



Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs

John Lindow

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Norse Mythology explores the magical myths and legends of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Viking-Age Greenland and outlines the way the prehistoric tales and beliefs from these regions that have remained embedded in the imagination of the world.

The book begins with an Introduction that helps put Scandinavian mythology in place in history, followed by a chapter that explains the meaning of mythic time, and a third section that presents in-depth explanations of each mythological term. These fascinating entries identify particular deities and giants, as well as the places where they dwell and the varied and wily means by which they forge their existence and battle one another. We meet Thor, one of the most powerful gods, who specializes in killing giants using a hammer made for him by dwarfs, not to mention myriad trolls, ogres, humans and strange animals. We learn of the ongoing struggle between the gods, who create the cosmos, and the jotnar, or giants, who aim to destroy it. In the enchanted world where this mythology takes place, we encounter turbulent rivers, majestic mountains, dense forests, storms, fierce winters, eagles, ravens, salmon and snakes in a landscape closely resembling Scandinavia. Beings travel on ships and on horseback; they eat slaughtered meat and drink mead.

Spanning from the inception of the universe and the birth of human beings to the universe's destruction and the mythic future, these sparkling tales of creation and destruction, death and rebirth, gods and heroes will entertain readers and offer insight into the relationship between Scandinavian myth, history, and culture.

Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs Details

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Author : John Lindow

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From Reader Review Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs for online ebook

Tom says

A solid work of scholarship. The introduction provides essential background material for the culture of the mythology, and an interesting, if brief, discussion of the nature of time in Norse mythology. Since the body of the book is arranged alphabetically by topic or character, it helps to have some grounding in Norse mythology to start with. So if what you're looking for is a narrative of the tales of the Norse gods, this is not the right book.

?Tamara says

???

Bettie? says

pub 2001
non-fic
link from Neil
summer 2013
ref book

Scandinavian mythology was, with virtually no exception, written down by Christians, and there is no reason to believe that Christianity in Iceland was any different from Christianity anywhere else in western Europe during the High Middle Ages.

As is also uttered about Enkidu: 'Poor Snorri!'

excellent as reference, thanks Neil. You can find it too: <ftp://s208.math.msu.su/286000/674cf5e...>

Kathleen says

This book is well written, but not organized as I would like it to be. It's an encyclopedia of concepts and deities, rather than a narrative account of Norse Mythology (which is what I wanted).

However, it was definitely useful for me as I was reading the Edda. Whenever a word or name came up that I was unfamiliar with, I could just look it up in the handbook. I think that's primarily what this book is for: a supplementary text for reading the prose or poetic eddas. It's not meant to be read on its own.

Everett Ambrose Warren says

Great reference, but more of that than a straight read. I didn't realize it was going to be a series of entries on people, places, and things when I started it... took me a bunch of entries to realize the narrative of the earlier section had given way - I blame intermittent reading patterns on an eReader for my shortcoming there.

Anyway, this should prove a valuable reference and accompaniment to other works on Norse mythology.

Richard says

It's hard to write a review of what is, essentially, a reference guide, except to say that it is a quality reference, and this is that. The explanation of time periods in the beginning is very helpful to the novice mythologist, and Lindow does a fine job of laying out where ambiguities lie and where the stories may have changed over time.

My highest recommendation would be this: having read it from the library, I will get my own copy to have at hand.

Mimesis says

The book contains detailed explanations of mythological terms (beings, places, concepts, ...). It can be read on itself or used when you need to check something while reading other works on Norse myths.

Janet Slipak says

I've been using a lot of Norse Mythology books over the years for many reasons. The first being my research into my genealogy. Since discovering I'm a descendent of Eric The Red, a historical Viking, I've been engaged in finding everything I possibly can both about those fated Norsemen of old and how history connects to my heritage. Secondly, I've used various mythologies, as substance for my own writing for the last twenty years and finding excellent resource materials is always a personal goal.

That is why I'm so excited about this particular book! It's full of incredible information and perfect for any writer on the subject. I can't gush enough about it! Sure, I've found many books over the years that didn't quite add up to what I'd call a good resource and read more like fiction than non-fiction with little evidence to back up the content. THIS book does and does it really well.

I highly, highly recommend John Lindow's work. Check it out!

Carl says

It isn't as comprehensive as Simeck's (sp?) dictionary, but it is an excellent, concise yet adequately thorough handbook of the major elements of Norse Mythology by perhaps the leader in the field today (okay, I'm a bit biased, being at Berkeley. How's that for alliteration, by the by?) I typically require or strongly recommend this book for my own students. It's been said (by whom, I'm not sure, though I suspect there are many) that Old Norse mythology (or literature) is a mythology of names, and that is certainly the case. My students invariably start the semester frustrated and confused at all the names which are thrown at them by the texts without the handy explanations 21st century Americans find necessary in every area of life. After all, we are reading a text from 800 years ago which was written about a mythological system which was dominant 200 years before that-- there is bound to be some confusion when the texts continue to take for granted a basic competence in the mythological population. John Lindow's book does an excellent job filling in the gaps with an appropriate amount of cross referencing. The first 2 chapters also serve as accessible and thorough introductions to the cultural and historical context, as well as some of the attempts to clarify the timeline and the perception of time in Old Norse mythology.

Todd says

This book was hard for me to rate, because when I started reading it, I was expecting a narrative text divided into chapters that neatly explained rituals, beliefs, etc. Instead, I found that this book is an encyclopedic Reference text, which is fine if you know what you are looking for, but makes things a great deal more difficult for the person who is looking for a basic overview/introduction. With that said, I would rate it a great deal higher as a Reference selection than I would as a general read.

Liz says

A fairly decent primer on Norse mythology, though I noticed some inconsistencies and flat out wrong information. For example, Sif is listed as being the mother of Magni and Modi, whereas under Magni his mother is listed (correctly) as Jarnsaxa the giantess, and under Modi there is no mother listed (as the Eddas and sagas do not give us a name). There may well be other misstatements that I missed.

Deborah Ideiosepius says

I was very happy with this book; the table of contents and the cross referencing between subjects were excellent, the introduction was good. The information had depth and a lot more information than several other similar guides I have leafed through recently (and did not even bother to review, as they were so basic).

Illustrations were not over done and were from historic finds, usually with enough information that one can go off and look up the finds in question.

Actually, I was meaning to return it to the library today, but leafing through it for this review I have just

decided to renew it instead, so much more in there.

Mari Stroud says

I approached this book expecting a narrative and was in that regard disappointed, but Lindow has created a thorough and valuable desk reference full of context, insight, and occasionally sly bits of humor.

Caw Miller says

Although this book is more of an encyclopedia than anything else, it gives unusual details on people and places in Norse mythology, all drawn from selected original texts. My favorite entry was the lengthy one on how the Proto-Germans incorrectly compared the Roman days of the week based on the planets to the Proto-German gods, creating the days of the week used in the English speaking world, even though those names for the days of the week are not used in Germany or Scandinavia, where they existed first.

Christina Nelson says

Norse Mythology: A Guide... is the best reference on Norse gods, their relation to one another, and specific facets of Norse Mythology as a whole that I have found yet. If you are looking for a book containing the legends themselves or a historical account of this time or of Norse Mythology, this will not meet your needs. However, this book would make a FANTASTIC companion piece to any other work that does include the Norse myths. Use it as a dictionary to look up the names you come across. It is INCREDIBLY thorough. I will say, it was a tough read on its own (similar to how it would be if you just decided to read the dictionary), but you CAN get through it due to the comprehensive knowledge of the author and his writing style, which is far from the dry academic tone you would expect from a reference material such as this. Would recommend!

Jan Dillard says

I didn't use this as a reference. I wanted it for a history of how Norse mythology has played into Scandinavian history .

Marko Vasi? says

One word - epic. Illustrations and annotations are great and comprehensive.

Jas says

Pretty good intro to the Norse gods, few stories and more interesting backstory than other Norse books.

Sarah says

A great book for anyone interested in Norse mythology. It will be a great reference book for my old norse and viking modules next year. The only thing I didn't like, was that it was organised alphabetically rather than through themes such as gods, monsters, terms or poems which would have made it easier to navigate rather than reading through and having to jump from one thing to another.

Chad says

A useful reference for looking up terms from Scandinavian Myths. Each entry also includes where in the lore the deity/place/term is mentioned so that you can look up the stories yourself.

The intro on the Norse religion and it's history was concise but illuminating. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on Mythic Time. It wasn't a perspective I'd come across before and it gave me a lot to think about. There was also an excellent list of resources for researching more and which books the author recommended. I just wish it wasn't 15 years old.

The only bit that I didn't like was a couple sentences on modern heathens, dismissing them as college kids who just want to party or looking for some kind of tax loophole. This was in a paragraph that also talked about how the Nazis used Germanic paganism and I found the implied connection annoying. I suppose one shouldn't expect a historian to be interested enough in what's currently happening to be bothered with researching it properly, but then again one probably shouldn't include hearsay in a non-fiction reference book.
