

## Willow's character profile from Sister Sister

Willow is 13 and lives with her mum, Helen who is an artist. Her grandmother, Granna, lives round the corner. Helen is unconventional and a bit scatty. She sometimes leaves the gas on and almost burns the house down. Willow feels like the grown up in the family. They live in a small cottage in the middle of the countryside. Stella and Jarvis live next door – they are twins and her best friends. Willow sees them almost every day. They have grown up together since they were seven, and played out in the woods, building dens, rescuing injured birds, making camps in their joint back gardens and having a ball. As they have got older, Stella and Willow spend more time together than all three of them together, and every Friday watch a girlie film at Willows and eat fajitas – their favourite food. Stella and Jarvis are like the brother and sister Willow never had, and it takes her a while to realise this further along in the book.

When we meet Willow she is very laid back and creative and doesn't really have any worries. As a toddler she never really threw tantrums – she has always been calm and easy going. She walks around with pencils rammed in her messy long brown hair and always has her nose in a book. She has brown eyes and freckles across her nose and couldn't even get her ears pierced because she has such a phobia about needles and blood. Willow enjoys nothing more than locking herself away in her bedroom and reading. She is amazing at creative writing – it is her real talent – and she wishes she could be a writer one day. Willow likes school up to a point. She is good at English and languages, but hopeless at maths, which she finds confusing and pointless. Helen is no help with homework so she has to go to Granna's if she wants to get it done.

Willow wishes that she had a sister or a brother to play with. She doesn't feel like she has missed out on not having a dad, but she definitely feels like something is missing being an only child. When she was little she used to talk to an imaginary sister when she was playing games in her own. This sister was called Lily. Willow imagined her to look just like her but with brushed hair, all smooth, not like her birds nest! Lily liked pizza and flapjacks and could do back flips.

Helen told Willow her father is a sperm donor and she will never know who he is, but it doesn't stop her inventing up dramatic scenarios about who he might be. Is he a pop star, or a millionaire or even someone from the royal family? Willow wonders if she looks like him. Helen has never had a boyfriend as far as Willow knows, and Willow finds it hard to imagine her with anyone, but she and Stella sometimes joke that maybe she is having an affair with the man in the post office because he always goes red when he talks to her mum.

Willow's other friends are called Hatty, Emma and Lola and she usually hangs out with them to go shopping as a girlie gang into town to stock up on books as she is not that fussed about make up or clothes. They all love her because she's different to all the other girls and doesn't care what people think of her. She dances to her own tune. Willow is effortlessly popular and boys all have crushes on her, not that she's bothered – she doesn't notice stuff like that. None of it is on her radar.

When Helen starts receiving the letters that make her freak out, Willow is shocked out of her cosy uncomplicated life. The twins urge her to steam one open and

when she does, a dark secret is revealed. Helen hasn't been truthful – Willow's dad is a famous writer and he knew Helen a long time ago, before he was married to his wife. After he and Helen split up and he decided to be with his new partner, Helen realised she was pregnant. And that's when the lies started. And when Willow finds out that her mum and dad (and Granna) have kept this hidden all these years, she loses it. Especially as her dad only contacted her when he needs Willow to be tested as a bone marrow donor to save the life of his other daughter (he has a son too). After wishing for siblings her whole life, Willow is now angry the only reason she has them is because she can be of use.

So Willow dramatically switches from calm and secure to livid and all over the place. She even thinks Stella is pushing her away as she is taken over by her new family drama. Willow meets her dad and is angry with him and shows it – she is fearless, her steely core coming through when it matters most. Willow wanted her dad to get in contact because he was desperate to meet her, to be a father and to hell with the flimsy agreement he and Helen concocted all those years ago. Willow feels rejected. Without realising it, Willow has missed out on not having a father because when she starts to get to know him, she finds that she can relate to him, even if she is angry. Because he is a writer, they have that common bond – she did always wonder why she was no good at drawing like her mum. Now she knows.

Willow's biggest fear is needles and blood and this is something she will have to overcome if she is going to help her sister, Bella. A bone marrow donation involves massive needles and Willow properly freaks out. She fainted at school when she had an immunisation earlier that year and almost knocked herself out on a table edge. And that was nothing compared to what she will have to do to save Bella. Being a kind hearted girl who always thinks of others, she is keen to help, but is finding overcoming the whole needle thing very hard. And it doesn't help that meeting her sister for the first time goes horrible wrong. Bella hates her and this is something Willow is just not used to. No one has ever hated her before. She doesn't know how to take it because she doesn't actually hate anyone. After years of not caring what other people think of her, Bella's opinion of her is very important. It really gets to her that the person she most wants to have a relationship with is rejecting her, especially when all Willow wants is to be friends.

The best way for Willow to vent her frustration is by writing a blog – her dad suggests it. And in this blog we see exactly how Willow is feeling. It is also her entry into a creative writing competition her English teacher has entered her for. It becomes a cult sensation!

All in all, Willow is a very positive character who loses her way when her father appears in her life. She learns that she can be angry, and it's OK. I feel like Willow goes on to be a great writer one day, like her father, and helps people with the subjects she writes about. She will be successful because she is always true to herself without hurting other people.