



10th Grade: Honors World Literature and Composition

Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman

Students in Honors World Literature and Composition need to read Gaiman's *Norse Mythology*. In *Norse Mythology*, Gaiman stays true to the myths in envisioning the major Norse pantheon: Odin, the highest of the high, wise daring and cunning; Thor, Odin's son, incredibly strong yet not the wisest of gods; and Loki—son of a giant—blood brother to Odin and a trickster and unsurpassable manipulator. Gaiman fashions these primeval stories into a novelistic arc that begins with the genesis of the legendary nine worlds and delves into the exploits of deities, dwarfs, and giants. Through Gaiman's deft and witty prose, these gods emerge with their fiercely competitive natures, their susceptibility to being duped and to duping others, and their tendency to let passion ignite their actions, making these long-ago myths breathe pungent life again (Goodreads).

1. What is the role of mythology in culture? Why have all civilizations created their stories: what do myths signify? What do the Norse myths, in particular, say about the Germanic/Norse cultures...and their view of humankind.
2. What other mythologies are you familiar with: perhaps Ancient Greek, African, Hindi, Native American, Sumerian? How do the Norse myths compare—are there similarities with any other group of myths that you are familiar with?
3. In Norse mythology all roads lead to Ragnarok. How did they get there? Is the cataclysmic end inevitable—is it dictated by fate or by the innate nature of the gods?