

Vikings - Season 4

The fourth season of the historical drama television series *Vikings* premiered on February 18, 2016 on History in Canada. The series broadly follows the exploits of the legendary Viking chieftain Ragnar Lothbrok and his crew, and later those of his sons. The first season of the series begins at the start of the Viking Age, marked by the Lindisfarne raid in 793. The fourth season consists of a double-season order of twenty episodes, split into two parts of ten episodes;[1][2][3] The first half concluded on April 21, 2016. The second half premiered on November 30, 2016. The season follows the battles between Ragnar and Rollo in Francia, Bjorn's raid into the Mediterranean, and the Viking invasion of England. It concluded in its entirety on February 1, 2017.[4] *Vikings* is an Irish-Canadian co-production presented by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The fourth season was developed and produced by Octagon Films for the first sixteen episodes, TM Productions for the last four episodes, and Take 5 Productions. Morgan O'Sullivan, Sheila Hockin, Sherry Marsh, Alan Gasmer, James Flynn, John Weber, and Michael Hirst are credited as executive producers. This season was produced by Keith Thompson for the first eight and for the last four episodes, and Sanne Wohlenberg for the ninth to sixteenth episodes. Bill Goddard and Séamus McInerney are co-producers.[7] The production team for this season includes casting directors Frank and Nuala Moisselle, costume designer Joan Bergin, visual effects supervisor Dominic Remane, stunt action designers Franklin Henson and Richard Ryan, composer Trevor Morris, production designer Mark Geraghty, editors Aaron Marshall for the first, fourth, seventh, fifteenth and eighteenth episodes, Christopher Donaldson for the second, fifth and eighth episodes, Tad Seaborn for the third, sixth, ninth, eleventh, thirteenth, sixteenth and nineteenth episodes, and Don Cassidy for the tenth, twelfth, fourteenth, seventeenth and twentieth episodes, and cinematographers PJ Dillon for the first eight and last four episodes, and Owen McPolin for the ninth to sixteenth episodes.[7] Both parts of the fourth season of *Vikings* received very positive reviews. The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reported a 92% approval rating, with an average rating of 8.3/10 based on twelve reviews. The critical consensus reads: "*Vikings* returns for another season of fantastic performances, epic battles, and sharp writing sure to please its barbarous hordes of fans." [12] **Season 4** of *Vikings* premiered on February 18, 2016 on History in Canada and in the United States and concluded on February 1, 2017. This season, consisting of 20 episodes, was split into two ten-episode parts with the first part airing from February 18 to April 21, 2016, and the second part airing from November 30, 2016 to February 1, 2017. Below is brief review of what happened in the fourth season of *Vikings*. And so, if seasons one through three of *Vikings* were largely the story of the rise of Ragnar Lothbrok from farmer to king of Kattegat and leader of the first wave of Viking expansion to the hit western Europe, season four is the story of his decline and fall, partly due to his previous sins coming back to haunt him. I admit, I really don't want Lagertha to be killed as well, so if one of Ragnar's sons does kill her, I hope it's in season 7. For now, I think they're all headed for England and she's safe, but I could be wrong. What a blow to the show it would be to lose Katheryn Winnick. For one thing, Ragnar's character arc left me feeling somewhat letdown. He's spoken of by everyone now as this great hero, such a legend that vikings from across Norway, Sweden and Denmark will all set aside their differences and come to avenge his death. In any case, my point is that it feels as though we've lost more than just Ragnar as we approach the season finale. We've lost almost his entire crew. We've even lost any sense of camaraderie. We've moved on and now much of the weight of the show lies on Ivar's shoulders, and those of his brothers. But five brothers in one army is almost too much. They merely squabble---as Floki jeeringly notes, "So this is what the grunting of the little pigs was all about?" Perhaps the show will split them all up, sending each with his own army to ravage the English countryside. Perhaps we will move into something more akin to *The Last Kingdom*, showing a protracted war for the soul of England play out over time, with Alfred staying the viking tide. It's hard to say how *Vikings* will approach what's coming. Will it leap ahead as it often does? It's hard to say. I've enjoyed the second

half of Season 4 quite a lot, but it's hard to adjust to this new rhythm, this new focus on new characters who have, in many ways, been thrust upon us rather than growing into the show organically. I want the struggle in Kattegat to feel more desperate; instead, as Lagertha tortures Egil to discover who paid him, it just seems glaringly obvious. Of course it was King Harald! The king and his brother barely hid their plotting, or at least it seemed too obvious to us. Now that the invasion has failed, the stakes seem incredibly low. Lagertha keeps escaping her own mistakes and oversights, and we as viewers don't feel particularly invested in her struggles because of that---at least, not in the way we were invested in her struggles in past seasons. I did enjoy the battle at the end of the episode, and hopefully leaving it on a cliff-hanger means we're in for a more protracted showdown next week. I hope Aethelwulf isn't just completely annihilated, and gives the vikings a run for their money. On the other hand, I do think the vikings were a bit unrealistically fleet of foot and too clever by half. It's no simple thing to leave the top of a hill, run into the forest, then circle back around the tail side of the enemy, especially when that enemy has horses---and then do it all over again. Ivar risks becoming the show's Dark Knight Joker. His plan, devised in the 11th hour as an entirely new tactic for viking warriors, plays out flawlessly. (This is why I call him the Joker, as that villain's plans in *The Dark Knight* all play out perfectly as well, no matter how preposterous.) Aethelwulf runs back and forth like a confused dog and then barrels headlong into the perfectly placed ambush. It would all feel more satisfying if the vikings were fighting against a much stronger foe---David cleverly tricking Goliath---but these armies were portrayed as largely on par with one another. I guess it does position Ivar as his father's true heir, as Ragnar was always sly and clever in his tactics. Ragnar questioned Yidu about her country much as he did with Athelstan in the first season. Talk about ambition, was China next on his list? This new relationship is refreshing, and I am enjoying it immensely. How quickly Ragnar caught on to the fact Yidu might be royalty. The Vikings Ragnar death was one of the most shocking moments of season 4 and the whole series in general, given that Ragnar was the series' main protagonist up until that point. Because of his penchant for battles and conquering, it was likely only a matter of time before Ragnar Lothbrok's death, but the shock factor swoops in thanks to the intentional element of Ragnar's death and the gruesome manner of his passing. During the First Siege of Paris, in *Vikings* season 3, Ragnar pretended to have converted to Christianity and asked to be baptized. He then faked his death so that his casket would be carried into the heart of the city for a Christian burial, before dramatically breaking out and opening the gates of Paris for his army to wreak havoc. In the wake of Athelstan's death, Ragnar had replaced his faith in the gods with faith in himself. While recovering from the injuries he received in Paris, Ragnar had a vision of the gates of Valhalla closing to him. While this could be interpreted as meaning that he was simply not ready to die yet, it could also be seen as the moment Ragnar ceased to believe in Valhalla. In *Vikings* season 4, Ragnar made his loss of faith clear when he accused Kattegat's Seer's prophecies of being vague, confusing, and self-fulfilling. Ragnar told the Seer, "I don't believe in the gods' existence. Man is the master of his own fate, not the gods. The gods are man's creation, to give answers that they are too afraid to give themselves." At the end of his life, Ragnar was no longer willing to accept that the gods had already decided the manner of his death. Instead, he proudly proclaimed that he shaped his own destiny and that he alone plotted the course of his death. There was more to Ragnar Lothbrok's death than simple revenge, however. In *Vikings* season 2, he asked the Seer what would become of his sons, and was told that they would become more famous than him. In particular, Ragnar saw the potential for greatness in Ivar, telling his youngest son that his non-functioning legs had given him a strength that his brothers lacked. The nature of Ragnar Lothbrok's death was also his final lesson for Ivar the Boneless: he emphasized that people would always underestimate him because of his legs, just like Ragnar's own enemies underestimated him when he appeared to be nothing more than a weak old man in rags. It was said many times in the *Vikings* show that Ragnar's real dream wasn't simply to raid England but to establish land for his people there. Through the careful design of his own death, he was finally able to succeed in this goal. Regardless of whether or not Valhalla exists, and whether Ragnar went there, he lived on after death by building a legacy through his sons. Of course, that legacy got a bit

off-track in Vikings season 5 when his sons started fighting among themselves, but Ragnar can't really be blamed for that. The famous Norse king Ragnar Lothbrok, who inspired the Vikings TV show, has been immortalized in Icelandic legends that recount his victories conquering England and elsewhere before eventually being defeated by King Ælle and thrown into a pit of snakes, just like in Ragnar Lothbrok's death scene. Sadly, little proof exists that the Vikings' Ragnar was actually a real person. Although evidence supports the existence of his sons, most notably Ivar the Boneless, historians believe that Ragnar was actually a combination of 3 different historical figures: King Horik I of Denmark (who appeared in the Vikings series), King Reginfrid, and Reginherus. The real King Horik was eventually killed by his brother, Guttorm, and King Reginfrid likely died in combat. Little is known about Reginherus' end, but many believe he was simply killed after losing in battle. None of these deaths are nearly as iconic as the myths surrounding Ragnar's, so it makes sense that Vikings season 4 sought to portray the legend rather than reality.

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