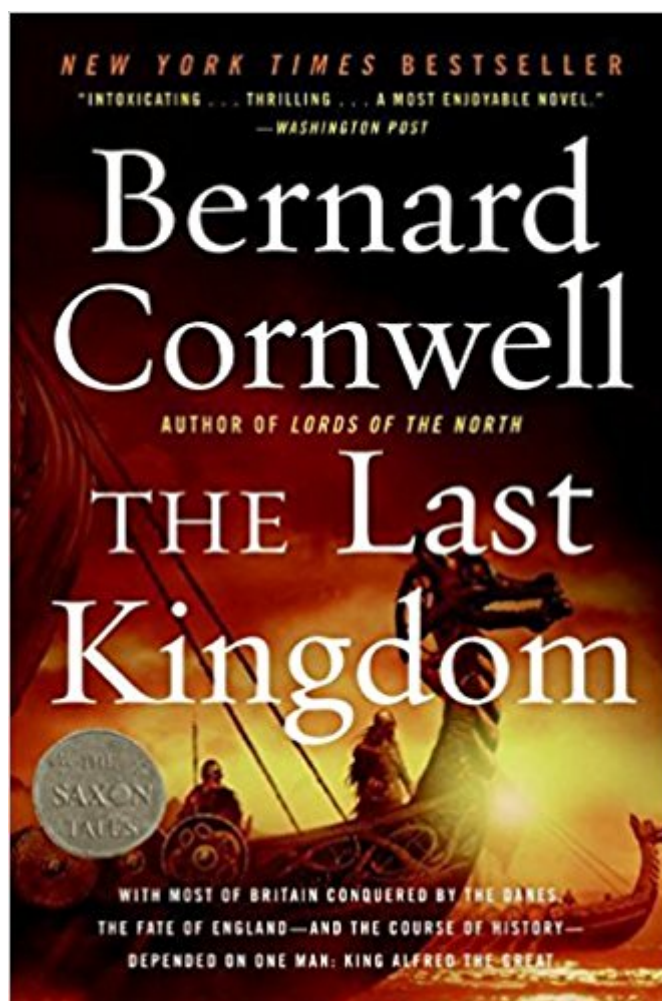


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The Last Kingdom (The Saxon Chronicles Series #1)



Synopsis

The first installment of Bernard Cornwell's New York Times bestselling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, as like Game of Thrones, but real (The Observer, London) is the basis for The Last Kingdom, the hit television series. In the middle years of the ninth century, the fierce Danes stormed onto British soil, hungry for spoils and conquest. Kingdom after kingdom fell to the ruthless invaders until but one realm remained. And suddenly the fate of all England and the course of history depended upon one man, one king. From New York Times bestselling storyteller Bernard Cornwell comes a rousing epic adventure of courage, treachery, duty, devotion, majesty, love, and battle as seen through the eyes of a young warrior who straddled two worlds.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins; Repack edition (January 3, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9780060887186

ISBN-13: 978-0060887186

ASIN: 0060887184

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 1,308 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #11,183 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Military #141 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > TV, Movie, Video Game Adaptations #164 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > War

Customer Reviews

Bestseller Cornwell leaps back a millennium from his Richard Sharpe series to tell of the consolidation of England in the late ninth century and the role played by a young (fictional) warrior-in-training who's at the center of the war between Christian Englishmen and the pagan Danes. (Most of the other principal characters—Ubba, Guthrum, Ivar the Boneless and the like—are real historical figures.) Young Uhtred, who's English, falls under the control of Viking berser-warrior Ragnar the Fearless when the Dane wipes out Uhtred's Northumberland family. Cornwell liberally feeds readers history and nuggets of battle data and customs, with Uhtred's first-person wonderment spinning all into a colorful journey of (self-)discovery. In a series of

episodes, Ragnar conquers three of England's four kingdoms. The juiciest segment has King Edmund of East Anglia rebuking the Viking pagans and demanding that they convert to Christianity if they intend to remain in England. After Edmund cites the example of St. Sebastian, the Danes oblige him by turning him into a latter-day Sebastian and sending him off to heaven. Uhtred's affection for Ragnar as a surrogate father grows, and he surpasses the conqueror's blood sons in valor. When father and adopted son arrive at the fourth and last kingdom, however, the Danes meet unexpected resistance and Uhtred faces personal and familial challenges, as well as a crisis of national allegiance. This is a solid adventure by a crackling good storyteller. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

An acknowledged master of rousing battlefield fiction as evidenced by his crackling Richard Sharpe series, Cornwell also deserves praise for his mesmerizing narrative finesse and his authentic historical detailing. Here he introduces a new multivolume saga set in medieval England prior to the unification of the four Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia, Mercia, and Wessex. Weakened by civil war, Northumbria is invaded by the fearless Danes, and Uhtred, the rightful heir to the earldom of Bebbanburg, is captured by the enemy. Raised as a Viking warrior by Ragnar the Terrible, his beloved surrogate father, Uhtred is still torn by an innate desire to reclaim his birthright. Fighting as a Dane but realizing that his ultimate destiny lies along another path, he seizes the opportunity to serve Alfred, king of Wessex, after Ragnar is horribly betrayed and murdered by Kjartan, a fellow Dane. Ever watchful and ever practical, Uhtred awaits his chance to settle the blood feud with Kjartan and to seize Bebbanburg from his treacherous uncle. Leaving his hero suspended on the threshold of realizing his desires, Cornwell masterfully sets up his audience for the second volume in this irresistible epic adventure. Margaret Flanagan Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I hadn't known of Bernard Cornwell until I found this series, which I have enjoyed thoroughly. Starting iwth this book, I now know much more abut the time of Alfred the Great, as seen through the eyes of Uhtred--son of a Danish mother and Saxon father. Just that combination during these times when the Saxons and Danish/Norse invaders/settlers struggled for dominance of the British Isles was a good indicator of the complexity that develops in this character. As a child of a local Saxon chieftan or lord, he was captured by the Danes when his father was killed and his uncle subsequently stole the stronghold and power due Uhtred. He was brought up as a son of the Danish chief, learning Danish ways and thoroughly adopting their lifestyle and religion. However, he

became 'stuck' in defense of Alfred and his ambitions of becoming overlord of a Saxon 'England'. Uhtred was a powerful fighter, having learned how the Danes approach battle fearlessly, and his skills were leashed by Alfred, despite Uhtred's dislike of the man personally. This first installment of the series builds the story that was not a weak or boring one through all the books that followed. Without a strong appreciation of the history of the times, unequalled description of how battles were fought strategically and shifting alliances could compromise territorial ambitions of the leaders, as well as strong character development of the principles, such a long series can't sustain interest. Cornwell did not disappoint me in any part of the long saga. In fact, this book, as the intro to this talented historical writer, led me to search out his other books of the European genre (medieval period) and I've now read every one and eagerly await what may come in future.

I watch the television show but wanted to read the book. What a great story and so well written. Much more detail and picture leaving. I love the historical context which helps me understand the story as it comes alive. Watching the television show did not spoil this story one day, and I eagerly look forward to reading the next book.

As a history teacher I truly enjoyed the historical accuracy behind the riveting characters. This book gets better with each page that is turned. I am definitely buying the next book in the series.

I enjoyed this writer's style, mainly because he made the story believable and made me care about the characters. I liked reading a story from this time period, as I have rarely come across one. Though historical fiction, he made it jibe with actual events as much as possible. Although somewhat gory, the Viking invasions had to include part of that.

What an adventure. Such great characters. Mr Cornwell brings Ragnar and Uthred to life. The battle scenes are so effective that you are transported to the spot where they were fought. Great book.

The story involves the growing up of a young Saxon noble boy called Uhtred, who should inherit his father's lands, but when as a ten-year-old he accompanies his father to a battle with some invasive Danes, his father is killed. Impressed by Uhtred's suicidal charge for revenge, Ragnar easily disarms him and brings him up as a young Dane, where he learns how to fight, to man the great ships, and effectively he becomes a Dane. The Danes have come to settle, and to do that, they intend to overpower the Saxon kingdoms, leaving puppet kings paying them tribute.

However, Ragnar is killed by another Dane, and Uhtred, losing Ragnar's protection, must flee. He ends up in Wessex, where Alfred decides he can use him. The story then proceeds to an event that essentially saves Wessex for the time being, then, following some treachery, to a battle that again lets Wessex survive. Regarding history, the major characters, other than Uhtred, were apparently real, the major events were more or less real (one, Ubba, is killed a year earlier than historically to make the story more complete) and the story also gives a genuinely interesting insight into how the Danes of the period lived. I am not in a position to know how genuine that is, but it most certainly gives the impression that Cornwell has deeply researched the period. That may be because he is apparently descended from an Uhtred, although from 200 years later. The character of Uhtred is somewhat overly heroic, possibly because of the personal association, while the characters of the leading known Danes are as well portrayed as could be expected, given that there are historical requirements. The technology and way of life at the time are also well portrayed, although the battle scenes, while exciting to read, tend to be more glamorized. Cornwell tells us that they were horrible, but the actual showing does not quite give that impression, although since Uhtred is telling the story, perhaps we can forgive him for glamorizing his own role. Overall it is a very interesting read, and since it appears to be the start of a series, it encourages the reader to go further. Cornwell does very well to end the book in a way that is almost an ending; my one minor criticism is that it really should have included Alfred's response to what had happened. Well worth the read.

I watched the tv series first and loved it. I thought it brought this period to life and made much more sense than the Vikings series did. But this book made it even more clear. Well written, fun and action packed. I knew what was going to happen and still I was in suspense. I'm ordering the next book now.

I admit I watched the tv show first and then checked out this book. It's a good book and a fun entertaining read. It's been a long time since I've read a book in the first person that's a true narrative like this and it took a little to get used to it but once I did it was interesting. I've already bought the second book and will be reading it as soon as I hit submit on this review.

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