

Viking gods

Odin was the chief god. He was sometimes known as Woden. He was the god of battles. He had one eye because he had thrown his other eye into the well of wisdom to increase his knowledge of the world. His remaining eye is represented by the Sun and his eye floating in the well is represented by the Moon. He also carried a raven on each shoulder. They were called Huginn and Muninn. They flew around the world gathering information then went back to Odin and told him what they had seen. Odin had magical powers and could change himself into a bird, a fish or even a snake. Wednesday – Woden's day is named after him.

Thor was the son of Odin. He had a hammer named Mjollnik and used it to kill ice dragons. He did not have magical powers he just solved problems with his strength. Thursday – Thor's day is named after him.

Njord was the god of the sea. He could provide safe passages, good fortune and wealth.

Freya was the daughter of Njord and the goddess of nature. She could fly in a falcon's skin and could cast magic spells.

Frey was the twin brother of Freya. He was the god of sunlight, rain and good harvests.

Loki was a fire god who hung from Thor's belt. He caused mischief.

Balder was the son of Odin who died tragically. It was believed that there would be a battle between the gods and the frost giants which would destroy the gods and the world. This time was called Ragnarok and after it Balder would live again in a newer, happier world.

Forseti, the son of Balder, was the god of judgement and settled disagreements between people.

1. Why do you think warriors worshipped Odin?



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2. Why do you think farmers preferred Thor as their chief god instead of Odin?



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3. Which other god do you think farmers worshipped and why?



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4. Which god did sailors worship and why?



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5. What relation was Frey to Njord?

6. What relation was Forseti to Odin?

7. What was (a) Muninn (b) Mjollnik

(c) Ragnarok?

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Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

The Vikings had a large number of gods and legends attached to them. This activity is simply to introduce a few gods with brief details and show why they might be worshipped and how some were thought to be related to each other.

Younger students

You may like to go through the text and questions with the students and help them answer the questions.

Answers

1. Because he was the god of battles.
2. They were more peaceful than warriors and could appreciate Thor using his strength to solve problems just as farmers had to use strength when ploughing or clearing land to make fields.
3. Frey. He was the god of good harvests.
4. Njord. He could provide them with a safe passage when they made a journey on the sea.
5. Son.
6. Grandson.
7. a) One of Odin's ravens, b) Thor's hammer, c) The time when the gods and the world would be destroyed.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Know that the Vikings had gods who controlled different things.
- Know that some of the gods are related to each other.

Older students

The students can work on their own to answer the question. The answers are given in the section above. The students could extend their work by making drawings of how they think Odin and Thor may have looked, then use secondary sources to look for pictures of the gods and compare them with their drawings.

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