

# Jon Snow (character)

**Jon Snow** is a fictional character in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series of fantasy novels by American author George R. R. Martin, and its television adaptation *Game of Thrones*, in which he is portrayed by English actor Kit Harington. He is a prominent point of view character in the novels, and has been called one of the author's "finest creations" and most popular characters by *The New York Times*.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Jon is a main character in the TV series, and his storyline in the 2015 season 5 finale generated a strong reaction among viewers. Speculation about the character's parentage has also been a popular topic of discussion among fans of both the books and the TV series.

Jon is introduced in 1996's *A Game of Thrones* as the illegitimate son of Ned Stark, the honorable lord of Winterfell, an ancient fortress in the North of the fictional continent of Westeros. Knowing his prospects are limited by his status, Jon joins the Night's Watch, who guard the far northern borders from the wildlings who live beyond The Wall. As the rest of the Starks face grave adversity, Jon finds himself honor bound to remain with the Watch. In *A Clash of Kings* (1998), he joins a scouting party investigating the growing threat from the otherworldly "Others" beyond the Wall, and manages to infiltrate the wildlings. Jon learns of their plans to invade Westeros in *A Storm of Swords* (2000), and begins to fall in love with the fierce wildling woman Ygritte. He betrays them—and Ygritte—before they can attack, but the Night Watch's victory comes at a heavy price for Jon. Now the Lord Commander of the Watch, he appears briefly in 2005's *A Feast for Crows*. Jon returns as a prominent character in a *A Dance with Dragons* (2011), working to negotiate an alliance between the Night's Watch and the wildlings. The growing animosity he has attracted from among the Watch finally catches up with him, and he is forced to face the dire consequences.

On the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, Jon's storyline follows the character's plot arc from the novel series, though season 6 and season 7 of the TV adaptation continue on from the events of Martin's latest published installment. Harington was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series for the role in 2016. He was also nominated for a Saturn Award for Best Supporting Actor on Television in 2012, 2016 and 2017.

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Jon Snow	
A <i>Song of Ice and Fire</i> character <div>Game of Thrones character</div>	
<span></span> <div>Kit Harington as Jon Snow</div>	
<b>First appearance</b>	<b>Novel:</b> <div><i>A Game of Thrones</i> (1996)</div> <b>Television:</b> <div>"Winter Is Coming" (2011)</div> <b>Video game:</b> <div>"The Lost Lords" (2015)</div>
<b>Last appearance</b>	<b>Video game:</b> <div>"Reigns" (2018)</div>
<b>Created by</b>	George R. R. Martin
<b>Portrayed by</b>	Kit Harington <div>(<i>Game of Thrones</i>)</div>
<b>Voiced by</b>	Kit Harington (video game)
<b>Motion capture</b>	Kit Harrington (video game)
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# Character

## Description

In *A Game of Thrones*, Jon Snow is introduced as the 14-year-old illegitimate son of Eddard "Ned" Stark, Lord of Winterfell,<sup>[3][4]</sup> and half-brother to Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran and Rickon. Jon is described as having strong Stark features with a lean build, long face, dark brown hair and grey eyes.<sup>[5]</sup> Jon has the surname "Snow" (customarily used for illegitimate children in the North) and is resented by Ned's wife Catelyn, who views him as a constant reminder of Ned's infidelity.<sup>[4]</sup> Jon is the same age as Robb and enjoys a warm relationship with his siblings, particularly the tomboy Arya (who resembles Jon and like him does not feel like she fits in). Ned treats Jon as much like his other children as propriety and his honor will allow. Still, as somewhat of an outsider, Jon has learned to be independent and to fend for himself when necessary.<sup>[3]</sup> Jon idolizes his father, but is wounded by Ned's refusal to tell him about his mother.<sup>[6]</sup> At the beginning of the story, Jon adopts the albino direwolf that he names Ghost. He later finds that at times he can "inhabit" the wolf and share its experiences.<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>

David Orr of *The New York Times* describes Jon as "a complex, thoughtful and basically good character".<sup>[1]</sup> David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, the creators and executive producers of the television adaptation of the series, explain that Jon is one of several characters in the series who must "face hard truths about the world they live in, and adapt themselves to those truths" because "The struggle many of them face is how to do that without losing their grip on who they are."<sup>[7]</sup> Ned Stark teaches all his children about leadership, selflessness, duty and honor. Following his father's example becomes more difficult as Jon faces challenges to his identity as a man, a Stark, and a brother of the Night's Watch.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Benioff and Weiss note that "Jon Snow tries to live with honor, while knowing that honor often gets his family members murdered."<sup>[7]</sup> Writing for *Variety* about the season 6 episode "Battle of the Bastards", Laura Prudom suggests that Jon "has the same shortcomings" as his father: "he fights with honor against opponents who are all too willing to use that predictable morality against him".<sup>[8]</sup>

Jon is a prominent point of view character in the novels, and has been called one of Martin's "finest creations".<sup>[1]</sup> Jon is introduced as the illegitimate son of a Northern lord who, realizing he is an outsider in his own family, follows his uncle to the far north and accepts the honorable duty of serving in the Night's Watch. But as much as he is a second-class Stark at home, initially his fellow recruits and brothers of the Watch set him apart as privileged and aloof. Jon adapts, soon proving himself to be wise, compassionate, and a natural leader. Over the course of the series, Jon's loyalty to the Watch and its vows, his family, and even Westeros itself are tested as he becomes embroiled in the efforts of the wildlings from Beyond the Wall to force

<b>Alias</b>	<div>Lord Snow</div> <div>The Bastard of Winterfell</div> <div><b>Novels:</b></div> <div>The Snow of Winterfell</div> <div>The crow-come-over Lord Crow</div> <div>The Black Bastard of the Wall</div> <div><b>Television:</b></div> <div>King Crow</div> <div>The White Wolf</div> <div>The Prince That Was Promised</div> <div>Aegon Targaryen (birth name)</div>
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Title</b>	<div>998th Lord Commander of the Night's Watch</div> <div><b>Television:</b></div> <div>King in the North</div>
<b>Family</b>	<div>House Stark</div> <div><b>Television:</b></div> <div>House Targaryen</div>
<b>Significant other</b>	<div>Ygritte</div> <div><b>Television:</b></div> <div>Daenerys Targaryen</div>
<b>Relatives</b>	<div><b>Novels:</b></div> <div>Ned Stark (father)</div> <div>Catelyn Stark (step-mother)</div> <div>Robb Stark (half-brother)</div> <div>Sansa Stark (half-sister)</div> <div>Arya Stark (half-sister)</div> <div>Bran Stark (half-brother)</div> <div>Rickon Stark (half-brother)</div>

their way back into the Seven Kingdoms. He lives among them as a spy for the Watch, sympathetic to their cause and becoming romantically involved with the tenacious Ygritte. However he ultimately betrays them to defend The Wall. Later, as the newest Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, he pursues an alliance with the wildlings.<sup>[3][4][5][9]</sup>

Several reviews of 2011's *A Dance with Dragons* noted the return to the narrative of Jon, Daenerys Targaryen and Tyrion Lannister, the three popular characters whom fans had missed most from the previous volume, *A Feast for Crows*.<sup>[2][10][11]</sup> These "favorites" had last been featured 11 years before in Martin's *A Storm of Swords*.<sup>[12]</sup> In *A Dance with Dragons*, Jon's leadership of the Night's Watch is complicated by several unprecedented challenges, including a wildling alliance, the demands of would-be-king Stannis Baratheon and the conflicting factions developing within the Watch itself.<sup>[12][13][14]</sup> *The New York Times* notes that "Jon's leadership is the best hope of Westeros, so naturally he's in imminent danger throughout *A Dance With Dragons*."<sup>[1]</sup> James Hibberd of *Entertainment Weekly* called Jon's final chapter in *A Dance with Dragons* "a harsh chapter in terms of fan expectations. You go from this total high of Jon giving this rousing speech about going after the evil Ramsay Bolton, to this utter low of his men turning against him."<sup>[15]</sup> Jon's presence in the forthcoming volume *The Winds of Winter* is uncertain.<sup>[15]</sup>

Asked what he thought was Jon's biggest "mistake", Martin replied:

Were they mistakes? I guess they were mistakes in some ways since they led to him losing control of part of his group. But it might have been wise and necessary decisions in terms of protecting the realm and dealing with the threat of the White Walkers. I'm a huge student of history, and all through history there's always this question of what's the right decision. You look back with benefit of hindsight at a battle that was lost and say, 'The losing general was such an idiot.' Was Napoleon a genius for all the battles he won? Or an idiot for losing at Waterloo? Partly I'm reacting to a lot of the fantasy that has come before this. Ruling is difficult whether you're a Lord Commander of the Night's Watch or the King of England. These are hard decisions and each have consequences. We're looking at Jon trying to take control of Night's Watch and deal with the wildlings and the threat beyond The Wall.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Parentage

The identity of Jon's mother has created much speculation among readers of the series, and guessing her identity was the test Martin gave Benioff and Weiss when they approached him in March 2006 about adapting his novels into a TV series.<sup>[17][18][19]</sup> In the novels, Martin hints that she could be a servant named Wylla, or the noblewoman Ashara Dayne.<sup>[20][21][22]</sup> The popular fan theory—called "R+L=J", an abbreviation of "Rhaegar + Lyanna = Jon"—proposes that Jon is not the son of Ned at all, but is actually the son of Rhaegar Targaryen and Ned's younger sister Lyanna Stark.<sup>[17][23][24]</sup>

- Brandon Stark (uncle)
- Benjen Stark (uncle)
- Lyanna Stark (aunt)
- Television:**
- Lyanna Stark (mother)
- Rhaegar Targaryen (biological father)
- Ned Stark (uncle/adoptive father)
- Catelyn Stark (aunt/adoptive mother)
- Robb Stark (cousin/adoptive brother)
- Sansa Stark (cousin/adoptive sister)
- Arya Stark (cousin/adoptive sister)
- Bran Stark (cousin/adoptive brother)
- Rickon Stark (cousin/adoptive brother)
- Rhaenys Targaryen (half-sister)
- Aegon Targaryen (half-brother)
- Brandon Stark (uncle)
- Benjen Stark (uncle)
- Viserys Targaryen (uncle)
- Daenerys Targaryen (aunt)

**Predecessor** Jeor Mormont (Lord Commander of the Night's Watch)

**Television:**

Though the character is presented as the illegitimate son of Ned Stark,<sup>[1][2][25]</sup> David Orr voiced the doubt of some readers when he wrote in *The New York Times* in 2011, "Jon Snow is presented as the illegitimate son of the Stark patriarch, although it's uncertain whether Stark is indeed his father."<sup>[1]</sup> Actor Sean Bean, who portrays Ned in the HBO television series, said when asked in a 2014 interview about returning to the series to appear in flashbacks, "I've definitely got some unfinished business that needs to be resolved there. I'm obviously not Jon Snow's dad. And you need that to be revealed at some point, don't you?"<sup>[26]</sup> The uncertainty arises from anecdotal evidence in the texts interpreted by readers to connect the mysterious maternity of Ned's son with the vague backstory of his sister Lyanna.<sup>[17][24][27]</sup>

	Robb Stark (King in the North) Ramsay Bolton (Lord Paramount and Warden of the North)
Successor	Television: Eddison Tollett (Lord Commander of the Night's Watch)
Kingdom	The North

As recounted by Ned in *A Game of Thrones*, at a tourney years before the events of the novel, Rhaegar had shown public favor to Lyanna in the presence of his own wife, the Dornish princess Elia Martell.<sup>[28]</sup> When Rhaegar and Lyanna disappeared a year later, her father Rickard and eldest brother Brandon confronted Rhaegar's father, the Mad King Aerys Targaryen, demanding that his son return the abducted Lyanna. Aerys had Rickard and Brandon brutally executed for their insolence, inciting Ned and his friend Robert Baratheon, Lord of Storm's End and Lyanna's betrothed, to rebel against Aerys.<sup>[29][30]</sup> In what later became known as Robert's Rebellion, Aerys was overthrown and Rhaegar was killed by Robert in single combat.<sup>[29]</sup> After a bloody battle against three of Aerys' Kingsguard protecting the Tower of Joy in Dorne, Ned found Lyanna inside, in a "bed of blood." She died shortly after eliciting a promise from Ned.<sup>[28][29]</sup> Once the war was won, he returned to Winterfell with his illegitimate son Jon.<sup>[25]</sup>

The R+L=J theory posits that rather than Rhaegar kidnapping Lyanna, they fell in love and ran away together. Living for a year in the Tower of Joy, they conceived a child—Jon. Rhaegar was killed in battle by Robert, and Lyanna died in childbirth.<sup>[31][32]</sup> Ned promised Lyanna on her deathbed to claim the baby as his own to protect him from Robert, who sought to exterminate all Targaryens out of hatred and to secure his claim to the throne.<sup>[32]</sup>

HBO's *Game of Thrones* has included in its adaptation many of the "hints" identified by this theory.<sup>[33]</sup> In the season 6 finale, "The Winds of Winter", Bran Stark has a vision of the past which shows Ned reuniting with a dying Lyanna in the Tower of Joy. Lyanna makes him promise to protect her son—Jon.<sup>[33][34][35]</sup> An infographic subsequently posted on the HBO-controlled website MakingGameofThrones.com confirmed Rhaegar as Jon's father.<sup>[36][37][38]</sup> Journalists later commented on the significance of two plot points in the season 7 episode "Eastwatch". One of Daenerys Targaryen's dragons, Drogon, approaches Jon calmly and allows the King in the North to pet him, seemingly recognizing him as a Targaryen.<sup>[39][40][41]</sup> Later, Gilly learns from a book at the Citadel that a High Septon annulled Rhaegar's marriage, and married him to someone else in Dorne, suggesting the possibility that Jon is the legitimate son of Rhaegar and Lyanna.<sup>[42][43][44]</sup> The season 7 finale episode "The Dragon and the Wolf" confirmed that Jon is indeed the legitimate son of Rhaegar and Lyanna, and that his birth name is actually Aegon Targaryen.<sup>[45][46]</sup>

## Storylines

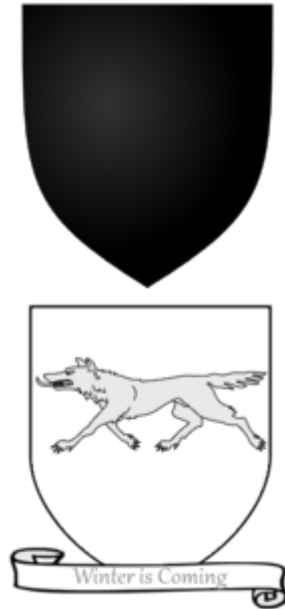
### A Game of Thrones

Jon Snow is first introduced in *A Game of Thrones* (1996), as he and his five siblings adopt six orphaned direwolf cubs. Known by all as Ned Stark's illegitimate son and with Ned's wife Catelyn despising him, Jon has always felt removed from the rest of the Stark family. He resolves to join the Night's Watch, as his status as a bastard prevents him from holding lands or marrying into a good family. At The Wall, the other recruits resent Jon's aura of superiority, but he makes amends by helping them master swordplay. He also befriends Samwell Tarly, a cowardly lordling who, despite being helpless with weapons, displays an aptitude for book learning. Jon's independence and his compassion for the recruits invite the ire of the harsh master-at-arms Alliser Thorne, who sees Jon as a threat to his authority. Jon gains the notice of the Lord Commander, Jeor Mormont, who names Jon his personal squire and grooms Jon for command. After learning of his father's execution, Jon resolves to desert the Night's Watch and join his half brother Robb, but

the other recruits convince Jon to remain loyal to his Night's Watch vows. The next night, Jon saves Mormont's life by killing an undead wight. Mormont then orders a Great Ranging beyond the Wall to learn more of this new threat.<sup>[3][6]</sup>

## ***A Clash of Kings***

In 1998's *A Clash of Kings*, Mormont leads a party of Night's Watch rangers beyond the Wall to investigate the disappearance of Jon's uncle Benjen, assess the intentions of the wildling leader Mance Rayder and learn more of the threat posed by the Others. Jon is sent out with a scouting party led by Qhorin Halfhand. On the journey, Jon comes upon a wildling lookout and takes the warrior girl Ygritte captive; though told to kill her, Jon lets her escape. Jon and Qhorin are subsequently captured by the wildlings. Qhorin, who faces certain execution at Mance's hands, commands Jon to infiltrate the wildlings and learn their plans, at any cost. Jon pretends to disavow the Night's Watch, and the wildlings force him to fight Qhorin to the death to earn their trust. With Qhorin's silent consent, Jon kills him with the aid of Ghost.<sup>[4][47]</sup>



Coat of arms of the Night's Watch and House Stark

## ***A Storm of Swords***

As *A Storm of Swords* (2000) begins, Jon has gained the trust of the wildlings by killing Qhorin, and marches with their host. He learns that Mance intends to breach the Wall and march south to escape the Others, crushing the Night's Watch if necessary. Jon finds himself torn between his growing love for Ygritte and his vows of celibacy. After climbing over The Wall with Ygritte and Tormund Giantsbane, Jon deserts them to warn the Watch of the impending attack. He helps defend Castle Black against the wildlings' initial attacks despite his lack of men and weapons. Ygritte is killed in the fighting, leaving Jon stricken. When the battle is won, Jon is arrested for desertion by Thorne and Janos Slynt, but is freed after convincing the judges of his loyalty. Still suspicious, Thorne orders that Jon be sent to kill Mance under the pretense of parley, but Jon's task is interrupted by the arrival of Stannis Baratheon's army. Stannis offers to legitimize Jon and declare him Lord of Winterfell if he will align the North with Stannis. Though greatly tempted at the prospect of becoming a true Stark, Jon again chooses to remain loyal to his Night's Watch vows. With Sam's help, Jon is elected to the position of Lord Commander by acclamation.<sup>[2][9][13][48]</sup>

## ***A Feast for Crows and A Dance with Dragons***

Jon is not a POV character in 2005's *A Feast for Crows*, but appears briefly from Sam's perspective as he sends Sam away from Castle Black with the Watch's Maester Aemon and Mance's newborn son to protect them from sacrifice by the Red Priestess Melisandre. Jon also gives Sam the specific mission of traveling to the Citadel in Oldtown to become a maester, so that he may better understand the threat of the Others and eventually succeed Maester Aemon.<sup>[49]</sup>

In *A Dance with Dragons* (2011), after sending Sam away to the Citadel to become a Maester, Jon successfully negotiates the peaceful surrender of the remains of Mance's army. He promises to settle the wildlings in sparsely populated regions of the North, and allows some of them to join the Watch to garrison the many abandoned Night's Watch fortresses. Many members of the Watch dislike the idea of allowing their ancient enemies through the Wall and welcoming them into their ranks. Jon attempts to juggle the integration of the wildlings, growing unrest within the Night's Watch, and Stannis' attempts to use the Watch in his war for the Iron Throne, while trying to maintain the Watch's strict political neutrality. Already agitated by these unprecedented developments, a group of officers led by Slynt openly defies Jon's orders. When Slynt refuses to submit, Jon executes the man himself. Stannis explains to Jon his plan to attack the Dreadfort, but Jon advises him to instead rally the Mountain Clans and attack Deepwood Motte, the fortress of House Glover recently captured by the Ironborn. Stannis does so, winning the support of the Glovers and the



Mormonts. Jon learns that his sister Arya is being married to Ramsay Bolton so that the Boltons may claim Winterfell. Unaware that the bride is actually Jeyne Poole, Jon sends Mance to rescue her while Stannis marches on Winterfell. Jon later receives a letter from Ramsay claiming that Stannis has been defeated and Mance is a prisoner. Ramsay demands hostages, else he will march on the Wall and kill Jon.<sup>[1][2][13][12][14]</sup> Jon decides to seek out and kill Ramsay himself, but he is stabbed by his Night's Watch brothers seeking to uphold the Watch's neutrality before he can leave Castle Black.<sup>[50][51]</sup>

Jon's presence in the forthcoming volume *The Winds of Winter* is uncertain; when asked in 2011 by *Entertainment Weekly* "Why did you kill Jon Snow?", author Martin responded "Oh, you think he's dead, do you?"<sup>[15]</sup> Asked later whether Jon was killed or will survive, Martin responded with a laugh, "I will not comment on that."<sup>[52]</sup>

## Family tree

# TV adaptation

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## Overview

Martin told *Rolling Stone* in 2014 that some early inquiries he received about adapting *A Song of Ice and Fire* suggested identifying the story's "important character" and focusing on that individual plot line: Jon and Daenerys Targaryen being the two most popular choices.<sup>[53]</sup> Martin was not interested in sacrificing so much of the overall story.<sup>[53]</sup> When the pilot for the HBO adaptation went into production years later, one of the first parts cast was Jon, with Kit Harington announced in the role in July 2009.<sup>[54][55]</sup> Alfie Allen and Iwan Rheon had also auditioned for the role, and were brought into the show to play Theon Greyjoy and Ramsay Snow instead, respectively.<sup>[56][57][58]</sup> In October 2014, Harington and several other key cast members, all contracted for six seasons of the series, renegotiated their deals to include a potential seventh season and salary increases for seasons five, six, and seven.<sup>[59][60]</sup> *The Hollywood Reporter* called the raises "huge", noting that the deal would make the performers "among the highest-paid actors on cable TV".<sup>[59]</sup> *Deadline Hollywood* put the number for season five at "close to \$300,000 an episode" for each actor,<sup>[60]</sup> and *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote in June 2016 that the performers would each be paid "upward of \$500,000 per episode" for seasons seven and the potential eight.<sup>[61]</sup> In 2017, Harington became one of the highest paid actors on television and will earn £2 million per episode for the show.<sup>[62][63]</sup>



Kit Harington plays the role of Jon Snow in the television series.



The costumes of Ygritte, Jon Snow, and Tormund Giantsbane in the show

As the series premiered, *TV Guide* called Harington a "soulful heartthrob" whose Jon is idolized by his younger siblings and who "seeks purpose" by joining the Night's Watch.<sup>[64]</sup> Creators David Benioff and D. B. Weiss later noted that Jon "tries to live with honor, while knowing that honor often gets his family members murdered".<sup>[7]</sup> They explained that he is one of several characters in the series who must "face hard truths about the world they live in, and adapt themselves to those truths. The struggle many of them face is how to do that without losing their grip on who they are."<sup>[7]</sup> Matt Fowler of *IGN* wrote in 2013 that while Jon and Daenerys' storylines in season 1 and season 2 "felt very separate" from the rest of the series' plot, for the first time in season 3, "Jon's entire situation felt incorporated into the larger picture."<sup>[65]</sup> Fowler also added that Jon's "oath-breaking romance with Ygritte

added a lot of heat to the story".<sup>[65]</sup> In May 2015, *International Business Times* called Jon "clearly the most popular character" of the series.<sup>[66]</sup>

In a 2015 interview Benioff said, "The problem with Jon is, he's not a cautious man. It's the problem with him, and also the reason we love him. He is a hero, but heroes are inherently incautious."<sup>[67]</sup> Weiss added, "At the end of the day, Jon is his father's son, he's a person who's honorable to a fault and does the right thing even when the right thing is extremely dangerous to him personally."<sup>[67]</sup> In the June 2015 season 5 finale "Mother's Mercy", Jon is stabbed to death by Alliser Thorne and several men of the Night's Watch after being labeled a traitor.<sup>[67]</sup> With Martin's 2011 novel *A Dance with Dragons* vague on Jon's fate, Harington confirmed the character's death in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, saying "I've been told I'm dead. I'm dead. I'm not coming back next season."<sup>[68]</sup> He added, "I loved how they brought [the orphan boy] Olly in to be the person who kills me. I love how the storyline with Thorne was wrapped up."<sup>[68]</sup> Benioff also said of the episode:

This is obviously a big deal, the death of Jon Snow. This is something we've been thinking about for a long long time, and Alliser kills him, it's kind of like, it's a bad guy killing a good guy. But when it's Olly holding the knife ... Olly's not a bad guy. Olly's a kid who's seen just way too much horror way too early, and he makes a decision that's a really hard decision for him but you understand where he's coming from ... It's one of those great conflicts that makes us love the books and this saga, is that it's, ultimately it's not just about good vs evil, it's about people of good intentions who come into conflict with each other because they have very different views of the world, and unfortunately it did not work out well for Jon Snow in this case.<sup>[67]</sup>

Writing for *The New York Times*, Jeremy Egner called Jon's demise "the biggest death on the show" since Ned Stark's beheading in season 1.<sup>[69]</sup> Amid strong fan reaction over Jon's death on social media,<sup>[66][70]</sup> immediately following the episode journalists began theorizing how the show could resurrect the character.<sup>[16][71][72][73][74][75]</sup> Nate Jones of Vulture.com noted:

It's easy to see what [other characters'] deaths meant for the series' sprawling narrative: Ned's execution sent the Stark kids adrift in a universe where there was nobody looking out for them, while Robb's murder was the final death knell for the hopes that the saga would ever have a traditional 'happy' ending. What would be accomplished, narratively, by getting rid of Jon permanently right now?<sup>[76]</sup>

A July 2015 sighting of Harington arriving in Belfast, a primary filming location for the series where other actors were arriving for season 6 script read-throughs, prompted further speculation about the character's return.<sup>[77][78]</sup> However, a story in *Vanity Fair* pointed out that Charles Dance had been seen in Belfast the previous year after his character Tywin Lannister's death as well, and he only appeared in the first episode of the subsequent season as a corpse.<sup>[77][79]</sup> Another photo that showed Harington on set in Belfast in a costume that varied from the Night's Watch outfit was published on September 25, 2015.<sup>[80]</sup> A season 6 *Game of Thrones* promotional poster released in November 2015 featured a bloodied Jon.<sup>[81]</sup>

Jon is resurrected by Melisandre in "Home", the May 2016 second episode of season 6.<sup>[82][83]</sup> Though calling it a "predictable move" for a television series, David Sims of *The Atlantic* praised the plot development as "the right choice" for the show's narrative.<sup>[84]</sup> In a subsequent interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Harington said:

I'd like to say sorry for lying to everyone. I'm glad that people were upset that he died. I think my biggest fear was that people were not going to care ... But it seems like people had a, similar to the Red Wedding episode, kind of grief about it. Which means something I'm doing—or the show is doing—is right.<sup>[82]</sup>

Joanna Robinson of *Vanity Fair* credited Jon's much-discussed cliffhanger death as a primary factor behind *Game of Thrones*' subsequent 25% ratings increase for season 6.<sup>[85]</sup> Harington's performance in season 6 earned the actor his first Primetime Emmy Award nomination in July 2016.<sup>[86]</sup> Harington as Jon has the most screen time of any other character in the seven seasons released to date.<sup>[87][88][89]</sup>

## Storylines

## Season 1

Following the plot of *A Game of Thrones*, in the first season Jon, the bastard son of Ned Stark, joins the Night's Watch. He arrives at the Wall with his direwolf Ghost in tow, to find that the order is a shadow of its former self. Raised to be a talented fighter with a strong sense of justice and honor, Jon is at first contemptuous of his fellow recruits, who are mostly lowborn, untrained fighters who are criminals and exiles. In 'Lord Snow', he is persuaded by Tyrion Lannister to put aside his prejudices and helps some of the others with their weapons training. Jon befriends Samwell Tarly, an overweight, clumsy coward who is more an intellectual than a fighter. Jon takes his vows but is disappointed about being made steward to Lord Commander Jeor Mormont rather than a ranger in "You Win or You Die". Sam points out that Jon is likely being groomed for command. Jon saves Mormont from a wight in "The Pointy End", and in "Baelor" Mormont gives him the House Mormont ancestral sword Longclaw, made of Valyrian steel, with a wolf's head handle custom made for Jon, in thanks. Jon learns of his father's execution for treason in "Fire and Blood", and although tempted to leave the Wall to help his family, his sense of duty ultimately compels him to stay.

## Season 2

In the second season, Jon witnesses the wildling Craster, a man with many wives who marries his own daughters, sacrifice his newborn son to the White Walkers in "The Night Lands". Later, as part of a small scouting party led by Night's Watch ranger Qhorin Halfhand, Jon is tasked with killing a wildling prisoner, the woman warrior Ygritte. He finds himself unable to do so in "The Old Gods and the New", and she escapes, only to capture him with her comrades in "The Prince of Winterfell". Qhorin orders Jon to pretend to defect and join the wildlings to discover their plans. In "Valar Morghulis", Qhorin stages a fight and secretly instructs Jon to kill him to gain the wildlings' trust. Jon does and is taken to meet Mance Rayder, the wildlings' King-Beyond-the Wall.

## Season 3

In the third season, Jon pledges his loyalty to Mance and travels with the wildlings, learning that they intend to scale the Wall and force their way south of the Wall. Ygritte seduces Jon, and they have sex in "Kissed by Fire". When Jon refuses to kill an innocent man to prove his loyalty in "The Rains of Castamere", he is attacked by the other wildlings but escapes. In "Mhysa", he is tracked by Ygritte, who shoots him with three arrows before he is able to escape again and return to Castle Black.

## Season 4

In "Two Swords", Alliser Thorne and Janos Slynt call for Jon's execution for defecting to the wildlings, but Maester Aemon is convinced of Jon's loyalty to the Watch and sets him free. In "First of His Name", Jon leads an expedition to Craster's Keep, where some men of the Watch have mutinied and murdered Lord Commander Mormont. After defeating the mutineers, Jon is reunited with Ghost. Tormund's wildlings attack Castle Black while Mance's army besieges the Wall in "The Watchers on the Wall". The wildlings are successfully repelled, although Ygritte is shot and dies in Jon's arms. Before Jon can negotiate with or kill Mance, Stannis Baratheon's army arrives and routs the wildling camp, taking Mance prisoner in the season finale "The Children".

## Season 5

In "The Wars to Come", Stannis enlists Jon as an intermediary between himself and Mance, hoping to add the wildling army to his own. Mance refuses to submit to Stannis, and the wildling king is burned at the stake by the red priestess Melisandre. In "The House of Black and White", Stannis offers to legitimize Jon and make him lord of Winterfell in exchange for his support. Jon is voted the new Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, initially tying with his nemesis Thorne but after the tie is broken by Maester Aemon's vote. Jon's intention to welcome the wildlings into Westeros and grant them lands south of the Wall further enrages Thorne's faction of the Watch, which holds a deep seated hatred for the wildlings. In "Hardhome", Jon travels by ship north of the Wall to the eponymous wildling village, seeking their support for his plan to ally the Night's Watch and the wildlings against the growing threat of the White Walkers. As some of the wildling clans board Stannis' ships to travel south, a massive force of wights, led by White Walkers and their Night King, attacks the village. Jon kills a White Walker with Longclaw, learning that not only dragonglass, but weapons forged with Valyrian steel, can destroy them completely. Jon and his group barely make it out alive, with only a fraction of



the wildling forces. Jon then permits the wildling forces to pass through the Wall into the North. Shortly after returning to Castle Black in the season finale 'Mother's Mercy', Jon is summoned to hear news of his missing uncle Benjen but is instead ambushed and stabbed to death by Thorne and his group of mutineers.

## Season 6

In "The Red Woman", Davos Seaworth, Dolorous Edd, and other brothers of the Watch loyal to Jon barricade themselves in a room with Ghost and Jon's body, and an attack by Thorne and his men is thwarted by the arrival of Tormund and his wildlings. Davos encourages Melisandre to attempt to resurrect Jon in "Home", and although the ritual at first seems to fail, Jon suddenly awakens. After hanging Thorne, Olly, Bowen Marsh, and Othell Yarwyck for their treason in "Oathbreaker", Jon gives command of the Watch to Edd and prepares to leave Castle Black. In "Book of the Stranger", he is reunited with his half-sister Sansa Stark, who has fled her abusive husband Ramsay Bolton and now seeks Jon's aid in crushing the Boltons. Jon is hesitant until a threatening message arrives from Ramsay demanding Sansa's return and announcing Ramsay's possession of their brother Rickon. Jon, Sansa, Davos, Tormund, and Brienne of Tarth set off to recruit an army to take back Winterfell and rescue Rickon from Ramsay in "The Broken Man", but their forces grow to only half the size of Bolton's. As the armies face each other in "Battle of the Bastards", Ramsay murders Rickon to enrage Jon, who rushes in with murderous fury. A devastating battle ensues in which the outnumbered Stark forces are nearly slaughtered, until the Knights of the Vale from House Arryn arrive with Sansa and Petyr Baelish, and attack the Bolton army from the rear. Jon chases Ramsay back into Winterfell and beats him savagely, stopping before killing him. Sansa subsequently feeds Ramsay to his own hounds. In the season finale episode "The Winds of Winter", Bran Stark has a vision of the past which shows Ned reuniting with a dying Lyanna in the Tower of Joy. She makes him swear to protect her son Jon.<sup>[36][37][38]</sup> Meanwhile, the Northern lords name Jon the King in the North.

## Season 7

Attempting to bolster the North's defenses in "Dragonstone", Jon is frustrated when his authority is undermined by Sansa, who does not want him to repeat the mistakes that got their father Ned and brother Robb killed. Jon dismisses a message from Cersei Lannister that he swear his allegiance to her. In "Stormborn", he receives an invitation to Dragonstone from Tyrion, on Daenerys Targaryen's behalf. Subsequently, receiving a message from Sam that a hoard of obsidian lies beneath the ancient Targaryen castle, Jon decides to meet Daenerys, leaving a surprised Sansa as his regent. At Dragonstone, he declines swearing fealty to Daenerys in "The Queen's Justice" and instead asks for her assistance fighting the White Walkers. She demurs but permits him to mine the obsidian. In "Eastwatch", Daenerys is surprised when her dragon Drogon approaches Jon and allows the King in the North to pet him. Determined to convince Cersei that their true enemy is the army of the dead, Jon leads an expedition north of the Wall to capture a wight and bring it south to King's Landing. They manage to do so in "Beyond the Wall" but are surrounded by a horde of the Night King's minions. Daenerys arrives with her dragons, but the Night King kills one of them with an ice spear, forcing the others to flee without Jon. He is saved by the reappearance of his uncle Benjen, who is overtaken by the dead as Jon escapes back to the Wall. Daenerys vows to fight the White Walkers with Jon, and he agrees to swear fealty to her as his queen. In "The Dragon and the Wolf", the two negotiate a truce with Cersei, who agrees to join them in fighting the Night King's forces. Bran learns that Jon was born Aegon Targaryen, the legitimate son and heir of Daenerys' brother Rhaegar Targaryen and Lyanna Stark. Meanwhile, Jon and Daenerys finally give in to their growing feelings for each other and have sex, unaware that they are related by blood.

## Recognition and awards

Harington was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series for the role in 2016.<sup>[86][90]</sup> He said, "It is a serious understatement to say that I am somewhat stunned ... For my work on *Game of Thrones* to be recognized in this way is an emotional moment for me. I could not be more humbled."<sup>[86]</sup> Harington was also nominated for a Saturn Award for Best Supporting Actor on Television for the role in 2012, 2016, and 2017.<sup>[91][92][93]</sup> His other nominations include the Golden Nymph Award for Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series in 2012,<sup>[94]</sup> the Young Hollywood Award for Actor of the Year in 2013,<sup>[95]</sup> and the Critics' Choice Television Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Drama Series in 2016.<sup>[96]</sup> IGN also nominated Jon Snow as its Best TV Hero in 2011.<sup>[97]</sup>

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