

Stories from Asgard: Norse Myths

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,169

Connections

Writing

Write an acrostic poem that explains common traits of Norse mythology. Use the words *Norse Myths* as the acrostic.

Art

Research Norse myths to find a story that was not included in this collection. Create a piece of art for the myth.

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Stories from Asgard: Norse Myths



Written by Keith and
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Illustrated by
Matthew Forsyth

**Multi
level
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Focus Question

What are some common elements
in Norse myths?

Words to Know

disguise	pursued
forge	talons
lair	taunted
mythology	trickster
Norse	Vikings
pranks	wager

Page 3: Iceland, Finland, and the Faeroe Islands are sometimes considered part of Scandinavia.

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Correlation

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Introduction

Norse people lived between 700 and 1100 CE in Scandinavia, an area of northern Europe. Fierce Norse warriors known as **Vikings** raided many other lands in Europe during this period. In Norse **mythology**, gods lived in a place called Asgard. They fought an ongoing war against giants. For over a thousand years, many tales of these battles have been told.





Odin's Search for Wisdom

Odin was the chief of the Norse gods. He prized wisdom above all things. One day Odin's ravens, Thought and Memory, told him of a well they had discovered. Whoever drank from this well would have all the knowledge of the universe. A giant who knew more of the secrets of the universe than any other living being guarded the well.



Odin traveled to the well and spoke to the giant. "I can see what happens in heaven or on earth, but I cannot see everything," he explained. "I will pay any price you name for a drink from your well."

The giant said, "I demand one of your eyes. Then I, too, will be able to see the mysteries of heaven and of earth."

Odin hesitated and then said, "Very well. I promise you one of my eyes in exchange for one drink of water from your well."

The giant slowly filled a cup to the brim with clear water from the well. As soon as it was full, Odin snatched the cup and drained it.

Before he rode away, Odin left one of his eyes at the bottom of the well. He became the wisest being in the entire universe—except for the giant himself.

From that day, Odin pulled his hat down over his one-eyed face so that no one could recognize him.



The Making of Thor's Hammer

The **trickster** god Loki was well known for his **pranks**. One day he went too far. He cut off all the golden hair of the goddess Sif, the wife of the thunder-god Thor. Loki promised the angry Thor that he would get new hair for Sif. He went to the world of the dwarves. He knew they were master artists who could create the new hair.

Aside from Sif's new hair, the dwarves made other gifts for the gods and goddesses of Asgard. These included a magical ship and the world's deadliest spear.

Seeing these gifts, Loki's greed overcame him. He took his treasures to another group of dwarves. Loki **taunted** them, saying, "I'm sure these are the greatest gifts ever made. I know you're skilled craftsmen, but I'll **wager** my head that you can't make anything equal to this."

The dwarves accepted the trickster's bet. They made a golden boar that could run faster than any horse. They also made a magical golden ring. As Loki saw these treasures take perfect shape, he became nervous.

Finally, the dwarves began to make a war-hammer. Loki thought of a way to win his wager. He turned himself into a fly. Then he stung a dwarf on the eyelid just as the hammer came out of the **forge**. Now the dwarf couldn't see what he was doing. Although he made the most powerful war-hammer ever created, its handle was slightly too short.



Loki took his treasures and returned to Asgard. Sif's hair was restored, and the hammer became Thor's weapon from that day forward.

Thinking they had won the bet, the dwarves followed Loki to Asgard. As they advanced on Loki to take his head, the trickster thought quickly. He pointed out that while the dwarves had won his head, they had no right to his neck. The dwarves instead sewed Loki's mouth shut as a punishment for his trickery. They left, satisfied.

Idun's Apples

One day while on a journey, Odin and the trickster Loki became hungry. Spotting a herd of oxen, they decided to butcher one for their dinner.

But when they built a fire, the ox wouldn't cook. Then an eagle spoke to them. "I have cursed your meat so that it won't cook. However, if you give me a share, I'll lift the spell."

The gods agreed. However, as soon as the meat was cooked, the eagle swooped down and took all the best bits. "That wasn't our bargain!" Loki cried. He seized a huge tree branch and swiped at the eagle in his anger. The eagle caught the branch in his beak and flew off with Loki still dangling from the other end.

Loki found that he had been placed under a spell, and he couldn't let go of the branch.



"Who are you?" he asked the eagle, terrified.

"My name is Thiassi," replied the eagle, "and I'm a giant in **disguise**."

"Release me," Loki begged.

"I won't release you," responded Thiassi, "unless you promise to bring me the goddess Idun and her magic apples."



Loki was silent, for he knew that this would be nearly impossible. Idun's apples were one of the gods' greatest treasures. The Norse gods and goddesses each ate one of Idun's apples every day to remain young and beautiful.

"Promise!" Thiassi insisted, for he wished to have the magic for himself. Seeing no other choice, Loki promised.



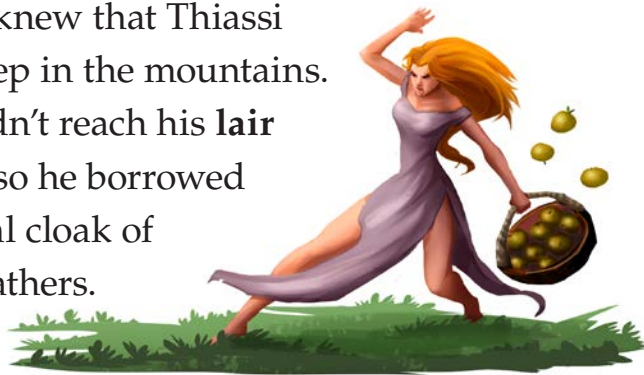
When he returned to Asgard, Loki told Idun how he had discovered apples even more marvelous than

hers. Loki promised to show her where these other apples grew. He said she must bring her own apples so she could compare the two.

Idun followed Loki out of Asgard. Immediately, the eagle swooped down, seized her, and carried her off to his mountain kingdom.

The gods noticed Idun's absence and began searching for her. Loki admitted to orchestrating Idun's kidnapping. The gods commanded Loki to bring Idun back to Asgard, threatening to kill him if he failed.

Loki knew that Thiassi lived deep in the mountains. He couldn't reach his **lair** on foot, so he borrowed a magical cloak of hawk feathers.

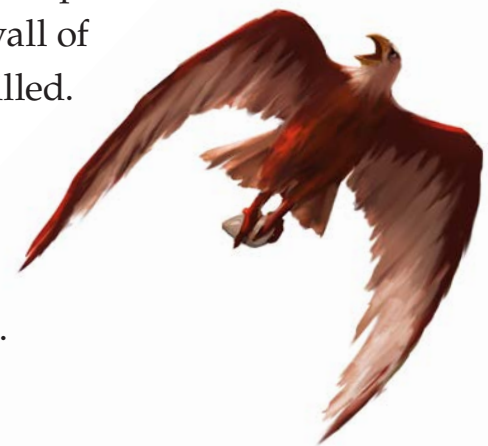


Turning into a hawk, he flew to the mountains and found Idun alone in the house of the giant.

Thinking quickly, he turned her into a nut and flew away, clutching her in his **talons**.

When the giant returned home, he was enraged to discover Idun gone. He transformed back into an eagle and **pursued** Loki in his flight. As Loki drew near Asgard, the other gods saw him flying desperately, with the eagle close behind. They stacked up logs around the outer walls. As Loki flew, exhausted, into the palace, the gods lit a fire. The eagle couldn't stop himself. He flew directly into the wall of flames and was killed.

So the gods of Asgard regained their youth and defeated the giant.





Conclusion

Many stories about the Norse gods, like those told here, are tales of conflict between the gods and the giants. The giants represented darkness and winter. The gods battled them constantly to restore light, warmth, and growth.

Eventually, the gods faced the giants in a great battle. Some of the gods survived and returned to remake the human race. These Norse stories treat life as a cycle: death and destruction are opportunities to begin anew.

Glossary

- disguise** (*n.*) clothes or other things a person or character wears to keep from being recognized (p. 12)
- forge** (*n.*) a very hot fire where metal is melted to be shaped by a blacksmith (p. 9)
- lair** (*n.*) a secret place where a person or creature can hide or be safe (p. 13)
- mythology** (*n.*) the myths, or ancient stories about heroes or supernatural beings, of a culture or group (p. 4)
- Norse** (*adj.*) of or relating to ancient Scandinavia or Norway (p. 4)
- pranks** (*n.*) tricks or practical jokes (p. 8)
- pursued** (*v.*) followed in order to catch or attack (p. 14)
- talons** (*n.*) claws on the feet of birds such as owls, hawks, and eagles (p. 14)
- taunted** (*v.*) challenged or provoked someone with insulting words (p. 9)
- trickster** (*n.*) a clever, deceptive, or mischievous character who takes various forms in the mythology or folklore of many cultures (p. 8)
- Vikings** (*n.*) Scandinavian explorers, traders, and pirates who raided and settled much of northwestern Europe in the eighth to eleventh centuries (p. 4)
- wager** (*v.*) to bet on an uncertain outcome or unpredictable event (p. 9)