

St John's Inspire Competition 3.2: Reading the Runes

Dickinson's Volcano

The first step in deciphering the runic text given is to assign each rune an equivalent in our own alphabet, which is as follows:

'Pe reticent volcano ceeps his never slumbering blan confided in his broiects binc to no brecharious man'

Although after this process, many of the words are obviously English, it is clear that some changes need to be made in order for words like "broiects" and "ceeps" to make sense.

- The words "blan" and "brecharious" both resemble English words, specifically plan and precarious, the only difference being that they use a B in place of a P. Hence it can be deduced that all Bs in the text should be interpreted as Ps.
- This is also useful for discerning the meaning of "broiects", now "proiects", which resembles the word 'projects', the only difference being the letter I i is used instead of J. However after researching the matter, I found that the Icelandic rune for the letter I can also be used to represent the letter J, so the word is definitely 'projects'.
- By changing a B for a P in the word "ceeps", it is clear it should become 'keeps'. And likewise, "binc" becomes 'pink'.
- Finally, the word "pe" seems as though it should become 'the', as it is the first word in the text.

After making the necessary changes, it reads:

'The reticent volcano keeps his never slumbering plan confided in his projects pink to no precarious man'.

This text is now recognisable as the first stanza of Emily Dickinson's 107th poem from Part One (Life) of her complete works.