

In History IALT: Understand Viking Gods.



Recall question:

What is the Viking writing language called?

Norse Mythology:

Vikings believed that there were Nine Worlds connected together by an enormous mythical tree called Yggdrasil. Each world was home to different living creatures or mythical beings.

- **Asgard** – home to the Æsir (pronounced 'A-seer') gods, including Odin, Frigg and Thor. Asgard is home to Valhalla, the place where fallen warriors go when they die.
- **Vanaheim** – home to the Vanir gods, including Freya, Freyr and Njord.
- **Midgard** – the Norse name for Earth, the realm of mortals.
- **Alfheim** – home of the elves.
- **Niflheim** – home of the frost giants.
- **Jotunheim** – home of the giants.
- **Helheim** – the underworld and realm of the dead.
- **Svatalfheim** – home of the dwarves and dark elves.
- **Muspelheim** – home of the fire giants.

Norse Mythology

Vikings believed in a polytheistic religion – a religion with many deities. Gods and goddesses were very important in Norse culture. The Vikings often made decisions or acted in ways to please the gods.

There are many different Viking gods, each possessing a mixture of human traits and magical abilities. They were split into different groups who were at war with each other, until they realised they were equally powerful:



Æsir

The gods of power and war



Vanir

The gods of fertility and nature



Odin

Odin is the chief god in Norse mythology and part of the Æsir pantheon. He is the king of Asgard.

Odin is the god of wisdom, poetry, death and magic.

Also known as the All-Father, it is believed that he gave up one of his eyes in order to gain understanding of the universe. He is also often accompanied by two ravens who help him see everything.

He rides into battle upon an eight-legged horse called Sleipnir and wields the mighty spear Gungnir, with which he never misses his target.

He is married to the goddess Frigg and is the father of many gods, including Thor and Baldr.





Thor

Thor is the god of thunder, storms, strength and fertility. He is part of the Æsir pantheon. He is the son of Odin and married to the goddess Sif.

Thor wields a magical hammer called Mjolnir which is so powerful it can destroy mountains. He is able to summon thunder and lightning using his hammer in battle against his enemies. Vikings believed that a thunderstorm was a sign that Thor was angry.

Thor also has incredible strength and is a mighty warrior. There are many tales of his battles, including with the giant serpent Jörmungandr during Ragnarök – the final battle of the gods.





Loki

Loki is the god of mischief and chaos. He is known for playing tricks on the other gods. He is part of the Æsir pantheon.

Loki is shown in the tales to only care for himself and life's pleasures though he is also sometimes shown as playful and as helping the other gods (but only if it helps him by doing so).

He is able to change his shape to that of other living creatures, such as a mare, fly, salmon and a falcon.

He is married to the goddess Sigyn and is the father of Hel, the giant serpent Jörmungandr and the giant wolf Fenrir.





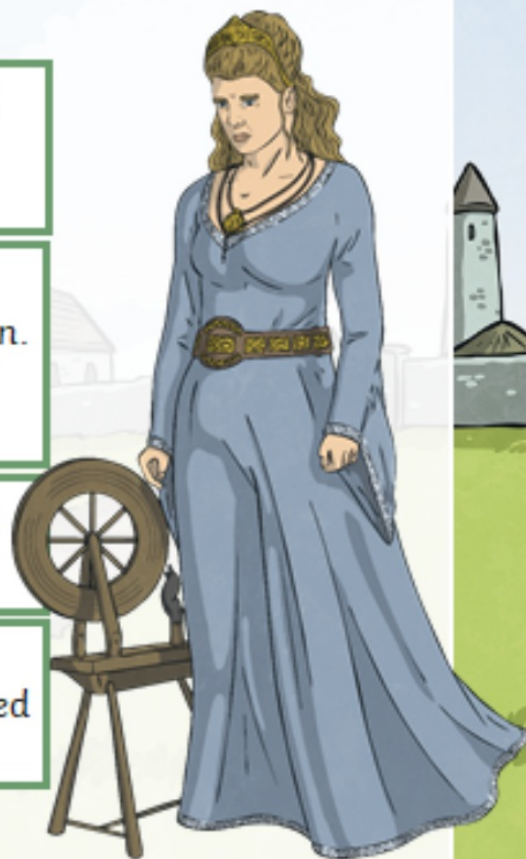
Frigg

Frigg, or Frigga, is the goddess of motherhood and the sky, the wife of Odin and mother of Baldr and Hodr. She is part of the Æsir pantheon.

Many of the stories surrounding Frigga are about her family role, alongside her husband and children. She is shown to be strong-willed and protective of those she loves.

Frigga is usually depicted as a beautiful woman in peaceful backgrounds, showing her calm nature.

Her symbols include the full moon, the spinning wheel, mistletoe and silver, which are often included in images of her.





Freya

Freya, or Freyja, is the goddess of love, war and death. She is the daughter of the god Njord and has a twin brother, Freyr. He is part of the Vanir pantheon.

Freya is often shown riding in her chariot which is pulled by two cats and has a cloak made from falcon feathers.

Freya rules over the heavenly field, Fólkvangr, where she welcomes those who died in battle but did not go to Valhalla.

Freya is married to the god Od although he is absent a lot of the time. Because of this, Freya is said to weep tears of red gold as she searches for him.



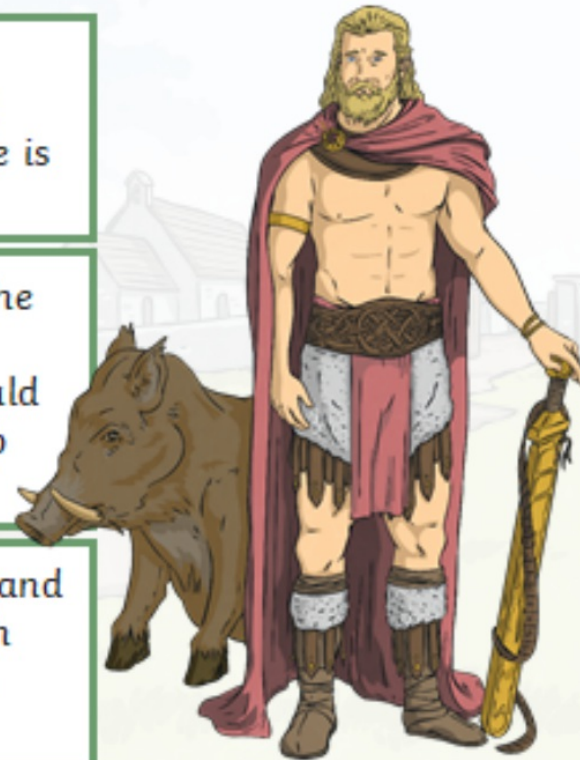


Freyr

Freyr, or Frey, is the god of fertility and prosperity. He is the son of the god Njord and twin brother of the goddess Freya. He is part of the Vanir pantheon.

Freyr rules over the rain and shining of the sun and therefore is responsible for the growth of crops in the fields. Vikings would pray to Freyr in the hope of a strong crop growing each year.

Freyr rides the shining boar Gullinbursti and owns the magical ship Skidbladnir, which can fold down and be carried in a pouch when not being used.





Heimdall

Heimdall is the guardian of the gods. He watches over the Bifrost – the rainbow bridge which leads to Asgard. He lives in a fortress which sits at the top of the Bifrost where he keeps watch. He is the son of Odin and part of the Æsir pantheon.

Heimdall has incredibly strong hearing and vision. He keeps watch for approaching enemies and uses his mighty horn, Gjallarhorn, to summon the other gods from across all nine worlds to battle if needed.

In tales, Heimdall is believed to have used his horn to sound an incoming invasion to Asgard at the beginning of Ragnarök.





Njord

Njord is god of the sea and is part of the Vanir pantheon.

Njord is also associated with wealth and Vikings would often describe rich people as being 'as rich as Njord'.

Vikings believed that whenever Njord was angry or sad, storms would rage at sea. Vikings would pray to Njord in the hope of a safe journey on their voyages.

Njord is the father of the twins Freya and Frey and married to the giant goddess Skadi.





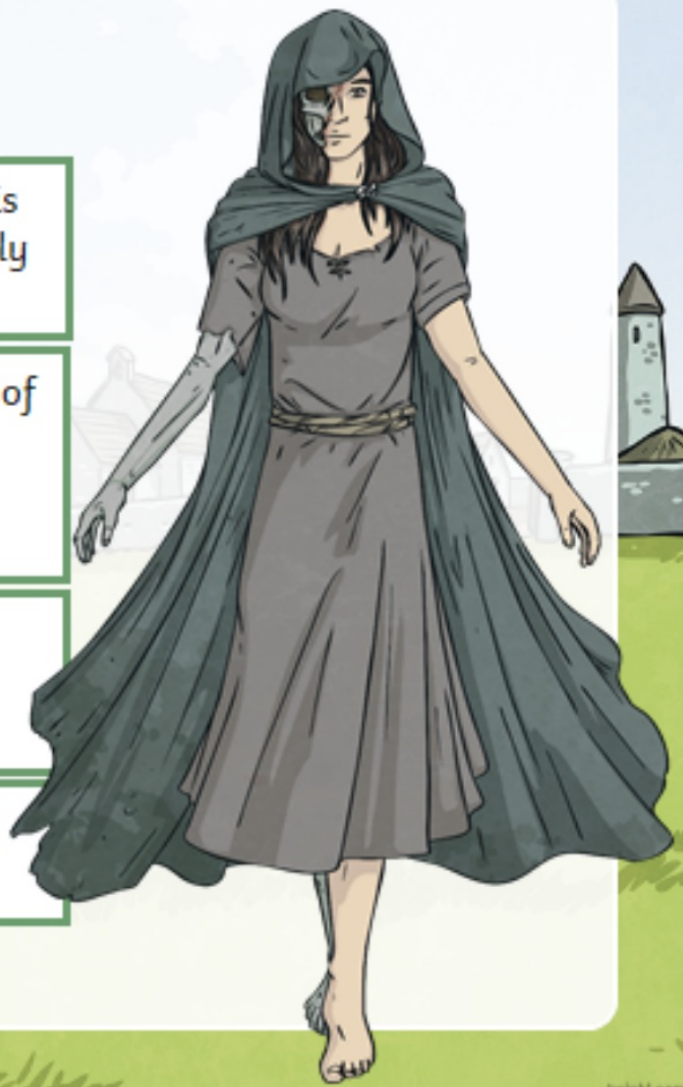
Hel

Hel is the goddess of the underworld. She is the daughter of Loki and regarded as highly dangerous.

Hel is often shown as having half the face of a beautiful woman and half the face of a monster. She is greedy and cruel and unconcerned with the problems of others.

She rules over the underworld realm, also called Hel, the ninth of the nine worlds, which lies at the roots of Yggdrasil.

Hel watches over the dead who arrive and dwell in the underworld.



Create your own Viking God! Use this layout to help you:

Viking God

What does your Viking God look like?

Draw your Viking God here.

What are the powers of your Viking God?

What do they look after?

Is your god evil or good? What do they like doing?

Extension Question:

Who is your favourite Viking God and why?