



A traditional story

Many myths, legends, and traditional stories from around the world are about such things as fire, water, rain, wind, or thunder and lightning. Sometimes these things take the form of giants, gods, or spirits that can harm or help humans. Carefully read the following facts about Norse gods.

Thor and Sif

What Thor was like

Thor was an exaggerated, colorful character. He was huge, even for a god, and incredibly strong. He had wild hair and beard and a temper to match. He was never angry for long, though, and easily forgave people.

Thor roared across the sky as his chariot, drawn by two giant goats,

Toothwisher and Toothgrinder. It was their howls that people heard when it thundered on Earth. He controlled the thunder and lightning and brewed up storms by blowing through his beard.

Nations prayed to him for protection from bad weather.



Thor's magic weapons

Thor had a belt which doubled his strength when he buckled it on and iron gauntlets which allowed him to grasp any weapon. The most famous of Thor's weapons was his hammer, Mjollnir. It always hit its target and returned to Thor's hands after use. When a thunderbolt struck Earth, people said that Thor had flung down his hammer.

Mjollnir did not only do harm, though. It also had protective powers and people wore small copies of it as jewelry to keep them safe and bring good luck.

Sif

Thor was married to Sif, who was famous for her pure gold, flowing hair. She was a goddess of fruitfulness and plenty. Her hair reminded people of a field of ripe corn and the harvest.

In one of the myths her hair was cut and stolen. Her misery, which lasted until the hair was replaced, represented the darkness of the winter season, when the corn did not grow.

Sif and Thor lived in a great hall in Asgard, called Bilskirnir, which means Lightning.

From *The Culture Book of Gods and Hero Legends*

Underline any words in the extract above that you do not understand, then look up their meanings in a dictionary.