Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman

In Norse Mythology, Gaiman fashions primeval stories into a novelistic arc that begins with the genesis of the legendary nine worlds; delves into the exploits of the deities, dwarves, and giants; and culminates in Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods and the rebirth of a new time and people.


About the Author: Neil Gaiman was born in Portchester, England on November 10, 1960. He worked as a journalist and freelance writer for a time, before deciding to try his hand at comic books. His first comic endeavor was the graphic novel series The Sandman. He writes both children and adult books. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Talk about each of the primary gods: Odin, Thor and Loki. Consider their passions, humor, conflicts, bravery, and flaws. Which god do you find most interesting, admirable, cruel, weird, cool? Consider also Odin's wife, Freya, and his son, Balder, as well as Tyr, the one-handed god.

2. Which of the stories do you find most engaging or funny? Are any of the stories instructive or especially tragic? What larger meanings, if any, might the other stories offer?

3. What is the role of mythology in culture? Why have all civilizations created their stories: what do myths signify? What do the Norse myths, in particular, say about the Germanic/Norse cultures...and their view of humankind?

4. Follow-up to Question #3 Does mythology, particularly Neil Gaiman’s volume have relevance today? Are they universal cautionary tales? Do they offer age-old wisdom? Or are they primarily for entertaining?

5. What other mythologies are you familiar with: perhaps Ancient Greek, African, Hindi, Native American, Sumerian? How do the Norse myths compare – are there similarities with any other group of myths that you are familiar with?

6. In Norse mythology all roads lead to Ragnarok (also known as Gotterdammerung for Wagner opera buffs). How did they get there? Is the cataclysmic end inevitable – is it dictated by fate or by the innate nature of the gods?

(Questions provided by LitLovers.com)