film aspects of the world views of these three cultures are illustrated. Cultural interaction is a major focus of the film.

Historical Background:

Since Viking explorers, merchants, and sailors traveled beyond their borders extensively in the 9th and 10th centuries, meeting people of different cultures was not a new experience for them. Some of the cultures they encountered were more "advanced". The inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire with its major city, Constantinople, had large domed churches, hippodromes, and massive stone walls. Other peoples, for instance those they would have met with on their river voyages into the heartland of Russia, would not have had these accouterments of "civilization". But whenever the Vikings wanted to engage in commerce, they were sure to find ways to communicate with potential trading partners.

The Irish did not have a history of trading, though they did go out into the world as missionaries, bringing Christianity to the peoples of northern Europe, and establishing monasteries as far south as northern Italy. When establishing these monastic centers, the Irish had to adapt to the various cultures and languages they encountered.

A captive such as Killian who worked as a cook and servant on the ship would have been exposed to the people in the various ports the Vikings sailed into. The fictional Killian is portrayed as someone who appears to be curious about others. He is also very caring about others. He deeply mourns the death of his sister, and carries her body to bury it at sea, rather than leave it for Ivar to possibly desecrate. Also, at a risk to his own life, he rescues the body of Contacook, so that the Native People can take it back to their village for a proper burial. In this unit, students can investigate whether such a portrayal of Killian is consistent with the best of Christian values and spiritual beliefs.

The contacts that Native Americans had with other Native Americans were extensive. They traded with them for things like corn seed and flint. Although there were

significant differences between many of the peoples who lived on this continent one thousand years ago, they do not appear to have been as great as between the Native Americans and Europeans.

Class activities and research:

The broad question is: "How would peoples' beliefs be seen by people they encounter in planned and unplanned ways, and what role would peoples' beliefs have in furthering or limiting interaction with strangers?"

In this unit students will analyze the complexities of belief systems: how people develop and change their belief system, and conversely how people's values provide support in times of change.

The questions raised by the interactions depicted in the film are as important today as they were in the year 1000. Students can find examples of cultural conflict in almost every issue of any newspaper. The following general questions are appropriate for individual or group exploration.

- What factors influenced the development of our cultural and religious beliefs? How did we learn them? How do they change?
- What are our personal expectations when we meet strangers? How are these expectations expressed? Describe an encounter you have seen that provides an example of your theory of cultural interaction.
- What can we know about the values of the Viking, the Irish, and the Woodland Native Americans?
- In what ways did the values of these three groups affect their interactions with one another in the 10th century?

The following documents provide opportunities to investigate the values of Viking pioneers, Irish peasants, and Woodland Native Americans, including their spiritual

beliefs and their assumptions about the relationship between people and their environment. When students read them carefully and discuss them first in collaborative groups and then with the entire class, they will want to consider the following: What types of things do people from these cultural backgrounds appear to value? Why? Are there any similarities between the cultures? What are the key differences? How are they seen by others? Both the above method books provide wonderful ideas as to how to have one's students do this work to benefit the most from collaborative group work.

For Vikings' beliefs: see the following:

- 1.) from "The Book of the Icelanders" in Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga: 145
- 2.) from "The Book of the Settlements" in Jones: 182-4
- 3.) from "Eirik the Red's Saga" in Jones: 225-6
- 4.) from King Olaf Trygvesson's Saga (968-1000) in Snorre Sturlason, Heimskringla: The Olaf Sagas: 27 & 29
- 5.) from The Law of Personal Rights in "The Frostathing" in Laurence M. Larson, The Earliest Norwegian Laws: 257-8
- 6.) from The Inheritance Law in "The Frostathing" in Larson: 324
- 7.) from Adam of Bremen, History of the Archbishops of Hamburg- Bremen (trans. Francis J. Tschan): 207
- 8.) from Ibn Fadlan in Gwyn Jones, A History of the Vikings: 425-30

For Irish belief system: see the following:

- 1.) from St. Patrick's Breastplate in Eoin Neeson, The Book of Irish Saints: 13-4
- 2.) from old tales in Ancient Irish Tales ed. by Tom Peete Cross & Clark Harris Slover: 131-3
- 3.) from legends in Lady Wilde, Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms & Superstitions of Ireland: 215-7
- 4.) from ancient Irish Laws, The Senchus Mor: Vol. III, 13-15; Vol. IV, 361-5; Vol. V., 483
- 5.) poems in Ancient Irish Poetry translated by Kuno Meyer: 30-31, 54-55
- 6.) from Christian guidelines in The Irish Penitentials ed. by Ludwig Bieler, 55-7

For Woodland Native American belief system: see the following:

- 1.) on the importance of corn, see Robert M. Leavitt, Maliseet & Micmac: First Nations of the Maritimes, 113
- 2.) on the meaning of blossoms, see William S. Simmons, "The Mystic Voice: Pequot Folklore", 10-13
- 3.) on spirits, see Leavitt, 136
- 4.) on bears, see Ruth Holmes Whitehead, The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts from Micmac History, 1500-1950, 2 & 8
- 5.) on bears, see "The Boybear" in Anthropos, XXXV-VI, 1940-1, 973-4
- 6.) on Delaware myths, see Gladys Tantaquidgeon, A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs, 68-9

7.) on thunder, see Charles Leland, Algonquin Legends of New England, 266-7

8.) on creation, see Ella Elizabeth Clark, Indian Legends of Canada: 7-9

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Connections

The student-based research projects -- on geography, values, language and culture, work, social structure, and gender roles -- presumably had students thinking about some of the essential questions such encounters raise. Still it is useful to list some of these questions again as a way to wrap up the unit.

- 1.) What are the similarities between these three cultures?
- 2.) What are the differences between these three cultures?
- 3.) In what ways have these issues influenced the United States today? How have they affected the creation or development of the "American" identity?
- 4.) What issues make it easier for people from different backgrounds to get along with one another?

5.) What issues make it harder for people from different backgrounds to get along with one another?

6.) In what ways does this study assist in looking at other encounters?

7.) What are the factors that help explain legitimate misunderstandings? What strategies could be used to limit them?