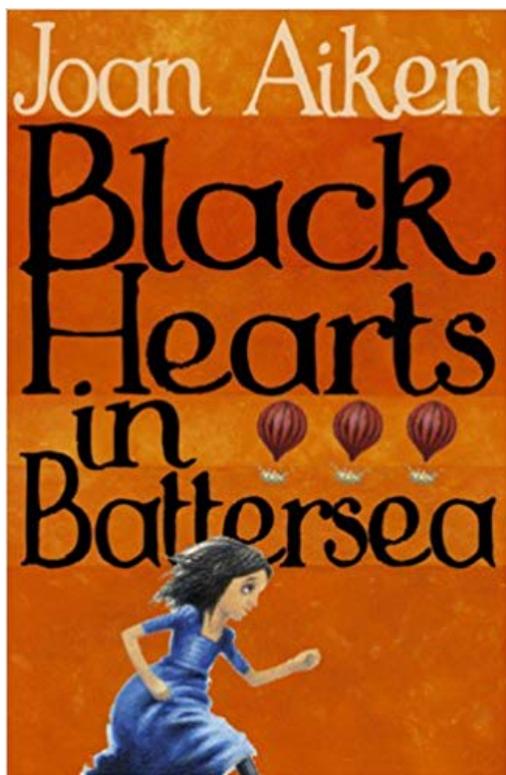


Black Hearts in Battersea (The Wolves of Willoughby Chase) **by Joan Aiken (author)**



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Black Hearts in Battersea



Reviews of the Black Hearts in Battersea (The Wolves of Willoughby Chase) by Joan Aiken (author)

JoJoshura

We love every book in the Wolves of Willoughby Chase series, but this one may be the most fairy tale-like of them all. Interesting plot twists and unexpected connections keep the reader turning the page. By the way, our suggested order of reading the series is: Wolves of Willoughby Chase, Blackhearts in Battersea, Nightbirds on Nantucket, The Whispering Mountain (This backtracks to give a "prequel" of Owen's story), The Stolen Lake, Dangerous Games, The Cuckoo Tree, Dido and

Pa, Is Underground, Cold Shoulder Road, Midwinter Nightingale, and The Witch of Clatteringshaws.
Coiron

Loved this book as a child, and rereading it now (many, many years later) I cringe at the breathless antics of Bonnie and the somewhat spinelessness of her cousin, but the adventure as a whole is satisfying. I recently saw there were some other books set in this universe but haven't dared read them in case it shatters the pleasant memory of this one.

Terr

This story starts in wintertime, when the wolves of the English country wolds are starving and roaming in packs to bring down anything they can. Into this world comes shy, young Sylvia, sent away from her aunt in London to be the companion and playmate to her cousin Bonnie Green of Willoughby Chase. After a harrowing train journey, Sylvia arrives and is warmly welcomed by the effusive, hoydenish Bonnie. The next day sees the departure of Sir Willoughby Green and Lady Green, bound overseas for poor Lady Green's health. The girls are left in the charge of the new governess, Miss Slighcarp, whose true evil nature is revealed upon the parents' departure. In short order, she dismisses all the servants except a handful of the worst ones (and one who only pretended to be bad so he could stay on and watch over the girls), sells the furniture and pockets the money, takes away all of the toys, and locks Bonnie in a cupboard. With the help of James, the loyal servant who stayed on to watch over them as best he can, they discover that Miss Slighcarp has truly nefarious plans for Willoughby Chase. But when the girls try to solicit outside help, they are discovered and sent away to an orphan school run by Mrs. Brisket. At the school, their life is one of drudgery, harshness and hopelessness until one day, a young boy from the wolds by Willoughby Chase comes to find them and help them escape. But where will they go?

I read this book aloud to my six and seven-year-old daughters. And what a grand adventure it was! Set in Victorian England, this story had all the plot elements guaranteed to keep my girls glued to the story as I read it aloud to them. They Ate. It. Up. It's a story that probably works best as a read-aloud the first go-round. The language structure is perfect for the story, old-fashioned, reflecting perfectly the age in which the story takes place, although the story itself was written in 1962. But it might be harder for children who have never been exposed to that antiquated structure to follow, which is why I suggest reading it aloud first.

I had so much fun reading this aloud. It was such fun giving life to all the wonderful characters. The names of characters make me laugh, they're so deliciously perfect for a book set in this period: Pattern (the maid), Miss Slighcarp, Mr. Grimshaw (the accomplice), Mr. Gripe (the lawyer), Dr. Morne, Mrs. Brisket, Mr. Wilderness, etc. And the internal pictures by Pat Marriott have a vagueness that adds splendidly to the menacing feel. (The cover illustration is by Edward Gorey. Isn't it wonderfully sinister?)

If you are looking for old-fashioned Victorian adventure story, with Gothic elements, plucky heroines, nasty bad 'uns, then this is the story for you.

spacebreeze

A great story that we listened to in the car when our children were young, checked out from the library. I was so pleased to find this available, and I am greatly enjoying listening again. A British novel for young teens, read in a marvelous British accent, full of adventure. Both children and adults enjoyed it in our family.

Madis

and now, I'm reading it to my 6th grade son.

We are still working through it, but he's enjoying the book. At first, it wasn't grabbing him. We needed to get a few chapters. I think if we'd started with *Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, which is where Simon is first introduced, he would have understood the beginning better. That said, the book

does stand on it's own. Also, the first chapters are self-explanatory and get right into who the characters are. I especially like Dido Twite. She figures prominently in several of Ms. Aiken's later books, but this is where you see her character growth.

Love Me

The book itself may not be terribly long, but it packs enough content and suspenseful storytelling to keep the reader involved throughout the entire adventure regardless if you are a child or an adult.

I first read this book when I was in the fifth grade, and it stuck out from other books so much that I picked it up every year until high school. The book inspired me to write and expand my creativity in ways few books could at that time in my life.

I won't go through the plot or progression of the story because I know the synopsis and other, more detailed, reviews will explain it well enough, but I highly recommend reading this book or picking it up for your children if you have any.

Goll

If you did not read this as a child, it's not too late. Keep one for yourself, and buy more for the loved ones in your life. Fantastic holiday present for children of all ages.

I read this for the first time when I was about ten. Since then, I have probably read it about twelve times. I have a copy that I will read aloud to my kids (in a few years, this book is a little too creepy for young kids!) and I have bought copies for several of my friends. This is a book in the great tradition of "kid power-orphans"- the type of book that depicts kids on their own, kicking ass without relying on an adult to save the day. Plus, awesome ambience and fabulous descriptives.

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