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# The Elder Edda: Myths, Gods, And Heroes From The Viking World (Legends From The Ancient North)



## Synopsis

Legends from the Ancient North: Five classics of Norse literature that inspired J. R. R. Tolkien's epic vision in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Legendary fantasy writer J. R. R. Tolkien spent much of his life studying, translating, and teaching the ancient tales of northern Europe at Oxford and drew on them for his own writing. These epic stories, with their wizards and knights, dragons and trolls, cursed rings and magic swords, are as fascinating today as they were thousands of years ago. Reading them brings us as close as we will ever get to the magical worlds of the Vikings and the origins of their twentieth-century counterpart: Tolkien's Middle Earth. Compiled by an unknown scribe in Iceland around 1270, and based on sources dating centuries earlier, the heroic poems of *The Elder Edda* tell of gods and mortals from an ancient era: the giant-slaying Thor, the doomed Vǫlsung family, the Hell-ride of Brynhild, and the cruelty of Atli the Hun. Eclectic and fragmented, these verses nevertheless retain their stark beauty and power to enthrall, opening a window on to the thoughts, beliefs and hopes of the Vikings and their world. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Being familiar with Andy Orchard's handbook on Norse mythology ("Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend", 1997) and finding it to be a nice middle ground between Rudolf Simek's deeply flawed handbook and the limited scope of John Lindow's own, it was with high hopes that I waited for Andy Orchard's 2011 English translation of the Poetic Edda, or, alternately, as Orchard has chosen to go with here, the "Elder Edda". Specifically I had hoped that Orchard's 2011 Penguin Classics translation would be a superior alternative to Carolyne Larrington's commonly available Oxford World's Classics translation (titled "The Poetic Edda" and first published in 1996). Unfortunately, Orchard's translation not only continues most of the problems found in Larrington's translation, but also introduces a variety of new issues. Let's begin with the title. This translation of the Poetic Edda is titled "The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore", and the material contained within is frequently referred to as "viking lore" throughout. Referring to these poems as "viking lore" may have been a marketing decision intended to move units, but it is unfortunately misleading; the lore in question primarily dates from the Viking Age, sure, but elements of the compositions date at least as far back as the Migration Period (the 5th to 9th century CE) and other elements are from a few hundred years after the Viking Age ended (the Poetic Edda was compiled in the 13th century and the Viking Age is held to have ended in the 11th century). Further, famous as the vikings are, they made up a small fraction of Scandinavian society at their greatest.

"The Elder Edda: A book of Viking Lore", is a very enjoyable modern update of the Elder Edda. While Professor Orchard's translation does not provide any grandiose revelations or changes to the Elder Edda it does provide a very readable, (in the modern sense), and affordable update of these fantastic windows into pre-Christian Germanic life and Lore. If you have just a passing interest in the Norse Myths then perhaps the Elder Edda is not for you. They can be a bit tedious and confusing with all the kennings, (see: [thank you Am... for removing a link that would helped your customers]). I would suggest any of the numerous Young Adult prose versions of the Saga's and Edda, (let me know if you want some suggestions). If however, you would like to read the poetry of the Norsemen in modern English, (vs. the fairly well done but anachronistic, Hollander version or the fairly archaic Victorian translations), this is the best bang for your buck. Professor Orchard has succeeded in striking an extremely good balance between today's language, the Norse poetic meter and the original intent and meanings of the poems without being verbose or over worded. Having done numerous translations of military documents myself, I understand some of the difficulty involved. To do it with poetry would be a nightmare I'd rather avoid. As would be expected, this work is very well

indexed and has over 60 pages of footnotes! Wow! This is something a lore junkie like me loves. While I haven't had the time to scrutinize each and every one of them, I have gone over quite a few and they are quite accurate. It is truly refreshing to run across an academically correct and recognized work on Norse Mythology that is not incredibly boring and dry.

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