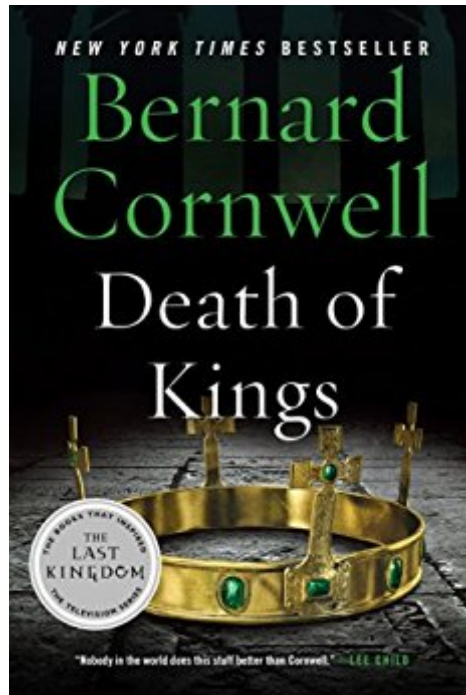


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Death Of Kings: A Novel (Saxon Tales Book 6)



Synopsis

The sixth 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) is the basis for The Last Kingdom, the hit BBC America television series. As the ninth century wanes, England is perched once more on the brink of chaos. King Alfred is dying; with his passing, the island of Britain seems doomed to renewed warfare. Alfred wants his son Edward to succeed him, but there are other Saxon claimants to the throne as well as ambitious pagan Vikings to the north. With the promise of battle looming again, Uhtred, the Viking-raised but Saxon-born warrior, whose life seems to shadow the making of England itself, is torn between competing loyalties. Uhtred's loyalty, and his vows, are to Alfred not to his son and despite long years of service to the old king, Uhtred is still reluctant to commit to Alfred's cause. His own desire is to reclaim his long lost ancestral lands and castle to the north. As the king's warrior he is duty-bound, but the king's reign is nearing its end, and his death will leave a vacuum of power. Uhtred is forced to make a momentous choice: either take up arms and Alfred's mantle to realize his dream of a united and Christian England, or be responsible for condemning it to oblivion. Death of Kings is a harrowing story of the power of tribal commitment and the dilemma of divided loyalties. This is the making of England magnificently brought to life by the best historical novelist writing today (Vince Flynn).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Right from the start I've got to tell you, I love Bernard Cornwell. I've read The Warlord Chronicles (King Arthur and Co.), Agincourt, and the previous five volumes of The Saxon Tales, and I have yet to be disappointed. This sixth volume of the tales takes us to Alfred's death, the ascension of his son Edward, and the inevitable and continuing battle to unite England and defeat the Danes. All the great characters return, first and foremost Uhtred of Bebbanburg, a Dane who has pledged allegiance to Alfred, and acted as his sword through a lifetime of battles. Uhtred is the guy you want on your side. He's big, bold, earthy, witty, a brilliant strategist and fighter, a great friend, and does not suffer fools. He can be a battle crazed killing machine and a lover. But, he never seems either corny or out of proportion. Though there are a raft of great recurring characters, they're all second to Uhtred. The book is written in the first person, and the author's skill is so great that even though you know Uhtred will always make it through - he's telling the story - the tension still rises as you expect for some lucky thrust to make it through the shield wall and cut him down. Here's what I like about the series: battle, politics, battle, intrigue, authenticity, battle, sex, battle, comedy, battle. Did I mention "battle." I have a feeling the list sums up what most of Bernard Cornwell's readers like. Well, he gives it to us. When I'm immersed in one of these tales I can just about feel the lice, smell the burning thatch, see the eviscerated civilians, warriors, and livestock. I get fed up with the priests, angered by the traitors, and interested in the women. And, I get really excited by the battles, large and small. Mr. Cornwell gives you a good read.

Bernard Cornwell's "Saxon Tales" series continues to explore the murky origins of England with "Death of Kings." Our hero remains Uthred, Saxon raised as a Dane (Viking) who has reluctantly fought for Alfred the Great for years. But what is he to do when the ailing Alfred finally passes and the Danes stand poised to invade a fractured kingdom? For those of you who are familiar with this series, you know the answer: fight and kill. Uthred is the ultimate warrior, hiding his strategic mind behind a facade of barbarian fury. "Death of Kings" features more of the same as Uthred tries valiantly to advise Alfred's heir Edward, who is unfortunately surrounded by a cast of advisors consisting largely of Cornwell's favorite villain, the corrupt clergy. This does lead to a most enjoyable scene where Uthred offers his advice on how to run a church service (you have to agree, they'd be both shorter and more entertaining). But through these battles - both political and bloody - we see

how the foundations of England were forged. And there is plenty of blood to satisfy Cornwell's fans, even though there is also a dizzying political landscape that makes the reader even more thankful when Uthred decides to solve problems with his lethal swords, *Serpent's Breath* and *Wasp-Sting* (as you can see, Uthred's a warrior, not a poet). Cornwell admits in his author's notes that he's taken more than a few liberties with the historical record in the interests of storytelling. That's fine, because Cornwell tells great stories. But he raises a valid beef with the focus of English history, which generally kicks off with 1066 as the first year of note.

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