

The Vikings Gods and Myths

For a very long time, the Vikings believed in many gods and goddesses. These gods were called the Norse gods, or gods of the north. The gods of the Vikings looked like ordinary people. They had the same faults that people have like jealousy and temper. The Norse gods were not immortal, but they lived very long lives and had magical powers. The Norse gods made their home high in the sky, in a place called Asgard. The gods' palaces were made of gold and silver. The prettiest and biggest of them all was Odin's home, [Valhalla](#). (Odin was king of the gods.)

There was another place - Midgard or Middle Earth. Middle Earth was inhabited by giants, elves, dwarfs, goblins, monsters, and humans. The Vikings believed the storm-giants, frost-giants, ice-giants, rock-giants, elves, dwarfs, goblins, and most of the monsters who lived in Middle Earth were invisible to humans, and that's why humans never saw them. But these creatures were not invisible to the Norse gods.

The gods were forever running into dangerous creatures, giants especially, sometimes on purpose! The Vikings never worried that their gods might be hurt in their encounters with giants. The giants were big, but the gods were clever. Besides, the Norse gods could always get away if things got too rough. A rainbow bridge, named Bifrost, connected Asgard to Middle Earth. **The god Heimdall** guarded the bridge so that no giant could enter Asgard (or anyone else uninvited.) Like all the Norse gods, Heimdall had magical powers. He could see for 100 miles night or day. He also had a great sense of hearing. He could hear grass grow! Hardly anyone ever got by him.

Odin (also known as Woden) was the god of poetry, wine, knowledge, and war, as well as ruler of the gods. Odin was sometimes called the Raven God because he had two ravens who sat on him, one on each shoulder, named Hugin (Thought) and Munin (Mind). Every day, Hugin and Munin flew around the Viking world, spying on humans, creatures, and gods. They returned to Odin each evening, and reported everything they saw like the tattletales they were. Odin was grateful to his two ravens for the news they reported. Odin kept his ravens, but he also made a deal with a wise, old giant. Odin traded one of his eyes in exchange for all the wisdom in the world. That's why Odin has two eyes early in his life as ruler, but only one eye later on that he covered with an eye patch, and also explains how he became the god of knowledge.

Thor was Odin's son. Thor was the god of strength, thunder, storms, and big muscles. He had a magical belt, a magic hammer, iron gloves, and a chariot pulled by two goats named Toothnasher and Toothgrinder.

Loki was Odin's adopted son. Loki was a trickster, a mischief maker, and a shape shifter. In different Norse myths, Loki turned himself into a fly, a horse, a fish, an old woman, and a seal to trick someone. Loki loved pranks. Some of his pranks caused death, like the time he tricked Odin's wife into telling him how to kill the god Baldur.

As the myth goes:

Baldur had been having nightmares. He was convinced someone was trying to kill him. He asked Frigga, Odin's wife, for help. Frigga cast a spell that magically blocked things that might hurt him from reaching Baldur. When the other gods heard about it, they amused themselves by using Baldur as a target, throwing darts, arrows, sticks, rocks and even axes at

Baldur. Everything bounced off him harmlessly. Although it was a bit startling to find an axe hurled at his face, he was Baldur the Good, and good gods did not complain.

It was not long before Loki became sick and tired of hearing what a good sport Baldur was. Loki shiftshaped himself into an old woman and went looking for Frigga. When he found her, Loki (the old woman) complimented Frigga on her spell. "Can nothing get through?" Loki (the old woman) asked her in amazement.

Delighted with the compliment, she whispered: "Mistletoe. I left out mistletoe. After all, what harm could mistletoe cause, and besides, it would not be sporting to block everything!"

That was all Loki needed to hear. He cut a twig of mistletoe at an angle to give it a sharp point. Then he helped an old god, going blind, to join in the fun. When it was the old god's turn to toss something at Baldur, Loki guided his hand, and helped him toss the twig with such force that it pierced Baldur's heart. Baldur the Good fell down dead. Loki acted as shocked as the other gods, but inside he was laughing.

That was Loki. You could not trust him, not at all.

Sif was the goddess of the harvest, and Thor's wife. She was very proud of her long, blonde hair. One day, as a prank, Loki cut her beautiful hair. Sif was so sad. She cried tears so heavy with salt that her tears fell on Middle Earth, and the crops could not grow. To fix this, and to avoid an angry beating by Thor, Loki asked the dwarfs to spin her some new hair, which fortunately for Loki, they did.

Freya and Frey were sister and brother. Freya was the goddess of fertility, growth, love, and war. She cried golden tears when she was unhappy, which was quite often. It made her unhappy to see Viking warriors fallen in war. Odin allowed Freya to help only half of the fallen Viking warriors recover from their wounds. The other half were delivered to Odin by the Valkyries, the she-warrior gods, where they entered Odin's Hall, also known as [Valharra](#). Freya's chariot was pulled by two cats (the wild kind that live in Scandinavia.) Freya's brother, Fray, was in charge of the dwarfs and elves. Frey had a ship that folded into his pocket, and a magic sword that could fight on its own. His chariot was pulled by a golden pig.

Idunn was the goddess of youth and beauty. She grew the golden apples that all Norse gods had to eat regularly to stay young, healthy, and strong. Without Idunn's golden apples to eat, the gods would quickly age and become old. Ultimately, they became old anyway, but the apples gave them a very long life.

The Three Norns - The three Goddesses of Fate were named "What has been", "What is", and "What must be". The Vikings believed that each Viking was connected to their fate by an invisible thread. When it was time for a life to end, the Norns would take their scissors and cut the thread. (Does this sound familiar? The ancient Greeks had three goddesses called the Fates, who had the same job as the Norns. But the ancient Greeks lived more than a thousand years *before* the Vikings. Like the ancient Romans, the Vikings plundered more than goods. They plundered ideas, inventions, and even gods!)