

MASTER MORPHOLOGY SKILLS

AGAINST THE ODDS

PARENT/TEACHER GUIDE



AGAINST THE ODDS

Overview

While reading the *Against the Odds* series, students learned about historical disasters. Although the characters and storylines are fiction, the events and locations are real. This series is intended for students to learn about historical events and read about young characters who faced danger and survived.

Beyond the action and adventure, this series offers a chance to dig deeper into vocabulary using morphology—the study of word parts and how they work together. By understanding prefixes, suffixes, and base words, students can unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words, giving them powerful tools for reading and writing. Teachers and parents are encouraged to have students attempt to define new and unfamiliar words they read using morphology.

Key Vocabulary

- **Morphology** – The study of how words are formed and how parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) determine a word's meaning.
- **Root Word** – The core part of a word that holds the basic meaning (*-loc* in *locate*).
- **Base Word** – A standalone word to which a prefix or suffix may be added (*play* in *playful*).
- **Prefix** – A group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning (*pre-*, *un-*, *dis-*).
- **Suffix** – A group of letters added to the end of a word to change its form or meaning (*-able*, *-tion*, *-less*).



"What will that do?" Haru yells back. "It will just break through the window and keep coming in!"

Before either boy can make a move, the bear roars and uses its massive paws to break away a chunk of the house below the window. Another powerful swipe, and what was once a window is now a door large enough for the bear to squeeze through. It enters fully into the house.

Osuake hears screams from the back room of the house, where most of the others must be hiding.

The bear steps forward directly onto the cooking pot. Okaason must have been making more food for when the soldiers return. Perhaps the soldier was correct earlier, and the bear came in because of the smell of their food.

The bear overturns the pot. Hot liquid flies everywhere, and soup spills into the fire, dousing it. Steam fills the room, making it hard to see and breathe.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the animals in this book attacked people? Discuss some of the issues that might have influenced the animals.

2. The characters in this book showed extraordinary bravery. When was a time you had to be brave? How did you demonstrate your bravery?

How do each of the main characters change over the course of their story? What do they learn about themselves?

Amit, Kate, and Osuke all had to leave their homes. How do you think leaving home affected each character? How did it impact the way they interacted with the animals in each story?

5. Conflict can sometimes happen when humans are in the same spaces as wild animals. How can you interact with nature so both you and the animals in the environment can stay safe?

6. These stories all take place in a different time period. What are some clues in the text that help you learn about what life was like in that time?

7. What were some new words you learned reading this book? How could you use those words in telling your own *Against the Odds* story?

Morphology Mini Lesson

Step 1: Explore Word Parts

Write the morphology focus from the book on the board and include a list of the prefixes and/or suffixes found on the Vocabulary List page. Explain that students will be exploring how these word parts can change the meanings of words.

Step 2: Break Down Words

Choose eight to ten words from the book that contain the prefixes or suffixes and write them on the board. Have students break these words into their parts (prefix, root, suffix) and define each part. Ask them to explain how combining the parts changes the word's meaning. For example, in the word *rebuild*, the prefix *re-* means "again," and the root *build* means "to construct," so *rebuild* means "to construct again."

Step 3: Define and Share

Using the word parts they've identified, students should work in pairs to define each word and use it in a sentence. Encourage them to relate these sentences back to the book's plot or characters for added depth.

Extension Activity

Step 1: Base Word Challenge

Write a base word, like *form*, on the board. Ask students to create new words by adding prefixes and suffixes from their list. They should write down the new words they create and define them using their knowledge of morphology.

Step 2: Sentence Creation

Once students have created new words, challenge them to write sentences that showcase these words in action. Encourage students to get creative and even tie in their sentences to the historical events or themes in the book.

Here are example base words you can use:

- form (transform, formation)
- port (import, portable)
- view (preview, review)
- play (replay, playful)
- act (action, react)

Morphology-Based Questions

1. How can identifying prefixes and suffixes help you figure out the meaning of a word you've never seen before?
2. What are some examples of words from the book that have a prefix or suffix? How do those parts change the word's meaning?
3. Why is it helpful to know the root or base word when trying to understand a new word?
4. Can you think of other words that use the same root or base word as a word in the book? How are they related?
5. How do prefixes like *un-*, *re-*, or *dis-* affect the meaning of words? Can you think of examples from the book?
6. How can learning about word parts like prefixes and suffixes improve your writing skills?

Book Discussion Questions

1. If you were in the same position as the main character of the book, would you have made the same choices? What would you have done differently?
2. What was an interesting fact you learned while reading this book?
3. Think about a character you liked in this book. How was this character important to the story?
4. You read about important events that happened in history. What are some ways to stay safe in case of an event like this?
5. What are some other possible outcomes that could have happened in the story?
6. How did the people in the book work together to find safety?

Suggestions for Differentiation and Extended Learning

Activity: Students can create visual representations of words by illustrating the base word and showing how adding different prefixes or suffixes changes the word's meaning. For example, they might draw a picture of someone being *helpful* and *unhelpful*. Have students explain how the two pictures are different based on the word parts added to the base word *help*. Have students first define the base word and then define each prefix or suffix.

Goal: This activity brings creativity into morphology, helping students visually conceptualize how word parts influence meaning.