

Tenth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators

Joan Delano Aiken was born in Rye, Sussex, England, to a family of readers and writers. Just a few years before she was born, her father, the Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet Conrad Aiken, and her mother, the Canadian author Jessie McDonald Aiken, moved from the United States to a remote English village. Even though the Aikens were both from North America, they forgot to register Joan's birth at either the U.S. or Canadian embassy, and so she automatically became a British citizen.

Aiken's father left the family when she was still very young and she spent long hours alone while her older brother and sister were in school. Aiken's mother taught her to read at an early age and allowed her to read at will from works in the family library. When Aiken wasn't reading, she loved to take long walks by herself on the country lanes near their rural village.

In 1929 Aiken's mother married the English novelist and poet Martin Armstrong. After a short while, Aiken's solitude was broken by the arrival of a baby brother. Once he was old enough to follow along on her walks, Aiken made up fanciful stories to entertain him along the way. Many of her best-known characters—among them Dido Twite, the indomitable heroine of the *Wolves Chronicles*—were invented during these strolls.

Reading aloud was a part of every family gathering. Joan's mother would pile books into baskets to take on Sunday picnics, and the children would carry them to their favorite spots in the surrounding Surrey countryside. Mrs. Aiken mother would begin by reading from novels, the works of Charles Dickens or Sir Walter Scott, for example, or poems by John Masefield (among others) and then pass the books to the children so they could have their turns. Sixty or more years later, Joan could still find the exact places, beneath leafy trees or in open meadows, where her favorite books and characters first came to vivid life.



Courtesy of Random House, Inc.

Joan Aiken

September 4, 1924–
January 4, 2004

When Aiken was seventeen she wrote down many of the fantasy stories she'd first told her younger brother and sent them to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which featured them on a radio program called "The Children's Hour." However, the United Kingdom, in the midst of World War II, was fighting for its very survival, and a teenager's literary debut did not attract much notice. After completing boarding school, Joan worked briefly at the BBC and later at the London office of the newly formed United Nations (UN).

In 1945 Joan married journalist Ronald Brown and within a few years was the mother of two children, John and Elizabeth. Despite her busy family life, Aiken found time to devote to her writing, and in 1952 she published her first collection of short stories, *All You've Ever Wanted*. She followed this with a second collection entitled *More Than You Bargained For*. She then commenced work on a children's novel, *The Kingdom and the Cave*, which was published in both Great Britain and the United States in 1960.

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Finally an established writer, Aiken settled down to begin the children's novel she'd envisioned since her solitary country walks with her brother. She already knew what its title would be: *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*. She was forced to set the story aside, however, when her husband was diagnosed with lung cancer. Brown died in 1955, and his young widow returned to full-time employment to support her two children. While writing jingles for the London office of J. Walter Thompson, an American advertising company, Aiken still managed to compose her own stories in the evening and on weekends.

Aiken finally published *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* in 1962. The story is set during a period of alternative history—in an 1830s that didn't actually exist but could have. In faraway America, which was once invaded by the Romans, Latin is still spoken, and England is no longer strictly an island nation but is joined to France by a tunnel under the English Channel. (A 31-mile-long English Channel Tunnel actually did open in 1994, 32 years later). In this strange British landscape, where the dark woods are thick with wolves, two orphaned cousins, Bonnie and Sylvia, have been left in the care of a tyrannical governess. The cousins manage to escape and travel to London, where they plot to reclaim their ancestral home, Willoughby Chase.

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase became an immediate success in both Great Britain and the United States, where it was cited as a Lewis Carroll Shelf Award title. With this success, Aiken was at last able to give up her advertising job and devote

herself to writing the second and third books in what became the *Wolves Chronicles*. *Black Hearts in Battersea* appeared in 1964 and introduced readers to Dido Twite. *Nightbirds on Nantucket* followed in 1966. Forty years after the publication of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, Aiken was still adding installments to the *Wolves Chronicles*, publishing *Midwinter Nightingale* in 2003; *The Witch of Clatteringshaws* appeared posthumously, in 2005.

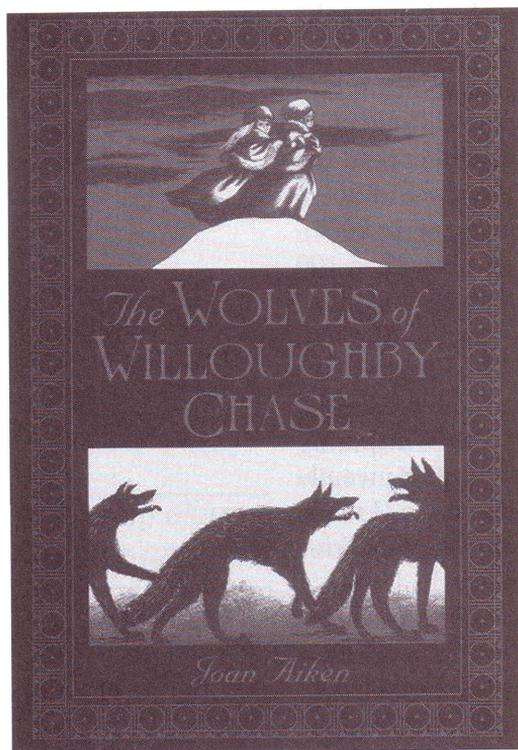
In the course of her long career, Aiken wrote more than 100 fantasy, mystery, horror, and Gothic romance novels and short stories, both for children and for adults. She also published plays, poetry, and even a guidebook for authors called *The Way to Write for Children*. She won several prestigious awards, including the *Guardian* Children's Book Award in 1969 for *The Whispering Mountain* and an Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best juvenile mystery for *Night Fall* in 1972. In 1999 Queen Elizabeth II made Aiken a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for her contributions to children's literature.

Aiken was often asked how she was able to write so easily for both adults and children. She replied that it helped to have a foot firmly planted in each camp. Her own literary voice, she believed, was neither young nor old but somewhere in the middle—just where it needed to be.

Among her later books were popular tales of a young girl named Arabel Jones, whose life is quite normal until her father brings home an injured raven that he has found on a busy roadway. As the bird recuperates, it begins eating everything in sight, from cakes to clocks, and flying about the house screeching "Nevermore!" Mr. and Mrs. Jones are horrified, but Arabel is completely smitten with her new pet, naming him Mortimer. Appealing to a younger audience, the tales of Arabel and Mortimer—all illustrated by Quentin Blake—are decidedly sillier and more lighthearted than Aiken's famous fantasy and mystery stories. The BBC ultimately adapted them into a popular children's television series.

In 1976 Aiken married Julius Goldstein, an American painter, and began to divide her time between England and New York City. Upon Goldstein's death in 2002, she retired to her beloved English countryside, where she painted, gardened, and wrote stories, typing them on an old, noisy typewriter. The windows in her study looked out on the same landscape that had inspired her imagination since she was a little girl. Aiken died in January 2004 in Petworth, West Sussex, at the age of 79. She is survived by her children, John S. Brown and Elizabeth D. Charlaff, and two grandchildren.

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Courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers

SELECTED WORKS FOR YOUNG READERS: *All You've Ever Wanted and Other Stories*, 1953; *More Than You Bargained For*, 1957; *The Kingdom and the Cave*, 1960 [first U.S. edition, 1974]; *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, 1962; *Black Hearts in Battersea*, 1964; *Nightbirds on Nantucket*, 1966; *A Necklace of Raindrops: and Other Stories*, illus. by Jan Pienkowski, 1968 [new edition with illus. by Kevin Hawkes, 2001]; *The Whispering Mountain*, 1969; *The Cuckoo Tree*, 1971; *Night Fall*, 1971; *The Green Flash: And Other Tales of Horror, Suspense, and Fantasy*, 1971; *Winterthing: A Play for Children*, 1972; *Arabel's Raven*, illus. by Quentin Blake, 1972; *The Mooncusser's Daughter: A Play for Children*, 1973; *Not What You Expected: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1974; *Midnight Is a Place*, 1974; *The Skin Spinners: Poems*, illus. by Ken Rinciari, 1976; *The Far Forests: Tales of Romance, Fantasy, and Suspense*, 1977; *Go Saddle the Sea*, 1977; *The Faithless Lollybird*, illus. by

Eros Keith, 1978; *Arabel and Mortimer*, illus. by Quentin Blake, 1981; *The Stolen Lake*, 1981; *Mortimer Says Nothing*, illus. by Quentin Blake, 1985 [first U.S. edition, 1987]; *Up the Chimney Down and Other Stories*, 1985; *The Last Slice of Rainbow and Other Stories*, 1985 [first U.S. edition, illus. by Alix Berenzy, 1988]; *Past Eight O'Clock: Goodnight Stories*, illus. by Jan Pienkowski, 1987; *The Moon's Revenge*, illus. by Alan Lee, 1988; *Give Yourself a Fright: Thirteen Tales of the Supernatural*, 1989; *Return to Harken House*, 1990; *The Shoemaker's Boy*, illus. by Alan Marks, 1991; *A Foot in the Grave*, illus. by Jan Pienkowski, 1991; *Is Underground*, 1993; *Cold Shoulder Road*, 1996; *Dangerous Games*, 1999; *Shadows and Moonshine: Stories by Joan Aiken*, illus. by Pamela Johnson, 2001; *Midwinter Nightingale*, 2003; *The Witch of Clatteringshaws*, 2005.

SELECTED WORKS FOR ADULTS: *The Embroidered Sunset*, 1970; *Died on a Rainy Sunday*, 1972; *Voices in an Empty House*, 1975; *The Weeping Ash*, 1980; *The Girl from Paris*, 1982; *The Way to Write for Children*, 1982; *Mansfield Revisited*, 1985; *Jane Fairfax: Jane Austen's Emma Through Another's Eyes*, 1991; *Deception*, 1987; *The Teeth of the Gale*, 1988; *Blackground*, 1989; *A Fit*

of *Shivers: Tales for Late at Night*, 1992; *Morningquest*, 1993; *Eliza's Daughter*, 1994; *Emma Watson: The Watsons Completed*, 1996; *The Youngest Miss Ward*, 1998; *Lady Catherine's Necklace*, 2000.

SUGGESTED READING: Clere, S. V., *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Children's Writers since 1960*, vol. 161, 1996; Drew, Bernard A., *The 100 Most Popular Young Adult Authors*, 1997; Egoff, Sheila A., *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature*, 1981; Silvey, Anita, ed., *Children's Books and Their Creators*, 1995; *Something about the Author*, vol. 152, 2005; *Something About the Author: Autobiography Series*, vol. 1, 1986. Periodicals—David Rees, "The Virtues of Improbability: Joan Aiken," *Children's Literature in Education* 19, Spring 1988; *New York Times*, Jan. 9 2004 (obituary). Online—Interview by Gavin Grant for Book Sense, Oct. 16, 2001 at www.booksense.com/people/archive/aikenjoan.jsp

An earlier profile of Joan Aiken appeared in *Third Book of Junior Authors*, 1972.

“I was almost born in Philadelphia where I grew up, but I appeared unexpectedly on my family's seashore vacation in Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. I guess I couldn't wait.

“My parents, who were born in Greece, raised their four children in all the Greek traditions. We were surrounded by our musical extended family—a self-contained world of warmth, love, food, and Sunday gatherings—where everyone, young and old, played an instrument, sang, danced, and displayed their talent.

“I started to draw when I first held a pencil. Drawing was so natural, it was like my twin. In Kindergarten, where I learned to speak English (later described in *Marianthe's Story*) I painted two family portraits: my own, with three girls and a boy named Peter, and Peter Rabbit's. My teacher told my parents I would be an artist someday. Then and there, Miss Hollingshead gave me my star to follow, and I've never forgotten her for it. An



Photo by Mary Bloom

Aliki

September 3,
1929–

artist is all I ever wanted to be. It's a lucky child who finds her path in Kindergarten.

"In third grade we moved to Yeadon, a small suburb of Philadelphia. Our school was an example of perfection—for me at least. Besides the core subjects, which I loved—science, history, geography, poetry, reading, handwriting—there was an abundance of art and music, and two brilliant teachers who taught them. There were after-school art clubs and before-school rehearsals for choir, chorus, band, and orchestra. All through school, I was encouraged by my teachers and my family alike. I was called 'the artist' and given all the art jobs—murals, posters, decorations—which gave me a feeling of worth.

"Education was my parents' priority. They taught us by example: work hard, do your best, give back. Their silent motto was Keep Them Busy—with art classes, piano lessons, Greek school, and helping in my father's grocery store, which gave us our respect for food and my love of cooking it.

"After high school, I spent four blissful years at the Philadelphia College of Art—now the University of the Arts—learning to draw, paint, and especially to SEE. At lunchtime, the auditorium doubled as a darkened 'music room' where we'd listen to classical records. Hearing one of them now brings it all back.

"After graduation and my only job—a year creating displays at J. C. Penney's design department in New York—I gravitated to all phases of advertising. That is what I was doing when I met my husband, Franz Brandenburg. I continued advertising design while we lived in Switzerland, but one day I saw a delightful children's book, *How St. Francis Tamed the Wolf*, illustrated by Gerald Rose. I thought, I can do that, and as we were living in William Tell country I researched, wrote and illustrated *The Story of William Tell*, first published by Faber and Faber in London. As far as I was concerned, that was that.

"But, a year later, the published book was in my portfolio when we moved to book-booming New York. I was soon inundated with work—not only advertising, but books to illustrate, including a script for a new series of children's books, called the Let's Read and Find Out series. While working on it, I was hit by an idea of my own: *My Five Senses*. I wrote it, made the dummy, and a week later the book was accepted by the formidable editor Elizabeth Riley. That book changed my life and my direction. This is where I wanted to be: alone in my studio, free of art directors, drawing pictures for books, in control of my fate.

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held habit, started in third grade, of writing down my feelings. Hurt, joy and anger were expressed in poems, diaries and letters. Writing clarified my thoughts. But this was different. Writing a book can be torture. Writing is rewriting, finding the words to express emotion or information clearly. Once I have the thread, words flow, but mostly it is carving out one paragraph at a time until thoughts are defined and all unnecessary words have been edited out, to give the pictures their space. The illustrations themselves are another story, and twice as hard.

“One book followed another—my own and those I illustrated for other authors, including my husband Franz. When our children, Jason and Alexa, were born, they were an inspiration to us both. I wrote stories they sparked (*At Mary Bloom’s; Keep Your Mouth Closed, Dear*), ‘feeling books’ (*The Two of Them; Feelings*) and ‘research books’ (biographies of George Washington Carver, William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, and science books about dinosaurs, fossils, woolly mammoths, growing corn, etc.). I call doing them ‘hard fun.’

“We spent summers traveling to our roots (Greece and Switzerland), and throughout Europe. In the British Museum one day I saw a mummified cat that sparked one of my many ‘three year’ books (*Mummies Made in Egypt*). More would follow (*William Shakespeare and the Globe; Ah, Music!*). In the late 1970s we moved to London, but most everyone I love lives far away, including my precious grandchildren—Willa, Lucas and Kosmas—so traveling is a fixture in my life.

“And what of the importance and value of books in all our lives? To that end, I have spent many gratifying years visiting schools throughout the U.S., Africa, Europe, India and China. It isn’t easy for a recluse who spends 18 hours a day working on a book (presently the 57th of my own) but children need to meet an author for the books they read to come alive. I am always touched and amazed when I see the bright eyes of those who have read my books. I recognize them instantly. They feel they know me. I tell them that’s because they know my soul.”



Aliki Brandenburg’s prolific and successful career in children’s books has created a significant body of work in both fictional picture book stories and a variety of informational books for young readers. Using only her first name on her books, Aliki has developed a distinctive style of art, one that is bright, colorful, and child-centered. In her picture book stories, the illustrations

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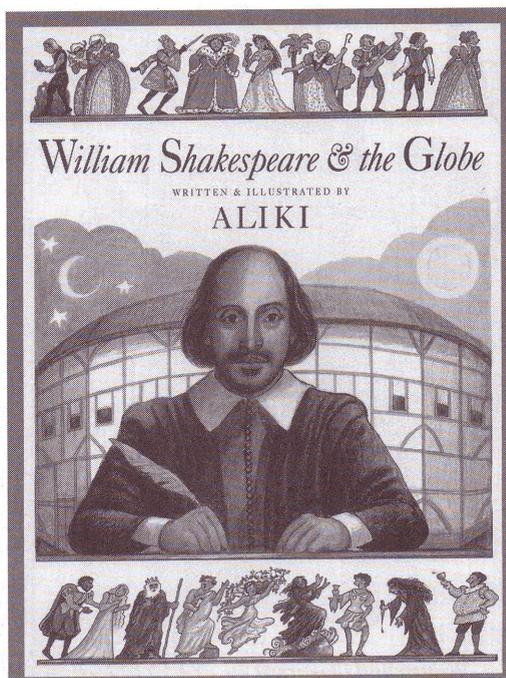
carry the story and provide plenty of background detail. Her informational books range from paleontology to mythology, from biography to agriculture. She exudes an enthusiasm in both her writing and her pictures for every subject or story that she tackles.

After graduating from art school in 1951 and spending a year in New York in the display department of the J. C. Penney Company, Aliki returned to Philadelphia to work as a freelance advertising and display artist. In 1956 she journeyed to Greece to visit her family's roots; traveling in Europe that year she met her future husband, Franz Brandenburg, a native of Switzerland. As Franz described the meeting in his autobiographical sketch in the *Fifth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*, he was working in a bookstore in Florence, Italy, when an American girl named Aliki Liacouras came in looking for a guide to Florence. He offered to guide her around the city himself. They were married in 1957 in Berne, Switzerland. In 1960 the couple settled in New York, where Franz started a literary agency, representing European authors, and Aliki began writing and illustrating children's books. Jason, their son, was born in 1964 and their daughter, Alexa, in 1966. Both soon became inspirations for the stories their parents would create together.

Aliki's informational books are notable for their child-friendly look. Her illustrations—executed in pen and ink, watercolor, and crayon—exhibit a simplicity of line and freshness of style that delight young learners and make each subject accessible and enticing. Her first entry in the Let's-Read-and-Find-Out series, illustrating Paul Showers' *The Listening Walk*, set the tone for her later work and created a standard for nonfiction directed toward preschoolers and the primary grades. Her own *My Five Senses* is a classic concept book for young children. *Corn Is Maize* tells the story of the importance of this grain throughout the ages and was recognized as an award-winning title by the New York Academy of Sciences. Her books on prehistoric life have been used for many years to answer children's perennial questions about dinosaurs and woolly mammoths and how we've come to know about them. *Dinosaur Bones* was cited by the John Burroughs list of Nature Books for Young Readers as an outstanding title when it was published in 1988. *Digging Up Dinosaurs*, *Dinosaurs Are Different* and *My Visit to the Dinosaurs* have been featured on the *Reading Rainbow* program on educational television. Aliki's aim is always to research a subject thoroughly and to turn complicated facts into simple, easily understood books for young readers.

Aliki has also received critical acclaim for her historical studies on such subjects as medieval feasts, Shakespeare's theater, and life in Ancient Egypt. Her *Mummies Made in Egypt* won the Garden State Award in New Jersey for grades 2–5 as well as the Dutch Children's Book Council Silver Slate Pencil Award. *My Visit to the Aquarium* also won the Garden State Children's Book Award and was named an Outstanding Science Trade Book. One of her most successful nonfiction titles, *William Shakespeare and the Globe*, recounts the history of the Globe Theater in London. The book itself is arranged as a play, with "acts" one through five, rather than chapters, and quotes from the plays on each page spread. Sidebars highlight significant people in the Bard's life, and a section on Sam Wanamaker, the man who dreamed of reopening the Globe Theatre in the 20th century, brings the subject up to date. This remarkable book was named a nonfiction honor book for the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* and received an honorable mention for the Bologna Ragazzi Award. It was cited as a *School Library Journal* Best Book, a Notable Social Studies Trade Book, and an ALA Notable Children's Book, as many of her titles have been over the years.

Aliki's Greek heritage has been featured in several of her books: *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus* and picture book retellings of Greek folk tales—*The Eggs*, *Three Gold Pieces*, and *The Twelve Months*. One of her most touching and honored fictional works, *Marianthe's Story*, which received a Jane Addams Book Award and was cited as a Notable Social Studies Trade Book, recalls her own experience as a child learning English for the first time in school, having been raised in a Greek-speaking household. Many of her fictional stories were inspired by her home life and the experiences of her own children, with texts written by both herself and her husband, Franz Brandenburg. In 1984 Aliki created a nonfiction title that discusses in words and pictures the emotions that are felt by all children. Titled *Feelings*, the book won the Prix du Livre pour Enfants in Geneva in 1987.



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