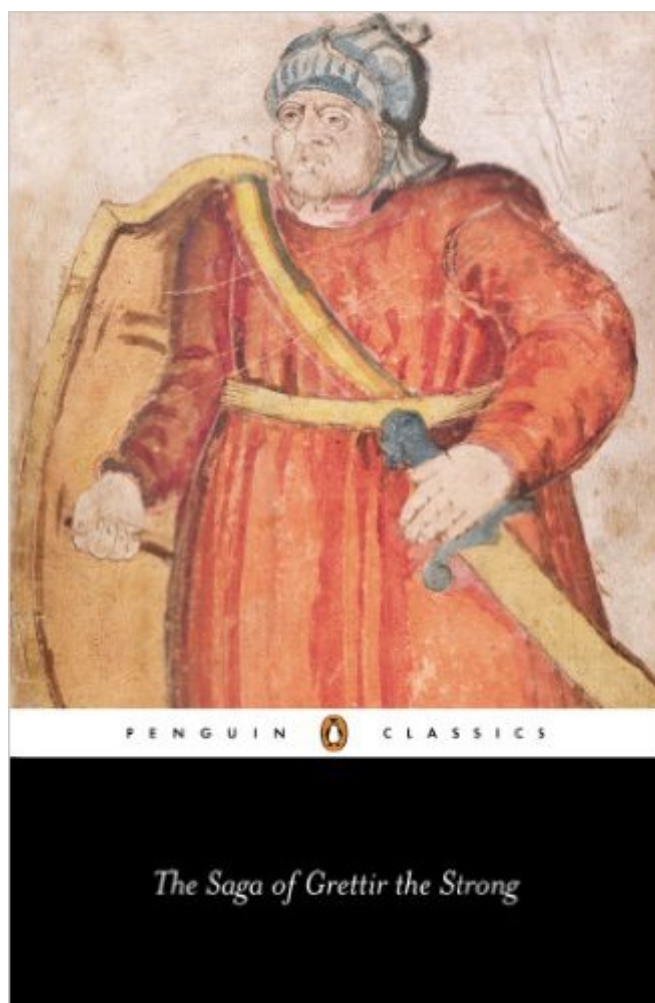


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The Saga Of Grettir The Strong (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Composed at the end of the fourteenth century by an unknown author, The Saga of Grettir the Strong is one of the last great Icelandic sagas. It relates the tale of Grettir, an eleventh-century warrior struggling to hold on to the values of a heroic age becoming eclipsed by Christianity and a more pastoral lifestyle. Unable to settle into a community of farmers, Grettir becomes the aggressive scourge of both honest men and evil monsters - until, following a battle with the sinister ghost Glam, he is cursed to endure a life of tortured loneliness away from civilisation, fighting giants, trolls and berserks. A mesmerising combination of pagan ideals and Christian faith, this is a profoundly moving conclusion to the Golden Age of the saga writing. 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

Two-line version of this review: You MUST read this if you have any interest in ancient Icelandic literature, this saga is one of the best, and culminates many trends in saga and Norse religion. This edition is quite good, and has a fine introduction. Grettir was indeed an enormous, strong man. His

name means literally "Snake" in Icelandic. But "Passing Grettir" was the name of an ancient Icelandic circle game, in which the participants "palm off" (as we might say) a dried animal [...] on each other - what an entertainment. (This ancient game was still evidently being played relatively recently on the world stage, with that same part of Napoleon's anatomy.) So the word "snake" is also euphemistic, for "[...]," I think most people should perceive the structural similarities... This guy was the (literally) ultimate Icelandic bad boy, but he certainly had a heroic side, and a perceivable ethic. He was the last-gasp incarnation of the ancient Norse religion, and he lived up to it perhaps better than anyone. He was the longest-surviving person to be outlawed in ancient Iceland. The saga has many fine episodes, a fair amount of poetry, and a lot of clues as to how Grettir fit into the ancient pre-Christian religion. He faced down some of Iceland's worst supernatural boogies. I have read about twenty sagas, and this is without doubt the most genuinely interesting story. He does not say so, nor does the author, but I think he we are supposed to perceive that he was an incarnation of a Norse god. There are many similarities between this saga and the tales of the Norse gods; also, he is probably the model for Paul Bunyan (Grettir died in a fight partly because he was weakened by a bunyan on his foot, and he was famous for once carrying a cow out of blizzard - that would be "Blue," PB's ox). One of the handful of most important works of ancient Icelandic literature.

He began his life as the lazy son of an over-indulgent mother, and indifferent father. He grew up to become the strongest man in Iceland, and the most notorious. Grettir earned fame from his enormous strength and battle-prowess, slaying powerful undead creatures, and other supernatural beings. But his dealings with mortal men, often resulted in outlawry. Despite the fact that most of his slayings of men were self-defence, "justice" went in favor of the better connected party. Enemies hunted Grettir in numbers that would easily overpower common men, but Grettir repeatedly sent his adversaries off in panicked retreat. As a daring and reckless warrior seeking fame, Grettir's potential is vastly promising...until he was cursed by Glam, the undead wraith who doomed him to a life of miserable isolation, squalor, and crime. Forced to rely on banditry in order to survive, Grettir's good name is tarnished, people strive to kill him or drive him away. A price is put on his head. Yet Grettir surpasses them all, until one enemy utilizes sorcery to bring him down once and for all.

Love the Sagas

Now this saga definitely reads like one that Stephen King got part of his main character, Roland (The Last Gunslinger), off from -;). Just a die-hard SK Constant Reader.

This is one bad a## mother f*^&er. aint no body got this foo. A really good translation, and a great story to read, 10 out of 10....

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