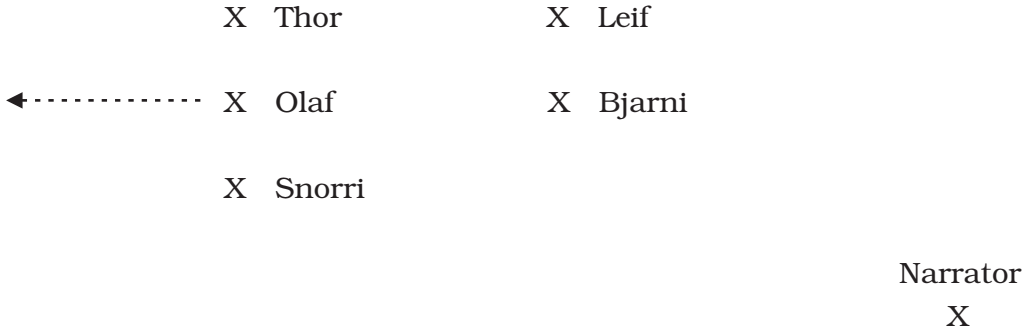




Leif Eriksson Discovers Vinland

Staging

The characters can all be seated on chairs or stools. They should all be facing the same direction (in the direction of the arrow) as they might be on a ship. The narrator can be standing off to the side or can be out of view of the audience.



NARRATOR: Leif Eriksson was the son of the great Viking explorer Eric the Red. Born in Iceland in about A.D. 980, he and his family moved to Greenland two years later. There he grew into a strong and handsome man filled with adventure and wanderlust. He had a strong urge to travel and when he was 19 he sailed for Norway, the homeland of his family.

There, he met the king and learned about Christianity. After one year he returned to Greenland.

It was in Greenland that he heard about the voyages of another adventurer who had seen a strange new land. Leif couldn't resist. He purchased a ship and got ready to sail for a new land.

In the first scene, we find Leif trying to convince a group of sailors that they should sail with him. This scene takes place on the docks in a small village in Greenland.

Scene 1

LEIF: I am looking for a few sailors who would join me to look for a new land—a new land in a distant place.

THOR: What is this land you talk of, Leif?

LEIF: It is a land of rich soil and tall trees. It is a land of abundance. It is a land of many plants and many animals.

OLAF: Why has no one gone this way before?

LEIF: Perhaps they are not the brave adventurers we are. Perhaps they are afraid of the unknown. Maybe they are content to live their simple lives as they always have.

SNORRI: You seem to know much about this new land.

LEIF: I only know what has been passed down to me by others and by my own reckoning.

BJARNI: But, what riches will we find, Leif?

LEIF: I hope to find tall trees to use as ships' masts. In our country of Greenland there are no tall trees so we need the timber from other lands.

THOR: Do you think we will find riches of another kind?

LEIF: I do not know. But we will be patient and see where the winds will take us.

Scene 2

NARRATOR: Leif and his men set out on their long and difficult voyage. The men are not happy with the work and the endless expanse of sea.

SNORRI: Day after day there is nothing but sky and ocean. I am growing weary of such sights.

OLAF: Perhaps young Snorri complains too much. I fear he has not been on many voyages across the ocean. Perhaps he should have stayed in the safety of the harbor, in the safety of the village.

SNORRI: I am as brave as you, Olaf. It's just that there is an endless expanse of ocean before us. This is an ocean that few have sailed, that few have seen. I'm just not sure what we will find.

THOR: I, too, am sick and tired of day after day of nothing but water. And the food! The food is barely edible. I do not know how much longer I can go on eating the same biscuits and dried meat.

BJARNI: Not only is the food tough, so is the work. We trim the sails, clean the rudder, and remove water from the bilge day after day after day. The routine never changes; it is always the same.

OLAF: I am not sure that our friend Leif knows exactly where he is going. He seems to be headed towards the west, but I'm still not sure he knows what's out there.

Scene 3

NARRATOR: After many days the men sight land and put ashore. But because the land is barren and full of rocks, they set sail again. After several more days they sight another land, this time with white sandy beaches. They land on this new place and explore it. After a few days they leave and are sailing southward.

LEIF: We have seen some new places. But we still haven't found the land we are looking for.

BJARNI: (*excitedly*) Look ahead, friends, there is a new land before us.

SNORRI: You are right, my friend. The land you see is covered with green and it stretches beyond our sight.

LEIF: Then, it is here we will land. Put out the small boats and let us explore this new and inviting place.

Scene 4

NARRATOR: Leif and his men disembark from their ship and begin to explore the new land. It is much different from the other lands they have seen on their voyage.

OLAF: Is this the rich land you spoke of, Leif?

LEIF: (*excitedly*) It is certainly a land of riches. Look, there are endless fields of self-sown wheat. The hills are covered with great expanses of tall trees. And, everywhere you look there are sweet wild grapes—grapes for eating and grapes for wine.

THOR: This is indeed a rich land. What shall we call it?

LEIF: Look at this land. The soil is dark and rich and shall be perfect for growing crops. The rivers and streams are overflowing with fish to fill both our storage sheds and our bellies. This is a land that has much to offer. I believe we should call it Vinland: the land of wine.

Scene 5

NARRATOR: Soon after their arrival on Vinland, Leif and his men set about to build shelters for the winter.

SNORRI: How long will we stay here Leif?

LEIF: We will stay here through the winter. Then, we must sail back to Greenland and tell our people of this rich and great land.

OLAF: Surely, they will not believe what we have found here. Surely no one would believe what we have found here. This land is unlike any other we have seen.

LEIF: You are right, Olaf. This is a land of promise and opportunity . . . a land where people can settle, raise families, and live off the richness that is all around. We shall journey back to Greenland in the spring and tell of this land. Perhaps others will come after us to partake of this richness. Families will settle here, homes will be built, and villages will be constructed. The fields will be plowed and planted. The rivers and streams will provide their rich bounty of fish for all to eat. Yes, my friends, this is indeed a land of great possibilities.

SNORRI: I hope you are right, Leif. I hope you are right.
