

Details of text extracts:

Text 1

Text: adapted from *Wideacre*

Author: Philippa Gregory (1987)

Text 2

Text: adapted from *Sleep, Pale Sister*

Author: Joanne Harris (1994)

Text 1

This is an extract from the novel, 'Wideacre', by Philippa Gregory (published in 1987). It is set in the second half of the eighteenth century. Beatrice, who is a small child from a wealthy family, is riding on horseback with her father across her family's land. Wideacre Hall is the family's country house.

We turned to look back over the way we had come and the shape and the setting of Wideacre opened up to me, like a magical page in a picture book, seen for the first time.

5 Closest to us, and extending far below us, were the green sweet slopes of the downs, steep at the top, but easy as soft shoulders lower down. The gentle wind that always blows steady and strong along the top of the downs brought the smell of new grass and of ploughing. It flattened the grass in patches like seaweed tossing under currents of water, first one way, then another.

10 Where the ground grew steep and broken, the beech woods had taken hold and now I could look down on them, like a lark, and see the thick tops of the trees. The leaves were in their first emerald growth and chestnuts showed fat, mouth-watering buds. The silver birches shivered like streams of green light.

15 To our right lay the dozen cottages of Acre village, white-washed and snug. The vicarage, the church, the village green and the broad, spreading chestnut tree that dominates the heart of the village. Beyond them, in miniature size like crumpled boxes, were the shanties of the cottagers who claimed squatters' rights on the common land. Their little hovels, sometimes thatched with turf, sometimes only a roofed-in cart, were an eyesore even from here.

But to the west of Acre, like a yellow pearl on green velvet, amid tall, proud trees and moist, soft parkland, was Wideacre Hall.

20 My father slipped the reins from my fingers and the great head of his horse dipped suddenly to crop the short turf.

'It's a fine place,' he said to himself. 'I shouldn't think there's a finer in the whole of Sussex.'

'There isn't finer in the whole world,' I said.

Text 2

This is an extract from the novel, 'Sleep, Pale Sister', by Joanne Harris (published in 1994). It is set in the Victorian period. Effie Chester is a newly married young woman who has fainted while out. She has been helped by a woman, Fanny, who has invited her into her house to recover.

5 Fanny's house was on Crook Street, quite near the canal, at the intersection of four alleys which led out from the house like the points of a star. In that part of town there were a number of old houses once very fine and fashionable, now receding into shabby-gentility, some derelict, with the rags of ancient curtains hanging at the toothy mouths of their broken windows, others fresh painted and spotless as the false fronts of a theatre backdrop.

10 Fanny's house was larger than the rest, built of the same soot-grimed London stone, but respectably clean, with bright heavy curtains at the windows and pots of geraniums on all the sills. In that neighbourhood the house stood out. The door was painted green, with a bright brass knocker and, at the doorstep, sat an enormous striped ginger cat, which mewed when we approached.

15 'Come in, Alecto,' said Fanny to the cat, opening the door, and the big tabby rolled her boneless weight silently into the hall. 'Please....' Fanny gestured for me to follow. I was struck immediately by the scent; something like sandalwood and cinnamon and wood-smoke, a scent which seemed to come from the furniture and the walls all around us. Then there were the flowers, great vases of them, crimson, purple and gold, on stands in every corner. Tapestries in jewel colours hung on the walls and rich rugs covered the parquet floors.

It seemed to me that I had been magically transported to some Aladdin's cave. Fanny guided me through a passageway and past a great sweeping staircase into a cosy drawing-room where a fire had already been lit. Two more cats rested, Sphinx-like, before it.

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