



# An interview with Francesca Simon: The Lost Gods

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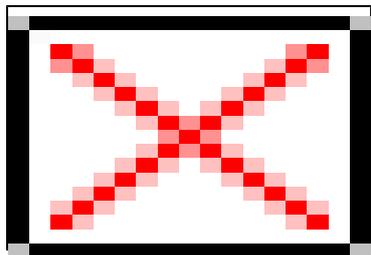
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Byline:

Francesca Simon answers questions on **The Lost Gods**.

Francesca Simon on her new book **The Lost Gods**



**You've described your new book as 'The Norse gods meet the X Factor.' Can you tell us a little more about that?**

**The Lost Gods** is about fame and celebrity and religion, involving the Norse gods coming down to earth?literally, in an effort to regain their worshippers. I am fascinated by the idea of fame in the Norse sense, of fame for great deeds, versus today's idea of famous for being famous. So we have Gods entering talent shows, modelling, playing football?all very funny. Oh, and fighting frost giants.

**What appealed to you about having a pagan Britain for your story**

I wanted to write about a modern Britain where people still worship the old Viking gods because Christianity never happened, so that Wodenism is the state religion, with an Archpriest in Copenhagen, etc. I've had to reconstruct a religion based on the myths, so I have 9 commandments, and to have a legal system based on retribution as well as punishment. I've also been struck by the similarities between the Norse idea of people being fated to be lucky or unlucky, which seems to chime with our own harsh times that the poor are to blame for their poverty.

**Are there any new characters that we didn't meet in *The Sleeping Army*?**

The gods have much bigger roles, and there is a heartless PR named Veronica, who I find quite funny, as she evaluates the gods purely in marketing terms. 'Your styling is terrible. Your brand is old and tired.' Freya's mother Clare also plays a larger role, as she unfortunately gets hold of one of the apples of youth?

**What are the different challenges faced in writing these books in comparison to those for your younger readers?**

They're a lot longer, for a start. I spent over a year writing and researching **The Sleeping Army**, and the same again for **The Lost Gods**. But these books engage a different part of me: I'm able to use all my interest in the Middle Ages, and in mythology, but to comic effect.

**What do you hope children take away from reading *The Lost Gods*?**

I hope they fall in love with mythology, and also think about fame in our culture. Children enjoy thinking about how worlds are structured and created, and I hope looking at our modern world without Christianity will be thought-

provoking. I was surprised myself how close our society is to our Viking past, especially the current attitude that the poor are to blame for their misfortune. I also think the emphasis on consumption and living for today is Norse. Both cultures behave as if there is no afterlife, so achieving fame in this life is everything, as that is the only immortality you will ever have. Fame is heaven. As Veronica sums it up: 'Gods want to be worshipped. We want to worship Gods. The only question is, which Gods? You could say, 'Who gets our vote??'

### **In what ways do think ancient mythology is still relevant and important for modern day children?**

Mythology reveals our universal fears, hopes, desires, presented in some of the greatest and most powerful stories ever told. Heroes destroyed by their weaknesses; passion; power, its use and misuse?what could be more relevant? These stories are every child's birthright.

### **The first story was set in the gods' home of Asgard - did you enjoy bringing the action back to contemporary (if alternative)London**

Absolutely loved it. I had the fun and the challenge of thinking about how our modern world would be if people still worshipped the old Anglo-Saxon and Viking gods?what would be the same, what would be different. So no Barts hospital, as there are no saints. (It's Baldr's hospital, since you ask.)

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**Source URL (retrieved on Jan '20):** <http://savfikh.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/202/childrens-books/articles/an-interview-with-francesca-simon-the-lost-gods>

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