

THE NORSE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The frost giants were a dark and violent race, misshapen, monstrous and noisy. Old Ymir's son, born by the union of one foot with the other, was a glacier-like being with six heads called Thruthgelmir or Mighty Roarer, and his son was known as Bergelmir, or Rock Roarer. When they and their ancient father and grandfather Ymir met in council the noise was ugly and the brothers Odin, Vili and Ve, the sons of Bor, were irritated beyond endurance.

Odin and his two brothers quarreled with the old giant Ymir and after a great battle they killed him. When he fell, hacked to pieces, so much blood flooded from his body that all his giant family were drowned except the youngest, Bergelmir, and his wife. Bergelmir swam through the billows of blood dragging his wife by the hair until he was able to scramble on to a giant hill and there they lay sprawled across the millstone gasping for breath. In this way, the race of the frost giants and hill ogres was able to continue.

Odin, Vili and Ve dragged Ymir's carcass, still pouring volumes of blood, into the middle of Ginnungagap. There were so many wounds in Ymir's body that the blood flowing out formed the sea. All oceans, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, pools and streams came from Ymir's blood. The sons of Bor went to work on Ymir's body. They pounded, kneaded, chopped and slashed his tremendous corpse, pushing and pulling his flesh this way and that as though it were clay until they were satisfied. When they had finished the first part of their gruesome task they had produced the ground-work of the earth; rolling hills, plains, dry river beds, empty lakes, and the empty sea-bed. Into all these hollows they poured Ymir's blood so that the earth lay entirely surrounded by the sea with rivers running into it. His bones they hacked and splintered to make the mountain crags. They made individual rocks and seashore pebbles from his toes and remaining chips of broken bone. They used Ymir's hair for trees and bushes. From the soil made out of his flesh, the race of dwarfs appeared spontaneously rather like maggots. Bor's sons had now created the earth and the beaches and the sea but as yet there was no sky. So Odin, Vili, and Ve between them heaved up the mighty skull of Ymir to form a dome over the earth. Now they had to find a way to keep it in place.

Fortunately (because without a sky the earth would have been a dark and miserable) a solution was at hand: they were able to make use of the dwarfs. Odin, Vili and Ve ordered four of them to stand forever at the four corners of the world and to hold up the sky. They called them North, South, East and West. A little later on Odin created the winds by posting a giant (one of Bergelmir's sons) in the form of an eagle at the ends of the earth to flap his wings for ever. And into the stream of air Bor's sons cast Ymir's brains to make the clouds.

The dome of the sky was now firmly fixed, but it remained dark and menacing. Freed from supporting the sky, the sons of Bor caught the glowing cinders and sparks which are thrown up and blown up out of Muspellheim and poised them in the middle of the yawning gulf to give light to both heaven and earth. They appointed positions to all the stars: some were fixed in heaven, some were to pass backwards and forwards in regular patterns. In this way the seasons of the years were marked out, but as yet there was no sun and no moon, and day was not separated from night.

Odin, Vili and Ve now gave a great grant of land encircling the outward shores of the ocean for the race of giants to settle in, calling it Jotunheim or Giantland. Finally the young gods took Ymir's brows to build a circular stronghold of cliff-like walls around the earth. They called this fortress Midgard, the Middle Enclosure.

Name _____ Per _____

1. Who were the only giants to survive the flood of blood from Ymir's body? _____

2. All the oceans, river, lakes and waterfalls came from Ymir's _____.
3. Mountain crags are made from Ymir's _____.
4. Rocks and pebbles are made from Ymir's _____ and _____.
5. Trees and bushes are made from Ymir's _____.
6. What race of creatures appeared from Ymir's flesh? _____
7. How does Odin create the sky? _____
8. Who does Odin order to hold up the "sky?" and what are their names? _____

9. How are the winds created? _____
10. Clouds are made from Ymir's _____.
11. How do the sons of Bor create the stars? _____

12. Midgard is built from Ymir's _____.