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# The Dream of the Rood

**Anonymous (Old English)** · *c. 8th century* · *James M. Garnett*

Lo! choicest of dreams I will relate: a dreamer sees a wondrous wood, now gemmed, now bleeding, and the Rood itself speaks of the day it raised the mighty King and durst not bend. The site EPUB is this poem only; the Gutenberg file is a larger volume of Old English poems in English.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What does the Cross itself remember of the Crucifixion, and how should a dreamer live after hearing that wood speak?

*"Lo! choicest of dreams I will relate,"*
The opening of the poem

The translation is James M. Garnett. The site EPUB is The Dream of the Rood only. Project Gutenberg #15879 is a larger volume (Elene, Judith, and other Old English poems in English). Quote only the Rood, in stretches that appear in both, including the opening and "A rood was I upreared; I raised the mighty King." Do not include later line-numbers in a quotation. A short, grave Christian dream-vision, excellent for a wide older band, to be taught with reverence as a meditation on the Cross—not as a curiosity of old verse only.

KEY CHARACTERS

**the dreamer**
*The speaker who will relate a choicest dream, and who is charged at the close.*

**the Rood**
*The Cross itself, which speaks of the day it raised the King and durst not bend.*

**the mighty King**
*The Lord of Heaven, borne by the wood.*

**the wondrous wood**
*The first sight, gemmed and bleeding, before it speaks.*

I DURST NOT BEND

> *"A rood was I upreared; I raised the mighty King,"*
> The Rood's tale

**Grades 9–12**
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
## A Choicest Dream
THE OPENING

*The dreamer will relate a choicest dream of the middle of the night, when mortal men reposed, and a wondrous wood towered, now hung with gold, now wet with blood.*

- The first line is exact in both the EPUB and the poem portion of the Gutenberg file.
- The changing look of the wood is the first vision, before the Rood speaks.
- Quote only this poem, not the other pieces in PG #15879.

> *"Lo! choicest of dreams I will relate,"*
> The opening

02
## The Wood Speaks
THE ROOD'S TALE BEGINS

*The cross itself tells how it was hewn, taken, and made to be an instrument. The voice is the poem's center.*

- The speaker is the Rood, not only the dreamer.
- Teach this as a Christian vision of the Passion.
- Garnett's English is the text to quote.

03
## I Raised the Mighty King
THE CRUCIFIXION REMEMBERED

*A rood was I upreared; I raised the mighty King, the Lord of Heaven; I durst not bend me. Dark nails, and wounds still seen, belong to this telling.*

- The line is exact in both witnesses.
- Do not append a following line-number in the quotation.
- The courage of the wood is obedience, not pride.

> *"A rood was I upreared; I raised the mighty King,"*
> The Rood's tale

04
## A Dreamer's Charge
THE CLOSE OF THE VISION

*The dreamer is left to live and tell what the wood has said. The poem is short, and it ends as a charge, not as a riddle only.*

- The last movement is devotion and witness.
- A short, complete Christian dream-vision, for a wide older band.
- Teach it with reverence.

05
## This Poem Only
THE HOSTED FILES

*The site EPUB is the Rood alone. The Gutenberg volume continues with other Old English poems in English. Stop at this poem, and do not quote Elene or Judith as this work.*

- Translator: James M. Garnett.
- PG #15879 is a collection; the site EPUB is this poem only.
- Quote stretches that appear in both.

A Dream-Vision | The Cross | The Passion | Obedience | A Witness

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. The translation is James M. Garnett. The site EPUB is The Dream of the Rood only. Project Gutenberg #15879 is a larger volume (Elene, Judith, and other Old English poems in English). Quote only the Rood, in stretches that appear in both. The opening is exact: "Lo! choicest of dreams I will relate," Also in both: "A rood was I upreared; I raised the mighty King." Do not include later line-numbers in a quotation.
2. A short, grave Christian dream-vision, for a wide older band. Teach it with reverence as a meditation on the Cross, not as a curiosity of old verse only.
3. Do not quote Elene, Judith, or the other poems in the Gutenberg file as this work.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the James M. Garnett, Project Gutenberg #15879: Elene; Judith; Athelstan; Byrhtnoth; and The Dream of the Rood, translated by James M. Garnett (Boston: Ginn, 1889; 2nd ed. 1901), the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-dream-of-the-rood/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.