

Suggestions for exploring more of the Riddles: Transcript

Nicholas Perkins

We've included about seven riddles in this Ten-Minute Book Club extract. What else should we read now? There are about a hundred Exeter Book riddles, but there's other stuff as well. And we've given a link at the bottom of the text to a really great website that has texts and translations of all of those riddles, if people want to have a look at them, called *The Riddle Ages*. So, what would you choose next?

Harriet Soper

We're very spoilt for choice. I think there's so much to be said for just clicking around and seeing what you connect with, what you stumble across, just cause it's such a good kind of pick-and-mix kind of opportunity.

But for me, I love actually the first riddle (it's sometimes broken into three, so you might see it as Riddles 1–3) all about a storm. I think that's a fascinating start to the collection, and it's a very long riddle, well, it's a very long series of riddles on one theme. And I wonder why that theme is so interesting? Why begin with that storm? Are they thinking about breath? You know, because the connection between the wind of the storm and breath is a big concern of that poem. Are they thinking maybe about speech, the poet, and kind of starting to speak and stopping speaking? Are they thinking about violence? Because we mentioned a lot to do with the order of the natural world. But as you might have noticed in the poems, there's a huge concern with violence and conflict. We might think there of, you know, this is the natural world as understood to have fallen, as understood to have broken in some way because of sin, humanity's sin, that something's gone wrong with it. So to begin with a poem that's all about the world behaving in a violent way, that's quite interesting. So kudos to the compiler of the riddles, because it's a good place to start.

And then also, personally, I love the inkhorn riddles. I think they're 88 and 93 and they are very good in terms of... They're so full of emotion and also clearly narrative in the sense that the speakers go through sequential experiences, kind of one after the other, different phases of their life. And that's really distinctive of the Old English compared to the Latin. There's something that's unusual in a way about the Old English ones, is they want to take us through time rather than just focusing on a single paradox in the moment. They want us to see how the voice develops in time.

Nicholas Perkins

Obviously, if we could have like a Twenty-Minutes or Thirty-Minute Book Club, then we could include all those! But I hope that you have got some flavour of them and be able to go and explore for yourselves. Thanks very much for listening.