

THE SEA OF TROLLS

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 6-8

Submitted by Regina B. Callahan, Teacher, Lockport Upper Elementary (Houma, LA) and Graduate Student at School of Library and Information Science, LSU (Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas); and David M. Bruce, Student at University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Instructor: Dorothy Grimsley)

The Sea of Trolls by Nancy Farmer. Simon & Schuster (Atheneum Books for Young Readers), 2004. 459 p.

Summary

This exciting fantasy takes place during the Viking raids of the Anglo-Saxons in the late 700s. Eleven-year-old Jack lives the simple life of a farm boy along with his younger sister, Lucy and their parents. Jack catches the eye of the local Bard, Dragon Tongue, who recruits him as his apprentice. The Bard teaches Jack about magic, the mysterious Northmen, the Jotun trolls, and far away lands. Jack's life is going well under the tutelage of the Bard until the Northmen come to raid his village. Jack and Lucy are whisked away by the Northmen's Berserkers and enslaved by their terrible leader, Olaf One-Brow. The two kidnapped children are unwilling participants in adventures on the high seas. During the voyage, Jack proves to be no common slave when he discovers that he possesses some magical powers and the ability to talk to animals. Jack's use of magic helps to save the lives of his shipmates during many dangerous encounters. Jack and Lucy eventually escape the clutches of Olaf but only to find themselves stranded in Jotunheim, the land of the trolls. It is here that Jack and Lucy face fantastic animals, a mother dragon, a cruel queen, and the wild Jotun trolls. Although the fate of the two siblings looks bleak, Jack never loses hope that he will find his way home. The book contains a list of all the characters, a map, and an appendix that describes some of the terminology.

Awards

ALA Best Books For Young Adults
ALA Notable Children's Books
Horn Book Fanfare
NYPL 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing
Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best
NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

Author's Biography

Nancy Farmer was born in Phoenix, Arizona and grew up living in a hotel located on the U.S./Mexican border. She received her B.A. from Reed College in Oregon in 1963. After college, Farmer joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to serve in India. Once back in the U.S., Farmer studied Chemistry at Merritt College in Oakland, California and also at the University of California at Berkley. She did not stay long in the U.S. after her studies; she soon moved to Africa. There, Farmer worked as a lab technician and an insect pathology technician. She met her husband in Zimbabwe and lived there for the next twenty years. Farmer was first inspired to write when reading to her four-year-old son. She realized that she would have plenty of stories to tell based on her living experiences abroad and her exposure to different cultures. Although Farmer did not

start writing novels until her 40s, she has consistently produced many unique and entertaining books for young readers.

Other Titles By Nancy Farmer

The House of the Scorpion

The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm

A Girl Named Disaster

The Warm Place

Do You Know Me

Related Titles

The Bartimaeus Trilogy (*The Amulet of Samarkand*, *The Golem's Eye*, and *Ptolemy's Gate*) by Jonathan Stroud.

Beowulf: A New Verse Translation by Seamus Heaney.

Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliett.

Dragon Rider by Cornelia Funke. (LYRC 2007 Gr. 6-8 Ballot)

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*) by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Norse Mythology: Great Stories from the Eddas by Hamilton Wright Mabie.

Peter and the Starcatchers by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson.

Classroom Connections

See **Book Browse – The Sea of Trolls**

http://www.bookbrowse.com/reading_guides/detail/index.cfm?book_number=1529

Simon Says – Sea of Trolls Reading Guide

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/book.cfm?sid=183&pid=500151&agid=10>

Excellent lesson plan for *The Sea of Trolls*. (same as Book Browse citation)

History

- Research the Saxons and the Northman. Compare and contrast the map in 793 A.D. to the present map of Europe.

Language Arts: Characterization

- Compare and contrast Olaf Half Brow and Jack; Jack and Thorgil.
- Locate examples in the book of characters strengths and weaknesses.
- Do a character analysis of the roles of the Saxons and the Northman.
- Have the students write about what the characters would be like if they lived now.

Language Arts: Mythology

- Split the class into two groups with one researching Greek mythology and the other Norse mythology. Divide both of these groups into three smaller groups with: one researching the gods, the second researching the heroes, and the third researching the monsters of the assigned mythology. Have the students present their findings to the class. After all information has been presented, use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the Greek and Norse mythologies. Discuss the relevance of mythology in *The Sea of Trolls*.

Art

- Have each student pick his or her favorite character from the book. Have them list descriptions of the characters citing page numbers as references.
- From these descriptions, have the students illustrate their character.
- Show the differences and similarities of the drawings, pointing out how there are different interpretations of characters from the same descriptions.

Drama

- Break the class up into small groups, having each group pick a scene from the book. The students will then write, direct, and perform as the characters in a short play. Encourage the students to rely on descriptive dialogue and pantomime rather than an elaborate set to illustrate action, emotion, and the setting of the scene. Each group will then take turns performing their scene in front of their peers. After each performance, discuss the effects of the scene and which dramatic elements were most effective in illustrating the action of the book.

Connections by Elizabeth Dumas, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe Grade 7

ELA Unit 1: Modern Fantasy-Through the Wardrobe (The strong thread of Norse mythology that flows through this story compliments this unit's focus on fantasy.)

Activity 2: Fantasy Book Review. This title can be included on the class list of fantasy novels for independent reading.

Activity 5: What is Next? This title is another excellent choice for the teacher-selected fantasy that students will be reading during this activity. Since the book is rather long (480 pages), it would perhaps be best for a class of strong readers.

Grade 8

ELA Unit 5: Novel

Activity 1: Sustained Silent Reading. This book can be included on a recommended reading list that students will use to self-select a novel to be read independently. It can then be used for the other follow-up activities in this unit.

Web Links

Author and Book

Amanda Craig: The Sea of Trolls

http://www.amandacraig.com/pages/childrens/reviews/sea_of_trolls.htm

Amanda Craig's review of *The Sea of Trolls* published in the *Times* (October 2004).

Book Browse – The Sea of Trolls

http://www.bookbrowse.com/reading_guides/detail/index.cfm?book_number=1529

Excellent lesson plan for *The Sea of Trolls*. (same as Simon Says citation)

Book Page – Nancy Farmer Interview

http://www.bookpage.com/0410bp/nancy_farmer.html

Includes an interview with author Nancy Farmer.

Meet Authors and Illustrators

http://www.childrenslit.com/f_nancyfarmer.html

Includes a biography of Nancy Farmer and a list of reviews and awards for her books.

Nancy Keane's Booktalks

http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/farmer_sea.htm

This site includes a booktalk for *The Sea of Trolls*.

Rickie's Picks

http://richiespicks.com/users/stories/picks/the_sea_of_trolls.html

Review of *The Sea of Trolls*.

Teenreads.com – The Sea of Trolls

<http://www.teenreads.com/reviews/0689867441.asp>

Review of book and a link to an excerpt of *The Sea of Trolls*.

Simon Says – Sea of Trolls Reading Guide

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/book.cfm?sid=183&pid=500151&agid=10>

Excellent lesson plan for *The Sea of Trolls*. (same as Book Browse citation)

Suite101.com – An Interview with Nancy Farmer

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/african_history/97782

An informative interview of Nancy Farmer by Jessica Powers.

Mythology**Mythweb.com – Greek Mythology**

<http://www.mythweb.com/>

Information about Greek myths includes pictures, stories, and lineage of the Greek gods, mortals, and monsters.

Norse Mythology

<http://todd.reimer.com/norse.html>

This site includes information on Norse mythology, including a family tree and stories.

Timeless Myths

<http://www.timelessmyths.com/>

Contains information on Greek/Roman, Norse, Celtic, and Arthurian mythologies.

History**BBC – History – Vikings**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/>

This site has sections on Viking weapons and warfare, a 3-D virtual reality Viking farmhouse, educational videos, and an extensive history of the people.