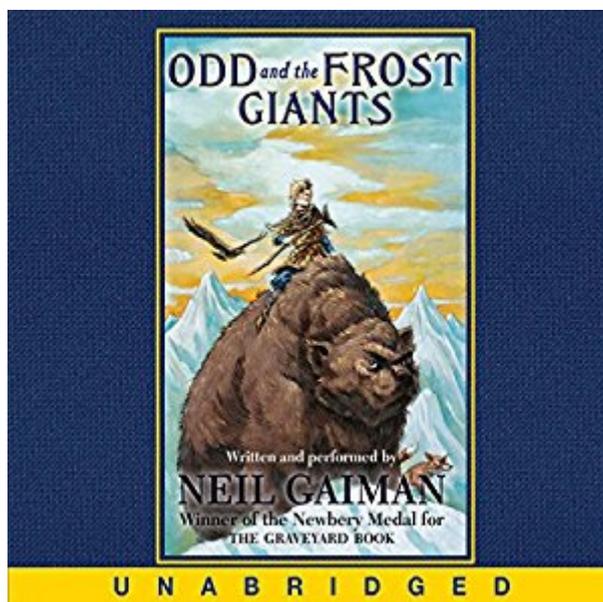


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Odd And The Frost Giants



Synopsis

Neil Gaiman takes listeners on a wild and magical trip to the land of giants and gods and back. In a village in ancient Norway lives a boy named Odd, and he's had some very bad luck: His father perished in a Viking expedition; a tree fell on and shattered his leg; the endless freezing winter is making villagers dangerously grumpy. Out in the forest Odd encounters a bear, a fox, and an eagle—three creatures with a strange story to tell. Now Odd is forced on a journey to save Asgard, city of the gods, from the Frost Giants who have invaded it. It's going to take a very special kind of twelve-year-old boy to outwit the Frost Giants, restore peace to the city of gods, and end the long winter. Someone cheerful and infuriating and clever. . . . Someone just like Odd. . . . --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 1 hour and 46 minutes

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Version: Unabridged

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Folklore #430 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy

#757 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Children's Books > Fiction

Customer Reviews

A review by Hank Wagner, co-author (with Christopher Golden and Stephen R. Bissette) of the upcoming *Prince of Stories: The Many Worlds of Neil Gaiman*, due out from St. Martins in October 2008: Gaiman wrote *Odd and the Frost Giants* as his personal contribution to World Book Day in the United Kingdom, which exists purely to inspire children to read. It's an annual event where a group of authors write books for nothing and publishers publish them for nothing. These books are then sold for £1 each to children who have been given £1 Book Tokens. On its website, the World Book Day organization ([...]) describes it as "the biggest annual event promoting the enjoyment of books and reading." Regrettably, at least for US residents, there are no current plans

to publish this charming, 14,500 word novelette in America. Happily, the book is available through .uk and it's only £1, a bargain even with current exchange rates. Be warned, however, the shipping charge will make the final cost seem relatively steep. The good news is that it's worth the cost: the story, enhanced by several illustrations from frequent Gaiman collaborator Mark Buckingham, is delightful. As you may have guessed from the title, the novelette deals with characters from Norse myth, a subject Gaiman became entranced with at a very young age. It tells the story of the crippled Viking boy Odd, who, running away from home, is befriended by a group of forest animals--a fox, a bear, and an eagle--who are far more than they seem. In truth, they are the Norse gods Loki, Thor, and Odin, respectively. Hoodwinked by a crafty and vengeful Frost Giant, they have been transformed into animals and exiled from Asgard. Odd offers his help, and travels with the gods from Midgard to their homeland of Asgard, where the plucky lad plans to bargain with the Frost Giant in attempt to save the day. No more about the story, you'll have to discover its significant pleasures on your own. Be assured though that this is vintage Gaiman, a lively, memorable tale that, although modern in its sensibilities, treats its source material in a respectful, affectionate, and humorous manner, making that material more accessible for modern readers, many of whom are likely encountering these characters and settings for the first time.

Neil Gaiman's *Odd and the Frost Giants* is a delight, a new tale in an old tradition, the mythological world of the Norse gods. Though intended for young readers, older readers can enjoy it as well. It is also a tale that reminds us that heroes come in all sizes, often from the most unlikely of beginnings, and that daring and wits can be even more important than strength and agility. A good example of how Gaiman imbues his characters with personality is shown in this scene where the boy Odd is woken by the sounds of voices in the hut where he has taken refuge along with a strange trio of animals: "It's because of you we're in this mess." "I thought we had a deal. I thought we weren't going to keep harping on about a trivial little mistake..." "You call this trivial?" And then a third voice, high and raw, screeched. "Silence." There was silence. Odd rolled over. There was a glow from the fire embers, enough to see the inside of the hut, enough to confirm to Odd that there were not another three people in there with him. It was just him and the fox and the bear and the eagle... Whatever they are, thought Odd, they don't seem to eat people. He sat up, leaned against the wall. The bear and the eagle both ignored him. The fox darted him a green-eyed glance. "You were talking," said Odd. The animals looked at Odd and at one another. If they did not actually say "Who? Us?" it was there in their expressions, in the way they held themselves. "Somebody was talking," said Odd, "and it wasn't me. There isn't anyone else in here. That means it was you lot. And there's no point in

arguing." "We weren't arguing," said the bear. "Because we can't talk." Then it said, "Oops." The fox and the eagle glared at the bear, who put a paw over its eyes and looked ashamed of itself. Odd sighed. "Which one of you wants to explain what's going on?" he said. "Nothing's going on," said the fox brightly. "Just a few talking animals. Nothing to worry about. Happens every day. We'll be out of your hair first thing in the morning." The eagle fixed Odd with its one good eye. Then it turned to the fox. "Tell!" The fox shifted uncomfortably. "Why me?" "Oh," said the bear, "I don't know. Possibly because it's all your fault?" Also, given that this story was intended to spur interest in reading, Gaiman succeeds at that as well, offering little tidbits such as this one that will entice younger readers to go beyond this story and read more: "Old Odin left his chair, and walked towards them. He wiped the goose grease from his mouth with his sleeve, smearing even more grease all over his grey beard. He said, quietly, into Odd's ear, 'Do you know what spring it was you drank from, boy? Where the water came from? Do you know what it cost me to drink there, many years ago?'" Gaiman leaves the questions unanswered. It is not hard to imagine any number of curious readers going on to find the answers themselves by reading the original Norse mythological tales that provided the background and setting for this new one. All in all, a pure pleasure to read, with very nice illustrations by Brett Helquist. Highly recommended.

This short story for children is basically everything I love about Neil Gaiman broken down into a quick 90 pages. The writing is fun and fluid with a knack for description that leaves just enough up to the imagination. The way he weaves the Norse Gods into his story is fun, exciting, and realistic. It gives just a little taste of what the Norse Gods are like, thus invoking curiosity about them in any reader (and what a better way to learn more about them than to go read Neil Gaiman's other books - American Gods, to be specific!) - which I think is exactly what is needed in a children's book. Any book that makes kids curious and inspires them to learn gets an A+ in my book. In general, I find that Gaiman does adult novels and comics better than he does children's books. At least, I used to feel that way until the awesomeness of the Graveyard Book. This book aims at a younger audience than that of the graveyard book and still manages to be fantastic for an adult audience. With Odd and the Frost Giants, Neil Gaiman shows that he is, indeed, able to take the awesomeness of his ideas and make them accessible to children. And yet, through it all, he throws in the occasional reference that children may not understand (and don't need to understand to appreciate the book) but that leave the adult riveted through the entire epic journey. All in all, this book ends up being the perfect read for a mother or father to read to their child. Or for a child just getting into books. Or for an adult with a quick half hour in the waiting room. It was just wonderful. I don't think any more needs to be said. :-)

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