

Viking Gods

The myths and legends that the Vikings told each other were rich with religion and mythology. Over time, the Vikings adopted and blended different cultures from around the world. They had one of the largest pantheons of gods and goddesses in history. You may have heard of some of them, but others may surprise and entertain you! Most of the gods were part of a tribe called the Aesir. They ruled from a place called Asgard, high above Earth (although they called it Midgard).

Odin

Odin was the king of the gods in Norse mythology. He had been an important god in Scandinavian and German mythology long before the Vikings. In the 1st-century CE, he was described as the Norse equivalent of the Roman god, Mercury. Odin was the god of poetry, battle and death. Odin only has one eye after he sacrificed his other for a chance to drink from a well of knowledge. Warriors used to pray to Odin to give them strength and to encourage them to go into a frenzy in battle.



Frigg

As Odin's wife, Frigg was the Queen of the Aesir. She was regarded as the most important of the goddesses. She was the goddess of motherhood, marriage and family. If you wanted a happy family life, you prayed to Frigg. It is unclear where Frigg came from, as she doesn't seem to appear in any religion before the Vikings. It is possible that she is a Viking creation.

Thor

Perhaps the best-known of all Norse gods is Thor. Thor was the god of thunder and always carried his hammer Mjollnir with him. He is often considered to be the strongest of all the gods, but his weapons certainly helped with that. As well as his almighty hammer, Thor wore iron gloves and a magical belt. His hammer was said to be the cause of lightning on Earth. He was the son of Odin and a very well-respected god.



Loki

Definitely not a god to trust, Loki was known as the god of mischief and was an ally of the mortal enemy of the gods, the frost giants. He was responsible for the death of Frigg's son, Balder. He dipped a dart in mistletoe and encouraged Balder's brother Hoor to throw it at him. Hoor didn't know that mistletoe was the only thing that could kill Balder within the halls of Asgard, and he didn't know that the dart was coated in it. When it hit Balder, it killed him instantly. Loki was also a shapeshifter and would take on the form of other gods to cause mayhem and to help the frost giants.

Tyr

The god of war and glory. Tyr was the god of battles, specifically the tactics and rules that must be obeyed in a battle. During a battle with the mythical wolf Fenrir, Tyr lost a hand. He is often shown as the one-handed god. He managed to trap the wolf and tame him. Unfortunately, there was a prophecy that Tyr would be slain by the guard dog of the underworld, Garm. Tyr was a common god throughout the ages, and in Old English was known as Tiw. His name is now part of our lives in the word "Tuesday".



RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Who was the Viking god of battle tactics?
2. Who killed Balder?
3. What did the Vikings believe caused lightning?
4. What word do we use today that is named after a Viking god?
5. Which god can change their shape to look like another?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

How is Odin linked to Roman gods?

V

Find and copy a word that means closest to "thought to be".

V

Which word in the Thor section tells you how powerful Mjollnir was?

S

What happened after Tyr lost his hand?

I

How can you tell that Loki wouldn't be liked by the other gods?