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A4 + US LETTER

RETOLD IN OUR OWN WORDS

Odin, the well and the ravens

From: The Younger Edda (Rasmus Björn Anderson's English translation, 1879)

Under one root of the great ash tree Ygdrasil lies the well of Mimer. Knowledge and wisdom are hidden in it.

Mimer is full of wisdom, because he drinks from the well with the Gjallar-horn.

Odin once came to the well and asked for a drink. He did not get it until he left one of his eyes there as a pledge.

Two ravens sit on Odin's shoulders and bring to his ears all that they hear and see. Their names are Hugin and Munin.

At dawn Odin sends them out to fly over the whole world, and they come back at breakfast time.

That is how Odin learns about so many things, and why he is called Rafnagud, the raven-god.



Picture: Odin, der Göttervater (Odin, father of the gods), enthroned with weapons, wolves and ravens, published 1882, by Carl Emil Doepler (Public domain). Doepler drew Odin with his wolves and ravens.

QUESTIONS

Odin, the well and the ravens

Read the story again, then answer in full sentences

WORD BANK

wisdom: great knowledge and good sense

pledge: something you leave with someone to show you will keep a promise

ash: a kind of tree

raven: a large black bird of the crow family

1. What lies under one root of the ash tree Ygdrasil?

2. Why is Mimer so full of wisdom?

3. What did Odin have to leave at the well before he got a drink?

4. What are the names of Odin's ravens, and what do they do?

5. Why is Odin called Rafnagud?

LABEL IT

Is this story **History**, **Literature** or **Tradition**? How do you know?

COLOUR ME

Vidar and the wolf

Colour this old drawing



LITERATURE The wolf swallows Odin. But Vidar, the Silent, sets his foot on the wolf's lower jaw, seizes the upper one with his hand, and tears the wolf apart.

Drawing: Vidar in the jaws of the wolf, published 1908, by W. G. Collingwood (Public domain), turned to black and white.

SORT IT

Legend, literature or history?

Read each statement. Tick the right label.

History: what records and historians show. **Literature:** what a named old text, poem, saga or book says. **Tradition:** a later belief, custom or local story.

1. Dirk Steinforth calls it a fragmentary mid-10th-century cross-slab in the parish church of Andreas, in the north of the Isle of Man.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
2. Since the wolf bit off his hand, Tyr is one-handed.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
3. Manx National Heritage writes: 'Legend has it that Odin gave his eye for the gift of wisdom!'	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
4. Snorri Sturluson (Snorre Sturleson in Anderson's spelling) was born in Iceland in 1178.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
5. Odin's horse Sleipner is the best of the gods' horses, and he has eight feet.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
6. According to the Younger Edda, a very brave person was called 'Tyr-strong', and a very clever one 'Tyr-learned'.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition

ANSWER KEY · FOR ADULTS

Odin, the well and the ravens

1. The well of Mimer, where knowledge and wisdom are hidden.
2. He drinks from the well with the Gjallar-horn.
3. One of his eyes, as a pledge.
4. Hugin and Munin. At dawn they fly over the whole world, and at breakfast time they come back and tell Odin what they have heard and seen.
5. Because of his ravens: the name means the raven-god.

Label it: Literature. It comes from a named old book, the Younger Edda, read here in Rasmus Björn Anderson's English translation.

Sort it

1. History
2. Literature
3. Tradition
4. History
5. Literature
6. Tradition

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The small print, kept short

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PICTURES

PICTURE	ARTIST	LICENCE	SOURCE PAGE (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)
Odin, der Göttervater (Odin, father of the gods), enthroned with weapons, wolves and ravens, published 1882	Carl Emil Doepler	Public domain	commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Odin,_der_G%C3%B6ttervater.jpg
Vidar in the jaws of the wolf, published 1908	W. G. Collingwood	Public domain	commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vidar_by_Collingwood.jpg

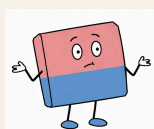
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WHERE THE FACTS COME FROM

Every labelled fact in this pack was checked against the sources below on 31 Oct 2026. **History** means what historians, archaeologists or heritage bodies say. **Literature** means what a named old text, poem, saga or book says. **Tradition** means a later belief, custom or local story, recorded by a named source. Retellings are in our own words and follow the events in the named text.

Snorri Sturluson, The Younger Edda (the Prose Edda), trans. Rasmus B. Anderson, Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18947
 Manx National Heritage: Learning about the Manx Crosses: manxnationalheritage.im/learn/family-learning/the-manx-crosses/

Dirk H. Steinforth, Thorvald's Cross: the Viking-Age cross-slab 'Kirk Andreas MM 128' and its iconography (Archaeopress), free sample: www.archaeopress.com/Archaeopress/DMS/51A425C9E1AB4BDE9543116A4BF587A1/9781789698558-sample.pdf



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