



# The Saga of the Volsungs (Penguin Classics)

By Jesse L. Byock, Anonymous

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**The Saga of the Volsungs (Penguin Classics)** By Jesse L. Byock, Anonymous

**One of the great books of world literature--an unforgettable tale of jealousy, unrequited love, greed, and vengeance.**

Based on Viking Age poems and composed in thirteenth-century Iceland, **The Saga of the Volsungs** combines mythology, legend, and sheer human drama in telling of the heroic deeds of Sigurd the dragon slayer, who acquires runic knowledge from one of Odin's Valkyries. Yet the saga is set in a very human world, incorporating oral memories of the fourth and fifth centuries, when Attila the Hun and other warriors fought on the northern frontiers of the Roman empire. In his illuminating Introduction Jesse L. Byock links the historical Huns, Burgundians, and Goths with the extraordinary events of this Icelandic saga. With its ill-fated Rhinegold, the sword reforged, and the magic ring of power, the saga resembles the Nibelungenlied and has been a primary source for such fantasy writers as J. R. R. Tolkien and for Richard Wagner's Ring cycle.

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## **The Saga of the Volsungs (Penguin Classics) By Jesse L. Byock, Anonymous Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #28057 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2000-01-01
- Released on: 2000-01-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.80" h x .41" w x 5.00" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 160 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Professor Byock is to be thanked for producing an eminently readable English version of the saga which will undoubtedly be well received . . . and which should do much to stimulate interest in the field."--"Saga

#### Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

#### From the Inside Flap

"This is a book of the highest importance. No one should attempt to teach about Viking society or claim to understand it without being familiar with this chilling and enduring myth."—Eleanor Searle, author of *Predatory Kinship & the Creation of Norman Power*

"Byock's translation is excellent, but his thorough introduction is of equal scholarly importance. . . . His section on Richard Wagner's use of the Volsung material in writing his *Ring* will expand the topic toward modern Wagnerians."—Michael Bell, University of Colorado

"*The Saga of the Volsungs* is one of the most important texts of Old Icelandic literature, with its treatment of Old Scandinavian heroic traditions. . . . The most difficult part of the text to translate is, of course, the poetry, but also here the translator has been successful."—Vésteinn Olason, University of Oslo

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