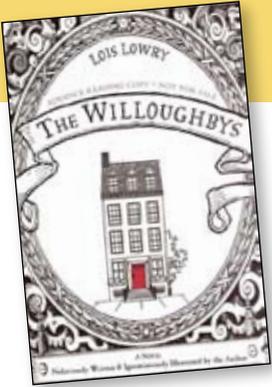


The Willoughbys

• Library Lessons •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Grades
2–4



The Willoughbys by Lois Lowry.
Houghton Mifflin Books for
Children, 2008.

Introduction:

The four precocious Willoughby siblings wish to rid themselves of their wicked and neglectful parents. This might seem drastic, but it is not so bad when it is disclosed that the Willoughby parents are planning a similar fate for their children.

Containing all the elements of an “old-fashioned story,” Lois Lowry’s witty book includes an abandoned baby on the doorstep, cradled in a basket; a sensible nanny, a transformed millionaire, and children presented with distinctly difficult challenges.

The book contains two appendices. The entertaining glossary reveals much about the author’s opinion on such topics as religion, sports teams, and titles for musicals; the annotated bibliography lists the thirteen classic books referenced in this orphans-overcoming-all-odds parody.

Notes Concerning The Willoughbys

Activity sheets:

- Students need to have knowledge of the book’s content to successfully complete the activity sheets
- The answers for Character Traits can vary and may stimulate an interesting class discussion. Suggested answers: 1. J, 2. H, 3. F, 4. C, 5. A, 6. B, 7. I, 8. D, 9. E, 10. G.

Lesson I: Foreshadowing and Flashback: The Troubled Tycoon’s Tribulations and Triumphs

.....

Introduction: *The Willoughbys* is written with humor and ironic nostalgia for past children’s classics. The author prepares the reader for the

delightfully predictable conclusion by foreshadowing events and revisiting the circumstances that caused them to occur.

Time Required: 30–40 minutes

Grade Level: 3–6

Objective:

- Students will be introduced to the literary terms of foreshadowing and flashback.
- Students will be involved in an interactive activity that will reinforce the concepts introduced.

Materials:

- Visual: “Foreshadowing and Flashback: The Troubled Tycoon’s Triumphs and Tribulations” (page 5)
- Visual: Tic-Tac-Toe (page 6)
- Foreshadowing and Flashback Cards (page 7)
- Transparency Marker, if necessary

Directions:

1. Prior to the lesson run off the Foreshadowing and Flashback Game Cards and have them cut and ready for class. (Keep a master copy of the cards for use in identifying the correct answers.)
2. Display visual. Read the information on it to the students.
3. Ask the students if they can recall ever having read stories that used foreshadowing or flashback. (Flashback tends to be easier for the students to identify. Foreshadowing can be subtle and is not always as identifiable.)
4. Divide the students into two groups.
5. Explain that the class is going to play a tic-tac-toe type game using the information concerning foreshadowing and flashbacks.
6. Display the Tic-Tac-Toe board, read the directions, and go over the rules with the class. (The grid on the directions sheet may be made into a transparency and used to play the game.)

Library Lessons

7. Play the game, following the directions.
8. Upon completion, congratulate the winning team and read any of the remaining Foreshadowing and Flashback Game Cards to check for understanding.



Lesson II: Machen Sie ein Neues Wort (Make a New Word)

Introduction: Commander Melanoff's wife and son are stranded in Switzerland. The son thinks he can speak German, but he was actually inserting extra syllables and German sounds into English words. (See example on page 89: "Helloschlimhofen," the boy said cheerfully. "Neisch day, isn't itenschlitz?")

Time Required: 25–30 minutes

Grade Level: 3–6

Objectives:

- Students will review the definition of a compound word.
- Students will write a definition for a created compound word.

Materials:

- Visual: Machen Sie ein Neues Wort (page 8)

- Set of English-German word cards (page 9)
- Paper
- Writing tools
- Optional: index cards

Directions:

1. Prior to class, create a set of English-German word cards, simply by cutting the word choice cards into strips. If more durable cards are desired, glue the cut-out strips on index cards and laminate them.
2. Tell the students that today's lesson will focus on compound words. Define compound words as words that are formed by combining two other words. Anteater, barefoot and classroom are examples of compound words.
3. Display the visual and read its contents to the students.
4. Distribute writing materials and two English-German word cards to each student or small group.
5. Give the students several minutes to create a new nonsense compound word, using both English and German words. Tell them to define and illustrate their new word. Extra points can be given for an especially convincing or humorous definition. Have them share with the class.
6. Share the following information about compound words with students: Closed compound words are written as one word, such as snowman.
7. Open compound words are written as two words, such as ice cream.
8. Hyphenated compound words are written with a hyphen, such as narrow-minded.
9. Challenge students to think of as many examples of each type of compound word as they can. The student with the longest list wins.

Further Activities

Guided Reading: The following grouping of chapters works well as a pacing guide when the book is being used as a two week, ten-lesson unit of study. The questions include examples of typical student responses and may be used as a starting point for discussion.

Chapter 1

1. What is unusual about the Willoughby children's names? (*The twins have the same name.*)
2. In what time period do you think this story takes place? (*It's hard to tell exactly, but likely within the last fifty years. NOTE: The newest book listed in the bibliography is "James and the Giant Peach," which was published in 1961.*)
3. Do you think the baby will show up later in the story? Why? (*Yes, because why else would the author write about her? OR No, the author just wanted to show how cold-hearted the Willoughbys are.*)
4. Do you like these children? (*Answers will vary.*)

Chapters 2–4

1. Why do you think the author chose the fairy tale Hansel and Gretel as the story the father read to the children? (*The plot of this fairy tale is similar to the situation the children find themselves in.*)
2. Do you like the parents? Do you think the author wants the reader to like the parents? (*The author shows only bad things about the parents and does not want you to like them.*)
3. The father thinks reading is important but education is not necessary. Why do you know this? (*While he knows that a person needs to be able to read function in life, he may not wish to pay for his children's college education.*)

Chapters 5–6

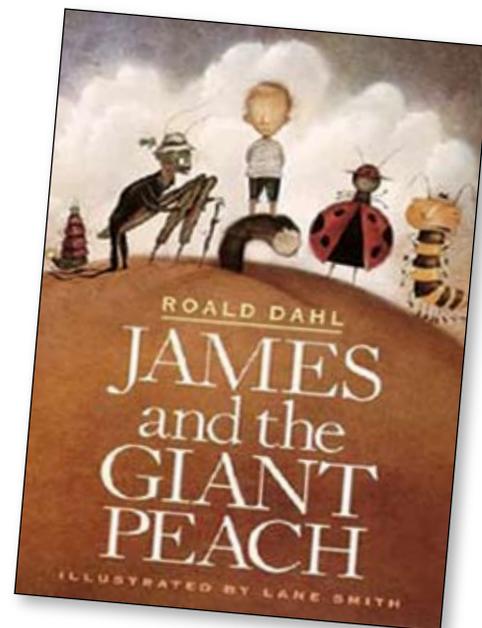
1. What do you think of the game that Tim plays with his siblings? What does it say about him? (*Tim likes to be in charge and he likes to win.*)
2. What do you think the word thermodynamics means? Is it important to know the meaning of this word to understand what is happening in the story? (*Definitions may vary. It is not necessary to know what this word means. Only the fact that it is a big word is relevant to the story.*)
3. Do you think that the nanny is smarter than the children? Why? (*Yes, she quickly lets Tim know she is in charge. She tricks them into eating breakfast. She lets them know she is on their side.*)

Chapters 7–10

1. Commander Melanoff appears to be sad and miserable. Why is this so? (*He has no interest in life. He misses his family, especially his son.*)
2. What are some reasons that Commander Melanoff could be happy? (*He could be happy because he has his wealth and health.*)
3. How do the children and the nanny plan to keep anyone from buying their house? (*They make the house look weird and ill-kept to all perspective buyers.*)

Chapters 11–12

1. How did having a baby in his house change Commander Melanoff's life? (*The Commander now has someone who relies on him for care and he is happy again.*)
2. What very important thing does the reader know that Commander Melanoff does not know? (*The reader is aware that the Commander's wife and son are alive.*)
3. How do you think the children feel when the nanny tells them that their parents did not like them and could not remember their names? (*They were surprised, but now felt better about wanting to be orphans.*)



Library Lessons

Chapters 13–15

1. Some new characters are introduced in Chapter 13. Who are they? What do you think about them? *(These are people living in North West Switzerland and include the Commander's missing wife and son. They have no sense of humor and like everything to be perfect.)*
2. Why do you think people speak German in this part Switzerland? *(This part of Switzerland shares a border with Germany.)*
3. Commander Melanoff meets the Willoughbys in Chapter 14. Did you think that this meeting was going to take place? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Do you remember where Commander Melanoff saw the children's names? *(In the beginning of the book, the children had included a note in with basket they left on Commander Melanoff's doorstep with baby Ruth.)*
5. The house has been sold! Now what do you think the children will do? *(They may have to go to an orphanage, get a house with Nanny, or possibly live with Commander Melanoff.)*
6. Can you think of ten words that would describe what kind of people the parents are? *(Answers will vary. Note: The glossary in the back of the book has some interesting words in it.)*

Chapters 16–18

1. Why do you think that the Post Master, Hans-Peter, suggested that his new stepson go on a walking tour? *(He does not like his stepson.)*
2. How did Commander Melanoff make his fortune? *(In is the inventor of Lickety Twist. He owns the factory that makes this popular candy.)*

Chapters 19–20

1. Are you sad that the Willoughbys are now orphans? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. The boy's mother sent him off on a journey without any food. Why do you think she did this? *(She is not a caring parent and was more concerned about her son's neatness than his nutrition. She may have known that he had money to purchase food.)*

3. What did the boy remember that helped find the address for his destination? *(The boy remembered the candy Lickety Twist was important to his past and discovered the address for the factory on the candy wrapper.)*
4. Do you think the boy is a good problem solver? *(Yes, he was able to get from Europe to America without parents or a passport.)*

Chapter 21

1. Is "A Decision, an Announcement, and an Unexpected Arrival" a good title for Chapter 21? *(This chapter is all about Commander Melanoff. The decision refers to the naming of the candy; the announcement was that the Commander had decided to get rid of all the old letters concerning his family, and the unexpected arrival was his son's return home.)*

Epilogue

1. Did the story end like you thought it would? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. What are some different conclusions for this tale? *(Possible answers: The children could have gone to an orphanage. The new son could have returned to Switzerland. The parents could have lived and returned to reclaim their children.)*



Lynne Farrell Stover has over thirty years of experience as an educator and is currently a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She has taught many teacher workshops and won Teacher of the Year in 1999 from the Virginia Council of Economic Education and from the Virginia Association for the Gifted. She is the author of *Magical Library Lessons*, *More Magical Library Lessons*, *Magical Library Lessons: Holiday Happenings*, and *From Snicket to Shakespeare* from *UpstartBooks*.

FORESHADOWING AND FLASHBACK

THE TROUBLED TYCOON'S TRIUMPHS AND TRIBULATIONS

FORESHADOWING

When a writer foreshadows an event, she uses clues or hints to indicate to the reader that something has just occurred that is going to matter later. Foreshadowing is one of the techniques a writer uses to generate anticipation for what is coming up in the story. Read the following sentences:



“Something had happened. And now Commander Melanoff’s life, surprisingly, was about to change.”

This is an example of foreshadowing from *The Willoughbys* by Lois Lowry. The author is giving clues to the reader that the life that the Commander is currently living may be taking a turn.

FLASHBACK

A writer uses a flashback he wants to reader to be aware of something that happened before the beginning of the story. Flashbacks offer information about the characters’ current situation or clarify why certain things may be happening in a story. When a flashback takes place, the chain of events in a story is interrupted.



“He had made a vast fortune by manufacturing candy bars. His factory still existed, and the money kept coming in because people bought his hugely successful confections by the millions.”

This is an example of a brief flashback from Chapter Seven in *The Willoughbys*. Here the author takes the reader back in time to inform the reader why Commander Melanoff had such great wealth.



FORESHADOWING AND FLASHBACK TIC-TAC-TOE

DIRECTIONS:

1. Draw a tic-tac-toe grid on the board, or create a transparency of the one below and display it using the overhead or document projector.
2. Cut out the foreshadowing/flashback cards from page 7. Shuffle them. Keep copies of the card grids intact for your reference.
3. Divide the class into two groups, and name one group the X team and the other the O team. The team that has the student with the next birthday goes first.
4. Draw a foreshadowing/flashback card from the deck and read it aloud.
5. The group must identify it correctly as an example of either foreshadowing or flashback.
6. If the team is correct, it may place an X or O on the grid. If the team is incorrect, the turn is forfeited and it is the next team's turn.
7. A new card is read and the second group has the opportunity to identify it as an example of foreshadowing or flashback.
8. The pattern repeats until one group has successfully gotten three Xs or Os in a row.



FORESHADOWING AND FLASHBACK CARDS

THE TROUBLED TYCOON'S TRIUMPHS AND TRIBULATIONS

FORESHADOWING CARDS

<p><i>The day was bright and beautiful and Tim had a feeling it was going the most exciting day of his life.</i></p>	<p><i>The commander heard whimpering coming from beyond the front door. What could be making such a sad sound?</i></p>	<p><i>The boy left home wearing shorts and cotton shirt. Soon he would wish for a warm jacket and some heavy socks.</i></p>
<p><i>The commander could not bring himself to throw away the stack of unopened letters in the hallway.</i></p>	<p><i>Three wretched events had happened this week. Things will surely change now... or so he thought.</i></p>	<p><i>"I do like Nanny," the commander said. "She takes my mind off my sorrows."</i></p>
<p><i>Even though the forecast was for clear weather, heavy rain started to fall. Nanny hoped she and the children would soon not be homeless.</i></p>	<p><i>Little did the commander know that the baby he had just found was going to make such a difference in his life.</i></p>	<p><i>Tim asked, "What if the house gets sold? Where will we live? What would we do?"</i></p>

FLASHBACK CARDS

<p><i>The commander asked the children not to mention the Alps because it brought back sad memories.</i></p>	<p><i>The commander was reminded of the time he was an energetic entrepreneur and invented the candy named Lickety Twist.</i></p>	<p><i>When he went to bed that night his dreams were about his former life as the son of a loving father.</i></p>
<p><i>He reminisced about the wonderful times he had read bedtime stories to his young son.</i></p>	<p><i>Tim explained that Nanny had been forced to work hard when her father died in debt and left her penniless.</i></p>	<p><i>That story brought to mind one he had read last year in one of his favorite old books.</i></p>
<p><i>The strong smell of oatmeal cookies reminded the children of that terrible morning when...</i></p>	<p><i>Memories flooded back and he asked if he could see the original candy wrapper.</i></p>	<p><i>Barnaby was tired, hurt and hungry. He sat down and started to recollect the happy times in his life.</i></p>

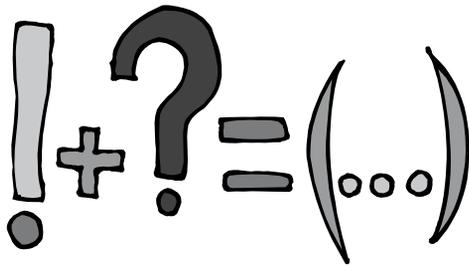
Machen Sie ein Neues Wort

Make a New Word

“Itz that better, Mutti? Neitz und Schtraight?”
“You know I don’t speak German, dear,” she replied.
“Ach, I forgotzenplunkt. Sorrybrauten,” the boy said.

The boy in the quote above is a character from *The Willoughbys*. He believes he is speaking German, but he is mistaken. What he is actually doing is inserting extra syllables and German sounds into English words. He is creating nonsense compound words.

A compound word is formed by combining two other words to make a new word. The three German words below can be combined to make six compound words.



English Word Everywhere	German Word Überall
English Word Bird	German Word Vogel
English Word Water	German Word Wasser

EXAMPLES:

Vogelwasser: Expensive specialty water sold in pet stores for parrots

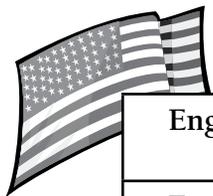
Überallvogel: An inconsiderate bird that lives all over the Earth

- Can you create another word?

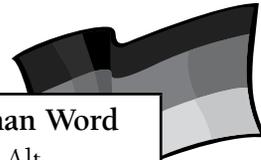
- What would be a good definition for that word?

Machen Sie ein Neues Wort

English-German Card Wordlist



English Word	German Word
Apple	Apfel
Bell	Klingel
Book	Buch
Cat	Katze
Chair	Stuhl
Day	Tag
Donkey	Esel
Flower	Blume
Friend	Freund
Girl	Madchen
Goose	Gans
Heart	Herz
House	Haus
Island	Insel
King	König
Money	Geld
Nothing	Nix



English Word	German Word
Old	Alt
Pen	Kugelschreiber
Pig	Schwein
Quick	Schnell
Red	Rot
River	Fluss
Room	Zimmer
Sausage	Wurst
School	Schule
Stone	Stein
Strong	Stark
Tall	Gross
Thunder	Donner
Tree	Baum
Work	Arbeit
Young	Jung
Zero	Null

THE WILLOUGHBYS EXAGGERATION ACTIVITY

Exaggeration: to portray something as greater than it actually is; to overstate

When Tim says, “I still need Mother’s mink coat, even though it’s hot and weighs a ton,” he means the coat is heavy—not that it actually weighs 2,000 pounds. This is an example of exaggeration.

DIRECTIONS:

Write an example of exaggeration for each statement below. Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

1. The book was interesting.

2. Tim liked to boss his younger siblings around.

3. The Willoughby parents did not like children.

4. Commander Melanoff was a wealthy man.

5. Nanny was kind.



POSTCARDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

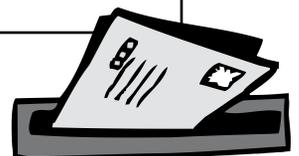
DIRECTIONS:

The Willoughby children's parents traveled all over the world and found themselves in many dangerous situations. What do you think is one of the most perilous places on Earth? Pretend that you have just had an adventure there and write to the Willoughbys about it on the postcard below. You don't have much space, but you should say where you are, what happened, and how you escaped. Remember to include a greeting, body, closing, and signature.

<hr/>	 <hr/> The Willoughbys <hr/> Tall Thin House <hr/> <hr/>
---	--



The front of a postcard is usually colorful and reveals the location from which it was sent. Create an appropriate design for the front of your card. The person receiving this postcard should be able to tell where it was sent from by the illustration.



THE WILLOUGHBYS: GLOSSARY QUESTIONS

1. What is a glossary? (Hint: The definition for glossary is on page 162)

2. Where in a book can the glossary be found?

3. How are the words in the glossary organized?

4. Use the word LUGUBRIOUS in a sentence.

5. Do you think the definitions in The Willoughbys glossary are funny? Why or why not?

6. Choose one of the words in the word box below and write a glossary entry in the same manner Lois Lowry might write it.

Infantile	Jovial	Vindictive	Instigate
Germanic	Fiasco	Interpret	Catastrophe

* Extra Credit: If you had written The Willoughbys glossary, would you have added any other information to the entries? If so, what?

