



The Willoughbys

By Lois Lowry

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The Willoughby's—Timothy; his twin brothers, Barnaby A and Barnaby B; and their little sister, Jane—are old-fashioned children who adore old-fashioned adventures. Unfortunately, the Willoughby parents are not very fond of their children, and the truth is that the siblings are not too keen on their parents either. Little do the Willoughby kids know that their neglectful mother and father are hatching an evil plan to get rid of them! Not to worry—these resourceful adventurers have a few plans of their own. But they have no idea what lies ahead in their quest to rid themselves of their ghastly parents and live happily ever after.

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The Willoughbys By Lois Lowry Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Signature *Reviewed by Lemony Snicket* Lois Lowry, who casts her noble and enviable shadow wide across the landscape of children's literature, from fantasy to realism, here turns her quick, sly gaze to parody, a word which in this case means "a short novel mocking the conventions of old-fashioned children's books stuffed with orphans, nannies and long-lost heirs." These clichés are ripe if familiar targets, but Ms. Lowry knocks off these barrel-dwelling fish with admirable aplomb in *The Willoughbys*, in which two wicked parents cannot wait to rid themselves of their four precocious children, and vice versa, and vice versa versa, and so on. The nanny adds a spoonful of sugar and a neighboring candy magnate a side order of Dahl, if you follow me, as the book's lightning pace traipses through the hallmarks of classic orphan literature helpfully listed in the bibliography, from the baby on the doorstep to the tardy yet timely arrival of a crucial piece of correspondence. The characters, too, find these tropes familiar—"What would good old-fashioned people do in this situation?" one asks—as does the omniscient, woolgathering narrator, who begins with "Once upon a time" and announces an epilogue with "Oh, what is there to say at the happy conclusion of an old-fashioned story?" This critic even vaguely recognizes the stratagem of a glossary, in which the more toothsome words are defined unreliably and digressively. (He cannot put his finger on it, at least not in public.) Never you mind. The novel does make a few gambits for anachronistic musings ("Oh goodness, do we have to walk them into a dark forest? I don't have the right shoes for that") and even wry commentary ("That is how we billionaires exist," says the man who is not Willy Wonka. "We profit on the misfortune of others") but mostly the book plays us for laughs, closer to the Brothers Zucker than the Brothers Grimm, and by my count the hits (mock German dialogue, e.g., "It makesch me vant to womit") far outnumber the misses (an infant named Baby Ruth, oy). There are those who will find that this novel pales in comparison to Ms. Lowry's more straight-faced efforts, such as *The Giver*. Such people are invited to take tea with the Bobbsey Twins. Ms. Lowry and I will be across town downing something stronger mixed by Anastasia Krupnik, whom one suspects of sneaking sips of Ms. Lowry's bewitching brew. Tchin-tchin! Lemony Snicket is the author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The ever-versatile Lowry offers what she calls an "old-fashioned story," complete with stock elements such as a baby left on a doorstep and a nanny who transforms her initially ill-behaved charges. Sly humor and a certain deadpan zaniness give literary conventions an ironic twist, with hilarious results. The Willoughby family consists of bossy elder brother Tim, twins Barnaby A and Barnaby B, little sister Jane, and their parents, who are despicable. Mrs. Willoughby insists that the twins share one sweater, and Mr. Willoughby abruptly stops reading aloud "Hansel and Gretel" one evening because the mother in the story has given him an idea—abandon the children! The parents take a vacation and, while away, sell their house, leaving the children and nanny to shift for themselves. Meanwhile, the children plot how to become orphans, "like children in an old-fashioned book." Many are the ways used by children's novelists to get their protagonists' parents out of the way, but Lowry's solution here is particularly inventive and wickedly amusing. A glossary humorously defines words seldom seen in newfangled books (the new nanny: villainous, lugubrious, or odious?), and an annotated bibliography comments on 13 old-fashioned children's books referenced within the story. Great fun. Grades 4-6. --Carolyn Phelan

Review

It's recommended for eight-10 years but anyone up to treble digits would enjoy the black humour of Lowry's novel. Bookseller

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lois Silvey:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important take action, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your trouble; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled The Willoughbys. Try to make the book The Willoughbys as your buddy. It means that it can to be your friend when you really feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortuned for yourself. The book makes you more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let's make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

Sandra Williams:

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James Fox:

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