

## 7. část

Přečtěte si článek o původu slova „Viking“. Na základě čtení vyberte vždy jednu správnou odpověď. Za každou správnou odpověď získáte 2 body.

## WHAT DOES THE WORD 'VIKING' REALLY MEAN?

We all know about the Vikings. Those hairy warriors from Scandinavia who raided and pillaged, and slashed and burned their way across Europe, leaving behind fear and destruction, but also their genes, and some good stories about Thor and Odin. The stereotypes about Vikings can partly be blamed on Hollywood, or the History Channel. But there is also a stereotype hidden in the word “Viking”. Respectable books and websites will confidently tell you that the Old Norse word “Viking” means “pirate” or “raider”, but is this the case? What does the word really mean, and how should we use it?

There are actually two, or even three, different words that such explanations could refer to. “Viking” in present-day English can be used as a noun (“a Viking”) or an adjective (“a Viking raid”). Ultimately, it derives from a word in Old Norse, but not directly. The English word “Viking” was revived in the 19th century (an early adopter was Sir Walter Scott) and borrowed from the Scandinavian languages of that time. In Old Norse, there are two words, both nouns: a *víkingr* is a person, while *víking* is an activity. Although the English word is ultimately linked to the Old Norse words, they should not be assumed to have the same meanings.

**VÍKINGR AND VÍKING**

The etymology of *víkingr* and *víking* is hotly debated by scholars, but needn't detain us because etymology only tells us what the word originally meant when coined, and not necessarily how it was used or what it means now. We don't know what *víkingr* and *víking* meant before the Viking Age (roughly 750–1100AD), but in that period there is evidence of its use by Scandinavians speaking Old Norse. A *víkingr* was someone who went on expeditions, usually abroad, usually by sea, and usually in a group with other *víkingar* (the plural). *Víkingr* did not imply any particular ethnicity and it was a fairly neutral term, which could be used of one's own group or another group. The activity of *víking* is not specified further, either. It could certainly include raiding, but was not restricted to that. A pejorative meaning of the word began to develop in the Viking Age, but is clearest in the medieval Icelandic sagas, written two or three centuries later—in the 1300s and 1400s. In them, *víkingar* were generally ill-intentioned, piratical predators, in the waters around Scandinavia, the Baltic and the British Isles, who needed to be suppressed by Scandinavian kings and other saga heroes.

**HOW TO USE IT**

The debate between those who would see the Vikings primarily as predatory warriors and those who draw attention to their more constructive activities in exploration, trade and settlement, then, largely boils down to how we understand and use the word Viking. Restricting it to those who raided and pillaged outside Scandinavia merely perpetuates the pejorative meaning and marks out the Scandinavians as uniquely violent in what was in fact a universally violent world. A more inclusive meaning acknowledges that raiding and pillaging were just one aspect of the Viking Age, with the mobile Vikings central to the expansive, complex and multicultural activities of the time.

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