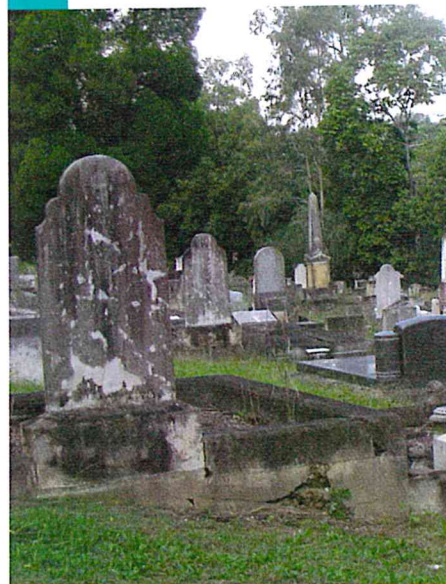


connectingideas

The Vikings

Legacies

For about 200 years, the Vikings were best known to the rest of the world as fierce plunderers. Yet, as you have seen, they were far more than that. Their contribution to modern society was considerable. They developed and advanced shipbuilding and sailing techniques, and their language and customs have affected the people of many societies around the world.



Reputation was very important to the Vikings. A translated Norse text says: 'Wealth dies, kinsmen die. Cattle die and the wheat too. But this thing never dies: word fame [reputation].' One way that a Viking preserved his 'word fame' after death was by having a runestone erected over his grave. The message carved on it in runes might declare the person's name, what they owned, or what they built or achieved.

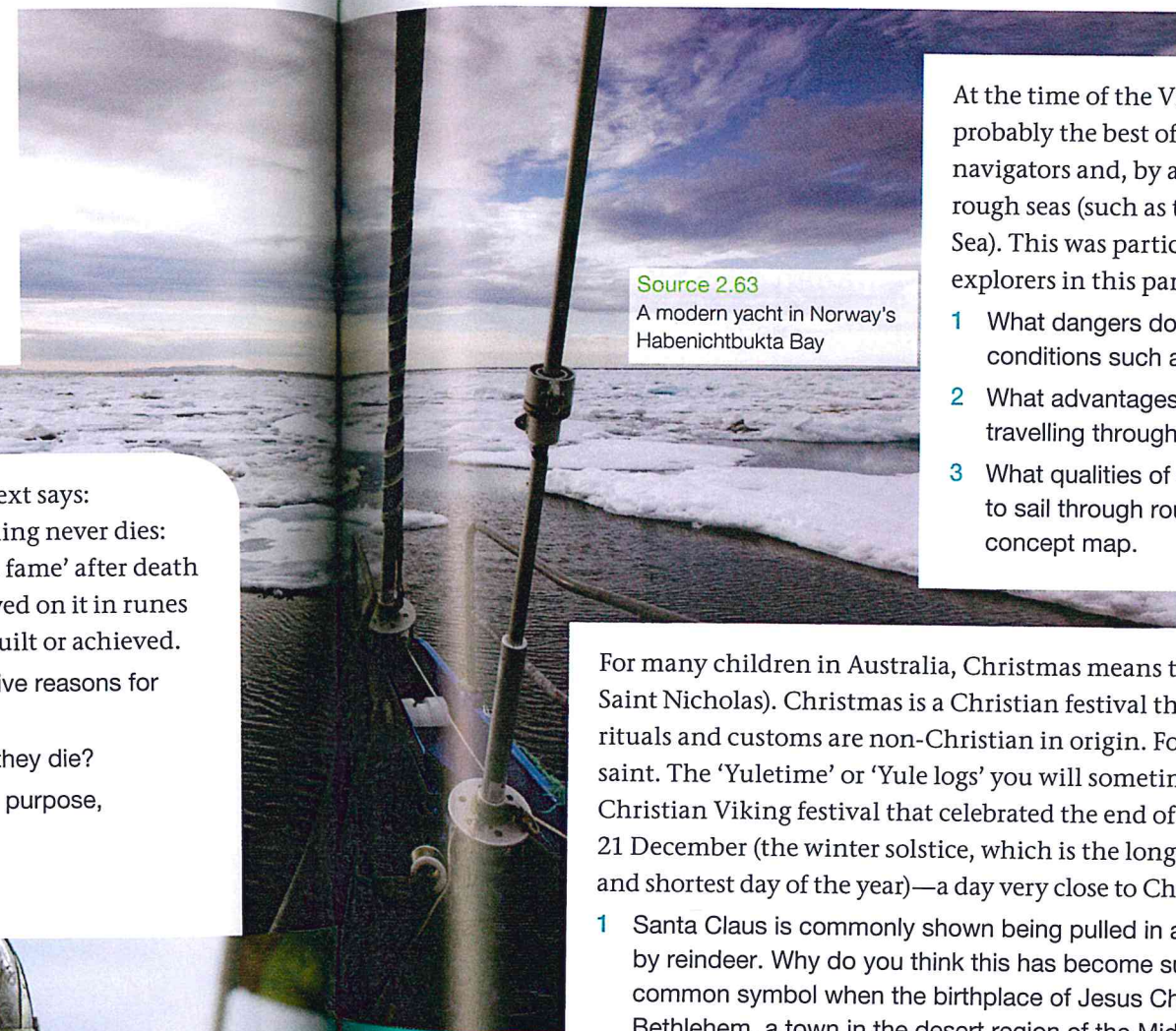
- 1 Do you think reputation is valued in today's Australian society? Give reasons for your response.
- 2 In what ways are people today remembered and respected after they die?
- 3 Compare and contrast the tombstones shown here, in shape and purpose, with the stones shown in Source 2.45.

Source 2.61 Modern tombstones

A very popular book (and movie series) today is JRR Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings*. Many of his characters—dwarves, elves, trolls, dragons and monsters—were inspired by his interest in Norse mythology. The final battle, with its hordes of non-human and human participants, is similar to battles in Norse sagas. The turf-covered homes of Middle Earth are like the turf-insulated Viking longhouses.

- 1 Why do you think fantasy writers today so often find Norse mythology a source of inspiration?
- 2 Create a character inspired by Viking mythology and history that you could feature in a fantasy story. Either describe your character in a few detailed paragraphs, or draw and label a sketch.

Source 2.62 A battle scene from the movie *The Lord of the Rings*



Source 2.63
A modern yacht in Norway's
Habenichtbukta Bay

At the time of the Viking Age, the Vikings were extremely good sailors, probably the best of their time. They were skilled shipbuilders and navigators and, by all accounts, not frightened to cross cold and often rough seas (such as the Arctic Ocean and the upper reaches of the North Sea). This was particularly so for the Vikings from Norway who were explorers in this part of the world and beyond.

- 1 What dangers do you think faced Vikings who might have been sailing in conditions such as those depicted in Source 2.63?
- 2 What advantages do you think the design of Viking boats provided when travelling through rough seas? Can you suggest any disadvantages?
- 3 What qualities of character do you think the Vikings would have needed to sail through rough and unknown seas? Display your response as a concept map.

For many children in Australia, Christmas means the arrival of Father Christmas (or Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas). Christmas is a Christian festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, but many of its rituals and customs are non-Christian in origin. For example, historically, St Nicholas was a Christian saint. The 'Yuletime' or 'Yule logs' you will sometimes see on Christmas cards are linked to a non-Christian Viking festival that celebrated the end of winter and the return of the sun. It was held on 21 December (the winter solstice, which is the longest night and shortest day of the year)—a day very close to Christmas Day.

- 1 Santa Claus is commonly shown being pulled in a sleigh by reindeer. Why do you think this has become such a common symbol when the birthplace of Jesus Christ was Bethlehem, a town in the desert region of the Middle East?
- 2 Why did Viking winter solstice rituals in the northern hemisphere come to be linked so much with the Christian festival of Christmas?
- 3 Can you think of another Christian festival that has become linked with non-Christian traditions over time

Source 2.64 An artist's impression of Santa Claus in his sleigh



Think about what would happen if, in about 500 years, Australia as a nation ceased to exist but parts of its culture remained. What legacies of Australia might be evident to people in the future? Using pictures and text found in books and on the Internet, create a record of three cultural artefacts (such as a household item, a written account of a footy game, a photograph of a car) that the mysterious and fascinating 'Australians' of today might leave for the people of the future.