

Classes 5 and 6 Readings Practice Quiz :: RLB 501

1. What are the different sections of the Eddic poem *Hávamál*?

a. One part describes the proper behavior for aristocratic Icelandic farmers when they visit expensive shops and restaurants in Copenhagen; a second section tells of Odin's love affair with Fjörgyn, the goddess of earth, which resulted in the birth of Þórr (Thor); a third part tells how Odin spent seven days and nights chanting magical songs to the world-tree Yggdrasil, which granted him access to the magical runes; a fourth section describes the uses of the runes.

b. One part explains the proper behavior for poor Icelandic peasant farmers when they attend the Law-Court at the annual Þing (medieval Icelandic gathering, like a parliament); a second section describes Odin's deceitful love-affair with the giantess Gunnlöth, which resulted in his obtaining the mead of poetic inspiration, which was then provided to both gods and mankind; a third section tells how he hung nine nights on the world-tree Yggdrasil, in order to obtain access to the magical runes; a fourth section describes the uses of the runes.

c. One part gives general advice on ethics and behavior, from how to treat guests, the importance of friendship, and the need to be careful at gatherings to not talk too much or too foolishly; a second section describes Odin's deceitful love-affair with the giantess Gunnlöth, which resulted in his obtaining the mead of poetic inspiration, which was then provided to both gods and mankind; a third section tells how he hung nine nights on the world-tree Yggdrasil, in order to obtain access to the magical runes; a fourth section describes the uses of the runes.

2. In Dumézil's analysis of Norse mythology, what is the "war between the functions?"

a. The "war between the functions" is a battle between gods who represent the 1st and 2nd functions of priestly-magical and legal-moral authority (1st) and gods associated with the use of force to protect and to rule (2nd) against giants who represent the 3rd function of fertility and prosperity. In Norse myth, this is a conflict between the Aesir (1st and 2nd functions) and the Jotunnar (3rd function). This war results in compromise and blending between the two opposing sides to constitute a complete society/world.

b. The "war between the functions" is a battle between gods who represent the 1st and 2nd functions of priestly-magical and legal-moral authority (1st) and the use of force to protect and to rule (2nd), and opposing gods who represent the 3rd function of fertility and prosperity. In Norse myth, this is a conflict between the Aesir (1st and 2nd functions) and Vanir gods (3rd function). This war results in compromise and blending between the two opposing sides to constitute a complete society/world.

c. The "war between the functions" is a battle between gods who represent the 1st and 2nd functions of priestly-magical and legal-moral authority (1st) and gods associated with the use of force to protect and to rule (2nd), against different gods who represent the 3rd function of fertility and prosperity. In Norse myth, this is a conflict between the Vanir (1st and 2nd functions) and Aesir gods (3rd function).

This war cannot be won by either side but results in a permanent state of hostility between the two opposing sides to constitute a complete society/world that will not be resolved until Ragnarök.

3. In Dumézil's discussion of the "war between the functions," which Norse gods represent the three different social-cosmic "functions?"

a. Thor represents the "first function" of magical-priestly authority; the other part of the "first function" is legal-moral authority, and is represented by Týr. Odin represents the "second function" of force and protection. Njorð, Freyr and Freyja represent the third function of fertility and prosperity.

a. Odin represents the "first function" of magical-priestly authority; the other part of the "first function" is legal-moral authority, and is represented by Ríg (Heimdall). Thor represents the "second function" of force and protection. Loki, Freyr and Freyja represent the third function of fertility and prosperity.

c. Odin represents the "first function" of magical-priestly authority; the other part of the "first function" is legal-moral authority, and is represented by Týr. Thor represents the "second function" of force and protection. Njorð, Freyr and Freyja represent the third function of fertility and prosperity.

4. Who is Gollveig in the poem *Voluspá*, what is her role in the "war between the functions" and what theoretical model seems to best explain her situation?

a. Her appearance among the Aesir causes discord and she is regarded as an evil witch. The gods stab her with spears and burn her three times but fail to kill her. Realizing her superiority, the Aesir agree to accept and honor her, but Gollveig is for some reason unhappy at being speared and burned alive, and seeks revenge by leading the Vanir into war against the Aesir. Dumézil's model of three functions makes it perfectly clear that female deities would naturally be opposed by gods of the first two functions.

b. Her appearance among the Aesir causes discord and she is regarded as an evil witch. The gods burn her three times but fail to kill her. The Aesir then go to war against the Vanir. Judging from this result, it seems possible that Gollveig may have been a Vanir deity, though the text is unclear on this point. The Gimbutas theory of a female-oriented Old European civilization and religion suppressed by male-oriented Indo-European invaders seems better suited to explain this situation than the Dumézilian theory.

c. Her appearance among the Aesir causes discord because the different male gods all wish to have her for themselves and begin squabbling among themselves. When she makes clear she is not interested in being anyone's wife or lover, the male gods attack her, stabbing her with spears and tossing her in a fire. Gollveig steps laughing out of the fire, reveals that she is actually Freyja, and seeks revenge by leading the Vanir into war against the Aesir. The Gimbutas theory of a female-oriented Old European civilization and religion suppressed by male-oriented Indo-European invaders seems to explain this situation about as well as the Dumézilian theory.

5. In *Rígsþula*, the god Ríg travels among humans, staying in various family's homes and sleeping with the wives to impregnate them in order to produce sons that represent different social classes. What are the three sons that Ríg helps bring into the world, and what social class do they appear to represent?

a. In the first home he visits, Ríg produces a son who is light-skinned, quick witted and named Earl, meaning "nobleman." He is strong and attractive and seems designed for a life of nobility. Unfortunately, he falls madly in love with a woman with much lesser intellect and beauty called Thír ("drudge") and together they produce children with names like "stable boy" and "serving maid" who seemed designed for lives of hard labor and servitude. This so depressed Earl that he kills himself and his children. In the second home Ríg visits, the couple seems of more equal social status, being skilled artisans and weavers, and Ríg produces a son who is called Karl. He becomes a prosperous farmer, and after marrying, has children who are likewise of higher social status and ability than those of the first couple. In the next house, Ríg finds a still more prosperous couple with nice home furnishings, silver utensils and wine, and with them he fathers a son called Valdi who shows aristocratic interests and abilities, with aptitude for hunting and learning the use of weapons. Ríg takes a stronger interest in this son than his others, and spends time with him teaching him high-level forms of knowledge such as the use of runes. Valdi seems suited for life at the highest level of Norse society.

b. In the first home he visits, Ríg produces a son who is dark-skinned and named Thrall, meaning "slave." He is strong but unattractive and seems designed for a life of manual labor. However, his muscular build and hard-working and honest character attract an aristocratic woman named Hilda and they marry. Unfortunately, their children are a disappointment to both of them, and since names are meant to reflect character in this society, they find it necessary to give them names like "stable boy" and "serving maid" who also seemed designed for lives of hard labor and servitude. In the second home he visits, the couple seems of slightly higher social status, being skilled sorcerers and healers, and Ríg produces a son who is called Karl. He becomes a prosperous farmer, and after marrying, has children who are likewise of higher social status and ability than those of the first couple. In the next house, Ríg finds a still more prosperous couple with nice home furnishings, silver utensils and wine, and with them he fathers a son called Earl who shows aristocratic interests and abilities, with aptitude for hunting and learning the use of weapons. Ríg takes a stronger interest in this son than his others, and spends time with him teaching him high-level forms of knowledge such as the use of runes. Earl seems suited for life at the highest level of Norse society.

c. In the first home he visits, Ríg produces a son who is dark-skinned and named Thrall, meaning "slave." He is strong but unattractive and seems designed for a life of manual labor. He marries a woman with similar qualities called Thír ("drudge") and together they produce children with names like "stable boy" and "serving maid" who also seemed designed for lives of hard labor and servitude. In the second home he visits, the couple seems of slightly higher social status, being skilled artisans and weavers, and Ríg produces a son who is called Karl. He becomes a prosperous farmer, and after marrying, has children who are likewise of higher social status and ability than those of the first couple. In the next house, Ríg finds a still more prosperous couple with nice home furnishings, silver utensils and wine, and with them he fathers a son called Earl

who shows aristocratic interests and abilities, with aptitude for hunting and learning the use of weapons. Ríg takes a stronger interest in this son than his others, and spends time with him teaching him high-level forms of knowledge such as the use of runes. Earl seems suited for life at the highest level of Norse society.

6. What does the name “Hár” mean, who does it refer to, and in which Eddic poem is it important?

a. It means “hair,” and it refers to Thor, for his long red hair, and plays an important role in *Thrymskivida* (Þrymskviða) when the giant Þrym sings a song about how much he loves Freyja’s long red hair that shines like the sun. He does not realize that “Freyja” is actually Thor dressed up in drag disguise, soon to bash his head in with a hammer. Sometimes “love hurts...” (note to men in the class, do not go on dates with women who carry hammers with them.)

b. It means “whore,” and is a term of disrespect that Loki uses in the poem *Lokasenna* to refer to Freyja for her past history of having many different partners (though this is perfectly logical for a goddess of fertility and sexuality, like Greek Aphrodite). This is one of many ways in which Loki angers the other gods until they bind him in a painful way to sit in agony until Ragnarök, when he will get his revenge by leading the armies of giants and dead against the gods.

c. It means “High” or “High One,” and refers to Odin. The title of the poem *Hávamál* can be translated as “Sayings of the High One.” (The “high” refers to wisdom, not to herbally induced mystical states, though some may prefer that interpretation.)

7. What is the main section of the *Prose Edda* called, what does the name mean in translation, and what is the significance of the name?

a. It is called *Gylfagynning*, in translation “The Deluding of Gylfi,” and refers to King Gylfi who goes in search of the Aesir and finds himself in a place of wonders where he learns the stories of the gods and the Norse cosmos. Through the medium of this story, Snorri provides much information about Norse mythology not found anywhere else.

b. It is called *Skaldskarpamál*, in translation “Poetic Diction” or “The Art of the Skald,” and gives an account of Norse mythological terms utilized in Norse poetry, especially the highly complicated metaphors known as *kennings* found in Norse skaldic poems.

c. It is called *Grímnismál* (The Sayings of Grímnir), and tells of how Odin’s visit to a certain king in which the disguised Odin is tortured over a fire and made to talk about many topics in Norse mythology and cosmology until he reveals himself to be Odin, wisest and mightiest of the gods, at which time the king dies, impaled on his own sword, and Odin disappears.

8. Which of the following is NOT part of the story of the creation of the world as described in the first part of the *Prose Edda*?

a. In the beginning there was nothing, just an emptiness called *Ginnungagap* (Gaping Nothingness.) The bottom part was icy cold, the top part fiery hot: out of their interaction came

the first being, a giant called Ymir. Odin and his two brothers sacrificed Ymir and made the world and all its key elements out of his body.

b. The first world to exist was a world of fire called *Muspellheim*. In Muspellheim lived a fire-giant called Surt who will burn the world to ashes at the end of time. The sparks of Muspellheim provided light to the world.

c. Ymir was fed by pieces of meat that would drop off the body of a giant pig, called “Pork-Father,” that licked at huge blocks of salty ice until a man was revealed in the ice. This man was called Bur. He somehow found a woman to marry, and she gave birth to three gods, one of whom was Odin. Odin and his brothers killed Ymir and fed him to the pig. Pork-Father could not digest Ymir and vomited up his body, which broke into pieces and formed all the components of our world. This is why one of the Old Norse names for earth is “puke-planet.” The ancient Norsemen practiced a solemn ritual in which they would drink huge amounts of mead and beer until they could re-enact the original creation of the world by throwing up.

9. What was created from Ymir’s flesh, blood, hair and brains?

a. From Ymir’s flesh, the earth; from his blood, the seas; from his hair, trees; from his brains, clouds.

b. From Ymir’s flesh, Scandinavia; from his blood, the Danube river; from his hair, trees; from his brains, the stars.

c. From Ymir’s flesh, the dry land on earth; from his blood, all the rivers of the world; from his hair, trees; from his brains, intelligence.

10. Why does the sun hurry through the sky each day?

a. He hurries because he is afraid of the wolf Skoll that is chasing him, intending to eat him. The wolf will catch the sun at time of Ragnarök and the sun will be eaten and destroyed.

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c. She hurries because he is afraid of the wolf Hati that is chasing her, intending to eat her. The wolf will catch the sun at time of Ragnarök and the sun will be eaten and destroyed.

11. Who did the god Njorð marry, and what went wrong in the relationship?

a. Njorð married a female giant named Skadi. He was a city god who liked living in places like Uppsala and Stockholm, and she was a mountain goddess who preferred living in the mountains and forests. When they stayed in the mountains, Njorð hated the sound of the howling of wolves. When they stayed in the cities, Skadi could not tolerate all the noise and people. So Skadi left Njorð to live in the forests where she became famous for traveling around by skiing and snowshoes.

b. Njorð married a female giant named Skadi. He was an ocean god who liked living by the shoreline, and she was a mountain goddess who preferred living in the mountains and forests. When they stayed in the mountains, Njorð hated the sound of the howling of wolves. Over time, however, they each got used to the different places, and they would spend the summer on the shore and the winter in the mountains so Skadi could enjoy skiing.

c. Njorð married a female giant named Skadi. He was an ocean god who liked living by the shoreline, and she was a mountain goddess who preferred living in the mountains and forests. When they stayed in the mountains, Njorð hated the sound of the howling of wolves. When they stayed by the sea, Skadi could not tolerate the sound of the sea-birds. So Skadi left Njorð to live in the forests where she became famous for traveling around by skiing and snowshoes.

12. Which Norse god lost his hand, and how?

a. Týr lost his hand as part of the gods' plan to bind the monstrous wolf Fenrir until the end of time. The gods wanted to put a very slender string or ribbon around Fenrir that was magically, supernaturally strong, but Fenrir said he would only allow this if one god would first fasten the ribbon around his own hand. Týr agreed and the gods tied the slender bond around his hand. Fenrir took the other side of the bond into his mouth and pulled and pulled on it, making it tighter and tighter. Finally, the ribbon ripped through Týr's wrist and severed the hand right off of Týr's arm. Fenrir realized the slender bond was a trick, and now there was no way for the gods to control him. Fenrir traveled widely across the world, eating whoever and whatever he liked, whenever he liked, and after many centuries, became the favorite god of a tribe of wolf-worshippers in Central Europe.

b. The god Heimdall, in his disguise as the traveler Ríg, went among humans to create more children. When one tough old Icelandic farmer saw Ríg holding his wife's hand and whispering sweet words into her ear, he took out an axe and chopped off Heimdall's hand. He then spat on the hand, stamped on it with his boot, fed it to his dog, and said to Heimdall/Ríg, "You are damned lucky this is all I am cutting off!"

c. Týr lost his hand when he offered to put it into the wolf Fenrir's mouth as part of the gods' plan to bind Fenrir until the end of time. The gods put a very slender string or ribbon around Fenrir that was magically, supernaturally strong, and Fenrir only allowed this if one god would place his hand in his mouth. When Fenrir realized the bond was no simple, easy-to-snap ribbon but something magically impossible to break, he bit off Týr's hand in rage. As the text says, "All the gods laughed except Týr—he lost his hand!"

13. Who lives in Valhalla, how do they pass the time, and what kinds of food and drink are available for refreshment?

a. Odin presides over Valhalla, a place where fallen warriors train for the final battle at the end of time. They spend the days fighting and the nights feasting. There is a magical cow that provides a never-ending supply of beef, cooked each day in a vast cauldron, and a never-ending supply of mead to drink, which flows from the teats of a goat. Odin, however, lives only on beer.

b. Odin presides over Valhalla, a place where fallen warriors train for the final battle at the end of time. They spend the days fighting and the nights feasting. There is a magical pig that provides a never-ending supply of pork, cooked each day in a vast cauldron, and a never-ending supply of mead to drink, which flows from the teats of a goat. Odin, however, lives only on beer.

c. Odin presides over Valhalla, a place where fallen warriors train for the final battle at the end of time. They spend the days fighting and the nights feasting. There is a magical pig that provides a never-ending supply of pork, cooked each day in a vast cauldron, and a never-ending supply of mead to drink, which flows from the teats of a goat. Odin, however, lives only on wine.

14. Thor's adventures in the land of Utgarð-Loki include some embarrassing moments. What are the difficulties Thor has, and what is later revealed about these incidents?

a. First, Thor is given a drinking-horn full of mead to drink. Though he is usually considered a champion drinker, capable of drinking huge amounts without getting drunk or losing control, quaffing huge amounts of mead or ale, in this case he quickly gets drunk and starts weeping that he is sick and tired of killing frost-giants "because they are, after all, people too!" He then attempts to wrestle a frail-seeming old woman with a similarly surprising lack of success. She pushes Thor down to the ground on one knee, while he is unable to move her at all. Finally, Thor is challenged to lift a cat, and can barely lift it off the ground. Later, Utgarð-Loki reveals that each contest was a trick. The drinking horn was attached to Mimir's Well, so Thor was actually drinking a magically powerful, mind-altering liquid that even Odin is careful to only drink in small, carefully-measured quantities; the old woman was Death, who no one can overcome; the cat was actually the Midgard Serpent, coiled around the entire earth, so that Thor lifting it even a tiny bit caused earthquakes all around the world.

b. First, Thor is given a drinking-horn full of mead to drink. Though he is usually considered a champion drinker, capable of quaffing huge amounts of mead or ale, in this case he is only able to lower the level of liquid in the horn by a tiny fraction, despite drinking a vast amount. He then attempts to wrestle a frail-seeming old woman with a similarly surprising lack of success. She pushes Thor down to the ground on one knee, while he is unable to move her at all. Finally, Thor is challenged to lift a cat, and can barely lift it off the ground. Later, Utgarð-Loki reveals that each contest was a trick. The drinking horn was attached to the ocean, so Thor was actually draining the ocean, causing ebb-tides around the earth; the old woman was old age, who no one can overcome; the cat was actually the Midgard Serpent, coiled around the entire earth, so that Thor lifting it even a tiny bit caused earthquakes all around the world.

c. First, Thor is given a drinking-horn full of beer to drink. Though he is usually considered a champion drinker, capable of quaffing huge amounts of mead or ale, he has never before drunk this kind of beer, and it upsets his stomach so much that he vomits copiously on his companions, who then look at him with disgust, while pretending to smile because he is, after all, Thor. He then attempts to wrestle a frail-seeming old woman with a similarly surprising lack of success. She pushes Thor down to the ground on one knee, while he is unable to move her at all. Finally, Thor is challenged to lift a cat, and can barely lift it off the ground. Later, Utgarð-Loki reveals that each contest was a trick. The drinking horn was filled with the poisonous slaver (saliva) that drips from Fenrir's mouth, so Thor was actually drinking one of the most dangerous poisons in

the world; the old woman was old age, who no one can overcome; the cat was actually the Midgard Serpent, coiled around the entire earth, so that Thor lifting it even a tiny bit caused earthquakes all around the world.

15. What causes Baldr's death, and what possibility for bringing him back from the dead is thwarted?

a. Baldr is killed by a dart of mistletoe hurled at him by his blind brother Höðr, which he was instructed to do by Loki. After Baldr's ship cremation funeral, his brother Hermóðr visits him in Hel, where he speaks to the goddess Hel, and learns that there is a way to bring him back. If all living beings will weep for his death, Hel will allow him to come back to life. The Aesir sent messengers far and wide, and all living beings agreed to weep for him except one person: a foul-natured giantess named Thökk, who was actually Loki in disguise. She/he said, "Let Hel keep what she has—he is no use to me living or dead." So, Loki both directed the killing of Baldr, and prevented his returning to life.

b. Baldr is killed by a dart of deadly nightshade hurled at him by his blind brother Hermóðr, which he was instructed to do by Mímir. After Baldr's ship cremation funeral, his brother Höðr visits him in Hel, where he speaks to Baldr's wife Nanna, and learns that there is a way to bring him back. If all living beings will weep for his death, Hel will allow him to come back to life. The Aesir sent messengers far and wide, and all living beings agreed to weep for him except one person: a foul-natured giantess named Skadi, who was actually Mímir in disguise. She/he said, "Let Hel keep what she has—he is no use to me living or dead." So, Mímir both directed the killing of Baldr, and prevented his returning to life.

c. Baldr is killed by a dart of hemlock hurled at him by his blind brother Höðr, which he was instructed to do by Loki. After Baldr's ship cremation funeral, his brother Hermóðr visits him in Hel, where he speaks to the ancient giant Ymir, and learns that there is a way to bring him back. If all living beings will weep for his death, Hel will allow him to come back to life. The Aesir sent messengers far and wide, and all living beings agreed to weep for him except one person: a foul-natured female dwarf named Gefjun, who was actually Loki in disguise. She/he said, "Let Hel keep what she has—the dead should stay dead and not bother the living." So, Loki both directed the killing of Baldr, and prevented his returning to life.

16. What are the two birds that accompany Odin, and what are their functions?

a. Odin has two pet vultures that sit on his shoulders and provide him news and information from around the world. One is called Huginn (Thought) and the other is called Muninn (Memory). Each morning they fly out at daybreak and bring him news of all that is happening in the world. It is said that Odin fears that Memory will someday not come back, but he worries even more about Thought.

b. Odin has two pet doves that sit on his shoulders and provide him news and information from around the world. One is called Angrboða (Bringer of Sorrow) and the other is called Fjölsvið (Wise One). Each morning they fly out at daybreak and bring him news of all that is happening

in the world. It is said that Odin fears that Angrboða will someday not come back, but he worries even more about Fjölsvið.

c. Odin has two pet ravens that sit on his shoulders and provide him news and information from around the world. One is called Huginn (Thought) and the other is called Muninn (Memory). Each morning they fly out at daybreak and bring him news of all that is happening in the world. It is said that Odin fears that someday Thought will not come back, but he worries even more about Memory.

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Class Four quiz:

1. Which of the following statements is correct about the earliest known Germanic peoples?

a. 2000 BCE, first Germanic peoples appear in Iceland;
500 BCE, migrations from Iceland to Denmark and Germany;
200 BCE, Germanic peoples conquer Rome

b. 300 BCE, first Germanic peoples appear in Germany;
200 BCE, Germanic tribes conquer Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary, but are defeated in Slovakia; 0 CE, Germanic tribes begin to raid Roman lands

c. 500 BCE, first Germanic peoples appear in Sweden;
200 BCE, migration southwards with Germanic peoples settling in Baltic region and along Rhine and Danube; 0 CE, Germanic peoples begin to raid and attack Roman lands

2. What major event occurred around 300~500 CE and what impact did it have on Germanic peoples?

a. This was the so-called “Migration Period” when Central Asian peoples like the Huns moved into Eastern and Central Europe, pushing Germanic people westwards and southwards into the Roman Empire, helping cause the final collapse of the western Roman Empire, with Germanic tribes replacing Romans as main power in Western Europe

b. This was the so-called “Migration Period” when Germanic peoples grew tired of cold weather in Northern Europe and pressed southwards into the Roman Empire seeking to resettle on the Mediterranean coast, helping cause the final collapse of the western Roman Empire, with Germanic tribes replacing Romans as main power in Western Europe

c. This was the so-called “Migration Period” when the Germanic peoples began moving westwards and southwards into the Roman Empire, because they had become Christian and

wished to live closer to the Holy Land of Jesus Christ. The Christian Germanic tribes now replaced Romans as main power in Western Europe and took over leadership of the Catholic Church, replacing wine with beer in the Catholic mass.

3. When and where did the first Scandinavian kingdom emerge, when was the so-called “Viking Era,” and which important Scandinavian country was not a kingdom in the Viking period?

a. The first Scandinavian kingdom was in Denmark between the 6th and 8th centuries CE; the Viking era was from late 7th century to early 11th century; Iceland was a kingless republic with a quasi-parliamentary system until the 13th century when it was absorbed into Denmark.

b. The first Scandinavian kingdom was in Sweden between the 5th and 7th centuries CE; the Viking era was from late 8th century to early 12th century; Iceland was a kingless republic with a quasi-parliamentary system until the 13th century when it was absorbed into Norway.

c. The first Scandinavian kingdom was in Norway between the 8th and 9th centuries CE; the Viking era was from late 9th century to early 11th century; Iceland was a kingless republic with a quasi-parliamentary system until the 13th century when it was conquered by Ireland.

4. The Vikings were often violent, but so were most peoples in Europe at this time. What were positive aspects of the Vikings and what helps explain their very negative reputation as killers, rapists and destroyers?

a. The Vikings did not only attack, kill and destroy; they also opened up trade routes across Europe, helped build new cities like York in England and Dublin in Ireland, and may have helped create the earliest Russian state of Kievan Rus. They had a distinctive culture with highly developed poetry and crafts. Their unusually negative reputation comes from attacking Christian churches and monasteries, as it was the Christian clergy that they attacked who were the main record keepers and chroniclers in this period. The Christian writers also disliked the Vikings for being Pagan and not Christian.

b. The Vikings did not only attack, kill and destroy; they also opened up trade routes across Europe, helped build new cities like Brno in Moravia and Budapest in Hungary, and may have helped create the earliest Ukrainian state in Kiev. They had a distinctive culture with highly developed poetry and crafts. Their unusually negative reputation comes from attacking Christian churches and monasteries, as it was the Christian clergy that they attacked who were the main record keepers and chroniclers in this period. The Christian writers also disliked the Vikings for being Pagan and not Christian.

c. The Vikings did not only attack, kill and destroy; they also opened up trade routes across Europe, helped build new cities like Riga in Latvia and Helsinki in Finland, and may have helped create the earliest Slavic state in Poland. They had a distinctive culture with highly developed poetry and crafts. Their unusually negative reputation comes from attacking Christian churches and monasteries, as it was the Christian clergy that they attacked who were the main record keepers and chroniclers in this period. The Christian writers also disliked the Vikings for being Orthodox Christian and not Catholic Christian.

5. In which country were the Norse-Germanic myths first written down, and when, and by whom?

a. It was in Iceland that the Norse myths were first written down between the 8th and 12th centuries, by Viking chieftains, who recorded the ancient poems as the *Poetic Edda*, and by Icelandic author Snorri Sturluson, whose *Prose Edda* comments on and explains the Eddic poems.

b. It was in Sweden that the Norse myths were first written down between the 9th and 13th centuries by Christian missionaries eager to collect information about the Pagan religion that they wished to destroy and replace. They recorded the ancient poems as the *Poetic Edda*. Swedish author Ingmar Bergman gave us the *Prose Edda*, which comments on and explains the Eddic poems.

c. It was in Iceland that the Norse myths were first written down between the 11th and 13th centuries, by Christian clerics, who recorded the ancient poems as the *Poetic Edda*, and by Icelandic politician and author Snorri Sturluson, whose *Prose Edda* comments on and explains the mythology contained in the Eddic poems.

6. What problem is there with using the *Poetic* and *Prose Eddas* as sources for Norse-Germanic mythology and religion?

a. Because these texts were written down after the Scandinavians had already become Christian, it is obvious that these texts are totally useless as information sources for Old Norse Paganism, because so much in these texts is obviously Christian-inspired. There are no reliable records of the ancient Pagan religion and people should stop asking about it!

b. Because these texts were written down after the Scandinavians had already become Christian, there is the problem that those writing down these myths may have added Christian elements and perspectives to these texts, even accidentally or unconsciously. As a result, we cannot always be sure if everything in the texts is really the way it was in pre-Christian, Pagan times, or if these are Pagan myths distorted and twisted by Christian bias. For example, the god Thor is often portrayed as kind of stupid though very strong, but we know from archaeology that he was the most popular Norse god by far. Using archaeology and comparison with other Indo-European myths are two good ways of checking to see if elements in the texts are authentic Pagan expressions or something distorted by Christian thinking or bias.

c. Even though these texts were written down after the Scandinavians had already become Christian, the Pagan elements are quite obvious, and so we do not need to worry about added Christian elements and perspectives. For example, the Norse god Odin, the all-knowing and wise leader of the gods, has random sexual adventures and engages in misdeeds like stealing and deceiving that would not be acceptable for a Christian god. The goddess Freyja is also extremely unchaste, which would not be suitable for a Christian female figure. Worse still, the god Thor dresses as a woman in one myth and pretends to be Freyja, and the god Loki goes even further and becomes the mother of monsters after sex with a giant stallion! These are not Christian

ideas! As a result, we can be fairly confident that most things in the texts really are the way they were in pre-Christian, Pagan times, without overmuch Christian influence or bias.

7. Choose the answer which most accurately and completely matches Norse-Germanic gods with their characteristic powers and functions.

a. Odin— god of self-destructive behavior who hangs himself on a tree and throws away one of his eyes just to get a drink to increase his so-called “wisdom”; Thor—god of stupidity and strength, who often gets drunk and fights against giants; Freyja—goddess of promiscuity and pregnancy, who throws tantrums that frighten the other gods; Freyr—brother of Freyja, god of fertility, a sex-crazed freak just like his sister; Njord—god of the sea, who enjoys seeing ships sink and sailors die; Frigg, wife of Odin who does and says little, apparently depressed due to the death of her son which her “all-knowing” husband was unable to prevent; and Loki, who may be the smartest of the gods but is a sexual deviant and a psychopath.

b. Odin—god of wisdom who enjoys reviving dead people and forcing them to talk to him; Thor—god of strength, who often gets drunk and throws his hammer around, causing earthquake ; Frigg—goddess of dead single women, fertility and war; Njord—brother of Frigg, god of fertility; Freyr—god of the sea, who keeps the North Sea full of fish; Freyja, wife of Odin who does and says little; and Loki, god of trickery and intelligence whose schemes are outrageous but often effective.

c. Odin—god of wisdom, magic and poetry; leader of the gods and their battle-leader during the battle of Ragnarök, Thor—god of strength and protection, often fights against giants; Freyja—goddess of fertility, war and death; Freyr—brother of Freyja, god of fertility; Njord—god of the sea, father of Freyja and Freyr; Frigg, goddess of wisdom and wife of Odin; and Loki, “trickster” god who is sometimes helpful, sometimes harmful.

7. Who are the different families/groups of divine beings in the Norse myths?

a. The Aesir (primarily fertility gods including Njord, Freyja, Freyr),the Vanir (the group including Odin, Tyr and Thor), the Giants (of different types, including Frost-Giants and Fire-Giants, equally dangerous unless you find death by freezing more enjoyable than death by fire); the Norns, the Elves, the Dwarves, the Disir and still others.

b. The Aesir (the group including Odin, Tyr and Thor), the Vanir (primarily fertility gods including Njord, Freyja, Freyr), the Giants (of different types, including Frost-Giants and Fire-Giants, equally dangerous unless you find death by freezing more enjoyable than death by fire); the Norns, the Elves, the Dwarves, the Disir and still others.

c. The Aesir (primarily fertility gods including Odin, Freyja, Freyr),the Vanir (the group including Njord, Tyr and Thor), the Giants (of different types, including Frost-Giants and Fire-Giants, equally dangerous unless you find death by freezing more enjoyable than death by fire); the Norns, the Elves, the Dwarves, the Disir and still others.

8. What is the role of the giants in the myths, and what do the Frost-Giants continually attempt to obtain from the gods?

a. The Giants are forces of total evil with no positive qualities at all. All they want is to destroy the world. The gods avoid them as much as possible, except for Thor who likes to fight and kill them. On several occasions they seek to take possession of Freyja and bring her to Giant-land as a wife for the head giant. Since they represent death and Freyja represents life, this would mean death taking control of life, and thus the destruction of the world.

b. The Giants are actually very nice and friendly, just extremely large....gigantic, in fact! They often cause damage and harm others without even trying because they are so huge and powerful. They are like the proverbial “bull in the China shop.” Several gods have relationships, even marriages with giants, so they cannot be all bad! On several occasions they seek to take possession of Freyja and bring her to giant-land as a wife for the head Giant. Since Freyja represents life and fertility, taking her away from our world and placing her in the world of the giants would upset the balance of life and perhaps cause the destruction of the world.

c. The Giants are forces of nature that tend to represent the more dangerous and destructive parts of nature, the “wild” nature of storms, volcanoes, earthquakes. They are not always bad or evil, and in some cases the gods have relationships, even marriages with them. In Norse myth as in other old religions, no one is totally good nor anyone totally bad. Much depends on the situation. The gods sometimes fight against the giants, especially Thor, who likes to fight and kill them. On several occasions they seek to take possession of Freyja and bring her to Giant-land as a wife for the head giant. Since they represent nature in its most aggressive and dangerous forms, and Freyja represents nature in its most beautiful and life-giving forms, it would be risky to let the giants have Freyja, and so the gods resist this, and Freyja absolutely refuses to be a wife or lover for the giants!

9. What is Ragnarök, and how does it involve the relationship between the gods and the giants?

a. In the battle of Ragnarök, the gods will fight the giants, the giants will win, and the world will be destroyed by flood and fire—natural forces that turn destructive. The world will then be reborn.

b. In the battle of Ragnarök, the giants threaten to destroy the world by flood and fire, until Odin uses his magical powers to raise an army of the dead that kills all the giants.

c. In the battle of Ragnarök, the gods will fight the giants, and both will die in the fighting. The world will then be destroyed by flood and fire—natural forces that turn destructive, showing how the balance of life has been lost. The world will then be reborn, as will the gods and giants, who now rule the world as friends. Freyja marries a fire-giant and enjoys a very hot relationship.

10. What is *Völuspá*, and why is it such an important Eddic poem?

a. It is the poem in which Odin raises a seeress, a *Völva*, from the dead in order to have sex with her and also because he hopes to father a son to replace his dead son Baldur. While they make

love, she tells Odin of the beginning of the world, the activities and adventures of the gods and other beings, but she does not tell him how he and the other gods will die in the battle of Ragnarök, because she does not want to depress him. It is the single poem with the most information about Norse mythology, and explains or refers to many of the most important events in the myths. The key missing element is Ragnarök, which is described in another Eddic poem.

b. It is the poem in which Odin raises a seeress, a *Völva*, from the dead in order to increase his knowledge and wisdom, and she tells him of the beginning of the world, the activities and adventures of the gods and other beings, and how he and the other gods will die in the battle of Ragnarök. It is the single poem with the most information about Norse mythology, and explains or refers to many of the most important events in the myths.

c. It is the poem in which Odin and his wife Frigg, famous for her wisdom as well as her cooking, have a conversation over dinner in which they discuss the beginning of the world, the activities and adventures of the gods and other beings, and make preparations for the battle of Ragnarök, in which they and the other gods will die and the world will be destroyed. They take comfort in the fact that the world will be reborn, fresh and green again, and that their son Baldur will return to life to rule this new world. It is the single poem with the most information about Norse mythology, and explains or refers to many of the most important events in the myths.

11. Who are Loki's children, and what role do they play in Ragnarök?

a. Loki has three children: the fire-giant Surt, the Midgard Serpent that circles the earth, and the gigantic bear Fenrir. As primarily a male god, Loki is the father of these three monstrous offspring, but also their mother. He became a female horse to distract the male horse helping the Giant Builder construct the wall around Asgard that would have required the gods to give Freyja to the giants, and then became pregnant and gave birth to the three. The Midgard Serpent dies fighting against Thor, who then also dies after taking nine steps, having been poisoned by the Serpent. Odin is crushed by the Bear, and that is how he dies. At the end of Ragnarök, Surt begins a fire that burns the whole world to ashes.

b. Loki has three children: the death-goddess Hel, the Undersea Dragon that circles the earth, and the gigantic wolf Fenrir. As primarily a male god, Loki is the father of these three monstrous offspring, but also their mother. He became a female horse to distract the male horse helping the Giant Builder construct the wall around Asgard that would have required the gods to give Freyja to the giants, and then became pregnant and gave birth to the three. In Ragnarök, Hel supplies an army of the dead that Loki leads into battle against the gods. The Undersea Dragon dies fighting against Thor, who then also dies after taking nine steps, having been burned by the Dragon's fiery breath. Odin is swallowed by the Wolf, and that is how he dies.

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against Thor, who then also dies after taking nine steps, having been poisoned by the Serpent. Odin is swallowed by the Wolf, and that is how he dies.

12. Are there female divine beings in Norse myth to match the prominent females in Celtic myth?

a. No, the goddesses and other female beings in Norse myth are not nearly as important or interesting as Celtic females like Queen Medb or the Morrigan. For example, Frigg, wife of Odin, is describing as “knowing all but saying nothing.” How useless can you be??

b. Yes, the goddesses and other female beings in Norse myth are every bit as important and interesting as Celtic females like Queen Medb or the Morrigan. It is the volva who tells Odin about the beginning and end of the world, not the other way around. This suggests greater knowledge among female beings than males in the Norse world, and explains why Odin’s wife Frigg is portrayed as all-knowing. Similarly, the three sister beings known as Norns care for the World Tree Yggdrasil that provides the structure of the entire universe, the “nine worlds in the tree,” and

decide the destinies of all living beings. One Norn is called Past, the second one Present, and the third one Future. Freyja, as a goddess of both sexuality and war, is very similar to fierce but sexy Celtic females like the Morrigan and Medb.

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