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John Bauer (1882–1918) created this illustration, circa 1915, for Walter Stenström's "The Boy and the Trolls or The Adventure," in a childrens' anthology entitled *Among Pixies and Trolls, a Collection of Childrens' Stories*, published in 1915. The illustration has this title: "Look at them," troll mother said. "Look at my sons! You won't find more beautiful trolls on this side of the moon." The copyright-expired image is online via Wikimedia Commons.

Scandinavian folk tales are filled with tales of trolls. Was Grendel, the monster in Beowulf, one of them? Before we answer that question, let's examine what folklore tells us about such creatures.

Trolls can be:

- covered in moss,
- sprout trees or branches,
- have four fingers, and can
- live in water
- forests or mountains.

Some trolls appear as fairly harmless, merely mischievous, or very tiny creatures - while others are huge, absolutely gigantic, frightening or downright terrifying. (This representation, in Copenhagen, was made by Niels Hansen Jacobsen in 1895-96.)

According to some tales, trolls only come out at night. If exposed to the sun, they could turn into stone - like when they're cursed. Does that theory explain "natural trolls," which are carved in stone, like one located at Hamarøy, Norway? Theodor Kittelsen, a Norse artist most known for his troll paintings, shows us what might happen were a mountain troll to see the sun.

It is said that trolls can be devious. In this 1882 drawing, one pretends to be a woman simply talking with someone in the forest. But if you look closely at the back of her skirt, you'll see a troll's tail!

Askeladden, a young boy featured in Norwegian fairy tales, was someone who could outwit a troll. Through his eyes (and those of other folk-tale heroes) we can see trolls in their natural surroundings - and at home with proud but scary mothers.

Maybe you disbelieve that trolls exist. But if you happen to be traveling on Norwegian roads, watch out. You just might see a "[Troll Crossing](#)" sign!

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TROLLS-Beowulf>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TROLLS-Beowulf>

Media Stream



[Trolls - Covered in Moss](#)

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Trolls-Covered-in-Moss>



[Trolls - Can They Sprout Trees?](#)

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).

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[Trolls - They Have Four Fingers](#)

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).

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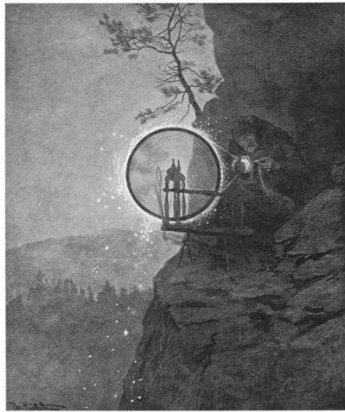
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Sea Trolls - Live in Water

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).
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Trolls - Living in Mountains

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).
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Troll Legends: They Can Appear Harmless

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Trolls - Are They Merely Mischievous?

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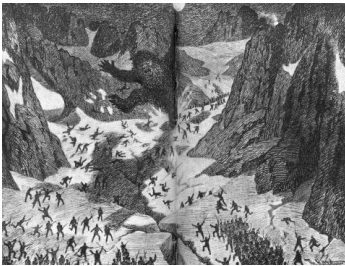


Trolls - Tiny Creatures

Image online, courtesy Northern (a Swedish-language website).

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Troll Legends - They Can be Huge

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).

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Trolls - Legends of Gigantic Creatures

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Trolls - Legends of Frightening Creatures

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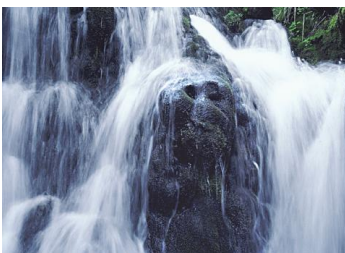


Trolls - Terrifying Creatures

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Trolls - Appear Naturally in Stone

Photo by Michael Haferkamp (Mikesegeln at Wikipedia), taken during June of 2002. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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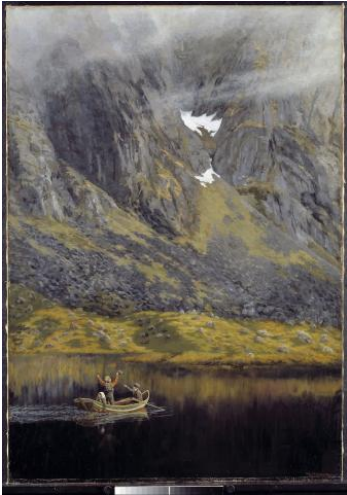
Theodor Kittelsen - Illustrator of Trolls and Fairy Tales

Image, described above, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Theodor-Kittelsen-Illustrator-of-Trolls-and-Fairy-Tales>



Mountain Troll - Echo in the Mountains

Image, described above, online courtesy Kittelsen Archive (a Russian-language website).

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Troll - Hiding Her True Appearance

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Trolls - The Boy and the Trolls

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Trolls - Mother and Sons with Abducted Princess

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Trolls - Scary Mothers

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Trolls - "Troll-Crossing" Sign in Norway

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Troll - A Water Spirit

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TROLLS

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