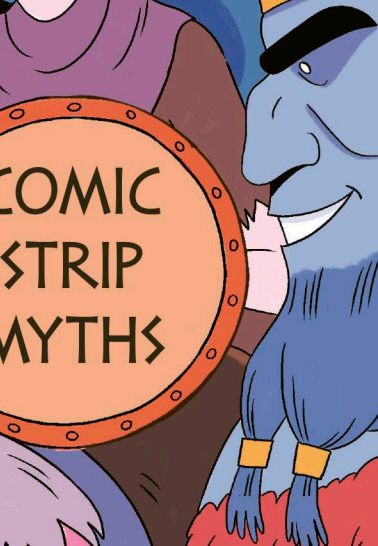


Welcome to  
the halls of Hel.  
Wanna join  
our band?



# NORSE MYTHS, MONSTERS AND VIKING VOYAGES

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# WHO WERE THE NORSE?

Around a thousand years ago, northern Europe was inhabited by fierce, proud tribes called Norsemen, or Norse people. The region is now called Scandinavia and includes Norway, Sweden and Denmark. At home, the Norse lived peacefully as farmers. But many of them believed that their destiny was to cross the sea, exploring new lands and conquering new territories.

Norse people saw their lives as strands of wool being spun into threads by three witches called the Norns. If the Norns decided to snap your thread, that meant your time on earth was up!



The Norse were excellent craftspeople who worked with metal, wood and leather. They made fearsome weapons, superfast ships and beautiful clothes. Most Norse houses contained a huge loom for weaving wool into cloth. Once the cloth was woven and dyed, it was made into brightly coloured trousers, tunics and dresses.



Norse people told wonderful stories about gods, humans and mythical creatures. Some were funny, like how the god Loki tried to beat a giant in an eating contest. Some were exciting, like when prince Sigurd slayed the dragon Fafnir. Some were scary, like the story of Ragnarok, the end of the world. Norse myths were passed down from generation to generation, and they are still among the greatest stories in the world.



Fierce warriors and mighty sailors, the Norse carried out violent and ruthless raids in Britain and other countries. They became known as 'Vikings', meaning pirates or raiders.

The Vikings were the most skilful ship builders in the world. Their longboats were extremely light, and could travel as fast as a modern racing yacht.

The Vikings did not believe that it was wrong to kill and steal. They thought only about their own fearsome reputations, and about the marvelous gifts that they would give to their families back home.

Coming whether ready or not!

Despite what you may have heard, Viking helmets never had horns on them!



Not all Viking warriors were men. Women sometimes joined these raiding expeditions, too.

Vikings did not spend all of their time sailing and fighting. There was a season for raiding and a season for returning to the family farm.

Want some honey, Hovey?

Even on their travels across Europe, the Vikings were not always in a bloodthirsty mood. Sometimes they would arrive in a new land peacefully, to make friends and to engage in trade. They brought with them animal products such as honey, wool and fish, and they sold these to buy luxury goods such as silver, silk and spices.

Y-y-g-ges, please.

# THE CREATION STORY

A creation myth is a story about how the world began. Ancient civilisations had all sorts of weird and wonderful ideas about how the world formed, and this is the Norse creation story. Warning: there are lots of giants!

Once there was a gap – a magical void of nothingness called Ginnungagap.



Over thousands of years, the Niflheim ice spread into the Ginnungagap. As the warm air from Muspelheim swirled in, the frost began to thaw.



To the south of Ginnungagap lay Muspelheim, a land of fire, lava and smoke. Surt the Giant lived there, stroking his flaming beard and swinging his blazing sword.



The frost thawed and froze, cracked and growled, shifted and grew.



To the north lay freezing Niflheim, a land of ice, frost and fog.



Until, at last, something came out of the ice...



Ymir the Frost Giant was rather... sweaty.



While Ymir slept, small droplets of sweat oozed from his armpits and the droplets formed themselves into two smaller giants.



Meanwhile, the sweat on Ymir's legs formed a six-headed giant called Thrudgelmir.



Audumla the Cow also emerged out of the ice. As there was no grass to eat, Audumla survived by licking the ice. She licked and licked, until something strange – and hairy – appeared...



On the third day of licking, the god Buri popped out of the ice.



In time, Buri married a frost giant and had a son called Bor. When Bor was grown, he married a frost giant himself and had three children called Vili, Odin and Ve.



Growing up, Odin, Vili and Ve loved their giant mother, but they hated all of the other frost giants, especially Ymir. The brothers plotted amongst themselves.



One night, the brothers attacked and killed the great giant Ymir. A torrent of blood flowed from Ymir's wounds and drowned all of the other frost giants – except for Ymir's grandsons, Bergimir, and his wife, Nal, who surfed to safety on a tree trunk.



Odin, Vili and Ve decided to use Ymir's giant body to create the world. They made the land from Ymir's flesh and the sea from Ymir's blood. They fashioned mountains from bones, clouds from brains, rocks from his teeth and trees from his hair.



The universe was starting to take shape. As sparks flew up into Ginnungagap from the fires of Muspelheim, Odin grabbed them and arranged them high in the sky.



To show their humility, the brothers marked off a region of land where the surviving giants could live together in the new world.



Next, the brothers created a realm called Midgard and filled it with beautiful meadows and clear waters.



To keep the giants at bay, the brothers made a wall from Ymir's eyelashes and used it to surround Midgard.



There was no one to enjoy the beautiful land of Midgard, so Odin breathed life into two logs. Next, Vili gave the logs thoughts and feelings.



Lastly, Ve carved the logs into the shape of people, creating the first man and woman of Midgard: Ask and Embla.



Finally, the gods built themselves a golden fortress called Asgard. They connected it to the rest of the world by the Bifrost, a glorious rainbow bridge. From Asgard, the gods watched over the adventures of humans and giants.





# MEET THE GODS

Norse people worshipped dozens of gods and goddesses – some say sixty-six! These divine beings each had their own role and personality. They were super-powerful, but very far from perfect.



ODIN

Odin 'Allfather' created humans and also many of the gods. The ravens on his shoulders are called Huginn (Thought) and Muninn (Memory). Arrogant and often cruel, Odin is a god to be feared above all others.



THOR

Strong, loveable and a teeny bit dim, Thor rides in a chariot pulled by two goats, Snarler and Grinder. He uses his incredible strength and mighty hammer to protect Asgard from giants and monsters.



FRIGG

The most important of all the goddesses, Frigg is the wife of Odin and the mother of Balder and Hod. She can see into other realms and even tell the future.



LOKI

Mischievous trickster Loki is always getting himself and others into trouble. He uses powerful shapeshifting magic to turn himself into a fly, a fish or even a giant.



SIF

Thor's wife Sif is famous for her long, silky blonde hair. Of all the gods and goddesses in Asgard, she is a by far the vainest. Her son Ull is a fantastic archer and a superfast skier.



TYR

Tyr is the brave but reckless god of war. His hand was bitten off by a monstrous wolf called Fenrir.



FREYR

Freyr is the god of fertility and growth. He is the one to thank for plentiful harvests and healthy children.



FREYA

Beautiful Freya is the goddess of battle. She rides in a chariot pulled by cats and owns a falcon skin that enables her to fly.



HONIR

Honir loves accompanying Odin and Loki on their adventures. He is very indecisive, though, and he will usually answer with a vague grunt!



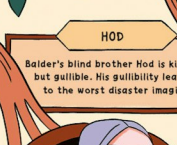
HEIMDALL

Heimdall, watchman of the gods, guards the Bifrost bridge day and night. His eyes and ears are so sharp, he can spot grasshoppers on the distant horizon and hear the wool growing on a sheep!



BALDER

With his handsome face, wise speech and generous character, Balder is the best of all the gods. In fact, his goodness makes him literally glow.



HOD

Balder's blind brother Hod is kind but gullible. His gullibility leads to the worst disaster imaginable.



IDUN

Idun is a cheerful, carefree goddess whose apples contain the secret to eternal youth. Whenever a god begins to grow old, one bite will make them young again.





One crisp, cold morning, Odin, Hœnir and Loki crossed the Bifrost bridge from their home in Asgard and went hiking in the world of humans.

After a long day Odin built a fire and the gods grilled three ox steaks over the flames. The steaks sizzled and sizzled and sizzled, but somehow did not cook.



The steaks had been on the fire for hours, but they were still raw.



Perched in the oak tree above their heads was an enormous eagle. An enormous talking eagle.



The magical eagle swooped down from the branches. It snatched up two steaks in its claws and another in its beak.



Loki was the quickest to react.



The eagle squawked another spell, causing the branch to stick to its talons... and to Loki's hands.



Loki begged the bird for mercy, offering to do it a favour in return for his release.



## IN AN ORCHARD FAR, FAR AWAY...

The goddess Idun was sitting in her sun-dappled orchard, living her best life. Her apples were sacred in Asgard because they restored youth to whoever ate them. Needless to say, she was very popular with everyone.



Loki crept into the orchard and siled up to Idun.



The cunning sorcerer told Idun that he had found another golden apple tree. It was in Midgard, just beyond the Bifrost bridge, and its apples looked exactly like Idun's apples.



Idun was worried about what this would mean for her brand. She picked all of the golden apples on her tree, then followed Loki out of the orchard and across the flaming Bifrost bridge.

