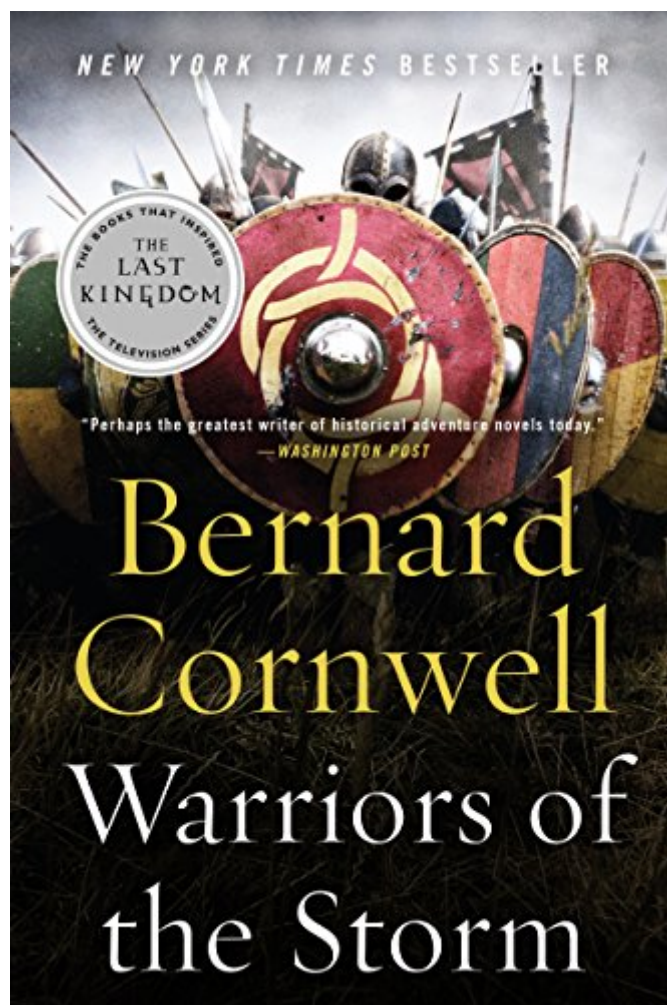


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Warriors Of The Storm: A Novel (Saxon Tales)



Synopsis

The ninth installment of Bernard Cornwell's bestselling series chronicling the epic saga of the making of England, à la Game of Thrones, but real (The Observer, London) "the basis for The Last Kingdom," the hit television series coming to Netflix in Fall 2016. A fragile peace reigns in Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia. King Alfred's son Edward and formidable daughter, Aethelflaed, rule the kingdoms. But all around the restless Northmen, eyeing the rich lands and wealthy churches, are mounting raids. Uhtred of Bebbanburg, the kingdoms' greatest warrior, controls northern Mercia from the strongly fortified city of Chester. But forces are gathering against him. Northmen allied to the Irish, led by the fierce warrior Ragnall Ivarson, are soon joined by the Northumbrians, and their strength could prove overwhelming. Despite the gathering threat, both Edward and Aethelflaed are reluctant to move out of the safety of their fortifications. But with Uhtred's own daughter married to Ivarson's brother, who can be trusted? In the struggle between family and loyalty, between personal ambition and political commitment, there will be no easy path. But a man with a warrior's courage may be able to find it. Such a man is Uhtred, and this may be his finest hour.

Book Information

File Size: 2277 KB

Print Length: 325 pages

Publisher: Harper; Reprint edition (January 19, 2016)

Publication Date: January 19, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00WQZG3O4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #17,179 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #106

in Kindle Store > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Military #117 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > British #153 in Kindle Store > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Historical

Customer Reviews

This historical fiction is naturally pretty bloody as it covers the period in the future 'England' coveted by many, but mainly Anglo Christians and the Odin & Thor-worshiping Danish (engaged in Viking seizures and occupations of future UK areas of land). The period was about 880-920 AD. Forces were typically sail and oar viking style ships of legend, with strength assessed by numbers of ships and their crews. The battles were often one 'shield wall' slamming into another, both sides typically equipped with sturdy shields, short and long swords, axes, archers, and whatever you might imagine. Mayhem. Limbs and skulls ripped asunder. Blood everywhere. Often three to six thousand men clashing. But likely much the way it went then. Gripping. Puckers one up. But more important than the likely quite accurate depiction from old sources about the weapons, land, peoples, battles, gore and guts over the years is the relationships and characters - Kings, princes, warriors, monks, priests, bishops, women loved and often lost. Cornwell's story is as though he was there and saw all this, told through the eyes and brain of a vicious warrior and heroic protagonist. An angry and conflicted figure who had his castles and lands stolen by an uncle early in life and was always torn by whether to devote his everything to recovering his inherited kingdom in what would become far SE Scotland or battling time and time again to aid the Anglo King and others in driving the Danish (Vikings) back to Denmark so what we know today as England could be unified and consolidated; in essence be 'created.' The series - front to back - is bold, graphic, exciting, believable and follows what we know about the period from many chronicles. It captures one in the first of this series and holds you until the last word, and you will wish there was more.

Since I don't do synopses of books (I hate the idea of spoilers) it is difficult to review Cornwell's work in this series. That's only because the writing is such high quality, the characters are so strong, the plot is complex - well developed and challenging for the reader and how many times can you say that? Well, I'll say it for every book it's true of. This book, according to Cornwell doesn't have much historical event context in it so it's just a story but it is well worth the time to read. Cornwell has become my favorite historical fiction writer because he never uses the history as a crutch and he weaves his story into the history seamlessly so that we get a good story and a glimpse of the history that goes with it. There is a lot of action in the book and the pace is fast. Expect gory details of battles but Cornwell is never obnoxious about it and only includes what sensibly moves the story along. You'll also learn about daily life, politics, ancient military strategy, weapons, tactics, sensibilities, attitudes of victors and the vanquished and the harsh reality of war in the 9th century. I usually didn't want to put the book down but unfortunately I just don't have enough time to read it all

in one sitting. I thoroughly enjoy this series and have enjoyed the Sharpe series for the hours of entertainment they have provided me. I highly recommend Warriors Of The Storm. As always, I suggest you begin with book one if you haven't read the whole series and work your way up to book nine. The only disappointment you'll experience is the waiting for the next book to be published but so far I'm convinced everyone has been rewarded for the wait with a great book. Buy it. You'll like it.

Bernard Cornwell hits it out of the park again with pure fun and action as our hero, Uhtred of Bebbanburg, must take care of family matters first, and then settles scores with the bad guys by letting his allies finish the job in the end. Eventually, the series will have to end, but perhaps this could be a way to "fill in" the years in some of the earlier books once this series comes to its inevitable conclusion.

Following The Empty Throne, Uhtred continues to fight for his Saxons, Lady Aethelflaed in particular, though his belief in the old Norse gods again adds to the difficulties he finds in relationships with the Christians he is fighting to protect. Lord Uhtred must find a way to defend Ceaster (Chester), rescue his daughter Stiorra and son-in-law Sigtryggr and their family from a siege of their island fortress in Ireland, revenge himself on his former lover Brida, and defeat the greatly superior forces of the Danish invader Ragnall Ivarson, the brother of Sigtryggr. Ragnall is a formidable fighter himself, and a clever general. Subplots involve the conflict between Uhtred's ally Finan and Finan's brother; the question of the worthiness of Uhtred's son Uhtred; the possible reconciliation with Uhtred's oldest son, Oswald, a priest; and as always, the eventual goal of regaining his own fortress at Bebbanburg. Great battle scenes, a Cornwell hallmark. Dramatic confrontations, the stuff of gripping fictions. And the craft to make a hero who fears and wonders: "Æl touched the hammer at my neck, wondering whether by saying that (he would kill Ragnall) aloud I had tempted the three Norns who weave our fate at the foot of Yggdrasil (the World Tree of the Norse). It was not a cold night, but I shivered. Wyrð Bith ful araed." (Fate is inexorable).

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