

# TEACHING RESOURCES

**WILDSMITH**  
INTO THE DARK FOREST





# COMPREHENSION

**Encourage children to read the extract from *Wildsmith* and to answer the questions after it. The extract occurs at the start of the book when war is looming over Holderby threatening to change Rowan's life. Rowan confronts her dad about a conversation she overheard involving the queen.**

'Instead of climbing up the tower, now Rowan hurried back down into the gardens, ignoring the cramp in her fingers. Then she rushed to her father in the palace stables where he worked. This was her favourite place: with its warm sweet smell of horses and fresh hay. Dad said she had a gift with the horses and she'd got very good at helping him without getting underfoot.

'Dad!' She glanced over her shoulder to check the stable yard was empty. 'I was climbing, and I didn't mean to listen, but I heard the queen. What's happening? Will there be a war? Here?' Her questions tumbled out, one after the other.

Her father was big and strong and scared of no one. She expected him to laugh and tell her it was nothing. But he didn't.


Instead, he crouched down on the cobbles, so he could look Rowan in the eye. He took her hand and said softly. 'You shouldn't have found out like that. But yes - if the rumours are true, war is coming to Gallren. It might even reach us here in Holderby.'

Just then a loud alarm bell sounded. She'd never heard this noise before. The harsh clanging rang out across the city.

'That's the sign: the fighting will reach us soon.' Her father frowned. 'Your mother and I have planned for this. The two of you must leave. Today.'

*Wildsmith, Chapter Three, 11 -12*





‘Instead of climbing up the tower, now Rowan hurried back down into the gardens, ignoring the cramp in her fingers. Then she rushed to her father in the palace stables where he worked. This was her favourite place: with its warm sweet smell of horses and fresh hay. Dad said she had a gift with the horses and she’d got very good at helping him without getting underfoot.

‘Dad!’ She glanced over her shoulder to check the stable yard was empty. ‘I was climbing, and I didn’t mean to listen, but I heard the queen. What’s happening? Will there be a war? Here?’ Her questions tumbled out, one after the other.

Her father was big and strong and scared of no one. She expected him to laugh and tell her it was nothing. But he didn’t.

Instead, he crouched down on the cobbles, so he could look Rowan in the eye. He took her hand and said softly. ‘You shouldn’t have found out like that. But yes - if the rumours are true, war is coming to Gallren. It might even reach us here in Holderby.’

Just then a loud alarm bell sounded. She’d never heard this noise before. The harsh clanging rang out across the city.

‘That’s the sign: the fighting will reach us soon.’ Her father frowned. ‘Your mother and I have planned for this. The two of you must leave. Today.’

*Wildsmith, Chapter Three, 11 -12*

- **What does Rowan ignore as she hurries down into the garden?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Where does Rowan’s father work?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What noise does Rowan hear and what does it mean is happening?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What does her dad suggest should happen to Rowan and her mother?**





# VOCABULARY

When we read we often come across new and unfamiliar words. Sometimes we can discover their meaning from the sentences they appear in. Do you know what the following words which appear in *Wildsmith* mean? Can you work it out, if not you might need to use a dictionary to help you.

‘This race would prove who knew the city’s secrets best, who was fastest and most agile.’  
(p1)

**What does agile mean? Can you create your own sentence which includes the word agile?**

---

---

---

---

‘The chestnut mare turned and whiffled comfortingly at Rowan as if to say: don’t worry you’re safe with me.’ (p14)

**What does whiffle mean? Can you create your own sentence which includes the word whiffle?**

---

---

---

---







'Full of excitement and determination, Rowan darted along the path and right into the Dark Forest.' (p38)

**What does determination mean? Can you create your own sentence which includes the word determination?**

---

---

---

---

'Dragons usually catch deer and smaller animals. They're predators after all,' Grandpa told them.' (p57)

**What does predator mean? Can you create your own sentence which includes the word predator?**

---

---

---

---

'Grandpa's eyes still looked worried. 'That last move was pure recklessness.' (p155)

**What does recklessness mean? Can you create your own sentence which includes the word recklessness?**

---

---

---

---







# DISCUSSION POINTS

- How does war affect Rowan and the animals in the Dark Forest?
- When Rowan leaves she packs a small bag of her most precious things. She takes a lucky feather, a shiny pebble and her treasured book about animals. What precious things would you take if you were moving and why?
- Rowan finds out she and her grandpa share some skills, can you find parts of the story where Rowan's special skills have been hinted at before?

You might find it useful to think about:

- why the stables are Rowan's favourite place
- the precious things Rowan takes with her to her grandpa's house
- how Rowan helps Leaf.
- Do you think it was brave or foolish for Rowan and Cam to go into the deep forest when the poachers are about? What are the reasons for your answer?
- Why do the poachers want to capture the dragons? Do you think hunting in this way is ever right?
- When Rowan sees the dragons, flying free over the green valley, she feels a bitter-sweet joy. Why do you think she might feel this way?

'Will explained, magical creatures lived everywhere, but as people built more cities, the magical animals had retreated to the wild places, where they could still live in peace.' (p71)

- What other kinds of magical creatures do you think might be found in the Dark Woods? You might like to think about the types of creatures you have encountered in myths, legends and fairytales.

'Will scowled and she felt a wave of frustration. Why was he acting like a spoiled child? Wasn't Leaf more important than anything?' (p95)

- Can you think of any reason why Will might be 'acting like a spoiled child'?







# ANSWERS

## **Comprehension**

Rowan ignores the cramp in her fingers.

Rowan's dad works in the stables.

Rowan hears the alarm bell sounding, it means the fighting will soon reach where she is.

Rowan's dad suggests that she and her mum should leave.

## **Vocabulary**

Agile means being able to move quickly and easily.

Whiffled means having made a soft sound like breathing.

Determination means being decisive or firm in purpose.

Predators are animals that prey on others.

Recklessness means acting without fear of danger or harm.







# FURTHER READING

If you have loved Wildsmith, you might also like to explore these other spell-binding reads.

*Autumn Moonbeam: Dance Magic*

by Emma Finlayson-Palmer illustrated by Heidi Cannon

If you enjoyed the magic and the witches in Wildsmith, you will find this enchanting read is full of friendship and fun.

*The Dragonsitter*

by Josh Lacey illustrated by Garry Parsons

If you have enjoyed the dragons in Wildsmith, you might like to find out about the mischievous dragon which Edward looks after for his Uncle Morton.

*Soldier Dog*

by Sam Angus

War changes Rowan's life in Wildsmith, you can find out how war affects Stanley and the greyhound puppies he is helping to look after.

*Storm Hound*

by Claire Fayers

If you have enjoyed discovering about the magical creatures in the Dark Forest, you might like to find out about Storm of Odin, the youngest storm hound, who is keen to join his brothers and sisters on their first hunt.

*The Wild Robot*

by Peter Brown

For another wild story, why not read about Robot Roz who discovers she is alone on a remote island. Can she and the animals there make it feel like home?

*Grimwood*

by Nadia Shireen

If you have enjoyed the setting of the Dark Forest and the animals that live there, you might also enjoy this fantastically funny story!





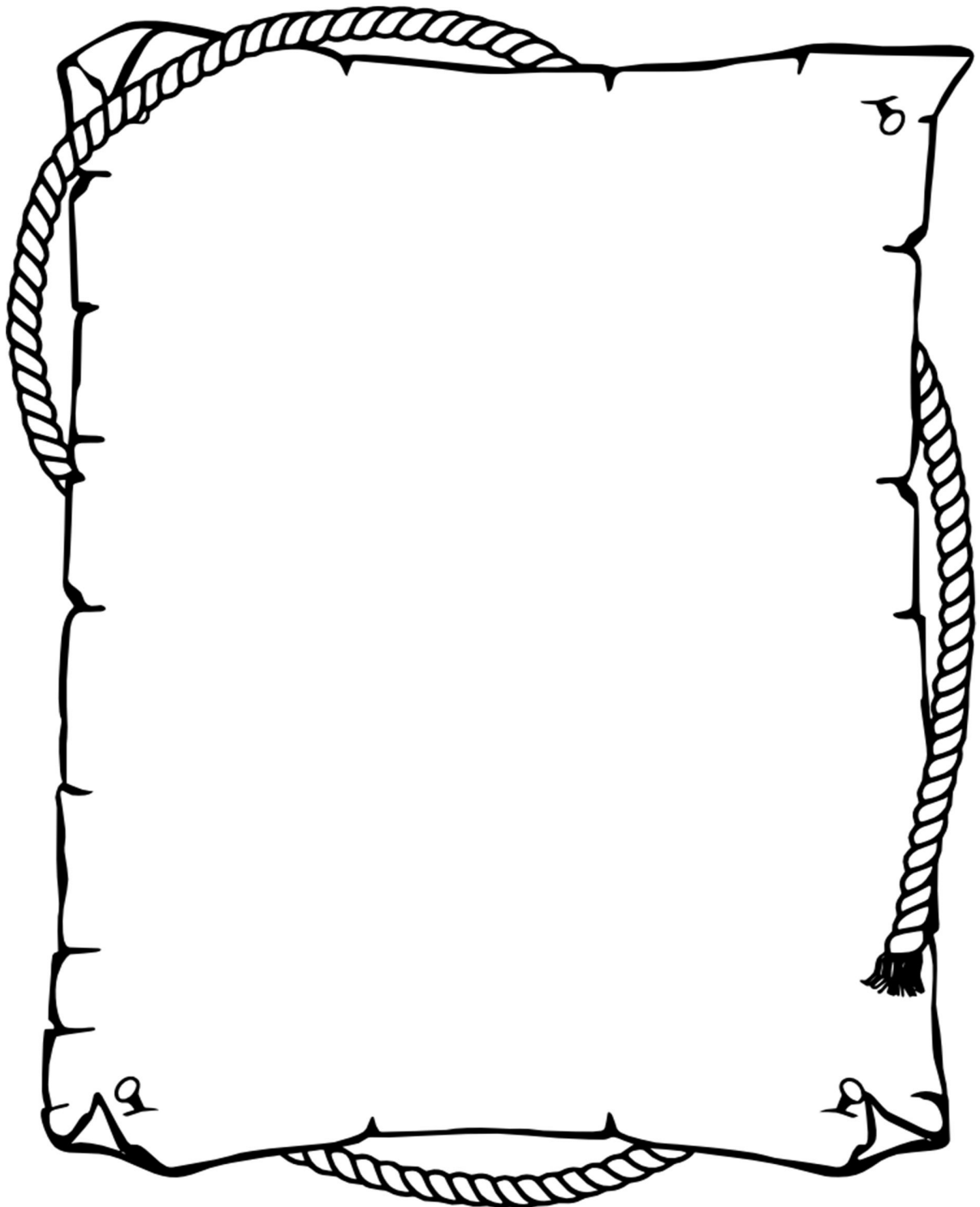
# ACTIVITIES

**WILDSMITH**  
INTO THE DARK FOREST



# MAKE A MAP

Draw a map of the Dark Forest – you could include clearings, places where the firestones might be found, Rowan's grandpa's house. Hideaways for the poacher's to use and places where the dragons can nest protected from the wind and rain.





# DRAW A DRAGON

Rowan chooses a book called, 'Dragons of the Forest' to read. Write an entry for your own dragon. What do you think the dragon would be called? What size and colour would they be, what would they eat, what type of egg would they have and whereabouts in the forest do you think they would live? Draw a picture of your dragon to go alongside it.





# AMAZING ALPHABETS

Each letter at the start of a chapter is large with a border made of twigs that have been drawn by illustrator Joe Todd-Stanton. These letters are sometimes called illuminated letters. Can you create an illuminated letter for the first letter in your name? Use things that you love or that contain special meaning to surround your letters. These might be pets, hobbies or things about where you live.



# FIND OUT ABOUT FORESTS

As Rowan is walking through the forest, she notices many different types of trees arching overhead. She recognises oak, beech, holly and rowan trees. Can you find out more about these trees? What do their leaves look like, what kind of seeds do they have?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Did you know* trees which lose their leaves in the autumn are called deciduous. All of the trees which Rowan spots on her walk are deciduous trees. Trees which keep their leaves all through the year are called evergreen. Can you find out about any other types of deciduous trees which Rowan might find in the Dark Forest?

---

---

---

---

See if you can find a leaf and use a crayon to take a rubbing to take its shape.





# WHAT HAPPENS IN WAR?

During times of war children and families often travel from cities where they are in danger to the countryside. This is called evacuation and the people who move are called evacuees. Can you find out anything about evacuees in the second world war?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

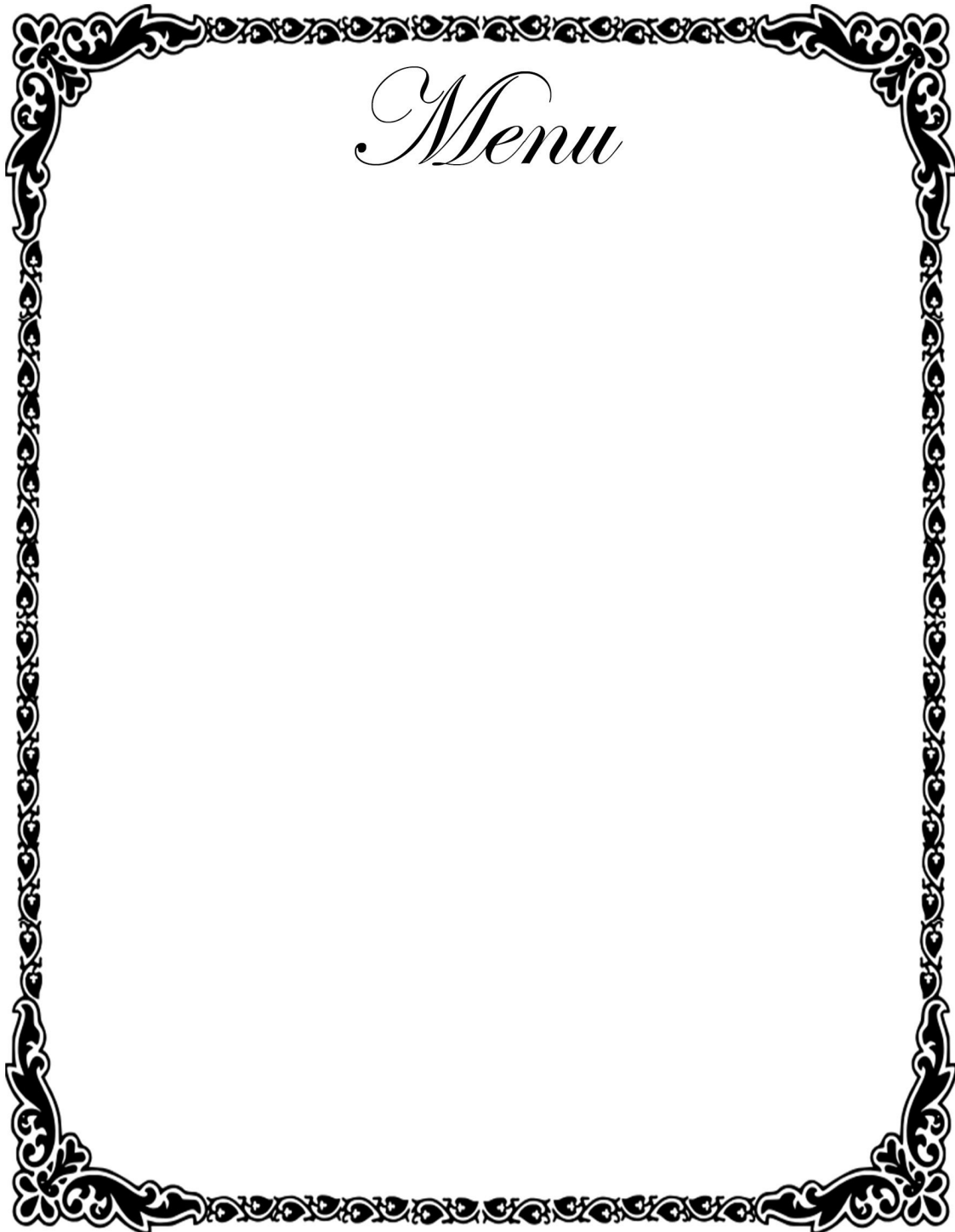
---

---



# MAKE A MENU

Make a menu for the second breakfast that Rowan and her friends can share. You could use items like nuts and berries which are found in a forest to create your dishes.







# RUN A RACE

Can you create your own race to find out who is the fastest and most agile? You might like to make races that involve climbing and crawling – see how creative you can get.

