

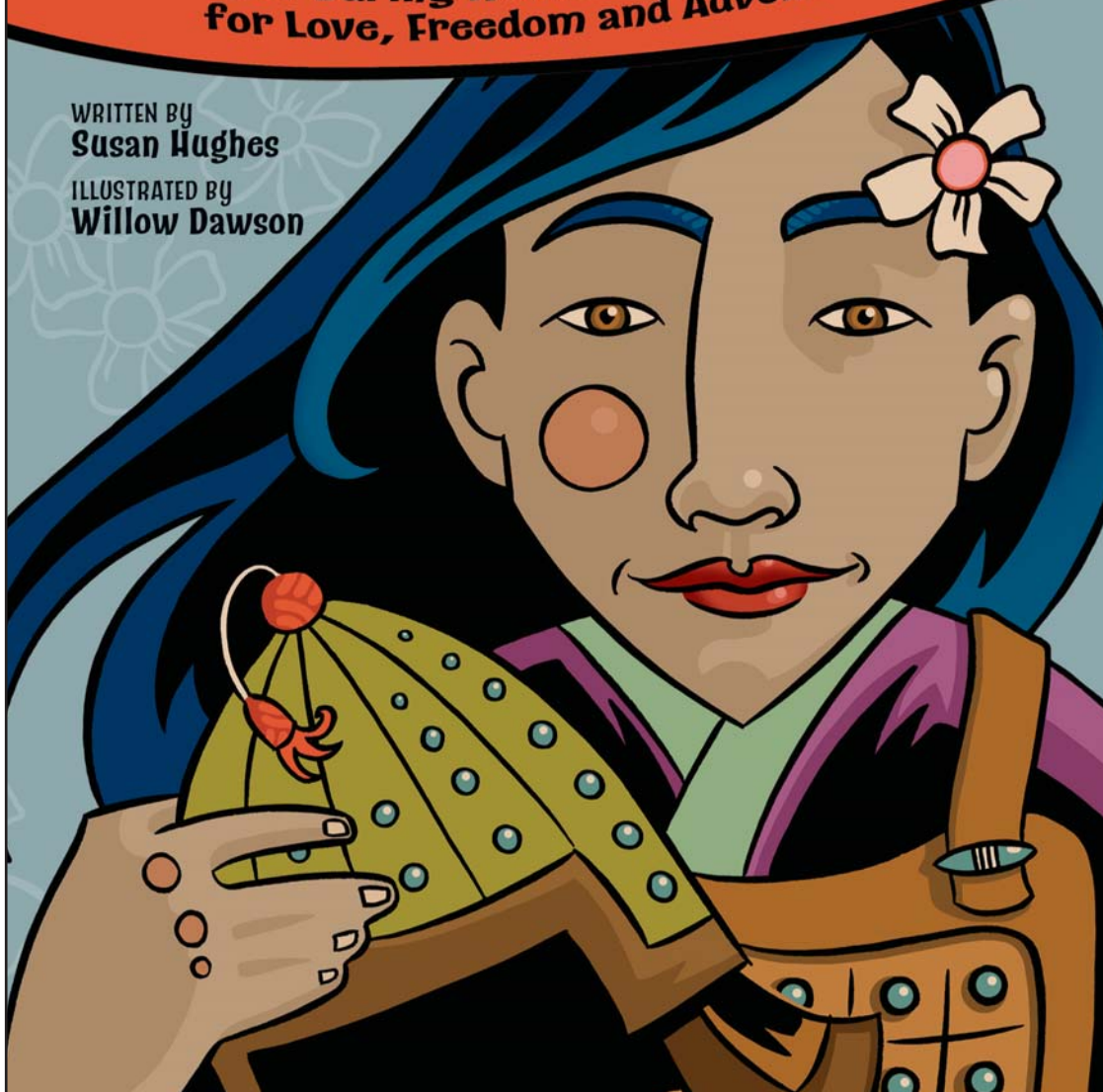
LEARNING RESOURCE MATERIAL

No Girls Allowed

Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men
for Love, Freedom and Adventure

WRITTEN BY
Susan Hughes

ILLUSTRATED BY
Willow Dawson



About No Girls Allowed

This eye-popping graphic novel features seven young women who were told “no girls allowed” — and did not listen. Each woman made a brave and desperate decision: she would disguise herself as a man for the freedom to follow her dreams. Hatshepsut was an Egyptian princess determined to become pharaoh. Mu Lan was a daughter ready to take up arms to save her father. Margaret Buckley wanted to become a surgeon at a time when women could not attend medical school. *No Girls Allowed* chronicles the history of seven such trailblazers. Man or woman, girl or boy, readers will delight in these tales of ambition and cunning that illustrate there is always more to a person than meets the eye.

About the Author

Susan Hughes is an editor and award-winning author. She has been writing professionally for nearly twenty years. Susan writes both fiction and nonfiction books for youth, including *Raise Your Voice*, *Lend a Hand*, *Change the World*. She lives in Toronto, Canada, with her three children, her boyfriend and his two children. *No Girls Allowed* is her first book of graphic fiction.

About the Illustrator

Willow Dawson graduated with honors from the Ontario College of Art and Design and now works as an illustrator and writer for clients such as *OWL*, *Shameless* and Kids Can Press. Recent comic book projects include the four-part *Violet Miranda: Girl Pirate*, written by Emily Pohl-Weary. In addition to illustrating and writing, Willow is also an arts educator who has taught comics, creative writing and art classes. She lives in Toronto, Canada.

Discussion Topics and Activities

The following discussion questions and activities support the elementary curricula in language and literature, social studies and visual arts, grades 4–7. This learning resource has been designed as originals that can be reproduced for home or classroom use only. For more learning resource materials please visit www.kidscanpress.com.



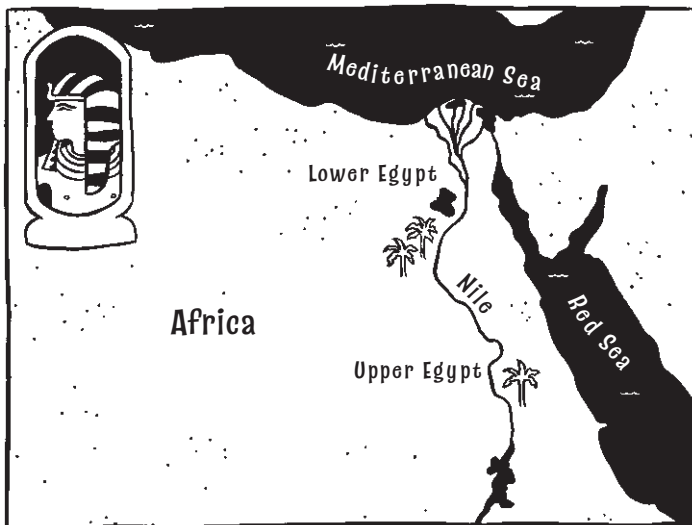
Activities

1. In Disguise

The female protagonists of *No Girls Allowed* dress as men to overcome obstacles based on their gender. In the afterword, author Susan Hughes writes that just by dressing as men, these women “suddenly felt safer, smarter, more capable and more ambitious.” As a class discussion, ask students why this might be by answering the following questions:

- ▶ How are we affected by other people’s perceptions of us?
- ▶ How does changing your appearance give you more or less confidence?
- ▶ What might be some positive outcomes of changing yourself to suit other people’s expectations?
- ▶ What might be some negative consequences of disguising yourself in this way?
- ▶ Can your students identify other people, in fiction, history or pop culture, who changed their appearances to gain power or confidence (e.g. Cinderella, Hannah Montana)?





2. Snapshots

The stories in *No Girls Allowed* take place in a variety of historical times and places. Divide the class into seven groups and assign each group a story. Ask students to research the setting in which their stories begin, using *No Girls Allowed* as a starting point (also see Further Reading in *No Girls Allowed's* end matter). Have each group create a poster snapshot of that place and time. The poster should include the following information:

- ▶ the name of country and/or region
- ▶ the year and/or dynasty
- ▶ a description of government
- ▶ population group(s)
- ▶ major products and/or trades
- ▶ major conflict(s)

Have each group present their snapshot to the rest of the class. Presentations may stimulate discussion of what the protagonists' early lives might have been like. Encourage students to identify factors that might have influenced these characters' decisions to dress as men.

3. Dear Diary

Ask students to choose a secondary character from one of the stories in *No Girls Allowed* (e.g., Thutmose III, Mu Lan's sister, William Craft). Ask students to imagine themselves in the story from the secondary character's point of view. Have them write a diary entry about the main protagonist based on an event from the story. How does the secondary character feel about the protagonist? How does the secondary character react to the protagonist's actions and behavior? Does he or she know about the protagonist's true identity? Does he or she agree with the protagonist's motives?

4. More Than Words

Graphic novel illustrators will sometimes choose to convey meaning solely through the use of images. Ask your students to take a look at page 10 of *No Girls Allowed*. In three panels, illustrator Willow Dawson brings to life a complex web of relationships — without a word of dialogue. (The narration box reveals only the identities of the characters.)

Encourage the class to closely examine the three panels and pay special attention to the changing expressions and gestures of the four characters. Ask students what they infer from these panels.

- ▶ What is the character's body language saying?
- ▶ What might the character be thinking?
- ▶ How might the character feel?

This activity can be repeated with the first four panels of page 24 and the last two panels of page 48 in *No Girls Allowed*.



5. Making Faces

Graphic novels blend text and images to tell a story. A character's expressions, body language and environment play as large a role as what he or she says. Readers infer meaning by interpreting the two together.

a) Divide the class into five groups. Photocopy and cut out the following lines of text and give each group a line. Each group member will present the same line but with differing tones and expressions. Challenge students to read their lines to show excitement, sadness, sarcasm, fear, aggression, boredom, bashfulness, etc. Join the class in guessing at the emotion being performed.

Hi, Uncle Mortimer.

Where is my bicycle?

This is going to be fun.

Your mother is outside.

Is that a unicorn?

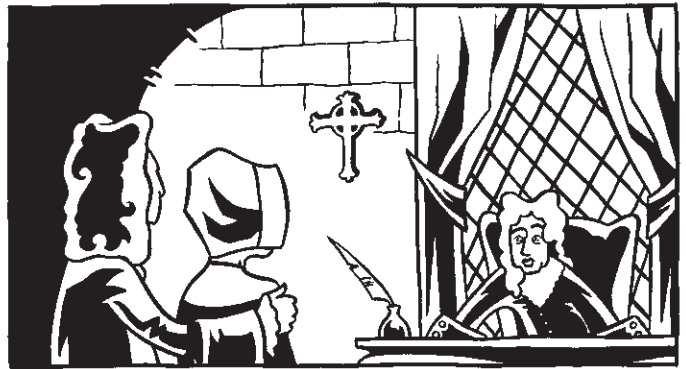
b) Illustrator Willow Dawson often works with a mirror to model her characters' expressions. For example, if a character needs to show skepticism, Willow might act that feeling in front of a mirror and then make a sketch based on her reflection.

Ask students to bring a handheld mirror to class. Have your students create a three- to six-panel comic strip based on one of the five lines provided above. The line can be expressed in any manner of emotion at any point in their mini-comic, but it should only be used once. All other meaning in the comic strip may be inferred through wordless panels, using the setting and characters' expressions and body language to tell the story. Encourage students to use the mirrors to make their characters' expressions as precise as possible.

6. Truth or Fiction?

Author Susan Hughes researched a lot to write *No Girls Allowed*. Some of the stories are based in legend and myth, passed on orally or written in poetry (Alfhild and Mu Lan). Others are based on primary sources, such as letters and historical documents or archaeological evidence (Sarah Wakeman and Hatshepsut).

Susan's challenge was to bring her characters to life based on her research. She wrote the dialogue by putting herself in her characters' shoes and imagining what they might have said or thought. As a class discussion, ask students whether they think the stories in *No Girls Allowed* are fiction or nonfiction. If an author imagines the book's dialogue, is she writing fiction? If a book is set in a real time and place and based on real people, does that make the story true?



7. Overcoming Opinion

A key theme of *No Girls Allowed* is never to be limited by the prejudices of other people. While the seven protagonists of the book worked hard to overcome gender stereotypes, many of them faced other obstacles above and beyond being women. Esther Brandeau defied anti-Semitism. Ellen Craft fought racism. And Sarah Rosetta Wakeman struggled to pull her and her family out of poverty. Ask students to write a short story about someone they admire who has prevailed over stereotypes and prejudice to achieve their goals.

