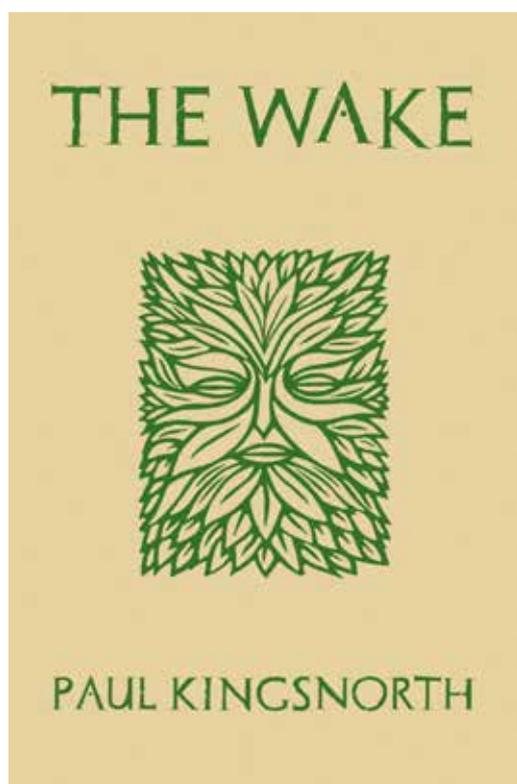




## Reader's Guide



*The Wake*  
is Paul Kingsnorth's first novel.

# The Wake Paul Kingsnorth

Unbound

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## About the author

Paul Kingsnorth is the author of two non-fiction books, *One No, Many Yeses* (2003) and the highly acclaimed *Real England* (2008), as well as a collection of poetry, *Kidland* (2011). A former journalist and deputy editor of *The Ecologist* magazine, he has won several awards for his poetry and essays. In 2009, he co-founded the Dark Mountain Project, an international network of writers, artists and thinkers in search of new stories for troubled times. *The Wake* is his first novel.

## The Wake

Set in the three years after the Norman invasion of 1066, *The Wake* tells the story of Buccmaster of Holland, a man from the Lincolnshire Fens who, with a fractured band of guerilla fighters, takes up arms against the invaders. It is a post-apocalyptic story of the brutal shattering of lives, a tale of lost gods and haunted visions, narrated by a man bearing witness to the end of his world.

## Discussion points

*The Wake* is written in what the author calls a 'shadow tongue' – a version of Old English updated so as to be intelligible to the modern reader. (Explained by the author in 'A note on language' at the back of the book). Adam Thorpe the novelist has called it 'a literary triumph', Philip Pullman has called it 'extraordinary' and Lucy Mangan in *The Guardian* said 'Reading Kingsnorth's book is to be immersed in the past and in a story in a way that I haven't really felt since childhood. It's time travel between hard covers and the most glorious experience I've had with a book in years.' John Sutherland in the *Sunday Times* on the other hand said of the language 'Anything that creates resistance for the reader is going to face a huge task gaining a wider readership.'

Do you feel that the language pulls you in to Buccmaster's world or is it a barrier to your understanding of the story?

What do you think of Buccmaster as a character? Is he a heroic figure or a fraud?

How does this approach to historical fiction compare with other historical novels you have read? Are there things that fiction can do that straight history can't?

Although the history of the Battle of Hastings is well known, this particular period of history – the aftermath of the battle - is not widely studied or written about. Does reading *The Wake* change your perspective on the Battle of Hastings?

Have you read any other novels written in invented languages – Why do you think those authors used such language in those books? How do they compare with what Paul Kingsnorth is doing here? (suggested other titles below)

## Themed reading

### Other novels in invented languages:

Russell Hoban *Riddley Walker*

Iain M Banks *Feersum Endjinn*

Anthony Burgess *A Clockwork Orange*

Will Self *The Book of Dave*

Sandra Newman *The Country of Ice Cream Star*

### Non-fiction:

Michael Wood *In Search of the Dark Ages*

## Useful links

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

[www.paulkingsnorth.net](http://www.paulkingsnorth.net)

[unbound.co.uk/books/the-wake](http://unbound.co.uk/books/the-wake)