



## **SHE WOLF** BY DAN SMITH

***SHE WOLF is an emotional and compelling adventure set in the Viking Age, featuring a fierce and resourceful female main character who hides her vulnerability behind single-mindedness, courage, and her quest for revenge.***

AD 866, the Kingdom of Northumbria. Thirteen year old Danish girl Ylva finds herself orphaned and alone in a foreign land - England - when her mother is murdered by a monstrous three-fingered Viking.

Believing that it is her duty to take revenge, Ylva swears to the gods that she will track down the three-fingered man and kill him. She sets out across the wintery forests of Northumbria with only her faithful dog, Geri, for company. To give her courage, she carries the memory of her mother in her heart, and the tales of the Norse Gods in her mind. But revenge is a difficult task and Ylva reluctantly accepts help from a kind, but fierce Saxon warrior called Cathryn, and a boy called Bron.

It isn't long before Ylva begins to understand that nothing is quite as it seems. Soon, she and her new friends realise that instead of being the hunters, they have become the hunted. They find themselves hiding from the three fingered man, as well as running from the hungry wolves that roam the forest.

SHE WOLF is a tale of Vikings, vengeance, wolves, action, adventure, and heartache.

[www.dansmithsbooks.com](http://www.dansmithsbooks.com)

 Dan Smith Author

 @DanSmithAuthor

 dansmithauthor



## WHAT THE PUBLISHER SAYS . . .

Set in Viking times, this exciting novel follows tough and resourceful Ylva on her quest to avenge her mother's death. Her journey is one of survival, spirit, and pure drive - but it's also a story about learning to trust again in spite of the wolves and raiders that fate sends against you . . . something we all have to prepare for. Danr Smior is the incredible Dan Smith's name in Old Norse, so I've decided to call him that from now on. Bravo Danr - more thrilling stories like this please!

## AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Growing up, I led three lives. In one I survived the day-to-day humdrum of boarding school, while in another I travelled the world, finding adventure in the paddy fields of South East Asia and the jungles of Brazil. But the third life I lived in a world of my own, making up stories . . . which is where some people say I still live most of the time!

## AUTHOR MOTIVATION

A few years ago I watched a film about a young man travelling across the Old West in the USA. About halfway through the story, he enters an isolated and dilapidated trading post in the middle of nowhere. While he's in there, a man and a woman come in and try to rob the trading post, so the owner kills them. Shaken, our hero leaves the ramshackle hut and sees two young children standing at the side of the track. In that moment we realise that the dead man and woman were their parents, and that the two children are now alone in a dangerous and unforgiving world. But our hero rides away, leaving them standing by the track.

The image of those two abandoned children stayed with me. So, *She Wolf* began life as a story about two children left alone in the Old West, but as it progressed and began to change (as stories often do in the telling), I realised the setting wasn't right. During a meeting, my publisher said to me 'Dan, what do you know about Vikings?' and that was that. It had to be Vikings. They are the stuff of legend. Brave heroes unafraid of death. Fearless adventurers. Ruthless killers. Raiders. Slavers. But they were also farmers, traders, adventurers, parents, grandparents, husbands, wives, and children. So ... what if those children standing outside that hut had been Viking children? What would they have done? They would have done what any true Viking would do - they would swear vengeance, and they would stop at nothing to get it.



# THEMES

- Vikings and Norse legend
- Vengeance, Honour, and Duty
- Survival and Resilience
- Perseverance
- Religion and belief
- Death and the Afterlife
- Trust and Courage
- Nature

# WRITING STYLE

She Wolf is a historical novel, set in Northumbria in 866. It is written in third person past tense, and evokes a sense of Ylva's manner and character. The writing is immediate, exciting and pacy. Although the story is told in a linear fashion, truths are revealed as the story unfolds so the reader gathers a clearer picture of events at the same time as Ylva does. The novel is split into several parts and ends with an author's note and glossary, explaining the historical and specialist terms used in the book.



I am a firm believer in reading for pleasure, and I am not suggesting that after reading every chapter of a book, students should carry out a task and analyse the text. Sometimes it is better to simply discuss how readers feel about the story, or to maintain the momentum of the story and keep on reading. However, in the following pages, you will find some suggested activities based on selected chapters of *She Wolf*. I have mostly concentrated on the chapters in the first half of the book. At the end of this document I have included some more general ideas for tasks, and some proposed research to enrich aspects of the story.

Please feel free to use these tasks in any way that suits your students, and your enjoyment of *She Wolf*.





## VIKINGS RESEARCH PROJECT

When I decided that She Wolf would take place during the Viking Age, I wanted to ensure that the reader would feel as if they were transported to Northumbria a thousand years ago, so I had to do a lot of research to find out as much as I could. Ask students to make a fact file about the viking age. Here are a few things to help them start their research.

- What did Vikings wear?
- What kind of food did Vikings eat?
- When did the Vikings live? How long did the Viking Age last?
- Find out about Viking ships. Did they build different types of ships? What was special about their ships?
- What weapons did Vikings use? What were they made of? How did they make them?
- Were Vikings just vicious marauders, or was there more to them?
- What gods did Vikings worship?



# CHAPTER 1. THE THREE-FINGERED MAN (PAGES 5-8)

## Figurative Language

Writers try to use original imagery to make their writing more interesting. Often they use SIMILE and METAPHOR to do this. Using examples from the text, discuss SIMILE and METAPHOR. Note that it is important to make sure that imagery is appropriate to the setting, and that it conjures strong pictures in the reader's mind.

Most of the imagery in this chapter is used to describe the 'three-fingered man' and his flame-haired companion. What impression of these two characters does this give to the reader? What kind of people are they? Do they seem as if they are good people or bad people? Is Ylva right to be afraid of them?

# CHAPTER 1. THE THREE-FINGERED MAN (PAGES 5-8)

## Story Beginnings

Authors often try to draw the reader into their story by writing an intriguing beginning. A really good beginning can give readers a sense of the setting of the story, as well as introduce some of the characters, set the tone of the story, and hint at what the story is going to be about. What do students think about the beginning of She Wolf? Are they intrigued? Do they want to read on? What do they think is going to happen? Who do they think Ylva is? Why is she afraid of the three-fingered man and the flame-haired woman? How do they feel about the characters?



# CHAPTERS 2 AND 3. GODS AND TEARS (PAGES 9-13) NIFLHEIM (PAGES 14-17)

## Character Chart

By now, students might have formed an opinion about Ylva. Ask students what are their first impressions of her. What kind of a person do they think she is? Using **'inference'** and **'deduction'** what can they find in the chapter that supports their view of Ylva?

(**'Inference'** is an interpretation that goes beyond the literal information given. **'Deduction'** is an understanding based on evidence given in the text.)

Quotation	What does it tell us about Ylva?
But that wasn't what Mother had taught her, so she forced herself to stand and adjust her scarf and cloak.	Ylva is strong and determined.



## **CHAPTER 4. YOUNG WOLF (PAGES 18-23)**

### Predicting the Future!

In this chapter, Ylva meets Cathryn. Discuss how Ylva reacts to her. Does Ylva trust Cathryn? If not, why not? Ask the students what is *their* immediate impression of Cathryn. Do they like her? Do they think she seems trustworthy? What do students think is going to happen next?

## **CHAPTER 5. A LONG WAY FROM HOME (PAGES 27-35)**

### Cathryn's Diary

In this chapter we see Ylva and Cathryn interact with one another. What do students think about Cathryn? Has their opinion changed at all from when we met her in the previous chapter? Ask students to imagine they are Cathryn - what does she think of Ylva? Write a short diary entry from Cathryn's point of view, describing the events when she and Bron arrive at the trader's hut.

## **CHAPTER 8. NO TEARS (PAGES 44-49)**

### Destiny

*'It's my duty. It's what the gods expect of me; my destiny.'* (Page 46)

Ylva believes in honour and vengeance, but Cathryn is more sceptical. Ylva insists the gods would expect her to carry out revenge. Ask students why Ylva is so insistent - is it out of grief, or anger, or fear? Do they think avenging her mother's death is the right thing to do? Why, or why not? Is claiming 'that's the way things work' a good enough reason to kill? Do students think this can ever be justified?





## CHAPTER 9. THOR'S SALVATION (PAGES 53-58)

### Myths and Legends

Ylva places a lot of importance in the stories of the Norse gods and Norse mythology. In this chapter she refers to a story about Thor killing the giant Geirrod (do the students know this story?). In other chapters Ylva remembers stories about Thor, Odin, and Ragnarok - all names that students may be familiar with. As a class, encourage students to discuss what they already know of Norse mythology. Where have they heard about it? Can they think of examples of Norse mythology in popular culture?

Split into smaller groups - each group could be assigned a different Norse myth to look at. Together the group can discuss: where did the myth come from? Is there a moral or lesson to it? How would it have been interpreted in the Viking Age? Is there a hero, or a villain? Does the story feature in popular culture at all? Are there different variations - has it evolved over time? If yes, why do you think this is? As a group, share your findings with the rest of the class.

## CHAPTER 13. FLAMES AND SCREAMS. (PAGES 83-87)

### Comprehension

After reading this short chapter, students could either answer these questions themselves, or they could be discussed as a class.

1. What do you think a 'hobble' is (line 6)?
2. Why do you think Ylva 'absolutely refused to allow tears come to her eyes'?
3. Ylva tells Cathryn she doesn't want to go somewhere safe. What *does* she want to do?
4. In this chapter, does Bron do anything to show how he feels about Ylva? Explain
5. Give an example of sarcasm in this chapter.
6. Explain why it is dangerous to ride through the forest at night.
7. How many riders does Ylva think are following them? Why does she think this?
8. Find and write an example of a simile from this chapter.



## **CHAPTERS 14-16 (PAGES 88-102)**

### Writing Emotion & Diary Entry

In these chapters, Ylva is involved in a dangerous chase through the forest. How does Ylva feel? Is she excited? Afraid? Brave? Ask students to find phrases that show how Ylva feels. Ask students to imagine they are Ylva. How would they feel if this happened to them? Ask students to pretend they are Ylva and write a letter to their best friend telling them what happened.

## **CHAPTER 17. WILD MUSIC (PAGES 103-112)**

### Write your own story

In this chapter, Ylva tells Cathryn a story about when she fell from a tree while stealing apples. Ask students to read the passage again, then write the story from their own point of view. They can add their own details.

## **CHAPTER 20. ULFHEDNAR (PAGES 131-141)**

### Geri

In this chapter, something very important is revealed about Ylva's dog, Geri. What do students think about this reveal? Did they understand it? Did they expect it? Had they already guessed the truth about Geri? How does it make them feel? Does it make them feel differently about Ylva? Why do they think Ylva refuses to let Geri go?



## **CHAPTER 22. WOLF'S BLOOD (PAGES 148 - 154)**

### Newspaper report

In this chapter, Ylva and Cathryn survive a bear attack. Using details from the story (and made-up details if you want!), write a newspaper report about the incident. Don't forget to put in as many facts as you can. Students could research information about bears and include a 'fact file' in their newspaper report, along with a drawing of the bear.

## **CHAPTER 23. MERCY (PAGES 155 - 161)**

### Write a letter

In this chapter, Ylva kills the wounded wolf. Do students understand why Ylva does this? Is it to be cruel or to be kind? How do students feel about this?

However, Ylva refuses to harm the pup. Can students think of any reasons why Ylva refuses? Ask students to imagine this happened to them - What would *they* do with the pup? Would they leave it? Take it with them? Ask students to write a letter/poem/diary entry to express how it might make them feel.



# PUPIL ACTIVITIES/DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. She Wolf introduces us to some of the groups that populated England in 866: Vikings, Saxons and Danes. As a class, discuss what you already know of these groups, especially Vikings. Are there tropes particularly associated with Vikings? What would you imagine when you think of a Viking? Does this match up with the 'Did You Know?' note at the end of the book? Work in small groups to create a Viking 'factfile' on A3 paper. Have a go at drawing a Viking based on descriptions in the book. When did Vikings live? What sort of armour did they wear, and what weapons did they use? What language did they speak? Which gods did they worship? Make a class display out of your work.

2. *'Keep Geri in your head, and your mother in your heart. That way, whenever you need them, they will be with you.'* (Page 141)

Why do you think Ylva continues to see Geri even after he dies? Why does she give him a voice? Do you think she believes he's really there? What effect do you think Geri's presence has on her? Why do you think Geri appears more at the beginning of the novel? Why do you think he appears less in the second half?

3. The novel is split into several parts. Why do you think that is? What do you think the effect of this is? Do you think the parts are named correctly?

4. *'Wolves are another matter. There's no hiding from wolves.'* (Page 55)

The symbolism of wolves plays a big part in the book. We find out that Ylva's name means 'She Wolf', Ylva and Bron are tracked throughout the novel by a wolf pack, and Ylva has a special bond with Freki. What do you think the overall depiction is of wolves in the novel – is it positive or negative, or is it not that simple? Why do you think there is such a focus on wolves? Why are they so important?

5. When I wrote She Wolf, I wanted Ylva to be a complicated character. She's fierce, resourceful, and brave, but she's also single-minded, stubborn, and direct. She doesn't relate well to people, she doesn't empathise with them, she gets frustrated, and she doesn't understand subtleties in speech - jokes and sarcasm confuse her. If she were alive today, Ylva might be diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. This could be an opportunity to discuss how we accept people's differences. How do students feel about Ylva as a character? Do they like her? Do they admire her? Do they think she's strange? How would they react to someone like Ylva? Do they know any one who has qualities like Ylva's?



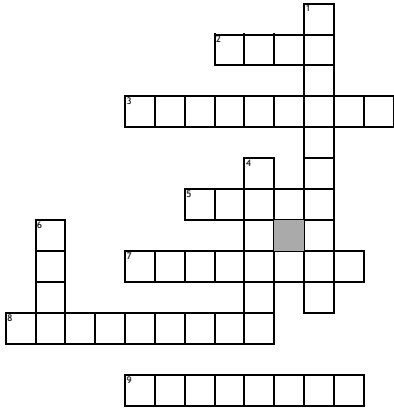
# CROSSWORD

With your class, discuss the words in the word bank below, then give the puzzle to the students to complete. (Thanks to Mrs Wylie for the crossword!)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## She Wolf Vocabulary Ch. 22



- Across**
- 2. blood that has been shed
  - 3. fall in large amounts
  - 5. army
  - 7. make a quick nervous movement
  - 8. moved fast and out of control
  - 9. look quickly

**Word Bank**

saga                      bewildered  
gore                      scanning  
horde

- Down**
- 1. very confused
  - 4. prepared for something difficult
  - 6. a long story of heroic actions

cascading                      braced  
barrelled                      flinched



## GENERAL TASKS

- Write a book review of She Wolf.
- Design an alternative cover for She Wolf.
- Think of an alternative title for She Wolf.
- If there was a sequel to She Wolf, what would it be about? Try writing the beginning.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

- See if you can find out about any famous Vikings.
- Do you know of any towns in Britain that were founded by Vikings?
- Does your own town have any connection to Vikings?
- Can you find out the furthest place Vikings travelled to?
- Can you think of any Viking influences around us today? (Many of our weekdays are named after Norse gods - do you know which ones?)
- Who finally defeated the Vikings in England?
- Can you find any similarities between Vikings and Anglo-Saxons?



# IF YOU LIKED SHE WOLF, WHY NOT TRY ANOTHER DAN SMITH ADVENTURE?

