

# Bridge to Terabithia

## • Library Lessons •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Grades  
4-7

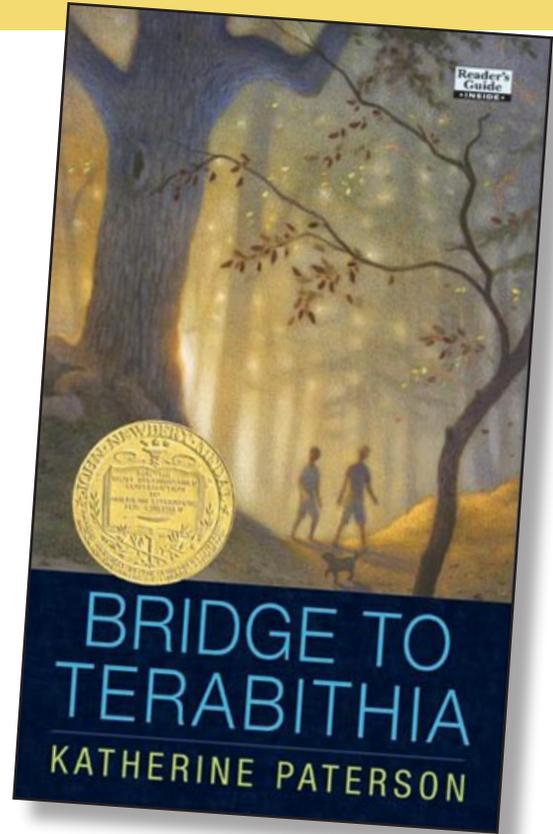
### Story Synopsis

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Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* won the Newbery Award in 1978. The book is the heartfelt story of eleven-year-old Jess Aarons who lives in a small community in rural Virginia. He dreams of being the fastest boy in his fifth grade class when school opens—and he's willing to spend every morning of the summer vacation practicing his running with the hope of winning the respect of his classmates, his father's approval, and some positive attention from his mother often focuses on the demands of his four sisters. The first day of school arrives and much to his dismay, the bold new girl, Leslie Burke, out races him and all the other boys.

Jess tries to ignore Leslie, who recently moved into the old Perkins place, down the road from the Aarons' family. She is from the city and is a misfit in the Appalachian community. However, Jess and Leslie soon discover they are kindred spirits and become fast friends. They feed off of each other's creativity and imagination, creating the magical Kingdom of Terabithia in the woods near their homes.

The friendship continues outside of Terabithia as the constant companions endure schoolyard teasing, hateful bullies, and an inquisitive younger sibling. Everything comes to a tragic end when Leslie drowns in an attempt to cross a creek while swinging on a rope. As Jess struggles with his grief, he realizes the need to keep Leslie's memory alive and knows he will continue the fantasy world with his adoring little sister, May Bell. **Note:** Students do not need to have read *Bridge to Terabithia* to successfully participate in these lessons.



### Lesson I: Foreshadowing and Flashback

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Katherine Paterson's beautiful but tragic *Bridge to Terabithia* is a book of timeless themes: the struggle for acceptance, the power of imagination, the importance of family, and the uncertainty of life to name a few. While the death of Leslie Burke is a shock, the author somewhat prepared the reader by foreshadowing the main character drowning throughout the story.

**Time Required:** 30–40 minutes

**Objectives:**

- The students will be introduced to the literary terms of foreshadowing and flashback.

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- The students will be involved in an interactive activity that will reinforce the concepts introduced.

### Materials:

- Foreshadowing and Flashback: Triumphs & Troubles in Terabithia visual (page 4)
- Triumphs & Troubles Tic-Tac-Toe visual (page 5)
- prepared activity cards (page 6)
- transparency marker

### Directions:

1. Prior to the lesson, photocopy the Foreshadowing and Flashback Game Cards and have them cut and ready for class. (Keep a master copy of the cards to identify the correct answers.)
2. Display the Foreshadowing visual. Read the information 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 as identifiable.)
4. Divide the students into two groups.
5. Explain that the class is going to play a tic-tac-toe game using the information concerning foreshadowing and flashbacks.
6. Display the Triumphs & Troubles Tic-Tac-Toe visual, read the directions, and go over the rules with the class.
7. Play the game, following the directions and using the grid.
8. Upon completion, congratulate the winning team and read any of the remaining Foreshadowing and Flashback Game Cards to check for understanding.

**Extension:** Encourage the students to create their own foreshadowing and flashback cards based on favorite books to be used in other class tic-tac-toe games.

## Lesson 2: Imaginary Places

The setting for *Bridge to Terabithia* is the raw and real rural Virginia of the 1970s. Young Jess and Leslie find a way to temporarily “divorce” themselves from the reality of school situations and family stress when they fabricate their own private fantasy world created from books they have read and their extremely active imaginations.

**Time Required:** 20–30 minutes

### Objectives:

- The students will review the literary term “setting” and apply the definition to various fictional works.
- The students will complete an assigned activity sheet.

### Materials:

- Imaginary Places visual (page 7)
- Imaginary Places activity sheet (page 8)
- writing tools
- titles of the featured books for student check-out (*optional*)

### Procedure:

1. Prepare the visual and activity sheets prior to class.
2. Introduce the lesson by explaining that the setting of *Bridge to Terabithia* is in the “real world,” but the title of the book is based on an imaginary place.
3. Display the visual. Read it with the students.
4. Solicit responses concerning information about the listed imaginary places from the students. Possible replies include:  
Bedrock—from the cartoon series *The Flintstones*.  
Camelot—the location of King Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table.  
Dictionopolis & Digitopolis—the cities visited by Milo in Norton Juster’s *The Phantom Tollbooth*.  
Krypton—Superman’s home planet.

The Lost Island of Atlantis—legendary location of an advanced civilization that vanished into the ocean thousands of years ago.

Olympus—mythical home of the Greek gods.

Tatooine—home planet of the Star Wars saga's young Luke Skywalker.

Treasure Island—place of buried pirates' booty in a book of the same name by Robert Lewis Stevenson.

5. Pass out the activity sheet and read the introduction to the students. **Note:** The places listed are found in popular children's literature. All book titles have been, (or soon will be), made into movies and should be familiar to most students. However, this activity works best if students are allowed to work together in pairs or small groups, as few students are likely to have knowledge of all ten books.
6. Check as a group. Answers 1. J; 2. C; 3. F; 4. I; 5. A; 6. H; 7. E; 8. B; 9. G; 10. D.

## McREL Standards

### Language Arts

#### Reading

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process. Understands the use of specific literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback).

#### Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.



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*, and *From Snicket to Shakespeare* from UpstartBooks.

# Foreshadowing and Flashback

## Triumphs & Troubles in Terabithia

### Foreshadowing

When a writer **foreshadows** an event he or she uses clues or hints to tip off the reader that something has just occurred that is going to matter later. **Foreshadowing** is one of the ways a writer generates anticipation and prepares the reader for what is coming next in the story.

“There were parts of the woods that Jess did not like. Dark places where it was almost like being underwater, but he did not say so.”

This is an example of **foreshadowing** from *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson. The author is giving the reader clues that the woods was not always a friendly place and that being underwater might be scary and dangerous.

### Flashback

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

“But one day—April the twenty-second, a drizzly Monday, it had been—he ran ahead of them all, the red mud slooching up through the holes in the bottom of his sneakers.”

This is an example of a **flashback** from *Bridge to Terabithia*. Here the author takes the reader back in time to the event that gave Jess a “taste for winning.”

