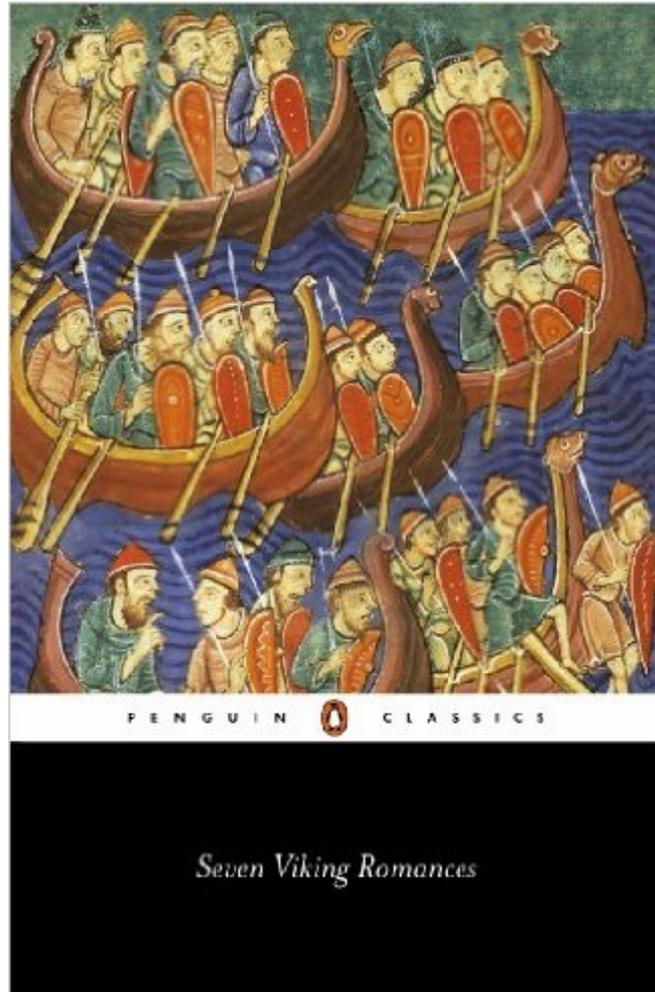


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Seven Viking Romances (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Combining traditional myth, oral history and re-worked European legend to depict an ancient realm of heroism and wonder, the seven tales collected here are among the most fantastical of all the Norse romances. Powerfully inspired works of Icelandic imagination, they relate intriguing, often comical tales of famous kings, difficult gods and women of great beauty, goodness or cunning. The tales plunder a wide range of earlier literature from Homer to the French romancesâ as in the tale of the wandering hero Arrow-Odd, which combines several older legends, or Egil and Asmund, where the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops is skilfully adapted into a traditional Norse legend. These are among the most outrageous, delightful and exhilarating tales in all Icelandic literature. 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.

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Customer Reviews

The sagas (prose narratives) from medieval Iceland are more diverse in subject than would be indicated by the more readily available translations. Of course, the major "Islendingasogur" ("Sagas

of the Icelanders") are, alongside the series of Kings' Sagas (mainly in Snorri Sturluson's "Heimskringla"), and the lives of the Earls of Orkney, among the great glories of medieval literature, and deserve the attention they have received. The stories of Icelandic families, conflicts and legal disputes, poets, outlaws, and lawyers, are unlike anything in Europe before the modern novel, and the accounts in the Kings' and Earls' sagas of both dynasty-builders and feckless rulers also deserve the praise they get. But there are also "Fornaldarsögur," the "tales of olden times," retelling ancient Germanic and Scandinavian legends (notably "Volsunga Saga," "Heidrek's" or "Hervarar Saga," and "Hrolf Kraki's Saga"). Only a few of them are as well-known as they deserve, and then often because of associations with other works (the Sigurd / Siegfried legend, "Beowulf"). And there are accounts of bishops and saints, translations and imitations of Arthurian romances and Carolingian chansons de geste ("riddarasögur," "knightly tales,"), and fantastic stories ("lying sagas") of adventure and romance among supernatural beings or in distant lands. "Sturlunga Saga" is a compilation of partisan reports of contemporary events, somewhat cloaked in the objectivity of the saga style. These are largely under-represented in English translation, or at best such translations usually are available only in large or specialized libraries. The great period of saga-writing was the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but stories in the native style continued to be written in later times.

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