

Foreshadowing is a literary tool authors and filmmakers adapt to provide early clues about where the plot is headed. It is a storytelling technique that, when used skillfully, gets viewers involved and thinking about the plot unfolding before them because they are picking up hints about what may soon happen. Foreshadowing in kids' movies is designed to make it easier for children to follow the plot and understand themes.

Examples of Foreshadowing in Kids' Movies

Foreshadowing in "The Wizard of Oz" (1939)

1. In this classic film, a tornado transports Dorothy Gale into the fantastical land of Oz, where she must contend with witches, odd creatures and supernatural happenings. The real message of the film is the value of self-reliance; the film helps children learn that they can succeed in life and survive great hardship through their own resourcefulness and determination.

Examples of **foreshadowing** can be seen in the early black-and-white sequence. Every major character who will appear in Oz--the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodsman, the Cowardly Lion, the Wizard himself and, most famously, the Wicked Witch of the West--is introduced at the beginning of the film as a normal, readily identifiable character. Ms. Gulch is a hateful crone who attempts to take away Dorothy's dog, Toto, representing a threat to the main character. Later, the same actress (Margaret Hamilton) will appear in Oz as the Wicked Witch, threatening Dorothy once again. A sham carnival worker who predicts phony fortunes will appear later in the film as the tricky Wizard of Oz, who is much less than he appears to be.

The Wizard of Oz uses foreshadowing to encourage children to rely as much on their own wits and resources as they would depend on the kindness of strangers.

Foreshadowing in "Charlotte's Web" (1973 and 2006)

Charlotte is a spider who lives in the rafters of a barn in this classic story by E.B. White. In the two film adaptations, Charlotte resolves to save the life of a runt pig named Wilbur, who is destined for the dinner table.

Early in the film, Charlotte explains to Wilbur that all living things eventually die. This foreshadowing sets the stage for the main plot struggle, which is saving Wilbur from the slaughterhouse. To do this, Charlotte weaves a web over the barn door with a message that startles the humans and spares Wilbur's life. In the process of spinning her web, Charlotte expends all her energy and dies, just as she had hinted to Wilbur at the beginning of the story.

Foreshadowing in "Bambi" (1942)

Bambi is a classic animated film produced by the Walt Disney Studios. The picture highlights the life of a young deer that grows to maturity in a deep forest while transcending tragedy. Early in the film, Bambi's mother warns him of the dangers in the forest, none greater than Man with his gun.

The death of Bambi's mother is foreshadowed by her conversation about the threat of Man encroaching upon the forest. Her death is the catalyst that propels the story forward and drives Bambi, determined and self-confident, to survive into adulthood.

About Foreshadowing & Flashback

Foreshadowing means suggesting beforehand what is going to happen later in the story.

A **flashback** occurs when the author tells about an event that happened before the time of the story.

Neither writing nor recognizing these particular literary elements is simple. The writer has to try to foreshadow without actually giving away the ending ahead of time, and the reader has to be able to notice these hints and begin to speculate about where they might be leading. As for flashback, the writer's challenge is to jump back and forth in time without confusing the reader; the reader's challenge is to recognize and follow the jumps.

Before students read the story, introduce them to the elements involved. Write the above definitions of foreshadowing and flashback on the board and ask a volunteer to read them aloud to the class. Copy the paragraphs on page 81 onto a blank transparency and display it on an overhead projector. Invite students to read the paragraphs aloud. Then challenge them to identify which underlined segments are flashbacks and which are foreshadowings, and explain how they know. (Answers: 1. flashback; 2. foreshadowing; 3. flashback; 4. foreshadowing)

Discuss with students how they might recognize foreshadowings and flashbacks. For example, in the first paragraph, the words *remembered* and *from long ago* hinted that Rory was about to have a flashback. The past perfect tense (i.e., *had been walking*, *had been so frightened*, and *had cried*) used in the next two sentences indicates that the events occurred before the time of the narration. In the second paragraph, a continuation of the first paragraph, readers are brought back to the present time by the word *today*. But the second sentence gives a hint of what's about to come: *He had no way of guessing what was waiting now, just a few yards ahead*. Ask students to predict what they think is going to happen, based on the tone of the whole paragraph. (They might guess that

something sinister is about to occur, maybe even the appearance of the hooded monster mentioned earlier.) Continue analyzing the third paragraph, challenging students to point out the words and phrases that indicate where Gloria is flashing back in time and those that foreshadow a future event.

Then invite students to read the story, keeping an eye out for these literary elements. When students have finished reading, have them work on the reproducible activities in this lesson. The activities will help reinforce what they've learned about foreshadowing and flashback and use these elements in their own stories.

IDENTIFY FORESHADOWING AND FLASHBACK

1. All of a sudden, Rory remembered an incident from long ago. He had been walking in the woods with his older brother, who tried to scare him half to death with a story about a hooded monster. Rory had been so frightened then that he had cried uncontrollably.
2. Today, as he strolled along peacefully, Rory chuckled at that long-ago horror story. He had no way of guessing what was waiting now, just a few yards ahead. Right now, he was happy and relaxed.
3. Gloria lined up with the other runners. They were all flushed with determination and excitement—all except Gloria. Suddenly, it was last year again, and she was telling the coach that she had to drop out of the team because of her illness. Now she was well again. "Still," she said to herself, "what am I doing here? I'll never win. I haven't practiced enough!" But miracles do happen. The question is, what kind of miracle would be best for Gloria?

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Name _____

Date _____

Foreshadowing
& Flashback

Time Spotters

In each paragraph below, you'll find examples of foreshadowing and one of flashback. Draw one line under each foreshadowing and two lines under each flashback. Then discuss your choices with classmates.

1. Something good was in store for her soon. She just knew it in her bones! Out on this same hillside last year, she had felt angry and helpless. Today she felt happy and self-assured.
2. Sinking lower and lower, pulled into darkness by the furious undertow, he could no longer hold his breath. He knew the end was near. Then the jangling alarm clock burst in, saving him from reliving once more that awful experience of many summers ago. He would never go near the sea again, he promised himself. But who says we can control our future?
3. The big, emaciated dog started across the street, heading right for Alonso. Alonso froze in his tracks. His dog Chance had disappeared in the fall, leaving Alonso's whole family distressed—Mom crying, Dad peering out the window every five minutes, hoping that by some miracle Chance would be at the door. Now this old thing was lumbering toward Alonso . . . was it Chance, or just another look-alike?
4. Luisa stood next to her mother, ready to begin kneading the dough. Suddenly, the yeasty smell of dough took her back to six months ago, when her grandmother had come for a visit. She, her mother, and her grandmother had been kneading bread when the phone call came. Luisa froze as she thought of this.
5. The heavy coins made his pockets sag, so Alex quickly emptied the change onto the table. He didn't need them for the bus since his mother was driving him to school. Later, he'd be sorry he'd done that.

Name _____

Date _____

Foreshadowing
& Flashback

Foreshadowings Everywhere

- A.** In real, everyday life we often experience foreshadowings of things that may be about to happen. Examples:

A sudden, blustery wind starts making its way through the woods.

This could possibly foreshadow that:

- (1) the biggest storm of the year will ravage the town.
- (2) a tree will topple over, smashing into a nearby house.

A police car with sirens blaring zooms down the highway.

This could possibly foreshadow that:

- (1) a speeder will cause a major traffic accident before being pulled over.
- (2) the police will finally capture an escaped convict.

- B.** Now YOU think of two possibilities about what may happen.

A dad greets his kids at the door, saying "Have I got a surprise for you! You'll never guess where we're going!"

This could possibly foreshadow that:

- C.** Use your ideas in B to begin a story of your own.
