

Norse Mythology

English IV: Myth & Legend

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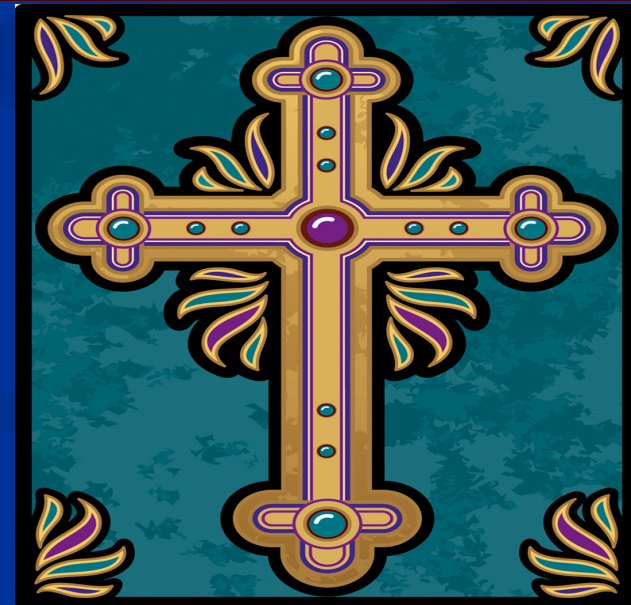
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"How many norse power is it?"

Historical & Geographical Background

- Origin is in Iceland and other realms of Europe
- Influenced Western culture (started in Bronze Age, 1600 – 450 B.C.)
- Christian priests destroyed many records – considered as paganism



Historical Background Continued...

- You know Beowulf (England); also important is Nibelungenlied (Germany)
- Elder Edda, 1300 A.D., poems (Icelandic)
- Younger Edda, prose, Snorri Sturluson, 1200 A.D.
 - Elder Edda's work is more important
 - Compared to *Illiad*; not as organized

Differences from Greek Mythology

- More stories were about gods, rather than mortals
- Not as mainstream, but more intriguing to many
- Concept of inevitable doom
- Heroic – die fighting
- Heaven is not eternal – Asgard includes death
- All northern tales are tragic, but light in the darkness is heroism

~~ETERNAL
LIFE~~

Similarities to Greek Mythology

- war-like cultures = war-like myths/gods
- creation myth
- pantheon of gods
- mortals
- moral world



Map of Norse Region



Conception: Creation of the Gods

Started with two regions

- Niflheim: northern waste of fog and ice



- Muspellheim: southern region of flame and brightness



Creation of the Gods Continued...

- Between Niflheim and Muspellheim existed a central region called Ginnungagap.
- From this region where warmth and cold met came first creature Ymir and a great hornless cow called Audhumla
- As Ymir grew, a male and female came from his armits and family of trolls from his legs



Creation of the Gods Continued...

- Trolls produced Frost Giants called Jotars that soon multiplied, producing fair and ugly offspring
- Cow licked iceblocks and uncovered Buri
- Buri married Jotar and had son Bor
- Bor had three sons: Odin (spirit), Vili (wild), and Ve (holiness)
- They founded the Aesir race
- They killed Ymir and pushed his bleeding body into Ginnungagap and his blood drowned all Frost Giants except Bergelmir
- He repopulated the icy area and vowed to avenge Odin
- Feud began between Frost Giants and Odin's followers

Creation of the World

- The Aesir raised up Ymir's body and formed the world from it
 - Blood = sea and lakes
 - Flesh = earth
 - Bones = mountains
 - Broken bones = rocks and pebbles
 - Skull = dome of sky (dwarf in each corner to hold up)
 - Eyebrows = wall around earth, called Midgard and meant to protect people from Frost Giants who roamed Niflheim



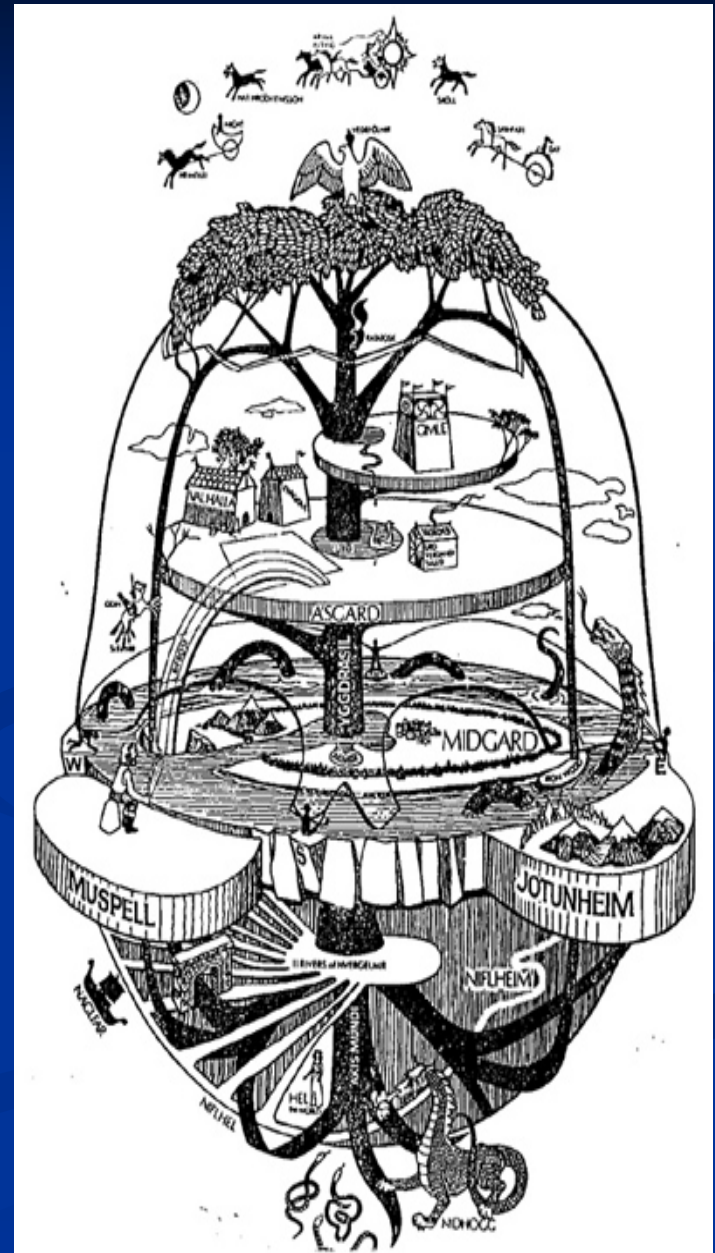
Creation of Humans

- Odin and two of his court, Hoenir and Lodur saw two trees (ash and elm) – he breathed into them and they became a man and woman
- Hoenir gave gift of understanding
- Lodur gave outward form and five senses
- They were to live on earth
- Below earth – dwarfs, small and twisted creatures – worked with metals
- Above earth – sun/moon, two children to drive across sky in chariots
- End of days came when giants would destroy the sun/moon resulting in Ragnarok (doom)



The World Tree

- Giant ash tree Yggdrasil
- Origin unknown
- Sustained life
- Branches went to heaven
And into the earth
- Three roots: Aesir realm,
Niflheim realm, land of dead
- Root of Niflheim – spring
of Mimir (Odin and eyesight)



The World Tree (cont.)

- Beneath tree – sacred spring of fate called Well of Urd – looked after by 3 Norns
- 3 Norns: Urd (Fate), Verdandi (Being), Skuld (Necessity) – also called past, present, future
- Controlled destiny and nourish earth
- Eagle and hawk on top – wind, enemy lookout
- Giant serpent at roots – trying to destroy it – and the evil squirrel with its insults



You are
such a jerk!
I hate you!

Different Worlds of the Norse

- Muspellheim – brightness and light
- Niflheim – cold and darkness (Hel – gloom)
- Ginnungagap – gap where creation came from
- Jotunheim – Frost Giants' home, icy
- Earth – realm of mortals, surrounded by Midgard (created by Odin)
- Darkalfheim (under earth – dwarfs)
- Alfheim – land of elves
- Asgard – home of Aesir gods (rainbow bridge Bifrost);
Odin's palace highest point
 - Golden palace – Gimli, where good people went
 - Vanir gods lived in Asgard – love and peace (more obscure)