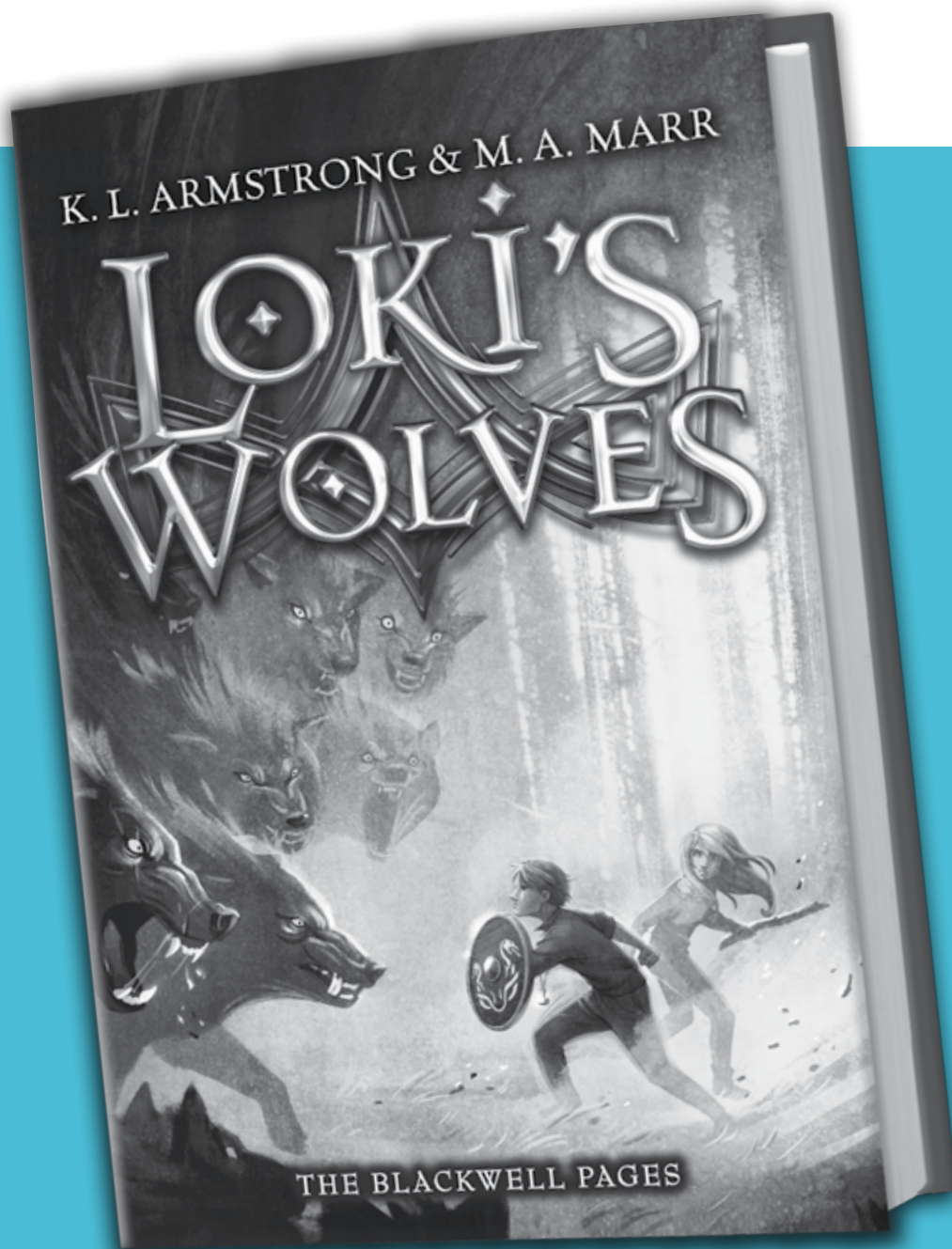


LOKI'S WOLVES



curriculum connections

- ❖ Mythology
- ❖ Adventure
- ❖ Friendship

Ages 8 to 12

by
K. L. Armstrong and M. A. Marr

BUILDING BACKGROUND

Who's Who Exhibit



The pantheon of Norse mythology may not be as familiar to students as Greek gods and monsters, so a short research project could help build a foundation for understanding *Loki's Wolves*. Creating a “Who’s Who of Norse Mythology” exhibit is an interactive way to prepare students for reading. Begin with

a list of Norse gods, monsters, and creatures for students to research. Then, ask each student (or small groups of students) to choose one character from the list. They should complete a short “biography” of the mythological figure, including a physical description, explanation of any significant connections to other mythological figures, and any other important information (such as special abilities or powers). Each student or team should prepare an exhibit with a poster or slide show designed to teach others about their mythological figure. Students can then visit the other exhibits to learn all about the role of the different gods or creatures in Norse mythology.

COMPREHENSION CONNECTION

Comparing and Contrasting

The descendants of the Norse Gods have some of their ancestors’ attributes. Make a chart of the main characters, listing their traits, and then compare and contrast them with the ancestor they descended from. This could be an extension activity after completing the previous activity. In what ways are the characters in *Loki's Wolves* the same as their ancestors? Use evidence from the text to show how they are the same. In what ways are they different? Encourage students to support their answers with text-based details.

VOCABULARY

Throughout *Loki's Wolves* there are references to many places and events, but they can be difficult to pronounce or understand. Most of the words of Norwegian origin are explained quite clearly by reading context clues. Ask students to create a vocabulary guide for future readers by finding examples of words that may be confusing to non-Norwegian speakers or people unfamiliar with Norse mythology. Then, have students create a companion dictionary, defining the words they find. This exercise can be a service to future readers, as well as a way to practice using context clues to understand unknown words.

WRITING

Collaborative Story

The authors of *Loki's Wolves*, K. L. Armstrong and M. A. Marr, collaborated on the book, each choosing to write one or two characters’ points of view. Have students experiment with the collaborative writing process by creating a short story of their own with a partner. Before writing, have students choose a partner and decide how the work will be divided. Will each student choose a different character’s viewpoint, will they choose to craft each paragraph together, or will they approach the task in a different way? Ask students to submit a written plan of work, before writing, explaining how they think they will complete the story. Then, after the story is complete, have students reflect on the experience. Did they follow their plan? Was it easier or more difficult to write a story together? Which parts were easier? Which parts were more difficult? Share stories and reflections as a class.

SCIENCE

Portals?

Laurie discovers she can open a portal. The concept of “portals” is found in many science fiction and fantasy novels, video games, and movies. Recently, however, they have also been discussed in the science community, particularly by astronomers. NASA has discovered evidence

of portals in space. Have students read about this recent discovery (or watch the short video) at http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2008/30oct_ftes/ and then summarize what they have learned. Next, ask students to compare NASA's view of portals with the type of portal Laurie discovers she can open. In what ways are they the same? In what ways are they different?

I Dreamed a Dream...But what does it mean?

Dreams play an important role in *Loki's Wolves*. Matt's dream is considered a very important sign by the elders in his community, Laurie dreams she is a fish (a shape Loki could take in the myths), and the Mara use nightmares to manipulate the descendants. Many cultures around the world and throughout time consider dreams to hold hidden truths. There are also many books and websites devoted to dream interpretation, but experts disagree about the importance and meaning of dreams. Have students research different theories about dreams, and then choose one to support. Next, have them write an opinion essay, designed to convince others of their viewpoint. They should support their ideas with research-based evidence, and use at least three different sources.

Mini Science Fair



Matt Thorsen creates a science fair exhibit based on his dream. He used a modified railroad track to show shadow wolves chasing two glowing balls. He connects his project to science by saying it is a way to explain eclipses, noting that many cultures have stories and myths to explain why the sun disappears and how it could return.

Have students research eclipses and create their own science projects to explain them. Have a mini science fair to display students' projects and experiments. Ask students to reflect on their projects. Do they think their science fair projects could win against Matt's? Why or why not?

Tornado Preparedness



When the tornado touches down in Blackwell, Fen, Laurie, and Matt run toward the longboat and hide inside. Ask students to research what to do in case of a real tornado. Then, challenge them to create a video, audio, or print public service announcement, explaining how to prepare for a tornado and what to do in case

they are faced with one. After sharing the PSAs, ask students to reflect in writing on the decision made by Matt, Fen, and Laurie to hide in the longboat. Based on their research, was the longboat the best place for them to seek shelter? Encourage students to refer to their research as they try to prove their point.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Viking Longboat Research

Fen, Laurie, and Matt hide in a replica of a Viking longboat in the center of Blackwell. Encourage students to learn more about real longboats through a virtual visit to the Viking Ship Museum in Norway: <http://www.khm.uio.no/english/visit-us/viking-ship-museum/> Students can learn about the three longboats on display by reading the articles and looking at the pictures. Have students show their understanding by writing an informational article about either the Gokstad, Oseberg, or Tune. They should include a description of the boat, tell where it was found, and discuss what its discovery helps us understand about life in that time period.

Mapping the Book

Although Blackwell, South Dakota is a fictional town, we know it is within walking distance of Mount Rushmore. Using an outline map of South Dakota, or a program such as Google Earth, ask students to identify the main settings discussed in *Loki's Wolves*. For each place, have students locate it, and tell why it is important to the story. Students may want to locate: Mount Rushmore, Lead (and the Black Hills Mining Museum), Deadwood, the Black Hills, and

Rapid City. If students want to integrate technology, they can learn how to create their own “Lit Trip” by visiting: http://jlancaster.pbworks.com/f/Building+Lit+Trips_Basics.pdf. Hold onto the maps because the next two books may take readers on an even longer journey.

Mount Rushmore: All About Quiz



Mount Rushmore is visited by almost three million people every year; it also is featured in many cartoons and movies, but it may be a place students have never visited in person. In fact, they may be surprised to discover that many adults know very little about it. Ask students to apply their research skills by creating an

“All About Quiz” focused on Mount Rushmore. Ask them to research interesting facts about the monument, and then use those to create a short quiz to see if they can stump an adult in their life. Some possible questions might include: “Which famous suffragette ALMOST had her face carved into the mountain?” or “The sculptors rejected the original location for the monument. Where was the original site and why did they reject it?”

The Wild Wild West: Fact and Fiction

As the descendants wander through Moriah Cemetery in Deadwood, Matt shares some interesting stories about the people who once lived there. In small groups, ask students to pretend they are writing an informational article about the famous people of Deadwood. Have each group choose one of the people Matt mentioned: Wild Bill, Calamity Jane, Seth Bullock, Preacher Smith, and Potato Creek Johnny. Then, have them research that person, focusing on reporting only the facts they can support with primary source evidence. There are a number of websites and tourist-focused resources they can use, but they should try to focus on the skill of separating fact from fiction. After each group presents on the person they chose, reflect as a class on the process. Was it hard to find primary source documents? Did they find any secondary sources? How difficult or easy was it to separate solid evidence from stories and legends?

MOVEMENT AND GAMES

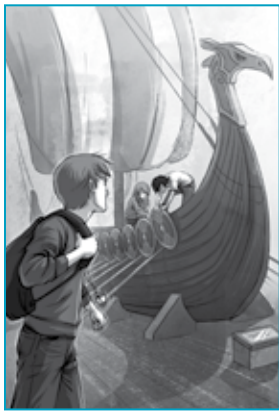
Showdown: I Choose...Odin!!!!

Have you ever wondered who would win in a match between Thor and Zeus? Help students connect Greek mythology and Norse mythology by creating a “Showdown” game. To do this, students should brainstorm a list of Greek gods and Norse gods. Then, have students work in small groups to create character cards for each god. They should list the powers of each god and assign them a numerical value, based on their powers. Each group should discuss together (using evidence from myths they have read) how to rank them according to ability and power. Students can create illustrations for the front of each card. After all cards are complete, students can have a “Showdown,” by playing a game with their deck of cards. Following the basic rules of the game “war,” students can turn over cards to see which side (Greek or Norse) will win. As an extension, students may want to add energy cards or other specialty cards to change the game mechanic, making it more like a trading card game. Each group should be able to explain their reasoning behind WHY they ranked their mythological figures as they did; they should use evidence from specific myths to support their numerical rankings.

Hnefatafl

Matt Thorsen plays the ancient Viking game of hnefatafl against his grandfather. Tafl is a strategy game with basic rules that can be easily learned. Challenge students to create their own Hnefatafl boards (either on paper or they can be on cloth or wood). Basic directions for how to paint or draw the 11x11 squares can be found on the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History’s website <http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/learning/boardgame.html>. If students just want to play without worrying about designing a board, there are also a number of online versions of Hnefatafl such as: <http://alumnus.caltech.edu/~leif/games/Hnefatafl/hnefatafl11CA.html> or <http://tafl.cynningstan.org.uk/> Challenge students to learn the rules and then host their own Hnefatafl tournament among their classmates or with other classes. They could even serve the participants traditional Viking foods, such as rakfish and whey. Yum!

ART



Inside the main hall of the rec center in Blackwell, the walls are covered with mosaics depicting scenes of Thor fighting. Mosaics are traditionally made by using shards of pottery or glass to create a picture. Detailed mosaics are often difficult even for the most experienced artists, but students can certainly try to create a mosaic

using grout and tile. As an alternative, students may want to create a photo mosaic of the most exciting scenes in *Loki's Wolves*. To begin, have students identify the scenes they want to depict. Then, have them recreate the scenes using costumes and props. Take a digital picture of the re-enactment. Next, using a computer program such as EasyMosa or Mozaika, students can create a photo mosaic. Just like a real mosaic, the main picture will be recreated using smaller pieces, although in this case, it will use thumbnail size pictures. Download the created mosaics, and create a slideshow of images that can help summarize the main events of *Loki's Wolves*, just as the mosaics on the wall of the rec center depicted Thor's greatest battles.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Disaster Relief: Making a Difference

Matt participates in many charity events to raise money for victims of natural disasters. Ask students to brainstorm service project ideas that could help a community that has recently faced a natural disaster, and then create a plan designed to help. It could be collecting books for a library damaged in a hurricane, or collecting coins in order to give a monetary donation to a service organization, or some other fundraising project. If there is more than one idea, students can hone their speaking skills by trying to persuade the rest of the class to support one project over another. The idea, though, is to empower students and show them they can make a difference.

QUESTION GUIDE:

Chapters 1-3

The authors of *Loki's Wolves* introduce three main characters in the first chapter: Matt, Fen, and Laurie. What are your first impressions of the three characters? What information is shared in the chapter that supports your impressions?

What is Laurie's relationship with her mother? How does her mother feel about Fen? Why do you think she feels this way?

Chapters 4-6

What role did stories about the battles of Thor play in the life of the Thorsens? How did these stories help shape their identities?

Ragnarök is the epic battle foretold in Norse mythology, an event that will result in the death of a number of mythological figures and bring about natural disasters. What does Matt learn about Ragnarök and his expected role? How does he feel about this? Use specific details from the text to support your answer.

Laurie meets a boy named Owen at the festival. What do you think is the significance of this meeting? What does Owen say that seems confusing to Laurie? What might this mean?

How does Fen react to Laurie's description of her dream? Why do you think he reacts this way?

Chapters 7-9

When Matt follows the little girl back to the recreation center, he overhears his grandfather talking to the group. What does Matt discover about his grandfather's plans? What does this mean for Matt?

What does Matt's grandfather hope will happen during Ragnarök? How does he justify what will happen to Matt as their champion?

The Norns, according to tradition, gave Thor advice. How do they help Matt?

Matt tries to befriend Fen by offering him corndogs. Fen seems to be offended, and soon they are fighting. Outside influences change the situation. Why do you think Fen was offended? What are these outside influences that change his response? How do things change?

The Thorsens have always been seen by others as a family that has many advantages. Using specific examples from the book, do you agree with this idea? How has Matt been treated throughout his life?

Chapters 10-13

Who are the Valkyries? What information do they share? What items do the descendants need to find?

How did Fen feel about Matt Thorsen in the beginning of the story? How are these feelings starting to change? Use specific details from the beginning of the story and more recent chapters to support your answer.

How did Matt, Fen, and Laurie work together to defeat the trolls? What contribution did they each make to the team effort?

Chapters 14-16

Laurie says, “We just hadn’t stopped to think of regular problems. Like the fact we’re all runaways.” What events prompt her to say this? Why are there All Points Bulletins out for Laurie and Matt, but not Fen?

What is Fen’s first impression of Ray and Reyna? Why does he call them Goth Barbie and Ken?

Fen feels an internal conflict; he feels guilty for something he has done. What has he done? How do you think Laurie and Matt will react if they find out?

“We just hadn’t stopped to think of regular problems. Like the fact we’re all runaways.”

Chapters 17-19



When it seems they are trapped by the trolls, Laurie discovers something about herself. What does she discover? Do you think this might change the way Fen and Matt see her? Why or why not?

What is Baldwin’s reaction to meeting the other descendants? How does his reaction differ from the response of Ray and Reyna?

How would you describe Baldwin? What is his personality like? What are his special abilities? Why is Laurie surprised by the way Fen responds to Baldwin? Use specific details from the text to support your thoughts.

Write a brief summary of the story Matt tells about Balder. If the myths are supposed to come true, what might this story mean?

The Mara can make people see things that are not there and they seem to have the ability to use a person’s deepest fears against him. What does Matt see when the Mara create a living nightmare for him? What does this reveal about him? What does Fen see? What does this show about his fears?

In “Trouble in Pink Boots,” the chapter title implies one of the characters is trouble. Who do you think this refers to in the story? Does it make a difference that this chapter is told from Fen’s perspective? Explain.

Chapters 20-22

When Matt and Baldwin enter the Raider’s camp, Skull reveals the secret Fen has been keeping. How does Matt feel about this information when he first hears it?

What does Matt talk to Fen about when they return to Baldwin’s house? Is Matt’s reaction similar to the one Fen imagined? What about Laurie’s?

Chapters 23-25

Why does knowing the myth of Balder help explain what might have happened to Baldwin? Refer back to your summary and connect Baldwin's situation with the story Matt told.

Looking back at previous chapters, were there any warning signs that one of the group should not be trusted? What did Astrid do to try to raise doubts or stir up negative feelings among the descendants? Use specific details to explain your answer.

What do you think happened to Paul? What might this mean?

Based on the last chapter, what do you predict will happen next?

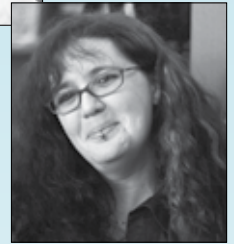
Final Reflection:

Although this is only the first book in a trilogy, the characters in this story have already changed and grown. Which character do you think has grown the most? Support your answer with evidence from the beginning, middle, and end of the story to show how the character you chose changes and develops over time.

about the authors



K. L. Armstrong



M. A. Marr

K. L. Armstrong & M. A. Marr had been friends for several years and found themselves spending hours talking about mythology and monsters. One sleepy morning, they realized that M. A.'s second last name is Norwegian. (The similarity between that name and "Midgard Serpent" is totally coincidental.) With that link, in addition to K. L.'s love for tackling creatures in video games when not writing (and sometimes when she's supposed to be writing), their monster and myth fixation, and the books they read with their 11 to 13-year-old sons, they knew they had to write the Blackwell Pages.

K. L. Armstrong and M. A. Marr invite you to visit them at www.blackwellpages.com.

about the book



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"The runes have spoken. We have our champion...Matthew Thorsen."

Matt hears the words, but he can't believe them. He's Thor's representative? Destined to fight trolls, monstrous wolves and giant serpents...or the world ends? He's only 13.

While Matt knew he was a modern-day descendent of Thor, he's always lived a normal kid's life. In fact, most people in the small town of Blackwell, South Dakota, are direct descendants of either Thor or Loki, including Matt's classmates Fen and Laurie Brekke. No big deal.

But now Ragnarök is coming, and it's up to the champions to fight in the place of the long-dead gods. Matt, Laurie, and Fen's lives will never be the same as they race to put together an unstoppable team, find Thor's hammer and shield, and prevent the end of the world.