

*[I trow I hung on that windy Tree
nine whole days and nights,
stabbed with a spear, offered to Odin,
myself to mine own self given,
high on that Tree of which none hath heard
from what roots it rises to heaven*

*None refreshed me ever with food or drink,
I peered right down in the deep;
crying aloud I lifted the Runes
then back I fell from thence*

*Nine mighty songs I learned from the great
son of Bale-thorn, Bestla's sire;
I drank a measure of the wondrous Mead,
with the Soulstirrer's drops I was showered*

*Ere long I bare fruit, and throve full well,
I grew and waxed in wisdom;
word following word, I found me words,
deed following deed, I wrought deeds.*

*Hidden Runes shalt thou seek and interpreted
signs,
many symbols of might and power,
by the great Singer painted, by the high Powers
fashioned,
graved by the Utterer of gods.*

Odin's Quest for the Runes (137-141)

Known as the god of a thousand names, one for each aspect of his character, Odin is a complicated, mysterious, and in some ways frightening figure in Scandinavian culture and mythology. Married to Frigga, ruler of the Valkyries, patron of death, healing, sorcery, battle and bringing half the einherjar (warriors fallen in battle) to Valhalla, and flying across sea, sky and into the underworld upon his eight-legged and terrifying horse, Slepnir, Odin is truly a master of many hats, especially since this is not all he is known for. Known across many different Germanic cultures, Odin is also the god of knowledge, poetry, and the runic alphabet.

Mimir was the giant living at the roots of Yggdrasil, as well as the teacher from whom Odin learned the runes and exchanged an eye to Mimir as a promise not to abuse the gained knowledge. Drinking from the spring-the source of all knowledge- Odin became the wisest of all men and gods.

This is only part of his characteristic drive for knowledge and wisdom. With this taste of knowledge, unable to satisfy his appetite for knowledge, Odin went to even greater lengths, and knew no boundaries for the sake of obtaining knowledge. From hanging himself from a tree for nine days to gain more wisdom, to taking Mimir's head (some time



later) and keeping it in order to access the knowledge he carried through sorcery. Odin even spoke to the dead to gain knowledge.

In another legend, Odin drinks a mead called Aerodrome, made by greedy dwarves who killed Kvasir (the wisest of all beings, created by Vanir) and drained his blood. After killing the dwarves, Suttong, the giant stolen the mead. Wanting gain the wisdom of the mead, Odin disguised himself as Bolverk-Worker of Ill, was invited in and seduced the giant's daughter. She gave him access to the cauldron of mead with he took and escaped in the form of an eagle. The mead itself is famous as the mead of inspiration or mead of poetry.

The mead gave him not only the wisdom and inspiration it held, but also the ability to communicate and share it with others. Poetry was Odin's special language, and many of his followers were poets. It represented not only a creative tongue able to weave a beautiful verse, but the knowledge obtained through learning and the ability to pass it on. With the Norse love for word-play, alliteration, puns, riddles, and kennings (a type of poetic circumlocution), telling and understanding poetry required knowledge of the legends.

Odin's four familiars: two ravens named as Hugin (thought) and Muninn (memory), and two wolves known as Geri and Freki (greedy or avaricious one). These familiars were dedicated to Odin, and though they are associated with death and the battlefield, they symbolized just as much if not more in Odin's never-ending quest for gaining, understanding, and retaining knowledge and wisdom.

To collect information and news throughout the nine realms of the Norse cosmos, and keep himself informed of the world-Odin sent Hugin and Muninn out daily.

Sending out this part of him, an important component of his own knowledge and wisdom, Odin feared that one or both might not come back one day. His wolves Geri and Freki accompanied him endlessly, and could represent Odin's greed and determination for more knowledge. As powerful of a god as his other associations and abilities made him, his knowledge is ever his priority.

Afterword:

- *Half the fallen warriors went to Valhalla with Odin and half went with Frigga to Folkvangr.*
- *Vanir created Kvasir after making a truce with Aseir, and the mead made from Kvasir's blood eventually made its way to Aseir by way of Odin.*

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