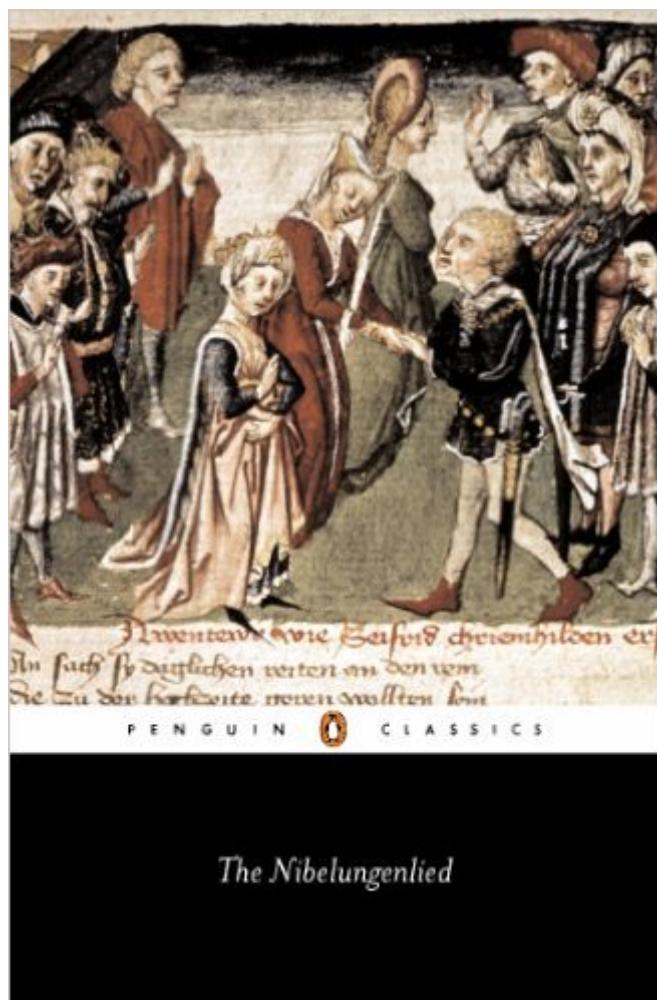


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# The Nibelungenlied: Prose Translation (Penguin Classics)



*The Nibelungenlied*



## Synopsis

A story of guile, treachery, loyalty and desperate courage. This great German epic poem of murder and revenge recounts with particular strength and directness the progress of Siegfried's love for the peerless Kriemhild, the wedding of Gunther - her brother - and Brunhild, the quarrel between the two queens, Hagen's treacherous murder of Siegfried, and Kriemhild's eventual triumph. Composed nearly eight hundred years ago by an unnamed poet, the *Nibelungenlied* is the principal literary expression of those heroic legends of which Richard Wagner made such free use in *The Ring*. A. T. Hatto's translation transforms an old text into a story as readable and exciting as Homer's *Iliad*. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

Wagner's operas and Tolkien's tales are modern incarnations of legends that have evolved in the European consciousness for centuries, in much the same way as the Arthurian cycle of stories. The *Nibelungenlied* (Song of the Nibelungs), which dates from around 1200 CE and probably originated in Austria, is one of the best known and most significant versions of those legends. It takes as its

main theme the life and death of the hero Siegfried and the revenge of his widow Kriemhild. It also incorporates characters and events based on the lives of Atilla the Hun and Theodoric the Great. This is a valuable insight into how literature evolved in Medieval Europe. If you are a Wagner or Tolkien fan, or a lover of epic fantasy, you will want to read it, both for historical interest and for the beauty and strangeness of some of the imagery. The inconsistencies in its plot and characterizations are a consequence of the poet trying to merge contradictory sources and also to present a version of pagan legends that would be acceptable to a Christian audience. The result is sometimes awkward but always interesting. A.T Hatto's Penguin edition is definitely the one to get. There is a brief forward, then the story itself, and then more than 100 pages of editorial, giving you a glossary of character's names, the history of the poem, etc, etc. Probably more than you ever wanted to know about medieval German literature. (Although, having said that, it is odd that there is no mention of the Volsung Saga, which is really needed to complete the picture). This is a lively, readable and authoritative prose translation. If, like me, your medieval German is less than fluent and likely to remain so, then this is the version to read.

German medieval epics are not for every taste but it is surprising how quickly one can become lost in something written in such an different style from our modern writing. The translation of the Nibelungenlied by A. T. Hatto takes the poem from its poetic roots and turns it into readable prose in an effective manner. This is a marvelous work with some truly memorable characters, particularly the women, and much grisly excitement (the author of the epic will never be cited for subtlety). It is easy to see why this inspired such works as Wagner's Ring Cycle. There is a lot of rich material in these legends and myths. An added bonus are the wonderful appendices at the back that could lead the reader to a richer second read of this book at some point in the future. A fine look at a great epic from the distant past.

If you can spell the title without looking, congratulations! And if you can pronounce it, you're really on a role. Those are the two of the most difficult things about this book, so please don't be daunted by the odd title or age of this classic. Why should you read this book? Simply put, it's a hell of a story. It's savage. It's bloody. Almost everyone dies or is maimed in some way. Battle is of course central to the plot. This is great for some readers, who love the battle scenes. Yet for you who are more into things like character and plot development, fear not! The characters in this tale are as rich and complex as you could hope for. You may find yourself loving a character at an early point in the tale yet utterly despising him by the story's end. Some you may not even be sure what to think about.

And that is what makes it such a great story. It is high drama with tons of bloodshed thrown in. The battle scenes near the story's conclusion are so packed with tension you feel exhausted after finishing. Honor is certainly a main theme in the tale, but please expect no Arthurian chivalry. It is much more savage and brutal than most Arthurian tales (excepting very early ones). There are heroes and villains, but sometimes it is unclear who is who. The *Nibelungenlied* was extremely influential on later similar tales, from Arthurian legend to modern fantasy. Elements from this story are can be seen in modern books, film, and games. It is certainly worth a read. You'll be glad you did.

Excellent translation of the German Epic of Siegfried's death and Kriemhild's revenge. Used as material for Wagner's third opera in the Ring Cycle. Very important material for anyone interested in the German cultural tradition.

"The *Nibelungenlied*" (or in English: Song of the Nibelung) was written by an unknown poet sometime in the 1300's, which is a shame because this is one of the finest epics I've ever read. It's as spectacular and intelligent as Homer's "The Iliad", and the Finnish "Kalevala". This story, which was revised on the theatre stage as Richard Wagner's 15-hour opera *Der Ring Des Nibelungen*, takes place in Germanic Medieval times. I won't go into much detail, though I will give you the basic plot: after winning Kriemhild as a bride, Siegfried wins another bride, a Queen of Iceland named Brunnhild, for Gunther, the King of Burgundy. Tragic and revenge strike when the two women have a terrifying conflict, which leads to many deaths. After reading the "*Nibelungenlied*" for the first time last week, I was surprised at how different it was from Wagner's lengthy music drama. Like the "*Volsung Saga*", most of the names and races from the book stay true, while the settings, the characters' motives, the philosophies, and the actual ring are undoubtably Wagner's own creations. This is a must-read for those who love "*Beowulf*", "*The Iliad*", "*The Odyssey*", "*The Kalevala*", and of course, Richard Wagner's "*Ring Cycle*".

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