

# Anglo - Saxon Runes



# Learning Objectives

- 1. We know that Anglo Saxons used runes as their alphabet.**
- 2. We realise that historians use these runes to find out what happened .**

# Anglo - Saxon Runes

The letters of the alphabets of the Anglo Saxons,  
were called runes.

Runes were letters used by the Saxons to write  
short messages of ownership, like  
"This belongs to Beowulf".

They were also used to write inscriptions on  
gravestones, like  
"Here lies Alfred. We miss him".

There are 28 characters in this Runic Alphabet.  
Although this number seems to vary!

The Alphabet is called a 'Futhork' from the first 6 letters.

Are the letters the same as ours?

F	U	TH	O	R	C	G	W	H	N	I	J	Z
f	u	th	o	r	c	g	w	h	n	i	j	z

P	X	S	T	B	E	M	L	NG	D	Æ
p	x	s	t	b	e	m	l	ng	d	æ

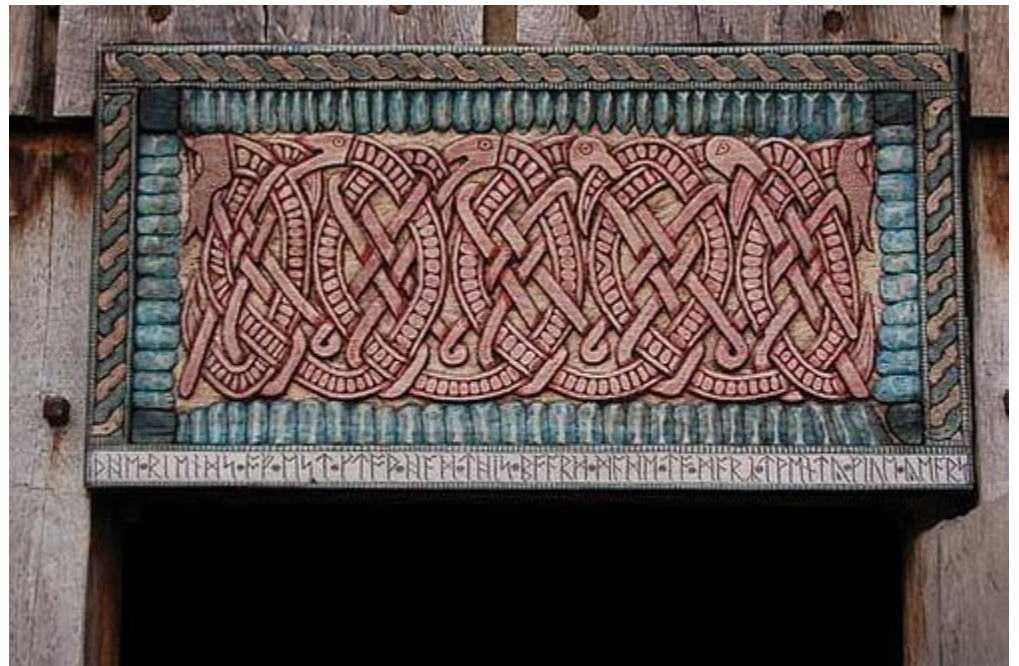
A	Æ	Y	EA
a	æ	y	ea

# Carving of Runes

- They were usually carved on wood or stone (not written in books).
- The runes consist mostly of vertical and diagonal marks, with notably fewer horizontal marks or curves.
- It is thought that runes were designed this way to help carving in wood.
- Runes were thought to have magical powers and Saxons thought they would protect them from illness and danger.



Where can  
we see  
runes?



# What do runes tell us?

- Historians use runes to find out information from the past.
- The earliest surviving runes are dated to about A.D. [200](#).
- These early runes up to about A.D. [650](#) appear to all use the same "[futhark](#)".
- Most of these older inscriptions are very short and cryptic, and in most cases it is hard to translate them or even be sure what language they are.

Can we de-code this?

þ M · H P B B I ↑

P R

þ M R M · F + N · B F K h · F X F I t

F U P P R H X P N t I \* Z  
f u t h o r c g w h n i j z

C Y Y ↑ B M M Γ X H X  
p x s t b e m l n g d æ

F F U Y  
a æ y ea



# The famous book ...

## The Hobbit

### Or

## There and Back Again

The Author J.R.R. Tolkien uses a variant of the Anglo-Saxon runes for the writing on Thrór's map.

Can we translate it?

Look at the symbols on the compass points

↑ East lie the Iron hills  
where is Dain.

The  
Lonely  
Mountain

Here was Girion  
lord in Dale

the Running River

There is  
the gateway  
of the Long  
Lake

Here of old was Thrain  
King under the Mountain

The Desolation  
of Smaug

far  
 to the North  
 are  
 the Grey Mountains  
 the Withered Heath  
 whence came the

Great Worms.

In Esjaroth upon  
the Long Lake  
dwell Men

[illegible]

Here flows the  
Forest River

West lies Mirkwood the Great  
there are Spiders.

Elvenking

Thror's Map

# Can you write using runes?

- Can you write your name using the runes?
- You may have to design your own rune if there is a letter missing.
- Can you write a secret message and then get someone else to de-code it?
- Can you carve your name into the clay?
- Super Challenge de-code the message on the map!