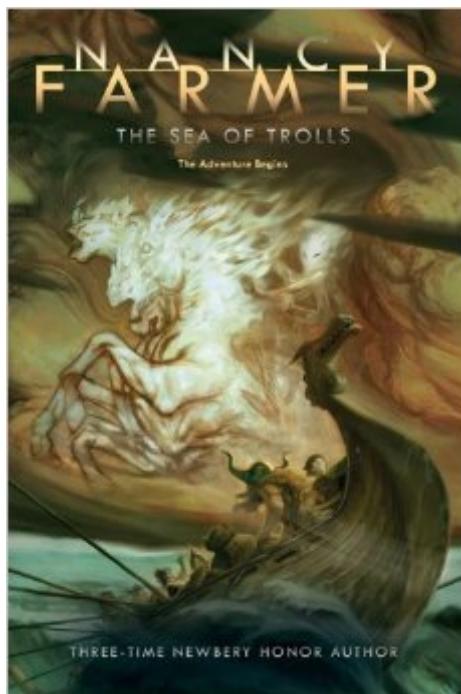


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The Sea Of Trolls (Sea Of Trolls Trilogy (Paperback))



Synopsis

Jack was eleven when the berserkers loomed out of the fog and nabbed him. "It seems that things are stirring across the water," the Bard had warned. "Ships are being built, swords are being forged." "Is that bad?" Jack had asked, for his Saxon village had never before seen berserkers. "Of course. People don't make ships and swords unless they intend to use them." The year is A.D. 793. In the next months, Jack and his little sister, Lucy, are enslaved by Olaf One-Brow and his fierce young shipmate, Thorgil. With a crow named Bold Heart for mysterious company, they are swept up into an adventure-quest in the spirit of *The Lord of the Rings*. Award-winner Nancy Farmer has never told a richer, funnier tale, nor offered more timeless encouragement to young seekers than "Just say no to pillaging."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thrice honored by whoever awards the Newbery award, Nancy Farmer turns her attention from Africa to medieval Norway in "The Sea of Trolls." Weaving legends and fact together, Farmer crafts a thrilling, magical, and hugely entertaining story set in the old Norse legends. Jack was thrilled when the Bard took him on as his apprentice, especially when the strange old man taught him to do magic -- or rather, to "use the life force." (Use the Force, Jack!) But his life is suddenly thrown into disarray when an evil Nightmare drives the Bard mad, and a band of berserkers captures Jack and his little sister Lucy. Now Jack is at the questionable mercy of Olaf One-Brow, who fortunately is pleased to have captured a skald (bard). But things go wrong again as soon as they arrive at Olaf's

home. The sullen shield-maiden Thorgil gives Lucy as a present to the half-troll queen Frith, who is initially pleased by the pretty little girl. But then Jack accidentally says a spell that reveals the queen's true appearance (and it's not a pretty sight). Now the queen threatens to kill Lucy unless Jack goes to the legendary Mimir's well, and finds a way to reverse the spell. But Mimir's well lies in the middle of Jotunheim, a hideous wasteland full of trolls, dragons, carnivore plants and enormous beasts. It's hard to find a fantasy as textured as this one is. Farmer weaves history (Viking berserkers and the destruction of the Holy Isle) with legends (Jotunheim, trolls, Norse gods and Yggdrasil), and never makes you suspend your belief that it could have been like this. Plus there's a bit of Irish druidry, all wrapped up in the growing friendship between the Bard and Jack. The book is worth reading alone for the Bard's insights into nature and happiness. But unlike many less talented writers, Farmer doesn't make everything simple. The berserkers slaughter or enslave whole villages, yet they can be kind and honorable as well. Same with the trolls. And wrapped up in her grim tale of pillage and slavery, Farmer works in some humor as well. "Just say no to pillaging"? Priceless. Jack evolves wonderfully over the book, turning from an ordinary farm boy into a sensitive, intelligent bard. Thorgil takes a rather long time to become sympathetic, although Farmer creates a realistic background to explain why she's such a pill. Nancy Farmer creates another classic in "Sea of Trolls," a magical blend of history and myth. Remember -- just say no to pillaging.

"He dragged Jack to the campfire and selected a knife for him to carry. 'This is for your protection. You're not to join in the fight,' Olaf said." 'Don't worry,' said Jack." 'I know how exciting pillaging is,' the giant said fondly, ruffling Jack's hair. It felt like a blow. 'No matter how much you're tempted, just say no.'" 'Just say no to pillaging. You got it.' "Despite reading some of her consistently award-winning tales, many of you may not be aware of how funny Nancy Farmer can be. But for those who have gotten to spend any time around her it's no surprise to encounter all sorts of terrific humor in her fabulous, fantastical new adventure, THE SEA OF TROLLS. And for anyone who has read Gordon Korman's SON OF THE MOB, with all of Vince's so-called "uncles" bearing wacky names, you'll understand why that book comes to mind as Nancy Farmer introduces us to the likes of Ivar the Boneless, Einar the Ear-Hoarder, Pig Face, Dirty Pants, Eric Pretty-Face, Eric the Rash, and Magnus the Mauler. Eleven-year-old Jack, who had been happily apprenticing with The Bard, and Jack's five-year-old sister, Lucy, are captured and enslaved by the Northmen and head off in their custody to destinations unknown. The Holy Isle that Jack sees through the haze is Lindisfarne. The Holy Isle's destruction in A.D. 793, which marked the onset of two hundred years of Viking raids on Great Britain, provides readers with a historic reference point for this year's great epic adventure

story. Farmer packs THE SEA OF TROLLS' 450 pages full of humor, history, mythology, and adventure. This is a deceptively complex story, beyond the mere fact that readers encounter Vikings, trolls, dragons, Beowulf, big-mouth fathers, and all sorts of other good stuff in the same book. What readers (and Jack) are left to sort out at the end of the odyssey are their feelings about the berserkers--those Northmen invaders with whom Lucy and Jack spend all of that time. On one hand, the siblings and the berserkers have all become so close to each other as they share stories, meals, and life and death struggles of immense proportion. Through those experiences, and despite their beliefs and customs being so different from his own, Jack has repeatedly seen and felt their humanity. As readers, we come to know and love the violent and smelly Olaf and Thorgil, and their wild and wacky comrades. On the other hand, even as Jack has to steel himself for having to say good-bye to them, he has to recognize (as we also have to) that the berserkers' intent--indeed their need, if their civilization is to survive--is to return to Jack's Britain again and again, robbing and pillaging and enslaving and murdering and partaking in those other activities that my eighth grade science teacher would repeatedly tell us about. "That's why you're genetically all a little bit of everything!" insisted old Mr. Max Krenis in his white lab coat and spectacles. So how do we as readers feel about the berserkers' need to invade in order to survive? How would we feel if we were Jack? How does "Love thine enemies" relate to the story? How does the Stockholm Syndrome fit in? How will readers relate all this to our being at war right now, and to the widespread suspicion of all people from that part of the world? But there's still more to THE SEA OF TROLLS. In fact, there is a whole 'nother story before Olaf One-Brow and his homies even show up in Britain the first time. The tale begins with Jack and Lucy, their family, and the Bard. Jack's a bright kid with an overbearing father who dotes on little Lucy. The Bard is a mysterious old guy who showed up a couple of years earlier, moved into the ancient Roman house overlooking the sea, and is provided for by the community. One day when Jack is delivering provisions to the Bard, he invites Jack back for lunch. The relationship that develops between Jack and the Bard is so heartwarming that I'd be happy to just keep going back and reading the first portion of the book again and again. The old man takes the beaten-down boy and, as he teaches him song, story, nature, and wisdom, he works to make Jack understand what a special kid he really is. And, oh what stories the Bard does tell him. Then, that time as an apprentice ends for Jack with the arrival of the long ships. And the real journey begins. THE SEA OF TROLLS nearly defies categorization, there are so many sides to it. And I couldn't begin to recount what Shari tried to explain to me about all of Nancy Farmer's allusions to traditional mythologies. But the humor, the excitement and danger, the history, and the characters who are real enough to cause you to really mourn the end of the book make THE SEA

OF TROLLS the latest success in the career of one of the great storytellers of our time.

Bought this book for my 12-year old son who might read one book a year on his own. And very slowly at that. I constantly buy him books hoping he will get interested and read them, since his reading needs improvement. Well, he loved this book so much, he literally couldn't put it down, and finished it in record time, all the while telling me about the story. He even asked me if the author, Nancy Farmer, wrote any more books.

Nancy Farmer grows into a better writer with each new work (and she started out as a darned good one). The Sea of Trolls is a Viking fantasy story that follows in the footsteps of the existing canon of Norse myth and literature, and though fantasy, is an insightful and interesting look into that bygone culture. It succeeds both because it is strongly plotted and at the same time isn't merely an adventure tale. The characters are no mere cardboard cut-outs, but living, breathing beings, complex in their motivations and at the same time subject to the cultural and personal backgrounds from which they arise. Farmer pulls no punches. These are not politically correct, sanitized versions of Norsemen. They are based firmly in anthropologically correct Viking culture. Which leads to some intense, and at times, ugly moments in the story. Not ugly in a pejorative sense, but simply ugly in a literal, descriptive sense. I won't give away plot points, but suffice it to say that this book is an excellent read. Highly recommended.

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