

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase

About the Book

Can you go a little faster? Can you run?

Long ago, at a time in history that never happened, England was overrun with wolves. But as Bonnie and her cousin Sylvia discover, real danger often lies closer to home. Their new governess, Miss Slighcarp, doesn't seem at all nice. She shuts Bonnie in a cupboard, fires the faithful servants and sends the cousins far away from Willoughby Chase to a place where they will never be found. Can Bonnie and Sylvia outwit the wicked Miss Slighcarp and her network of criminals, forgers and snitches?



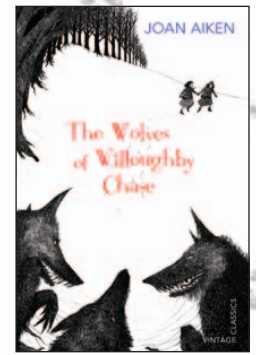
About the Author

Joan Aiken was born in 1924 in East Sussex. She didn't go to school until she was twelve but she read hundreds of books and loved to make up stories. In her early twenties some of her short stories were broadcast by the BBC and she began to make a career out of her writing. She did lots of different jobs including working for the BBC, writing for TV adverts and magazine articles. Her first book was a collection of short stories called *All You've Ever Wanted*.

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase was one of the first full-length novels Joan wrote and was published in 1962. Originally written as a one-off spoof of the Victorian Gothic adventure stories Joan had read as a child, this book became the inspiration for the series of 'Wolves Chronicles' that followed - a series of fantastic adventures set in her own invented world, a period of history that never happened. Joan was finally able to become a full-time writer and she continued to write books, mostly for children, all her life.

VINTAGE CHILDREN'S CLASSICS
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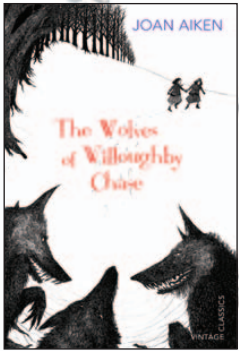
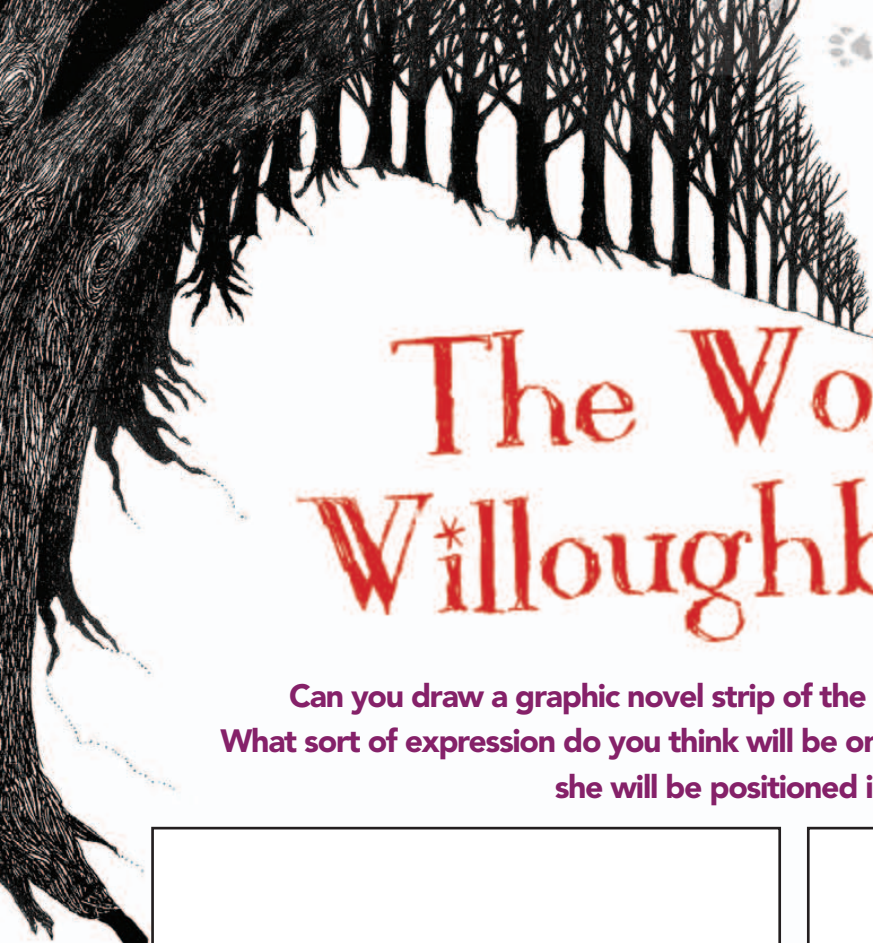
Wolves!

Sylvia is travelling to Willoughby Chase on the train. Check out this scene when a wolf jumps into her compartment through a smashed window.

'As if in contradiction of his words a sad and sinister howling now arose beyond the windows, and Sylvia, pressing her face against the dark pane, saw that they were passing through a thickly wooded region where snow lay deep on the ground. Across this white carpet she could just discern a ragged multitude pouring, out of which arose, from time to time, this terrible cry. She was almost petrified with fear and sat clutching Annabelle in a cold and trembling hand. At length she summoned up strength to whisper: 'Why don't we go on?' 'Oh, I expect there are too many of 'em on the line ahead,' the man answered carelessly. 'Can't just push through them, you see – the engine would be derailed in no time, and then we should be in a bad way. No, I expect we'll have to wait here till daylight now – the wolves get scared then, you know, and make for home. All that matters is that the driver shan't get eaten in the meantime – he'll keep 'em off by throwing lumps of coal at them I dare say.' 'Oh!' Sylvia exclaimed in irrepressible alarm, as a heavy body thudded suddenly against the window, and she had a momentary view of a pointed grey head, red slavering jaws, and pale eyes gleaming with ferocity. 'Oh, don't worry about that,' soothed her companion. 'They'll keep up that jumping against the windows for hours. They're not much danger, you know, singly; it's only in the whole pack you've got to watch out for 'em.' Sylvia was not much comforted by this. She moved along to the middle of the seat and huddled there, glancing fearfully first to one side and then to the other. The strange man seemed quite undisturbed by the repeated onslaught of the wolves which followed. He took a pinch of snuff, remarked that it was all a great nuisance and they would be late, and composed himself to sleep again. He had just begun to snore when a discomposing incident occurred. The window beside him, which must have been insecurely fastened, was not proof against the continuous impact of the frenzied and ravenous animals. The catch suddenly slipped, and the window fell open with a crash, its glass shivering into fragments. Sylvia screamed.'



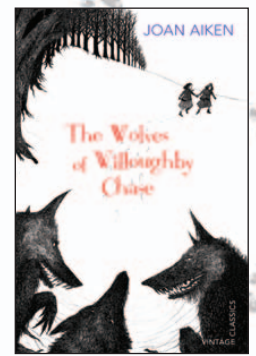
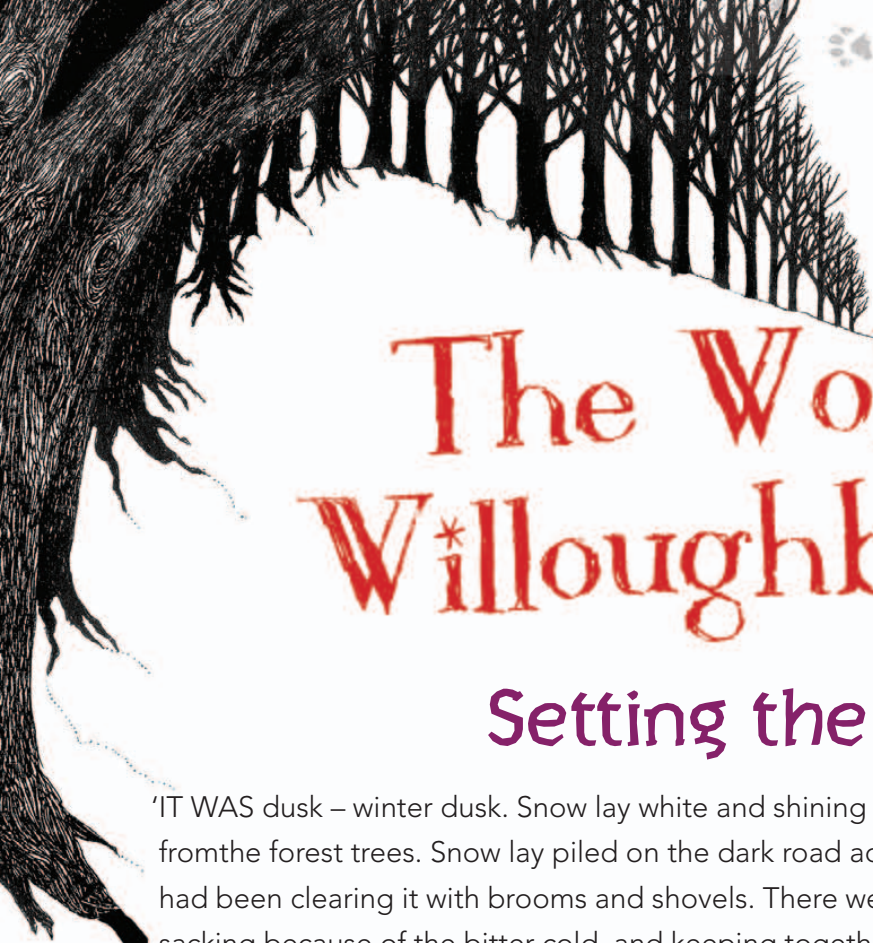
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Can you draw a graphic novel strip of the wolf entering Sylvia's carriage.
What sort of expression do you think will be on Sylvia's face and how do you think she will be positioned in the train?





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Setting the Scene

'IT WAS dusk – winter dusk. Snow lay white and shining over the pleated hills, and icicles hung from the forest trees. Snow lay piled on the dark road across Willoughby Wold, but from dawn men had been clearing it with brooms and shovels. There were hundreds of them at work, wrapped in sacking because of the bitter cold, and keeping together in groups for fear of the wolves, grown savage and reckless from hunger. Snow lay thick, too, upon the roof of Willoughby Chase, the great house that stood on an open eminence in the heart of the wold.'

Try writing the opening to a scary story. Remember to add lots of descriptive words and create an atmosphere of tension. What period is your story set in? Where does it take place?

