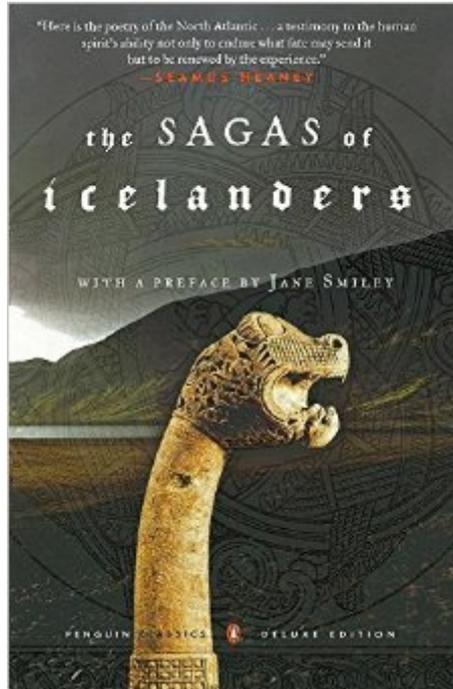


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Synopsis

A unique body of medieval literature, the Sagas rank with the world's greatest literary treasures--as epic as Homer, as deep in tragedy as Sophocles, as engagingly human as Shakespeare. Set around the turn of the last millennium, these stories depict with an astonishingly modern realism the lives and deeds of the Norse men and women who first settled Iceland and of their descendants, who ventured further west--to Greenland and, ultimately, the coast of North America itself. The ten Sagas and seven shorter tales in this volume include the celebrated "Vinland Sagas," which recount Leif Eiriksson's pioneering voyage to the New World and contain the oldest descriptions of the North American continent. 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 Icelandic sagas bear repeated readings - these texts are a heritage of ancient European culture that belong on the "canon lists" with Homer and Shakespeare. Their influences and histories are that important, anyone who speaks English should certainly read these stories, they are distantly

related to us and are at once familiar and very strange. This massive volume is the best single-source for the sagas, and the translations are all new and take into account the most recent scholarship on the sagas. Five stars for the work and the translations, and a sixth star for the best reason to own this book, the reference section, a book in its own right: illustrations and diagrams, historical charts, glossary (Icelandic-English), up-to-the-minute and large bibliography, maps, family ties and trees, ages of icelandic history, and essays on the social and political structure that is so important to really understading the sagas and the culture that produced them. However, I have to subtract a few of my stars, with the proviso that I do recommend this book as a must-own for anyone interested. This may raise a few hackles, but I really think that the "Tales" could have been omitted, and either Njal's saga or Erbyggja Saga added. These are fundamental sagas (esp. the former), but perhaps this is just my own love of Njal that sways me. Naturally, the inclusion of these sagas would mean something had to go, and I think that the sagas can stand without the Tales to augment them. All that said, the book is still a treasure, and I am very glad to see Penguin coming out with such fine volumes. After all, Njal and Ergygga are also published in very nice translation by Penguin.

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