**The History And Use Of Runes**

Historically, runes were used by the ancient Norse civilization for writing purposes. Each rune represents a sound and they were strung together to spell words. In modern times, runes have been used for magic and mysticism, and were even used in Nazi symbolism, most notably by Heinrich Himmler. They are also used by neopagans for their supposed magical powers.

Nobody is really certain where runes originated, but the earliest known inscriptions can be dated back to 150 A.D. Stories trace the origins of runes to the Norse god Odin, and the word “rune” comes from the Norse word for mystery or secret. Ancient legends suggest that one could divine their future through reading runes. They were used to represent gods, people, objects, animals, and concepts.

Modern pagans and followers of the new age movement find runes useful for a variety of applications. For example, they are used for healing and for protection from diseases and evil spirits. There is very little archaeological evidence to suggest that runes were used in such a way in the beginning. But, as early as the first century AD, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote of the Norsemen casting runes for reading omens and divination. Only rune masters had the secret ability to interpret runes. According to legend, the last of these rune masters died in the 17th century AD, taking with him the secrets behind reading runes

The new age movement reaches back to the times of Norse mythology for inspiration. As such, they consider runes to be magical. In 1982, author Ralph Blum published “The Book of Runes”. This book was connected more to the Chinese “I Ching” than to anything Norse. With no access to the rules followed by ancient rune masters, modern authors and rune masters are coming up with their own methods, loosely based on a variety of sources stemming from cultures as foreign to the Norse and West African voodoo and Taoism.

Runic talismans were actually tested extensively during World War II, most notably by Nazi Germany. The soldiers of the “SS” – Nazi Germany’s paramilitary elite – derived their double S insignia from the runic symbol for good conquering evil. The use of runes was an offshoot of the Nazi German tendency to resurrect Norse mythology, refer to their Teutonic blood origins, and claim their direct decent from the ancient Vikings. Of course, many members of the SS were killed during the war, and Nazi Germany was ultimately and completely defeated.   
  
This, however, did not signal an end to the use of runes. After an intermission of several decades, interest in runes has blossomed once again as many westerners who feel turned off by the world’s major religions turn to mysticism and paganism to express their own views of spirituality.

Unfortunately for them, it appears that runes really have no significant magical qualities. Their only real purpose is as a consumer product, much the same as the Ouija board and tarot cards. Runes were always meant to be a system of communication.