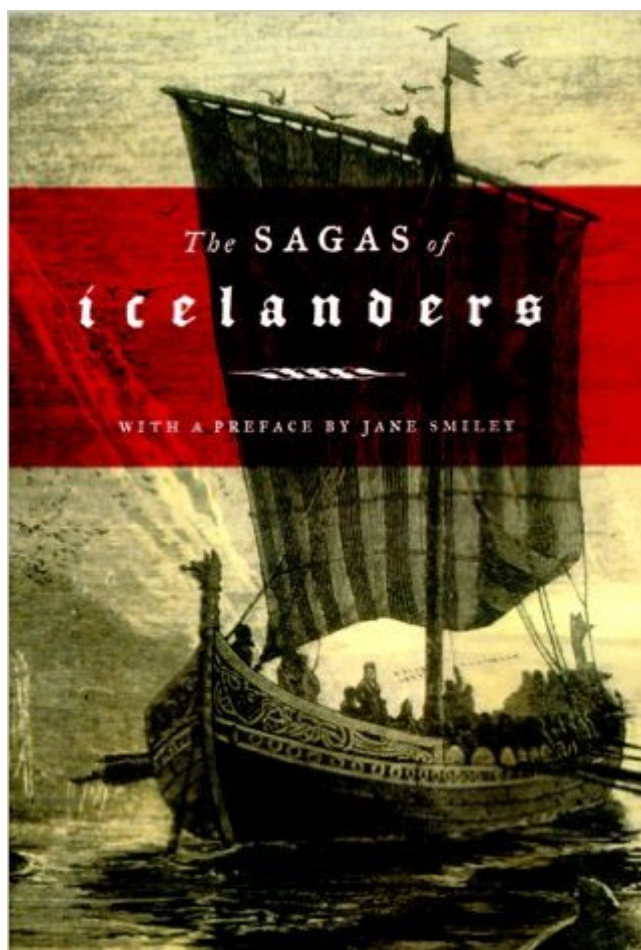


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The Sagas Of Icelanders: A Selection



Synopsis

Commemorating the 1000th anniversary of Leif Eriksson's pioneering voyage to the New World, Viking will proudly publish a major new translation of the very greatest of the Icelanders' Sagas. 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 during the Viking Age, these epic stories depict with an astonishingly modern realism the lives and deeds of the Norsemen and Norsewomen who first settled Iceland and of their descendants, who ventured farther west--to Greenland and, ultimately, the coast of North America. The Sagas of Icelanders collects a dozen of the most outstanding Sagas, including the celebrated "Vinland Sagas," which contain the oldest descriptions of the North American continent. Much more than rousing adventure narratives, though, the Sagas introduce modern readers to a now-vanished world separated from ours by a thousand years--a richly imagined and psychologically complex world, comparable in realistic effect with the novelistic genius of Austen or Dickens. The publication of these volumes is a reminder that the Icelandic Sagas can hold their own with the literature of the Mediterranean."

---Seamus Heaney, Nobel Laureate, 1995

The Icelandic Sagas remain one of the great marvels of world literature, a great human achievement."--Ted Hughes

Book Information

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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 understanding 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 Eirbyggja 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 Eirbyggja are also published in very nice translation by Penguin.

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