

WOOD SPIRIT MYTHOLOGY

Except from:

Relief Carving Wood Spirits, Revised Edition: A Step-By-Step Guide for Releasing Faces in Wood (Fox Chapel Publishing) Fully Detailed Wood Spirit Project with Techniques, Tips, and 23 Bonus Patterns Paperback – Illustrated,

MYTHOLOGY

Learn about an ancient love story of the Mother Goddess and her consort, the Wood Spirit

WOOD SPIRITS IN CARVING

How the Wood Spirit has been revived in wood carving and pyrography

WOOD SPIRIT

WALKING STICKS

Special features that can be added To your handcrafted walking stick

Lora S. Irish

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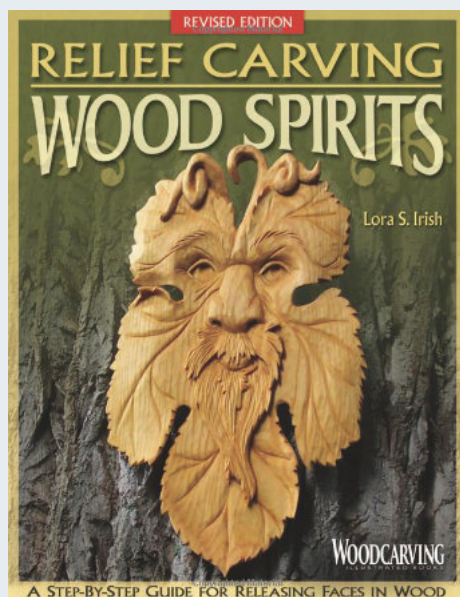


*Pagan
mythology
identifies the
Wood Spirit
as the
consort to
the Mother
Goddess
when she
walks upon
the earth.*

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AN ANCIENT LOVE STORY

IN MYTHOLOGY

In Pagan cultures, those that preceded Christianity, in many of the Western countries today as the Germanic States and the British Isles, Mother Goddess was the major deity.

She was the creator of life and from her everything—mankind, animals, plants, the stars and heavens, and nature - Was born.

In many of the early stories, Mother Nature was the Sun and her consort was the Moon.

She would look upon him with her loving nature and that is why the Moon sometimes is full and bright, reflecting her love.

As a female spirit, she was represented as a moody and jealous because her consort, the Moon, would light the earth with the light that she gave him.

So, she would turn her back to him, scorning him and withholding her love and light. This is why the moon becomes dark during an old moon.

He would be patient and wait because he loved her so very much. She would soon relent and again smile her light gloriously upon him bringing him back to a full moon.

You can discover more about the Mother Goddess and female mythological creatures by searching for the following names -

Mother Nature
Mother Earth
Great Mother
Gaia
Wood Nymphs
Dryad



There came a time when Mother Goddess wanted to come to earth and enjoy the beautiful world that she had created - to walk in the fields and forests.

Soon she became lonely. To ease her loneliness her consort also came to earth, and he did so by inhabiting the trees of both the meadows and the forests. He stands as the single old apple tree that graces the grasslands giving shade to the cattle and goats. He stands as the guardian of the forest, the largest tree right at the forest margin. He is the oldest twisted tree deep within the black woods.

Where in the heavens he was the Moon, on earth he was called the Spirit of the Woods.

It was believed that his favorite tree was the evergreen. Humans knew that the pines and conifers were special for even during the coldest and harshest of winters it remained forever green.

Other trees around the evergreen suffered the 'small death' of winter, losing their leaves and going bare. The story arose that Mother Goddess's Consort went into the evergreen to live during the winter and there he slept until the warmth of spring returned.

Because the people were frightened that the 'small death' might one day not give way to spring they decided that they would go to the forest and bring into their homes an evergreen.

They would tend the evergreen giving it water and protecting it from the deep snows and harsh winds.

Therefore, they were protecting the Spirit of the Woods through the worst of the winter months. When the time came that the 'small death' of winter should be passing they would return the evergreen to its place within the forest so that the God would awaken and once again encourage spring to return to the earth.



The instructions and pattern for this Wood Spirit are available in *Relief Carving the Wood Spirit* by Lora S. Irish

In wood carving, most wood spirits and green men follow the gender suggestions of the old myths by displaying them as male entities. There are carvings in the same relief carving style using a female face, but these are more often referred to as Goddess images.

Myths are the stories handed down to us by our ancient forefathers. These stories tried to explain natural occurrences that at the time were not understood because of the extremely limited scientific or physiological knowledge of the era in which they were told.

Myths use personification which www.dictionary.com defines as "figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are

represented as possessing human form."

By giving nature a human face with human emotions the storyteller could talk in terms that people understood.

They did not understand a waxing and waning moon. They did understand a jealous woman turning her back on her lover and that she loose her anger and return, over and over again, to him.

They also understood that such a woman and her lover would repeat that cycle throughout their lifetime, forever trapped in the circle of jealousy and rekindled intense love.

So, the sun was the loving but jealous Goddess; she would always return to her lover, the Moon, to once again give him liq

The myth of the Mother Goddess and her consort the Spirit of the Woods still touches our daily lives through both the revival of the wood spirit as a carving theme.

The Green Man, a variation of the Wood Spirit, first appears in the early 12th century as a decorative motif in the Gothic Cathedrals.

He often is a male human face surrounded by leaves, the icon can have an animal face. The foliage can include fruit, berries, nuts, and flowers.

Drawings below are from the

[Fun Wood Spirits Pattern Pack](#)

14 Line Art Patterns
14 Shaded Drawings



WOOD SPIRIT



GREEN MAN



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WOOD SPIRIT PATTERNS

17 Line Art Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

Classic Wood Spirit designs surround the male human face with elements from nature - wood grain, leaves, acorns, fruit, bird wings, boar tusks, and winding vines.

ADULT COLORING PATTERNS

62 Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

Leaf Eater Wood Spirit have the leaf stem erupting from inside the mouth. The leaves in the eyebrow, and beard areas also are directly attached to the face.

FANTASY PATTERNS

18 Line Art Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

Often Wood Spirit Patterns are accented with Celtic and Viking interlocking line designs.



WATER SPOUTS DOOR KNOCKERS

21 Line Art Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

During the Gothic era the Wood Spirit was carved into the pillars, corners, and ceiling tiles of the great cathedrals. Door knockers were also a favorite item for an artist to feature a Wood Spirit.



GREENMEN & GOTHIC

16 Line Art Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

Greenmen can be designed so completely engulfed by nature that just the eyes and nose of the figure remains human. Fruit and berries often fill in the extra space around the leaves.



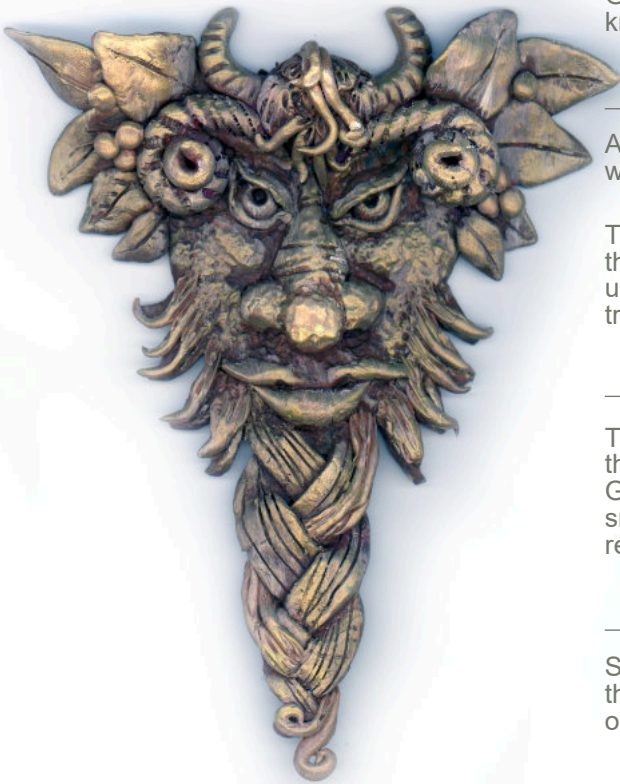
MUSHROOM SPIRITS

18 Detailed Patterns in 100 DPI, JPG format

While the Wood Spirit is closely links to the forest trees, they can also decorate the stem of a mushroom.

RELATED MYTHS

ACROSS HISTORY



Wood Spirit worked in oven-baked polymer clay as a door decoration.

DRYAD

The term dryad comes from the Greek word for "oak tree". As the Greeks saw it, every tree (not only oaks) had a spirit. The best known of the dryads was Daphne.

SUN GOD RA

Ancient Egyptians used to decorate conifers and made wreaths as well as garland to celebrate Ra, the Sun God.

They believed that winter came every year because Ra was sick. On the 21st or 22nd of December, during the solstice, the population used to celebrate Ra by filling their home with beautiful evergreen trees.

VIKING SOLSTICE

The Vikings decorated with evergreen trees and wreaths to ward off the evil spirits they associated with the winter solstice. In ancient Germanic and Norse traditions, the evergreens were decorated with small carvings of the gods and food, encouraging the tree spirits to return to bring the new spring.

SATURNALIA

Saturnalia, an ancient Roman solstice celebration was dedicated to the Saturn, the god of agriculture and time. Though it started out as a one-day celebration earlier in December,

JACK OF THE GREEN

Another common name for the Green Man is Jack of the Green. Originally he was seen as a full male figure covered in leaves from head to toe.

For the mythology behind the Wood Spirit we need to explore the Sun Deities.

In the mythologies there are several identifying names for the feminine representation of nature and the cosmos.

MOTHER GODDESS

Wikipedia.org -

"A mother goddess is a major goddess characterized as a mother or progenitor, either as an embodiment of motherhood and fertility or fulfilling the cosmological role of a creator- and/or destroyer-figure, typically associated the Earth, sky, and/or the life-giving bounties thereof in a maternal relation with humanity or other gods."

MOTHER EARTH/MOTHER NATURE

Britannica.com

"Mother goddesses, as a specific type, should be distinguished from the Earth Mother (q.v.), with which they have often been confused. Unlike the mother goddess, who is a specific source of vitality and who must periodically undergo intercourse, the Earth Mother is a cosmogonic figure, the eternally fruitful source of everything. In contrast, mother goddesses are individual, possess distinct characters, are young, are not cosmogonic, and are highly sexual. Although the male plays a relatively less important role, being frequently

reduced to a mere fecundator, mother goddesses are usually part of a divine pair, and their mythology narrates the vicissitudes of the goddess and her (frequently human) consort."

SUN GODDESS

[Sun Goddess](http://SunGoddess) - Goddess-guide.com has a wonderful list of Sun and Moon goddess name throughout history

The Sun Goddess is associated with light, fire, inspiration. Hathor, an Egyptian goddess is shown with a solar disk behind her head. In Christianity, the Virgin Mary is also shown with that halo.

PRE-HISTORY LEGENDS

The earliest deities could be feminine, masculine, androgynous, or of indeterminate sex.

The Mother Goddess, being the creator of all, often is shown as being the partner or mate of her father, brother, or son.

In later legends, after the Earth is well populated, She can be told to have taken a human partner.

[Norse legend](#) identifies Sol, also called Sunna, as the Sun and her brother Mani as the moon.

In the poem Völuspá, a dead völva recounts the history of the universe and foretells the future to the disguised god Odin. In doing so, the völva recounts the early days of the universe, in which: Benjamin Thorpe translation:

*The sun from the south, the moon's companion,
her right hand cast about the heavenly horses.
The sun knew not where she a dwelling had,
the moon knew not what power he possessed,
the stars knew not where they had a station.*

In the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál, Sól is first presented in chapter 93, where the kennings "daughter of Mundilfæri", "sister of Máni", "wife of Glen", "fire of sky and air" are given for her, followed by an excerpt of a work by the 11th century skald Skúli Þórsteinsson:

*God-blithe bedfellow of Glen
steps to her divine sanctuary*

Sun and moon (Inuit myth)

Wikipedia.org

Knud Rasmussen Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921–24 has a transcript of a Pâdlermiut story told by a storyteller named Kibkârjuk. This one is largely different from the others, but still includes the key elements of an incestuous brother and sister becoming the sun and moon, the sun torch flaming while the moon torch is only embers.

There were once a brother and sister who lived together as man and wife. This they did secretly, lying together only when none could see.

But then it happened that they were surprised. People came and found them lying together. And at this they were so overwhelmed with shame that they rose up from the earth, rose up into the sky.

It was winter, and it was dark, and both carried torches. The moon was moving very rapidly, because he was a man (aṇuta•ugame naker-tôrjuaq, nakertôq: swift, with speed); so rapidly did he rush up into the sky that his torch went out, but the sun rose up slowly because she was a woman, and her torch did not go out.

Therefore the sun gives out both light and heat, while the moon gives only light from the embers of the torch, and gives no heat. Thus the moon and the sun came up into the sky.



ACCESSORIZE YOUR WOOD SPIRIT WALKING STICK

Excerpt from LSIrish.com,

Lora Irish's free online carving, pyrography, and craft blog.

EMERGENCY KIT

A small cloth or leather bag can be added to your walking stick by drilling a hole through the stick just below the wood spirit carving. Thread the bag cords through this hole and secure with a simple square knot.

The emergency bag, shown below, measures 4" x 5" and has two 24" long 3mm nylon cords threaded through the top fold of the bag.

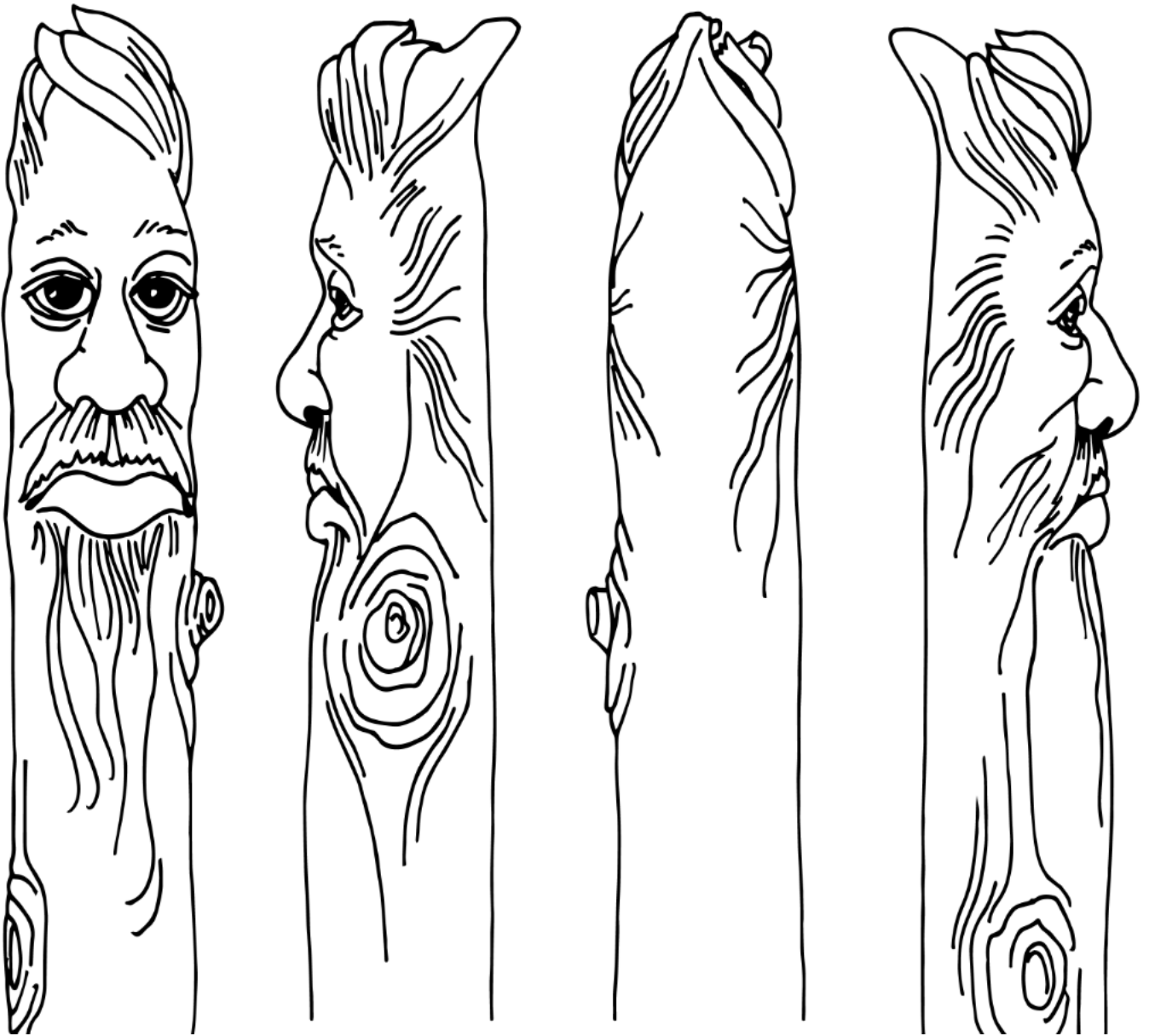
The bag can now hold a small knife, a few bandages, a box of wood matches, and a 3 yard length of heavy twine.

Cut the Ziploc top from a quart plastic sandwich bag. Place each of your items into one cut bag. Fold the bag to just fit the item, then seal with painter's tape.

The plastic bags will keep your items dry and can be used to carry water or small gathered items.

In an emergency the bag's tie cords can be removed and used as well.





The classic Wood Spirit cane pattern a very simple face that blends into the natural wood grain of your stick. The hair, mustache, and beard are created using a v-gouge.

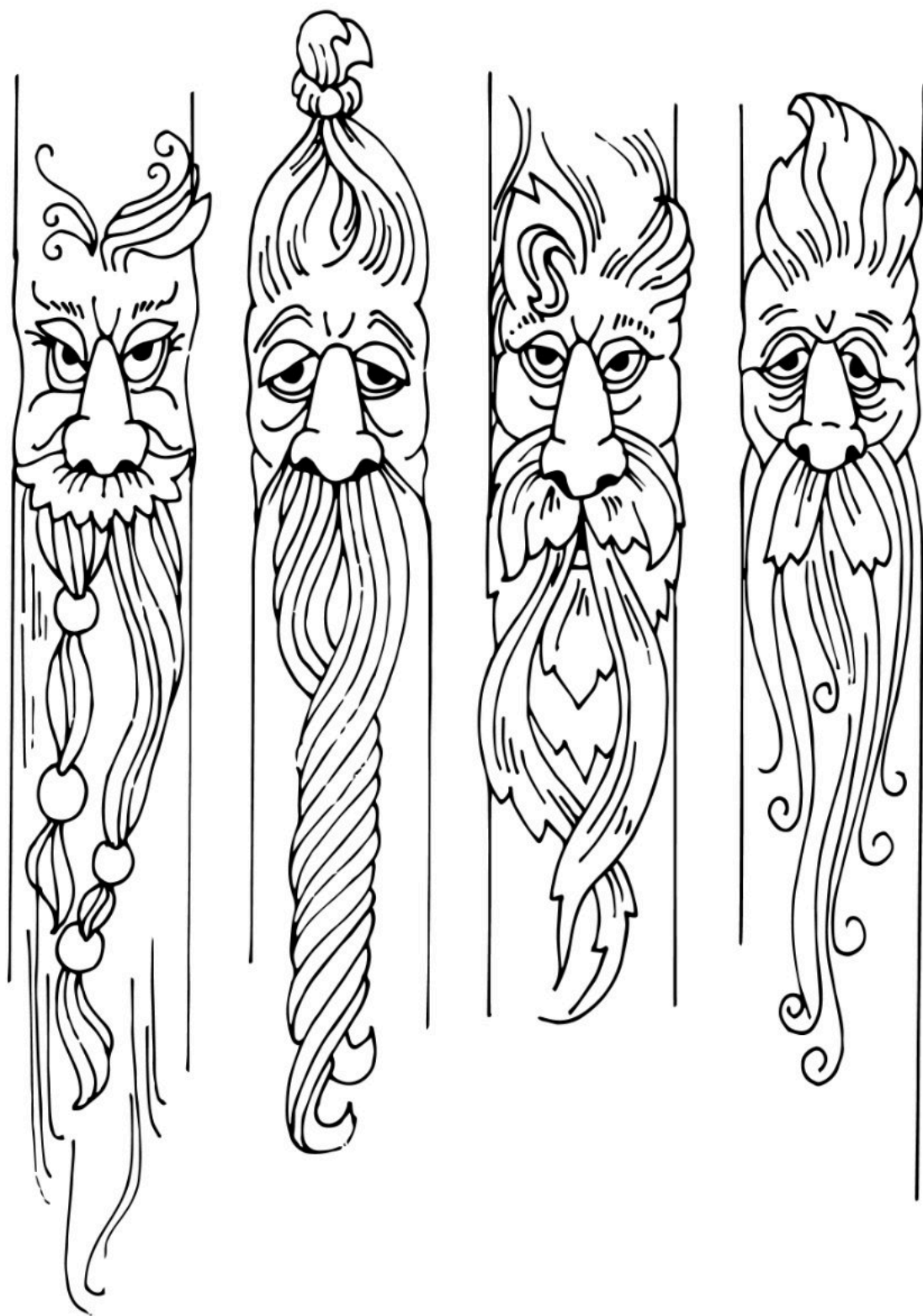


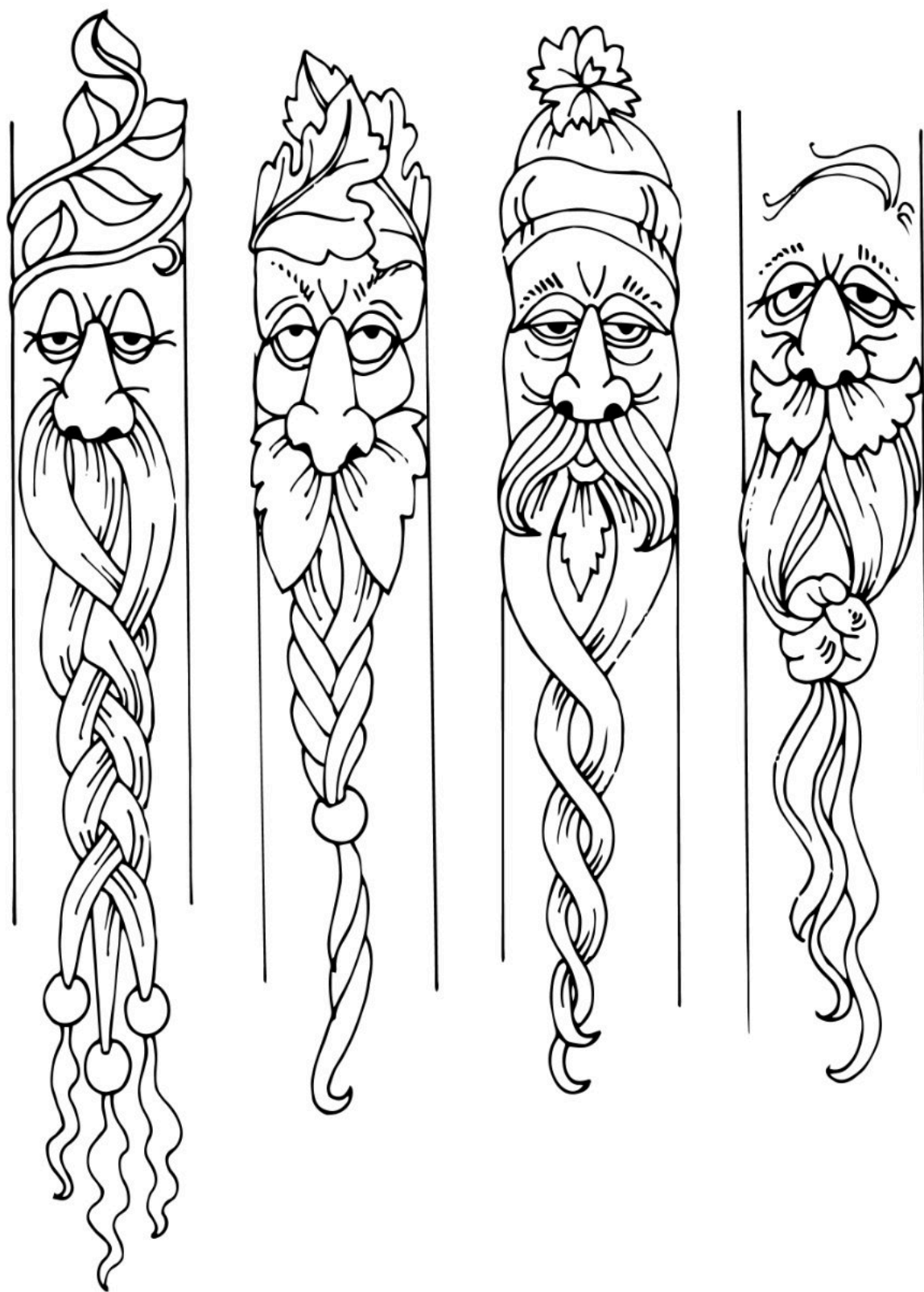
Once you have learned to carve the basic Wood Spirit face, creating different Wood Spirits is easy using a few, common variations.

Let's look at a few ideas in the following pages.

- 1 Add beads to a few hair strands.
- 2 Twist the beard into dreadlocks.
- 3 Let the hair become oak leaves with acorns.
- 4 Add feathers, tied with leather knots, to the hair strands.
- 5 Give him a Santa Clause, baseball, or snow hat.
- 6 Wrap a snake around the Wood Spirit face.
- 7 Change the angle of the eyes to make him happy, sad, or inquisitive.
- 8 End his beard in a cluster of tight curls.
- 9 Braid his hair, mustache, or beard.
- 10 Wrap his head in a small leaved vine.
- 11 Pull his hair up into a top knot.
- 12 Tie his mustache into a giant knot.







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[Wood Spirit Walking Stick Carving](#)

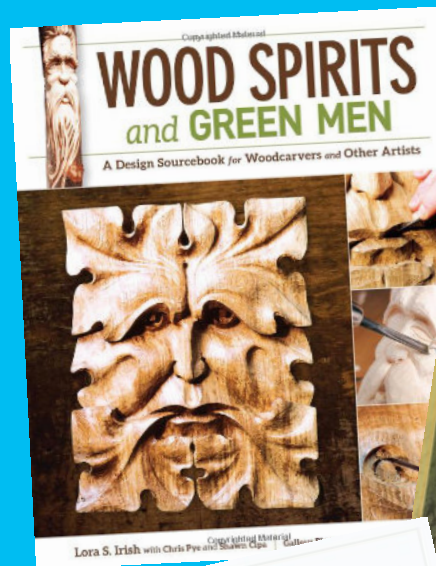
Cane Carving

Walking Sticks and canes are a favorite wood carving project for beginning carvers to the most advanced woodworker. This free project by Lora Irish will take you through the basic techniques in choosing your wood staffs and sticks, wood carving cane construction, and finishing used for walking sticks. Learn how to use wood burning in your cane carving to clean the joint line, carving and add fine details. Explore the different steps you can use to add bright, bold painted coloring.

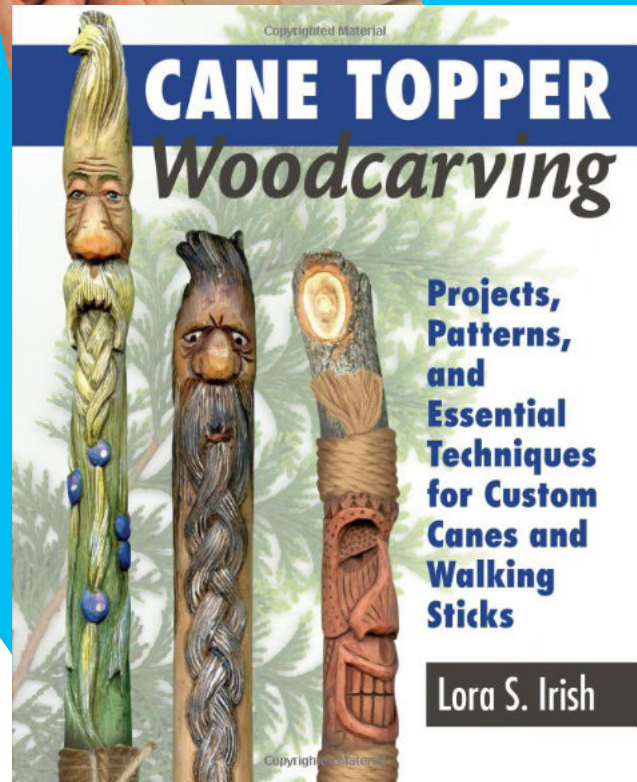
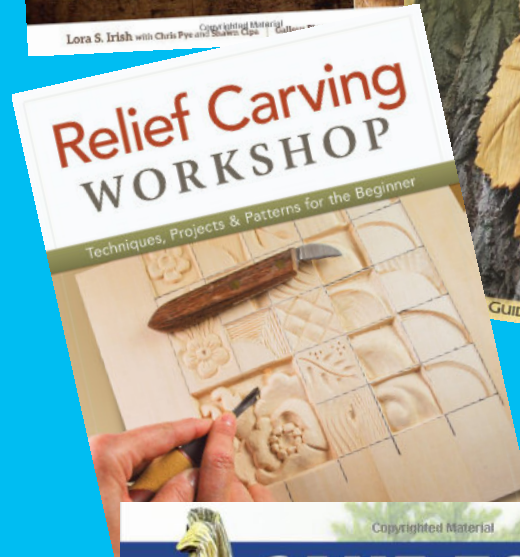
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