



Norse Myths Tales of Odin, Thor and Loki

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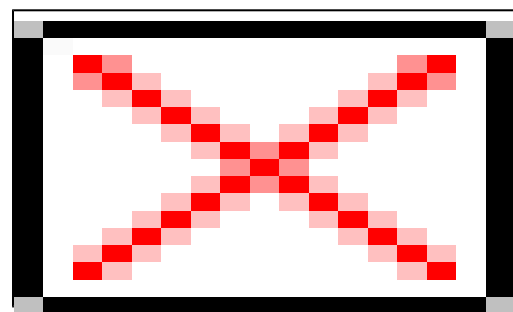
Book

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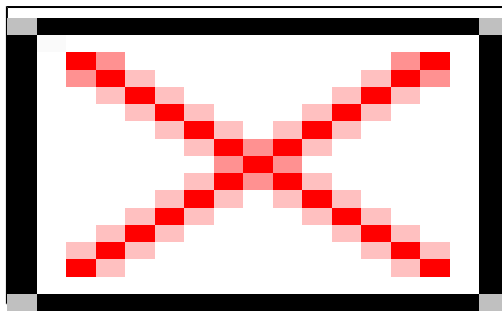
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When I think about the Vikings, Kevin Crossley-Holland tells us in the introduction to this magnificent book, my eyes brighten, my heart beats faster, and my hair stands on end. His new retellings of Norse myths will have exactly the same effect on readers. Bold yet flawed, all-powerful and doomed, the gods of the Vikings seem closer to us now than they've ever been and this collection takes us to the heart of their world.

Crossley-Holland tops and tails the collection with two stories about King Gylfi of Sweden. Tricked by a goddess to whom he has been generous, the king disguises himself as a footsore traveller and journeys to Valhalla to find out all that he can about the gods. His questions are answered by three wise kings so readers too learn about the gods, as well as their co-stars in the stories, the giants and the dwarfs, and Loki, the trickster who lives with the gods and who used to make them laugh. Jeffrey Alan Love's dramatic and beautiful silhouette figures punctuate the tellings and he provides an inky atlas of the linked worlds of Asgard, Midgard, Jotunheim and Nilfheim together with an illustrated guide to the characters in the opening pages. Even those coming completely new to the myths therefore will quickly be familiar with the major players.



Eighteen stories follow, and what stories they are: tales of trickery, battle, betrayals and transformations. Each has its own moral or lesson to be learned. The scale of the stories is huge (and Love's monumental illustrations suit them perfectly), but Crossley-Holland is a masterly storyteller, and readers will feel that he is speaking to them and them alone. Amongst the drama and violence, there's space for quiet moments, for individual voices, for humour, for surprising glimpses of the natural beauty of the Norse landscapes.



And throughout there is a sense of progression, of the stories building to the final chapter. It's called *The Last Battle*, and Gylfi, by then at the end of his own life, travels once again to Valhalla for the answer to his question, 'Must whatever begins also end?' Hair-raising stuff indeed, this is a book to inspire and thrill all readers.

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