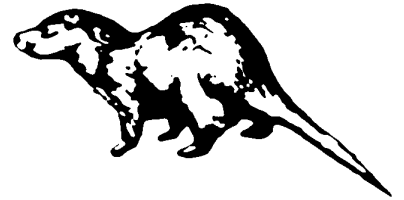


NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



EGIL'S SAGA AND VIKING POETRY RESOURCES

Egil's Praise Poem

*By sun and moon
I journeyed west,
My sea-borne tune
From Odin's breast,
My song-ship packed
With poet's art:
Its word-keel cracked
The frozen heart.*

*And now I feed
With an English king:
So to English mead
I'll word-mead bring,
Your praise my task,
My song your fame,
If you but ask
I'll sound your name.*

*These praises, King,
Won't cost you dear
That I shall sing
If you will hear:
Who beat and blazed
Your trail of red,
Till Odin gazed
Upon the dead.*

*The scream of swords,
The clash of shields,
These are true words
On battlefields:
Man sees his death
Frozen in dreams,
But Eirik's breath
Frees battle-streams.*

*The war-lord weaves
His web of fear,
Each man receives
His fated share:
A blood-red sun's
The warrior's shield,
The eagle scans
The battlefield.*

*As edges swing,
Blades cut men down.
Eirik the King
Earns his renown.*

*Break not the spell
But silent be:
To you I'll tell
Their bravery:
At clash of kings
On carrion-field
The red blade swings
At blue-stained shield.*

*When swords anoint
What man is saved?
Who gets this point
Is deep engraved:
And men like oak
From Odin's tree,
Few words they spoke
At that iron-play.*

*The edges swing,
Blades cut men down.
Eirik the King
Earns his renown.*

*The ravens dinned
At this red fare,
Blood on the wind,
Death in the air;
The Scotsmen's foes
Fed wolves their meat,
Death ends their woes
As eagles eat.*

*Carrion birds fly thick
To the body stack,
For eyes to pick
And flesh to hack:
The raven's beak
Is crimson-red,
The wolf goes seek
His daily bread.*

*The sea wolves lie
And take their ease,
But feast the sly
Wolf overseas.*

*Valkyries keep
The troops awake,
There's little sleep
When shield-walls
shake,
When arrows fly
The taut bow-string,
To bite or lie
With broken wing.*

[continued]

*The peace is torn
By flying spears,
When bows are drawn
Wolves prick their ears,
The yew-bow shrills,
The edges bite,
The warrior wills
His men to fight.*

*His arrows fly
Like swarms of bees
To feast the sly
Wolf overseas.*

*I praise the King
Throughout his land,
And keenly sing
His open band
His hand so free
With golden spoil:
But vice-like, he
Grips his own soil.*

*Bracelets of gold
He breaks in two
And, uncontrolled,
Pours gifts on you:
The lavish King
Loads you with
treasure,
And everything
Is for your pleasure.*

*On his gold arm
The bright shield
swings:
To his foes, harm:
To his friends, rings;
His fame's a feast
Of glorious war,
His name sounds east,
From shore to shore.*

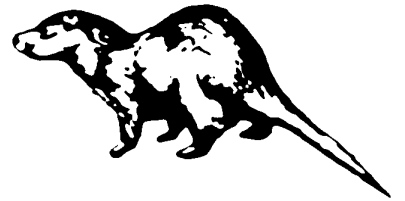
*And now my lord,
You've listened long
As word on word I built
this song:
Your source is war,
Your streams are
blood,
But my springs pour
Great Odin's flood.*

*To praise my lord
This tight mouth broke,
The word-floods
poured,
The still tongue spoke,
From my poet's-breast
These words took
wing:
Now all the rest
May learn to sing.*

Egil's Praise Poem: Glossary of words

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>borne</i> | <i>carried by</i> |
| <i>carrion</i> | <i>feeding on dead bodies</i> |
| <i>dear</i> | <i>expensive, high cost</i> |
| <i>dinned</i> | <i>made a din</i> |
| <i>fated</i> | <i>already decided by fate</i> |
| <i>foes</i> | <i>enemies</i> |
| <i>keel</i> | <i>middle plank under a boat – it sticks down into the water</i> |
| <i>kinsman</i> | <i>relative</i> |
| <i>lavish</i> | <i>generous, extravagant</i> |
| <i>mead</i> | <i>honey wine</i> |
| <i>open hand</i> | <i>generosity</i> |
| <i>point</i> | <i>sword-point</i> |
| <i>renown</i> | <i>fame</i> |
| <i>source</i> | <i>beginning</i> |
| <i>spoil</i> | <i>booty, loot</i> |
| <i>taut</i> | <i>stretched tight</i> |
| <i>Valkyries</i> | <i>goddesses. Warriors who had been killed were taken by the Valkyries from the battlefield to the halls of Valhalla.</i> |
| <i>woes</i> | <i>sorrows</i> |

NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



EGIL'S SAGA AND VIKING POETRY RESOURCES

Here is an example of one of the stanzas of Egil's Praise Poem, enlarged on a single sheet, for a pair of children to analyse.

The class was divided into pairs, with each pair looking at one stanza.

*And now my lord,
You've listened long
As word on word
I built this song:*

*Your source is war,
Your streams are blood,
But my springs pour
Great Odin's flood.*