



Alex Atkinson

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

My Dad was a brilliant storyteller, but I grew up and forgot about stories for a while until I had my own children. Then I remembered all the fun and laughter we shared over his truly terrifying tales at bedtime and realised that I wanted to try to recreate that.



Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

I did. I was an absolute bookworm and spent many happy hours visiting the libraries in Thirsk and Northallerton. My favourite place to read was somewhere quiet and cosy, usually my bedroom.

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

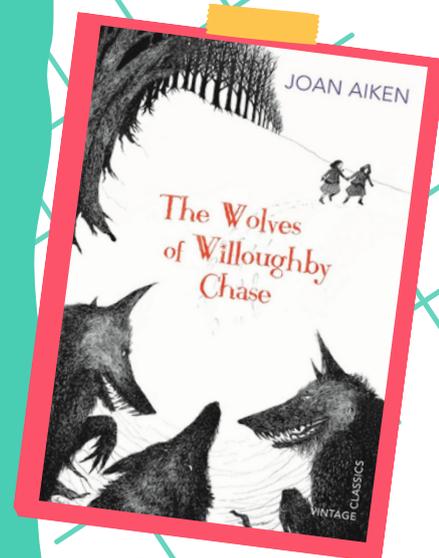
I can't pick just one! The Wolves of Willoughby Chase was a firm favourite as was The Dark Is Rising and The Owl Service. I think I liked them so much because they were big adventures, with an element of darkness and other worldliness, and the main characters were in serious jeopardy.

How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

It's magical to see something you've written on bookshelves. I feel so proud and grateful to everyone who has bought or borrowed my books. The first time I saw my book in a shop window was in Blackwell's. I was so happy I cried!

What is the best part about being an author?

There is a lot of good stuff. I absolute love coming up with new ideas and when the writing flows it really is the best feeling in the world. I also really enjoy doing school visits and chatting to readers about stories.

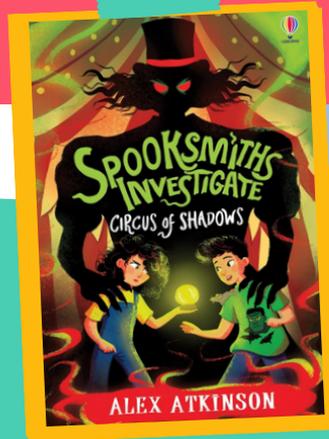


What are the 'not so fun bits' in being an author?

The first draft of a book, after the fun ideas stage, can often feel like a bit of slog. I have to get the words down to map out the story and then when I start editing it, I find the fun comes back. I also find public speaking a bit scary, so while I love doing school visits, I often get a bit nervous beforehand. Once I get going though, the nerves go away.

Why do you think it is important for children to read?

Reading is something you can do anywhere, any time. It allows you to travel, live different lives, gain experiences, understanding and empathy. If you find the right book it's also a whole load of fun.



Who gives you feedback on your drafts and how do you act on the feedback?

My husband and a couple of very good writer friends are usually the first people to see an early draft. Then it goes to my lovely agent, Lina. At first, I found taking feedback quite hard, but now it's one of my favourite parts of the whole process because I've realised no one writes a perfect first draft. Taking constructive feedback and editing your work is how you make your story sing.

Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world - where would it be?

On a sunny yet deserted beach, lying in a hammock in the shade with a cold drink and a bag of giant Wotsits.



What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

For the first Spooksmiths book that spark of inspiration came in the form of a place. I had a very clear idea of what Greyscar should look like because it's loosely based on a real seaside town called Saltburn-by-the-Sea. With the second book I was researching creepy settings and stumbled across the London Necropolis Railway which was a real-life railway for the dead during the Victorian era.

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