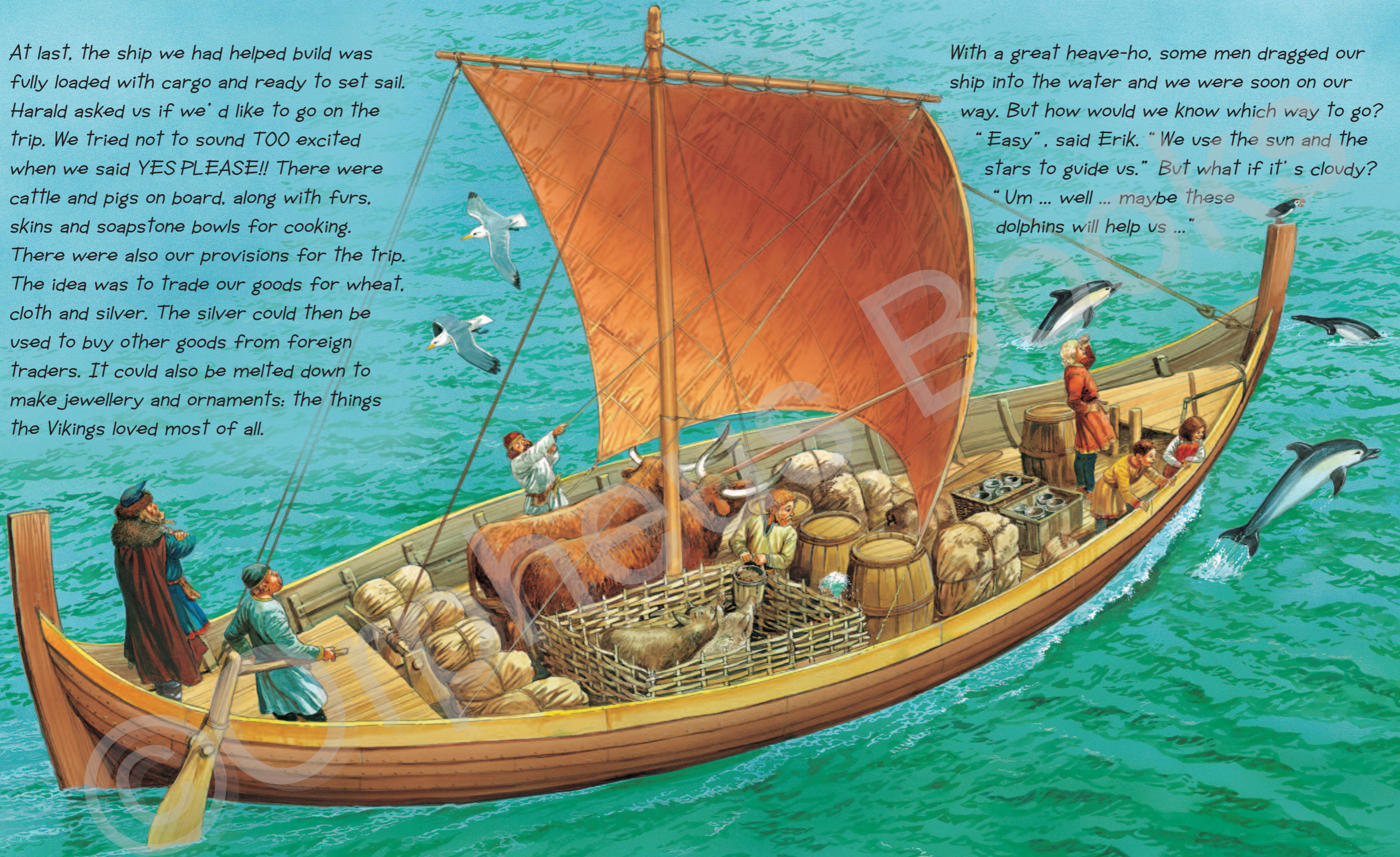


At last, the ship we had helped build was fully loaded with cargo and ready to set sail. Harald asked us if we'd like to go on the trip. We tried not to sound TOO excited when we said YES PLEASE!! There were cattle and pigs on board, along with furs, skins and soapstone bowls for cooking. There were also our provisions for the trip. The idea was to trade our goods for wheat, cloth and silver. The silver could then be used to buy other goods from foreign traders. It could also be melted down to make jewellery and ornaments: the things the Vikings loved most of all.

With a great heave-ho, some men dragged our ship into the water and we were soon on our way. But how would we know which way to go? "Easy", said Erik. "We use the sun and the stars to guide us." But what if it's cloudy? "Um ... well ... maybe these dolphins will help us ..."



VOYAGES OF EXPLORATION

The design of their ships enabled the Vikings to make long voyages across seas and oceans as well as sail up the shallowest of rivers. The Vikings travelled all over Europe and beyond in their quest for trade and for new lands to settle.

Around 860, Swedish Vikings began to venture across the Baltic Sea and along rivers, such as the Volga, into western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. These people were known as the Varangians. One group of Varangians, the Rus (from which the name "Russia" is derived), founded the towns of Novgorod and Kiev.

A Viking ship moored off the coast of Labrador.



These towns became major stations on the trading route between the Baltic Sea and the Caspian Sea. Varangian merchants also travelled down the River Dnieper and across the Black Sea to Istanbul, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. They even traded in Jerusalem, Baghdad and the wealthy Arab lands of the Middle East.



Viking explorers in Newfoundland were attacked by Native Americans, known to the Vikings as *skraelings*.

Meanwhile, some adventurers headed across the North Atlantic to settle in the Faroes and Iceland. In 985, Erik the Red discovered a large island to the west, which he named "Greenland". In the hope of encouraging others to follow him.

From Greenland, his son, Leif, set out to explore the coast of North America in about AD 1000. Leif Eriksson explored the coasts of Baffin Island and Labrador. He became the first European to set foot on North American soil. Leif even founded a settlement on Newfoundland, known to them as Vinland, but it was abandoned after a few years.



The Vikings found grapes, salmon streams and pastures in Newfoundland.

