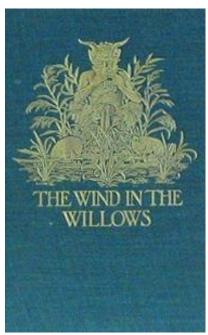
# The Wind in the Willows

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For other uses, see The Wind in the Willows (disambiguation).

## The Wind in the Willows



Cover of the first edition

Author(s) Kenneth Grahame
Country United Kingdom

Language <u>English</u>

Genre(s) Children's novel

**Publisher** Methuen

**Publication date** 1908

Media type Print (<u>Hardcover</u>)

Pages 302 pp ISBN NA

The Wind in the Willows is a classic of children's literature by Kenneth Grahame, first published in 1908. Alternately slow moving and fast paced, it focuses on four anthropomorphised animal characters in a pastoral version of England. The novel is notable for its mixture of mysticism, adventure, morality, and camaraderie and celebrated for its evocation of the nature of the Thames valley.

In 1908 Grahame retired from his position as secretary of the <u>Bank of England</u>. He moved back to <u>Cookham</u>, <u>Berkshire</u>, where he had been brought up and spent his time by the <u>River Thames</u> doing much as the animal characters in his book do—namely, as one of the most

famous phrases from the book says, "simply messing about in boats"—and wrote down the bed-time stories he had been telling his son Alistair.

The Wind in the Willows was in its thirty-first printing when then-famous playwright, <u>A. A.</u> <u>Milne</u>, who loved it, adapted a part of it for stage as <u>Toad of Toad Hall</u> in 1929.

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# [edit] Plot summary

At the start of the book, it is spring time: the weather is fine, and good-natured Mole loses patience with spring cleaning. He flees his underground home, heading up to take in the air. He ends up at the river, which he has never seen before. Here he meets Ratty (a <u>water rat</u>), who at this time of year spends all his days in, on and close by the river. Rat takes Mole for a ride in his rowing boat. They get along well and spend many more days boating, with Rat teaching Mole the ways of the river.

One summer day shortly thereafter, Rat and Mole find themselves near the grand Toad Hall and pay a visit to Toad. Toad is rich (having inherited wealth from his father): jovial, friendly and kind-hearted but aimless and conceited, he regularly becomes obsessed with current fads, only to abandon them as quickly as he took them up. Having only recently given up boating, Toad's current craze is his horse-drawn caravan. In fact, he is about to go on a trip, and persuades the reluctant Rat and willing Mole to join him. The following day (after Toad has already tired of the realities of camp life and sleeps-in to avoid chores), a passing motor car scares the horse, causing the caravan to overturn into a ditch. Rat does a war dance and threatens to have the law on the motor car drivers, but this marks the immediate end of Toad's craze for caravan travel, to be replaced with an obsession for motor cars. When the three animals get to the nearest town, they have Toad go to the police station to make a complaint against the vandals and their motor car and thence to a blacksmith to retrieve and mend the caravan. Toad - in thrall to the experience of his encounter - refuses. Rat and Mole find an inn

from where they organise the necessary steps and, exhausted, return home by train. Meanwhile, Toad makes no effort to help, instead deciding to order himself a motor car.

Mole wants to meet the respected but elusive Badger, who lives in deep in the Wild Wood, but Rat - knowing that Badger does not appreciate visits - refuses to take him, telling Mole to be patient and wait and Badger will pay them a visit himself. Nevertheless, on a snowy winter's day, whilst the seasonally somnolent Ratty dozes unaware, Mole impulsively goes to the Wild Wood to explore, hoping to meet Badger. He gets lost in the woods, sees many "evil faces" among the wood's less-welcoming denizens, succumbs to fright and panic and hides, trying to stay warm, amongst the sheltering roots of a tree. Rat, upon awakening and finding Mole gone, guesses his mission from the direction of Mole's tracks and, equipping himself with a pistol and a stout stick, goes in search, finding him as snow begins to fall in earnest. Attempting to find their way home, Rat and Mole quite literally stumble across Badger's home — Mole barks his shin upon the boot scraper on Badger's doorstep. Rat finds it and a doormat, knowing they are an obvious sign of hope, but Mole thinks Rat has gone crazy, only to believe him when the digging reveals a door. Badger - en-route to bed in his dressinggown and slippers - nonetheless warmly welcomes Rat and Mole to his large and cosy underground home and hastens to give them hot food and dry clothes. Badger learns from his visitors that Toad has crashed six cars, has been hospitalised three times, and has spent a fortune on fines. Though nothing can be done at the moment (it being winter), they resolve that once spring arrives they will make a plan to protect Toad from himself; they are, after all, his friends and are worried for his well-being.

With the arrival of spring, Badger visits Mole and Rat to do something about Toad's self-destructive obsession. The three of them go to visit Toad, and Badger tries talking him out of his behaviour, to no avail. They decide to put Toad under house arrest, with themselves as the guards, until Toad changes his mind. Feigning illness, Toad bamboozles the Water Rat (who is on guard duty at the time) and escapes. He steals a car, drives it recklessly and is caught by the police. He is sent to prison on a twenty-year sentence.

Badger and Mole are cross with Rat for his gullibility but draw comfort from the fact that they need no longer waste their summer guarding Toad. However, Badger and Mole continue to live in Toad Hall in the hope that Toad may return. Meanwhile in prison, Toad gains the sympathy of the Jailer's Daughter who helps him to escape disguised as a washerwoman. Though free again, Toad is without money or possessions other than the clothes upon his back, and is being pursued by the police. Still disguised as a washerwoman, and after hitchhiking a lift on a train, Toad comes across a horse-drawn barge. The Barge's Owner offers him a lift in exchange for Toad's services as a "washer woman". After botching the wash, Toad gets into a fight with the Barge-Woman, who deliberately tosses him in the canal. After making off with the barge horse, which he then sells to a gypsy, Toad flags down a passing car, which happens to be the very one which he stole earlier. The car owners, not recognizing Toad disguised as a washer woman, permit him to drive their car. Once behind the wheel, he is repossessed by his former passion and drives furiously, declaring his true identity to the outraged passengers who try to seize him. This leads to an accident, after which Toad flees once more. Pursued by police he runs accidentally into a river, which carries him by sheer chance to the house of the Water Rat.

Toad now hears from Rat that Toad Hall has been taken over by <u>weasels</u>, <u>stoats</u> and <u>ferrets</u> from the Wild Wood, who have driven out its former custodians, Mole and Badger. Although upset at the loss of his house, Toad realises what good friends he has and how badly he has

behaved. Badger then arrives and announces that he knows of a secret tunnel into Toad Hall through which the enemies may be attacked. Armed to the teeth, Rat, Mole and Toad enter via the tunnel and pounce upon the unsuspecting weasels who are holding a party in honour of their leader. Having driven away the intruders, Toad holds a banquet to mark his return, during which (for a change) he behaves both quietly and humbly. He makes up for his earlier wrongdoings by seeking out and compensating those he has wronged, and the four friends live out their lives happily ever after.

In addition to the main narrative, the book contains several independent short-stories featuring Rat and Mole. These appear for the most part between the chapters chronicling Toad's adventures, and are often omitted from abridgements and dramatizations. The chapter *Dulce Domum* describes Mole's return to his home, accompanied by Rat, in which despite finding it in a terrible mess after his abortive spring clean he rediscovers, with Rat's help, a familiar comfort. *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* tells how Mole and Rat go in search of Otter's missing son Portly, whom they find in the care of the god Pan. (Pan removes their memories of this meeting "lest the awful remembrance should remain and grow, and overshadow mirth and pleasure".) Finally in *Wayfarers All* Ratty shows a restless side to his character when he is sorely tempted to join a <u>Sea Rat</u> on his travelling adventures.

# [edit] Main characters

- Mole A mild-mannered, home-loving animal, and the first character to be introduced. Fed up with spring cleaning in his secluded home, he ventures into the outside world. Originally overawed by the hustle and bustle of the riverbank, he eventually adapts.
- Ratty Ratty (actually a water vole) is cultured, relaxed and friendly, with literary pretentions and a life of leisure. Ratty loves the river and takes Mole under his wing. He is implied to be occasionally mischievous and can be stubborn when it comes to doing things outside of his riverside lifestyle.
- Mr. Toad The wealthy scion of Toad Hall. Good-natured, kind-hearted and not without intelligence, <u>Toad</u> inherited his wealth from his late father. Spoiled, conceited, and impulsive, he is prone to obsessions and crazes (such as <u>punting</u>, <u>houseboats</u>, and horse-drawn caravans), each of which in turn he becomes bored with and drops. His motoring craze eventually sees him imprisoned for theft, dangerous driving and gross impertinence to the rural police. Several chapters of the book chronicle his daring escape from prison.
- Mr. <u>Badger</u> Gruff and solitary, who "simply hates society", Badger embodies the "wise hermit" figure. A friend of Toad's late father, he is uncompromising with the disappointing Toad yet remains optimistic his good qualities will prevail. He lives in a vast underground set, part of which incorporates the remains of a buried Roman settlement. A brave and a skilled fighter, Badger helped clear the Wild Wooders from Toad Hall with his large cudgel.
- Otter and Portly A friend of Ratty with a stereotypical "Cockney costermonger" character, the extrovert Otter is tough and self-sufficient. Portly is his young son.
- The <u>Gaoler's Daughter</u> The only major human character; a "clever, wise, good girl" she helps Toad escape from prison.
- **The Chief Weasel** The story's antagonist. He and his band of weasels, <u>stoats</u>, and <u>ferrets</u> from the Wild Wood plot to take over Toad Hall.
- **Inhabitants of the Wild Wood** Weasels, stoats, ferrets, <u>foxes</u> and others, who are described by Ratty thus: "all right in a way... but... well, you can't really trust them".

- Pan A god who makes a single, anomalous appearance in Chapter 7, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.
- **The Wayfarer** A vagabond seafaring <u>rat</u>, who also makes a single appearance. Ratty briefly considers following his example, before Mole manages to persuade him otherwise.
- <u>Squirrels</u> and <u>rabbits</u>, who are generally good (although rabbits are described as "a mixed lot").

# [edit] Editions



"The Piper at the Gates of Dawn", frontispiece to a 1913 edition by Paul Bransom

The book was originally published as plain text, but many illustrated, comic and annotated versions have been published over the years. Notable illustrators include <u>Paul Bransom</u> (1913), <u>Arthur Rackham</u> (1940), <u>Tasha Tudor</u> (1966), <u>Michael Hague</u> (1980), <u>Scott</u> McKowen (2005), and <u>Robert Ingpen</u> (2007).

- The most popular illustrations are probably by <u>E. H. Shepard</u>, originally published in 1931, and believed to be authorised as Grahame was pleased with the initial sketches, though he did not live to see the completed work. [1]
- The Folio Society edition published in 2006 featured 85 illustrations, 35 in colour, by Charles van Sandwyk. A fancier centenary edition was produced two years later.
- <u>Michel Plessix</u> created a *Wind in the Willows* comic book series, which helped to introduce the stories to <u>France</u>. They have been translated into English by <u>Cinebook Ltd</u>.
- Patrick Benson re-illustrated the story in 1994 and it was published together with the William Horwood sequels The Willows in Winter, Toad Triumphant and The

Willows and Beyond. It was published in 1994 by HarperCollins and published in the US in 1995 by St Martin's Press.

- <u>Inga Moore</u>'s abridged edition features text and illustrations paced so that a line of text, such as "oh my oh my," also serves as a caption.
- <u>Seth Lerer</u>'s *The Wind in the Willows: An Annotated Edition* was published in 2009 by Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0-674-03447-1
- Annie Gauger and <u>Brian Jacques</u> released *The Annotated Wind in the Willows* in 2009, published by <u>W. W. Norton</u>, as part of the <u>Norton Annotated Series</u>. <u>ISBN 978-</u>0-393-05774-4

# [edit] Literary analysis

In *The Enchanted Places*, Milne's son Christopher (<u>Christopher Robin Milne</u> of <u>Winnie-the-Pooh</u> fame) says of The Wind in the Willows:

A book that we all greatly loved and admired and read aloud or alone, over and over and over: The Wind in the Willows. This book is, in a way, two separate books put into one. There are, on the one hand, those chapters concerned with the adventures of Toad; and on the other hand there are those chapters that explore human emotions – the emotions of fear, nostalgia, awe, wanderlust. My mother was drawn to the second group, of which "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" was her favourite, read to me again and again with always, towards the end, the catch in the voice and the long pause to find her handkerchief and blow her nose. My father, on his side, was so captivated by the first group that he turned these chapters into the children's play, Toad of Toad Hall. In this play one emotion only is allowed to creep in: nostalgia.

# [edit] Adaptations

## [edit] Stage

- Toad of Toad Hall by A. A. Milne, produced in 1929
- Wind in the Willows, a 1985 Tony-nominated Broadway musical by Jane Iredale, Roger McGough and William P. Perry, starring Nathan Lane
- The Wind in the Willows by Alan Bennett (who also appeared as Mole) in 1991
- Mr. Toad's Mad Adventures by Vera Morris
- Wind in the Willows (UK National Tour) by Ian Billings
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u> Two stage adaptations a full musical adaptation and a small-scale, shorter, stage play version by <u>David Gooderson</u>.
- *The Wind in the Willows*, a musical adaptation published by Dramatic Publishing with adaptation, music and new lyrics by Douglas Post
- In 2011, it was announced that <u>Julian Fellowes</u>, <u>George Stiles</u> and <u>Anthony Drewe</u> were writing a new musical adaptation for London' West End [2]

## [edit] Film and television

- <u>The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad</u>, a 1949 animated adaptation by <u>Walt Disney</u>, narrated by <u>Basil Rathbone</u>. One half of the animated feature was based on the unrelated short story, <u>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</u>.
- The Reluctant Dragon and Mr. Toad Show, a 1970 TV animated series produced by Rankin/Bass, based on both The Reluctant Dragon and The Wind in the Willows.
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, a 1983 animated film version with stop-motion puppets by Cosgrove Hall.
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, a TV series (1984–1990) following the stop-motion film, done in the same style. There was a host of famous names in the cast, including <u>David</u> Jason, Sir Michael Hordern, Peter Sallis and Ian Carmichael.
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, a 1987 animated musical film version for television, produced by <u>Rankin/Bass</u>. This version was very faithful to the book and featured a number of original songs, including the title, "Wind in the Willows," performed by folk singer <u>Judy Collins</u>. Voice actors included <u>Eddie Bracken</u> as Mole, <u>Jose Ferrer</u> as Badger, <u>Roddy McDowell</u> as Ratty, and <u>Charles Nelson Reilly</u> as Toad. [3]
- <u>The Aventures of Mole</u>, a 1995 animated made for TV film with a cast including <u>Hugh Laurie</u> as Toad, <u>Richard Briers</u> and <u>Peter Davison</u> as Ratty and Mole respectively and <u>Paul Eddington</u> as Badger. Was followed by *The Adventures of Toad*.
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, a 1995 animated version with a cast led by <u>Michael Palin</u> and <u>Alan Bennett</u> as Ratty and Mole, <u>Rik Mayall</u> as Toad and <u>Michael Gambon</u> as Badger; followed by an adaptation of *The Willows in Winter* produced by the now defunct TVC (Television Cartoons) in London. [4]
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, a 1996 live-action film written, directed by and starring <u>Terry Jones</u> along with <u>John Cleese</u>, <u>Eric Idle</u>, and <u>Michael Palin</u> (all of whom were previous <u>Monty Python</u> members). The film also starred <u>Steve Coogan</u> as Mr. Mole and featured appearances by <u>Stephen Fry</u>, <u>Bernard Hill</u>, <u>Nigel Planer</u> and <u>Julia Sawalha</u>.
- <u>The Wind in the Willows</u>, another live-action film in 2006 with <u>Lee Ingleby</u> as Mole, <u>Mark Gatiss</u> as Ratty, <u>Matt Lucas</u> as Toad, <u>Bob Hoskins</u> as Badger, and also featuring <u>Imelda Staunton</u>, <u>Anna Maxwell Martin</u> and <u>Mary Walsh</u>.
- In 2003, <u>Guillermo del Toro</u> was working on an adaptation for Disney. It was to mix live action with CG animation, and the director explained why he had to leave the helm. "It was a beautiful book, and then I went to meet with the executives and they said, 'Could you give Toad a skateboard and make him say, 'radical dude' things,' and that's when I said, 'It's been a pleasure..." [5]
- In 2010, it was announced that <u>Ray Griggs</u> was developing a live-action/CGI blend adaptation of the story, scheduled to begin filming in late 2010 in New Zealand. [6]

## [edit] Radio

The BBC has broadcast a number of radio productions of the story.

### Dramatisations include:

- 8 episodes from 4 to 14 April 1955, <u>BBC Home Service</u>. With <u>Richard Goolden</u>, Frank Duncan, <u>Olaf Pooley</u> and Mary O'Farrell.
- 8 episodes from 27 September to 15 November 1965, <u>BBC Home Service</u>. With <u>Leonard Maguire</u>, David Steuart and Douglas Murchie.

- Single 90-minute play, dramatised by A.A.Milne under the name "Toad of Toad Hall", on 21 April 1973, <u>BBC Radio 4</u>. With Derek Smith, <u>Bernard Cribbins</u>, Richard Goolden and Cyril Luckham.
- 6 episodes from 28 April to 9 June 1983, BBC Schools Radio, Living Language series. With <u>Paul Darrow</u> as Badger.
- 6 episodes, dramatised by John Scotney, from 13 February to 20 March 1994, BBC Radio 5. With Martin Jarvis, Timothy Bateson, Willie Rushton, George Baker disambiguation needed and Dinsdale Landen.
- Single 2-hour play, dramatised by <u>Alan Bennett</u>, on 27 August 1994, <u>BBC Radio 4</u>.

### Abridged readings include:

- 10-part reading by <u>Alan Bennett</u> from 31 July to 11 August 1989, <u>BBC Radio 4</u>.
- 12-part reading by <u>Bernard Cribbins</u> from 22 December 1983 to 6 January 1984, BBC channel unknown.
- 3-hour reading by <u>June Whitfield</u>, <u>Nigel Anthony</u>, <u>James Saxon</u>, and <u>Nigel Lambert</u>; Puffin audiobook, 1996.

Kenneth Williams also did a version of the book for radio.

2002 <u>Paul Oakenfold</u> produced a Trance Soundtrack for the story, aired on the <u>Galaxy FM</u> show *Urban Soundtracks*. These mixes blended classic stories with a mixture of dance and contemporary music.

## [edit] Sequels and alternative versions

In 1983 Dixon Scott published <u>A Fresh Wind in the Willows</u>, which not only predates Horwood's sequels (see below) by several years but also includes some of the same incidents, including a climax in which Toad steals a Bleriot monoplane.

<u>William Horwood</u> created several sequels to *The Wind in the Willows*: <u>The Willows in Winter</u>, <u>Toad Triumphant</u>, <u>The Willows and Beyond</u>, and <u>The Willows at Christmas</u>.

<u>Jan Needle</u>'s *Wild Wood* was published in 1981 with illustrations by William Rushton (<u>ISBN 0-233-97346-X</u>). It is a re-telling of the story of *The Wind in the Willows* from the point of view of the working-class inhabitants of the Wild Wood. For them, money is short and employment hard to find. They have a very different perspective on the wealthy, easy, careless lifestyle of Toad and his friends.

## [edit] Awards

• Mr. Toad was voted Number 38 among the 100 Best Characters in Fiction Since 1900 by *Book* magazine in their March/April 2002 issue. [7]

# [edit] Inspiration

- Mapledurham House in Berkshire was an inspiration for Toad Hall. [8]
- The village of Lerryn, Cornwall lays claim to being the setting for the book. [9]

- <u>Simon Winchester</u> has suggested that the character of Ratty was based on <u>Frederick Furnivall</u>, a keen oarsman and acquaintance of Kenneth Grahame. [10]
- Articles in *The Scotsman* [111] and *Oban Times* [121] have suggested The Wind in the Willows was inspired by the <u>Crinan Canal</u> because Grahame spent some of his childhood in <u>Ardrishaig</u>.
- There is a theory that the idea for the story arose when its author saw a water vole beside the <u>River Pang</u> in <u>Berkshire</u>, southern England. A 29 hectare extension to the nature reserve at <u>Moor Copse</u>, near <u>Tidmarsh</u> Berkshire, was acquired in January 2007 by the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. [13]

# [edit] In popular culture

- Mr. Toad's Wild Ride is the name of a ride at <u>Disneyland Park</u> (and former <u>Magic Kingdom</u> attraction), inspired by Toad's motorcar adventure. It is the only ride with an alternate Latin title, given as the inscription on Toad's Hall: 'Toadi Acceleratio Semper Absurda' ('Toad's Ever-Absurd Acceleration').
- The first album by psychedelic rock group Pink Floyd, The Piper at the Gates of Dawn (1967), was named by former member Syd Barrett after Chapter 7 of The Wind in the Willows. However, the songs on the album are not directly related to the contents of the book. The same chapter was the basis for the name and lyrics of "Piper at the Gates of Dawn", a song by Irish singer-song writer Van Morrison from his 1997 album The Healing Game. The song "The Wicker Man" by British heavy metal band Iron Maiden also includes the phrase. British extreme metal band Cradle of Filth released a special edition of their album Thornography, called Harder, Darker, Faster: Thornography Deluxe; on the song "Snake-Eyed and the Venomous," a pun is made in the lyrics "..all vipers at the gates of dawn" referring to Chapter 7 of the book.
- Dutch composer <u>Johan de Meij</u> wrote a music piece for <u>wind band</u> in four movements named after and based upon *The Wind in the Willows*.
- Bosworth Badger XVII, a character in <u>Susan Wittig Albert</u>'s Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter, is said to be a cousin of Kenneth Grahame's Badger. (This is proven by the mention in *The Tale of Briar Bank* of an opinion attributed to Bosworth's cousin quoted directly from *The Wind in the Willows*.)
- The Piper at the Gates of Dawn is a piece for solo flute by Laurence Rosenthal
- A <u>messabout</u>, often organized online, is a social event inspired by the book's famous quote, "There is nothing absolute nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats."

## [edit] Footnotes

- 1. <u>^</u> This information was obtained from the E.H. Shepard illustrated edition, published by <u>Charles Scribner's Sons</u> in the <u>USA</u>. Please see the introduction of that edition for full details on how the illustrations were created.
- 2. <u>^ "Julian Fellowes to write new Willows Musical"</u>. BBC. 9 December 2011. Retrieved 12 December 2011.
- 3. ^ "The Wind in the Willows (1987) (TV)". IMDB. Retrieved 16 February 2009.
- 4. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0192802
- 5. <u>National Control on Why Wind in the Willows Went Away</u>. *Rotten Tomatoes*. Retrieved 9 May 2009.

- 6. ^ McNary, Dave (10 June 2010). "New wind in the 'Willows' RG teams with Weta for live action version of classic tale". Variety. Retrieved 27 June 2010.
- 7. ^ NPR report
- 8. ^ Fodor's
- 9. ^ BBC Inside Out The animals of Wind in the Willows
- 10. <u>\(^\) Winchester, Simon.</u> "The Meaning of Everything: the Story of the Oxford English Dictionary". Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- 11. ^ Wind whispered in the Scottish willows first, The Scotsman 16 April 2005
- 12. ^ "Was Crinan the seed for Wind in the Willows?", Oban Times 11 January 2008
- 13. <u>^</u> (*Natural World*, Spring 2007): "Ratty's Paradise joins eight new reserves" p10.

# [edit] Further reading

- Grahame, K, *The Annotated Wind in the Willows*, edited with preface and notes by Annie Gauger and Brian Jacques, Norton, <u>ISBN 978-0-393-05774-4</u>.
- Grahame, K, *The Wind in the Willows: An Annotated Edition*, edited by <u>Seth Lerer</u>. Belknap Press / Harvard University Press, <u>ISBN 978-0-674-03447-1</u>.

# [edit] External links



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**The Wind in the Willows** 

#### **Sources**

- The Wind in the Willows at Project Gutenberg illustrated by Paul Bransom (1913)
- The Wind in the Willows, scanned books from Internet Archive
- The Wind in the Willows, audio versions from Internet Archive and LibriVox

### Other

- Bodleian Library, Oxford, online display of original manuscript, books and drawings
- Pictures and song excerpts from the American stage production

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### The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame

**Characters** Mole • Ratty • Mr. Toad • Mr. Badger

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