



Is Cape Cod the Real Vinland?

This MysteryQuest examines the theory that Follins Pond, Cape Cod is the likely location of Vinland, the unidentified place where Vikings found lush lands and wild grapes. Students learn to examine historical theories for credible and comprehensive evidence to determine their validity.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History **Where Is Vinland?**

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/29/indexen.html>

*Author: Colleen Andjelic
Series Editor: Roland Case*

*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)
www.tc2.ca*

Ages

14–16

Courses

Canadian history, social studies

Key Topics

- early Viking settlement along the east coast of North America
- assessing the strength of an historical theory about the location of Vinland

Critical Challenges

- Locate evidence that supports or contradicts the “Cape Cod theory.”
- Judge the extent to which the “Cape Cod theory” is convincing.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn about early Viking settlement along the east coast of North America.
- Students will find evidence in textual sources to help assess the strength of a theory.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of Vinland, including information about topography, climate, vegetation, and the human presence there
- knowledge of the “Cape Cod theory”



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for determining what makes a convincing theory (e.g., consistent, comprehensive, supported, credible)
- criteria for reaching a sound conclusion (e.g., plausible, supported with accurate evidence)



Critical thinking vocabulary



Thinking strategies

- data chart
- rating scale



Habits of mind

- attention to detail

Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/29/indexen.html>.

Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each item of support material and a set of procedures are linked to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Set the context

- Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, introduce students to the mystery.
- Consider using an LCD or overhead projector to display the [map of possible locations](#) of the area and [pictures of Follins Pond](#) in Cape Cod, and briefly explain the other theories about the location of Vinland.

Discuss the challenge

- Using [The Task](#) as a guide, explain to students that their challenge, working collaboratively in small groups, is to determine how convincing the “Cape Cod theory” is in identifying the location of Vinland.

Learn about Vinland and the Cape Cod theory

- Using [Step 1: Learn about Vinland and the Cape Cod theory](#) as a guide, orient students to the evidence about Vinland and to the theory put forth by Frederick Pohl that Follins Pond, Cape Cod is indeed the real Vinland.
- Distribute one copy of [Gathering Information](#) to each student. Direct students to fill in the chart as they examine two of the overview documents identified here from the [Evidence in the Case](#) section. Demonstrate how to complete the chart by reading one of the excerpts aloud with students and noting information on the chart as a class.

Look for evidence

- Divide students into groups of five. Distribute one copy of [Gathering Information](#) to each student. Using [Step 2: Examine documents for evidence](#) as a guide, assign each group member to read one of the selections identified here and found also in the [Evidence in the Case](#) section. Ask students to complete the chart with information from their assigned document.

Introduce criteria for identifying convincing theories

- Using [Step 3: Consider what makes a convincing historical theory](#) as a guide, ask students to think of theories that did not pan out in the end—theories that are, or were, weak. For example, the theory that the earth was flat has been proven wrong, and the sun does not revolve around the earth despite the view held long ago that it did. Ask students what is necessary to disprove these theories. Tease out the criteria for a convincing theory (e.g., comprehensive and numerous pieces of evidence, credible sources, and consistency). To illuminate this point further, you may also wish to discuss convincing theories we accept today, looking for the evidence that causes us to believe them. Is this evidence consistent, comprehensive, abundant, and credible?

Prepare to assess the theory

- Using [Step 4: Assess the theory](#) as a guide, invite students to rate the strength of the theory that Cape Cod was likely to have been the real site of Vinland.
- Distribute a copy of [Assessing the Theory](#) to each student. Instruct students to assist other members of their group in rating the theory in light of each criterion by sharing information about their documents.

Justify the conclusion

- Distribute a copy of [Justifying My Conclusion](#) to each student and using [Step 5: Explain your conclusion](#) as a guide, ask students to support their judgments about the theory.
- Organize a class discussion where students align themselves according to their opinion on the strength of the theory (ranging from “very strong to “very weak”). Invite students to defend their conclusion in light of evidence from the documents.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [Assessing the Evidence and Ratings](#) to evaluate student completion of the charts.
- Use the rubric [Assessing the Justification](#) to evaluate student justification of their assessment of the theory.

Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the activities suggested in [Extension](#).