

WILDERLAND LEARNING TRAILS

Words of the Wilderland

One shared story - three age levels - one family roundtable

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Trail 4 • Words of the Wilderland

Vocabulary • Morphology • Etymology • Borrowing • Diction • Word Creation

Story connection: The book deliberately pairs short, accessible sentences with unusually rich vocabulary. Its language includes scientific terms, nautical vocabulary, historical borrowings, archaic words, and invented terms built to sound plausible.

TRAIL 4 • WORDS OF THE WILDERLAND

Upper Elementary • Grades 4-5

Learning goals

Use sentence context to infer meaning.

Use familiar roots/affixes as clues.

Verify meaning and pronunciation in a reference source.

Create and explain a plausible new word.

Student Challenge • Word Detective

Choose six words from the Vocabulary Guide: at least two Everyday, two Stretch, and two Rare & Wonderful.

1. For each word, copy or paraphrase the sentence/context where it appears.
2. Circle clues that helped you guess the meaning before using the guide.
3. Underline any word part you recognize (prefix, root or suffix).
4. Write a kid-friendly definition and one original sentence.
5. Choose one invented Wilderland word. Explain why its sound or parts fit its meaning.
6. Invent one new word for something in your own life. Give pronunciation, definition and a sample sentence.

Parent notes

Do not require Latin/Greek terminology for every word. Recognition comes before formal analysis.

A plausible invented word should have consistent sound/parts, not merely be silly.

Encourage dictionary verification after context inference.

TRAIL 4 • WORDS OF THE WILDERLAND

Middle School • Grades 6-8

Learning goals

Use roots, context and reference works together.

Investigate etymology and borrowed words.

Distinguish denotation from connotation.

Construct a plausible technical/worldbuilding term.

Student Challenge • Word Genealogy

1. Select eight words representing at least four origins/types: nautical, scientific, historical/borrowed, ordinary English, or invented.
2. For each word, identify origin (if known), meaningful parts, current meaning, and meaning in the book.
3. Choose two near-synonyms and explain differences in connotation. Example: "dry," "desiccated," "anhydrous."
4. Choose one borrowed word such as caravansary, dervish, sema, akce, or seraglio. Research the culture/language it came from and write a 100-word note on what the borrowing adds to Horatio's world.
5. Create one new technical or worldbuilding term using recognizable roots. Explain your construction.

Extension

Write a short paragraph twice: once using plain vocabulary and once using precise Wilderland-style vocabulary. Compare tone, precision and readability.

TRAIL 4 • WORDS OF THE WILDERLAND

High School • Grades 9-12

Learning goals

Use general and specialized references to investigate etymology and usage.

Distinguish denotation, connotation and book-specific semantic change.

Write lexicographic entries accurately.

Analyze the relationship between diction, sentence complexity and worldbuilding.

Student Challenge · The Wilderland Lexicographer

1. Select ten words from the Vocabulary Guide. Include at least three real technical/historical terms and three invented or repurposed terms.
2. For each, verify pronunciation, etymology or source language, part of speech, denotation, connotation, and the book-specific usage.
3. Identify two cases where the novel repurposes a real word (for example, geoglyph or talisman). Explain what changed and why the new usage still feels believable.
4. Write polished dictionary-style entries for five words, including etymology and one original illustrative sentence.
5. Write a 600-800 word analysis: How does the novel use difficult or unusual vocabulary without making its sentence structure difficult? Use at least five examples and connect diction to worldbuilding, tone or reader development.

Family roundtable

Each person shares one favorite word and answers: "Why is this word better here than a simpler word?"

The story comes first. Use this trail when it makes the reading richer.