

The Wind in the Willows

A Reading A-Z Level Z1 Leveled Book
Word Count: 3,328

LEVELED BOOK • Z¹

The Wind in the Willows

Part 14

Connections

Writing

Write an essay that compares how Mole and Toad address the problem of the story, and then describe what this reveals about their characters.

Science

Research the home, or habitat, of a real toad. Draw a diagram of the habitat, label it, and write a paragraph explaining how the habitat meets a toad's needs.

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Adapted from the Writings of Kenneth Grahame
Illustrated by Christopher Cyr

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The Wind in the Willows



Kenneth Grahame
(1859–1932)

Kenneth Grahame was Scottish, but he spent most of his life in England, where he worked as a banker and wrote in his free time. *The Wind in the Willows* began as stories he told his son, Alastair, before bed.

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Focus Question

How does each animal contribute to the plan to reclaim Toad Hall?

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Words to Know

accoutrement	pantry
belabouring	peevisly
despondent	portentous
detestable	privations
flustered	tousled
frivolous	unhallowed
haughty	vengeance
humbugging	victuals
laborious	volatile

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Correlation

LEVEL Z1

Fountas & Pinnell	W–X
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	60

In Part 13 of The Wind in the Willows, Rat helps Toad clean up after his adventure and tells him about the Wild Wooders taking over Toad Hall. Toad attempts to take back his home and ends up sinking Rat's boat. Rat scolds Toad and tells him to wait for Badger and Mole as they sit down to supper.

XI. "Like Summer Tempests Came His Tears" (continued)

The Rat remembered that poor Toad had been on prison fare for a considerable time and that large allowances had therefore to be made. He followed him to the table accordingly and hospitably encouraged him in his gallant efforts to make up for past **privations**.

They had just finished their meal and resumed their armchairs, when there came a heavy knock at the door.

Toad was nervous, but the Rat, nodding mysteriously at him, went straight up to the door and opened it, and in walked Mr. Badger.

He had all the appearance of one who for some nights had been kept away from home and all its little comforts and conveniences. His shoes were covered with mud, and he was looking very rough and **tousled**; but then he had never been a very smart man, the Badger, at the best of times.

He came solemnly up to Toad, shook him by the paw, and said, "Welcome home, Toad! Alas! What am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a poor home-coming. Unhappy Toad!" Then he turned his back on him, sat down to the table, drew his chair up, and helped himself to a large slice of cold pie.

Toad was quite alarmed at this very serious and **portentous** style of greeting; but the Rat whispered to him, "Never mind. Don't take any notice, and don't say anything to him just yet. He's always rather low and **despondent** when he's wanting his **victuals**. In half an hour's time he'll be quite a different animal."

So they waited in silence, and presently there came another and a lighter knock. The Rat, with a nod to Toad, went to the door and ushered in the Mole, very shabby and unwashed, with bits of hay and straw sticking in his fur.

"Hooray! Here's old Toad!" cried the Mole, his face beaming. "Fancy having you back again!" And he began to dance round him. "We never dreamt you would turn up so soon! Why, you must have managed to escape, you clever, ingenious, intelligent Toad!"

The Rat, alarmed, pulled him by the elbow, but it was too late. Toad was puffing and swelling already.

"Clever? O, no!" he said. "I'm not really clever, according to my friends. I've only broken out of the strongest prison in England, that's all! And captured a railway train and escaped on it, that's all! And disguised myself and gone about the country **humbugging** everybody, that's all! O, no! I'm a stupid fool, I am! I'll tell you one or two of my little adventures, Mole, and you shall judge for yourself!"

"Well, well," said the Mole, moving towards the supper table, "supposing you talk while I eat. Not a bite since breakfast! O my! O my!" And he sat down and helped himself liberally to cold beef and pickles.

Toad straddled on the hearthrug, thrust his paw into his trouser pocket and pulled out a handful of silver. "Look at that!" he cried, displaying it. "That's not so bad, is it, for a few minutes' work? And how do you think I done it, Mole? Horse dealing! That's how I done it!"

"Go on, Toad," said the Mole, immensely interested.

"Toad, do be quiet, please!" said the Rat. "And don't you egg him on, Mole, when you know what he is; but please tell us as soon as possible what the position is, and what's best to be done, now that Toad is back at last."

"The position's about as bad as it can be," replied the Mole grumpily, "and as for what's to be done, why, blest if I know! The Badger and I have been round and round the place, by night and by day; always the same thing. Sentries posted everywhere, guns poked out at us, stones thrown at us; always an animal on the lookout, and when they see us, my! How they do laugh! That's what annoys me most!"

"It's a very difficult situation," said the Rat, reflecting deeply. "But I think I see now, in the depths of my mind, what Toad really ought to do. I will tell you. He ought to—"

"No, he oughtn't!" shouted the Mole, with his mouth full. "Nothing of the sort! You don't understand. What he ought to do is, he ought to—"

"Well, I shan't do it, anyway!" cried Toad, getting excited. "I'm not going to be ordered about by you fellows! It's my house we're talking about, and I know exactly what to do, and I'll tell you. I'm going to—"

By this time they were all three talking at once, at the top of their voices, and the noise was simply deafening, when a thin, dry voice made itself heard, saying, "Be quiet at once, all of you!" and instantly every one was silent.

It was the Badger, who, having finished his pie, had turned round in his chair and was looking at them severely. When he saw that he had secured their attention, and that they were evidently waiting for him to address them, he turned back to the table again and reached out for the cheese. And so great was the respect commanded by the solid qualities of that admirable animal that not another word was uttered until he had quite finished his repast and brushed the crumbs from his knees. The Toad fidgeted a good deal, but the Rat held him firmly down.

When the Badger had quite done, he got up from his seat and stood before the fireplace, reflecting deeply. At last he spoke.

"Toad!" he said severely. "You bad, troublesome little animal! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? What do you think your father, my old friend, would have said if he had been here tonight and had known of all your goings-on?"

Toad, who was on the sofa by this time with his legs up, rolled over on his face, shaken by sobs of contrition.

"There, there!" went on the Badger, more kindly. "Never mind. Stop crying. We're going to let bygones be bygones and try and turn over a new leaf. But what the Mole says is quite true. The

stoats are on guard at every point, and they make the best sentinels in the world. It's quite useless to think of attacking the place. They're too strong for us."

"Then it's all over," sobbed the Toad, crying into the sofa cushions. "I shall go and enlist for a soldier, and never see my dear Toad Hall any more!"

"Come, cheer up, Toady!" said the Badger. "There are more ways of getting back a place than taking it by storm. I haven't said my last word yet. Now I'm going to tell you a great secret."

Toad sat up slowly and dried his eyes. Secrets had an immense attraction for him, because he never could keep one, and he enjoyed the sort of **unhallowed** thrill he experienced when he went and told another animal, after having faithfully promised not to.

"There—is—an—underground—passage," said the Badger, impressively, "that leads from the river bank, quite near here, right up into the middle of Toad Hall."

"O, nonsense! Badger," said Toad, rather airily. "You've been listening to some of the yarns they spin in the public houses about here. I know every inch of Toad Hall, inside and out. Nothing of the sort, I do assure you!"

"My young friend," said the Badger, with great severity, "your father, who was a worthy animal—a lot worthier than some others I know—was a particular friend of mine and told me a great deal he wouldn't have dreamt of telling you. He discovered that passage—he didn't make it, of course; that was done hundreds of years before he ever came to live there—and he repaired it and cleaned it out because he thought it might come in useful someday, in case of trouble or danger; and he showed it to me. 'Don't let my son know about it,' he said. 'He's a good boy, but very light and **volatile** in character, and simply cannot hold his tongue. If he's ever in a real fix and it would be of use to him, you may tell him about the secret passage, but not before.'"

The other animals looked hard at Toad to see how he would take it. Toad was inclined to be sulky at first, but he brightened up immediately, like the good fellow he was.

"Well, well," he said, "perhaps I am a bit of a talker. A popular fellow such as I am—my friends get round me—we chaff, we sparkle, we tell witty stories—and somehow my tongue gets wagging. I have the gift of conversation. I've been told I ought to have a salon, whatever that may be. Never mind. Go on, Badger. How's this passage of yours going to help us?"

"I've found out a thing or two lately," continued the Badger. "I got Otter to disguise himself as a sweep and call at the back door with brushes over his shoulder, asking for a job. There's going to be a big banquet tomorrow night. It's somebody's birthday—the Chief Weasel's, I believe—and all the weasels will be gathered together in the dining hall, eating and drinking and laughing and carrying on, suspecting nothing. No guns, no swords, no sticks, no arms of any sort whatever!"

"But the sentinels will be posted as usual," remarked the Rat.

"Exactly," said the Badger, "that is my point. The weasels will trust entirely to their excellent sentinels. And that is where the passage comes in. That very useful tunnel leads right up under the butler's **pantry**, next to the dining hall!"

"Aha! That squeaky board in the butler's pantry!" said Toad. "Now I understand it!"

"We shall creep out quietly into the butler's pantry—" cried the Mole.

"—with our pistols and swords and sticks—" shouted the Rat.

"—and rush in upon them," said the Badger.

“—and whack ‘em, and whack ‘em, and whack ‘em!” cried the Toad in ecstasy, running round and round the room and jumping over the chairs.

“Very well, then,” said the Badger, resuming his usual dry manner, “our plan is settled, and there’s nothing more for you to argue and squabble about. So, as it’s getting very late, all of you go right off to bed at once. We will make all the necessary arrangements in the course of the morning tomorrow.”

Toad, of course, went off to bed dutifully with the rest—he knew better than to refuse—though he was feeling much too excited to sleep. But he had had a long day, with many events crowded into it; and sheets and blankets were very friendly and comforting things, after plain straw, and not too much of it, spread on the stone floor of a draughty cell; and his head had not been many seconds on his pillow before he was snoring happily. Naturally, he dreamt a good deal; about roads that ran away from him just when he wanted them, and canals that chased him and caught him, and a barge that sailed into the banqueting hall with his week’s washing, just as he was giving a dinner party; and he was alone in the secret passage, pushing onwards, but it twisted and turned round and shook itself, and sat up on its end; yet somehow, at the last, he found himself back in Toad Hall, safe

and triumphant, with all his friends gathered round about him, earnestly assuring him that he really was a clever Toad.

He slept till a late hour the next morning, and by the time he got down he found that the other animals had finished their breakfast some time before. The Mole had slipped off somewhere by himself, without telling any one where he was going to. The Badger sat in the armchair, reading the paper and not concerning himself in the slightest about what was going to happen that very evening. The Rat, on the other hand, was running round the room busily, with his arms full of weapons of every kind, distributing them in four little heaps on the floor, and saying excitedly under his breath, as he ran, “Here’s-a-sword-for-the-Rat, here’s-a-sword-for-the Mole, here’s-a-sword-for-the-Toad, here’s-a-sword-for-the-Badger! Here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Rat, here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Mole, here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Toad, here’s-a-pistol-for-the-Badger!” And so on, in a regular, rhythmical way, while the four little heaps gradually grew and grew.

“That’s all very well, Rat,” said the Badger presently, looking at the busy little animal over the edge of his newspaper. “I’m not blaming you. But just let us once get past the stoats, with those **detestable** guns of theirs, and I assure you we shan’t want any swords or pistols. We four, with

our sticks, once we're inside the dining hall, why, we shall clear the floor of all the lot of them in five minutes. I'd have done the whole thing by myself, only I didn't want to deprive you fellows of the fun!"

"It's as well to be on the safe side," said the Rat reflectively, polishing a pistol barrel on his sleeve and looking along it.

The Toad, having finished his breakfast, picked up a stout stick and swung it vigorously, **belabouring** imaginary animals. "I'll learn 'em to steal my house!" he cried. "I'll learn 'em, I'll learn 'em!"

"Don't say 'learn 'em,' Toad," said the Rat, greatly shocked. "It's not good English."

"What are you always nagging at Toad for?" inquired the Badger, rather **peevishly**. "What's the matter with his English? It's the same what I use myself, and if it's good enough for me, it ought to be good enough for you!"

"I'm very sorry," said the Rat humbly. "Only I *think* it ought to be 'teach 'em,' not 'learn 'em.'"

"But we don't *want* to teach 'em," replied the Badger. "We want to *learn* 'em—learn 'em, learn 'em! And what's more, we're going to *do* it, too!"

"Oh, very well, have it your own way," said the Rat. He was getting rather muddled about it himself, and presently he retired into a corner, where he could be heard muttering, "Learn 'em, teach 'em, teach 'em, learn 'em!" till the Badger told him rather sharply to leave off.

Presently the Mole came tumbling into the room, evidently very pleased with himself. "I've been having such fun!" he began at once. "I've been getting a rise out of the stoats!"

"I hope you've been very careful, Mole?" said the Rat anxiously.

"I should hope so, too," said the Mole confidently. "I got the idea when I went into the kitchen, to see about Toad's breakfast being kept hot for him. I found that old washerwoman dress that he came home in yesterday, hanging on a towel horse before the fire. So I put it on, and the bonnet as well, and the shawl, and off I went to Toad Hall, as bold as you please. The sentries were on the lookout, of course, with their guns and their 'Who comes there?' and all the rest of their nonsense. 'Good morning, gentlemen!' says I, very respectful. 'Want any washing done today?'"

"They looked at me very proud and stiff and **haughty**, and said, 'Go away, washerwoman! We don't do any washing on duty.' 'Or any other time?'"

says I. Ho, ho, ho! Wasn't I *funny*, Toad?"

"Poor, **frivolous** animal!" said Toad, very loftily. The fact is, he felt exceedingly jealous of Mole for what he had just done. It was exactly what he would have liked to have done himself, if only he had thought of it first and hadn't gone and overslept himself.

"Some of the stoats turned quite pink," continued the Mole, "and the Sergeant in charge, he said to me, very short, he said, 'Now run away, my good woman, run away! Don't keep my men idling and talking on their posts.' 'Run away?' says I. 'It won't be me that'll be running away, in a very short time from now!'"

"O *Moly*, how could you?" said the Rat, dismayed.

The Badger laid down his paper.

"I could see them pricking up their ears and looking at each other," went on the Mole, "and the Sergeant said to them, 'Never mind HER; she doesn't know what she's talking about.'"

"O! Don't I?" said I. 'Well, let me tell you this. My daughter, she washes for Mr. Badger, and that'll show you whether I know what I'm talking about, and *you'll* know pretty soon, too! A hundred bloodthirsty badgers, armed with rifles, are going

to attack Toad Hall this very night, by way of the paddock. Six boatloads of Rats, with pistols and cutlasses, will come up the river and effect a landing in the garden; while a picked body of Toads, known as the Diehards, or the Death-or-Glory Toads, will storm the orchard and carry everything before them, yelling for **vengeance**. There won't be much left of you to wash, by the time they've done with you, unless you clear out while you have the chance!' Then I ran away, and when I was out of sight, I hid; and presently I came creeping back along the ditch and took a peep at them through the hedge. They were all as nervous and **flustered** as could be, running all ways at once, and falling over each other, and every one giving orders to everybody else and not listening; and the Sergeant kept sending off parties of stoats to distant parts of the grounds, and then sending other fellows to fetch 'em back again; and I heard them saying to each other, 'That's just like the weasels; they're to stop comfortably in the banqueting hall, and have feasting and toasts and songs and all sorts of fun, while we must stay on guard in the cold and the dark, and in the end be cut to pieces by bloodthirsty Badgers!'"

"Oh, you silly fool, Mole!" cried Toad, "You've been and spoilt everything!"

"Mole," said the Badger, in his dry, quiet way, "I perceive you have more sense in your little finger than some other animals have in the whole of their fat bodies. You have managed excellently, and I begin to have great hopes of you. Good Mole! Clever Mole!"

The Toad was simply wild with jealousy, more especially as he couldn't make out for the life of him what the Mole had done that was so particularly clever; but, fortunately for him, before he could show temper or expose himself to the Badger's sarcasm, the bell rang for luncheon.

It was a simple but sustaining meal—bacon and broad beans, and a macaroni pudding; and when they had quite done, the Badger settled himself into an armchair and said, "Well, we've got our work cut out for us tonight, and it will probably be pretty late before we're quite through with it; so I'm just going to take forty winks, while I can." And he drew a handkerchief over his face and was soon snoring.

The anxious and **laborious** Rat at once resumed his preparations and started running between his four little heaps, muttering, "Here's-a-belt-for-the-Rat, here's-a-belt-for-the-Mole, here's-a-belt-for-the-Toad, here's-a-belt-for-the-Badger!" and so on, with every fresh **accoutrement** he produced, to which

there seemed really no end; so the Mole drew his arm through Toad's, led him out into the open air, shoved him into a wicker chair, and made him tell him all his adventures from beginning to end, which Toad was only too willing to do. The Mole was a good listener, and Toad, with no one to check his statements or to criticise in an unfriendly spirit, rather let himself go. Indeed, much that he related belonged more properly to the category of what-might-have-happened-had-I-only-thought-of-it-in-time-instead-of ten-minutes-afterwards. Those are always the best and the raciest adventures; and why should they not be truly ours, as much as the somewhat inadequate things that really come off?

Glossary

accoutrement (<i>n.</i>)	a special piece of clothing or equipment that is used for a specific purpose (p. 17)
belabouring (<i>v.</i>)	attacking (<i>British spelling</i>) (p. 13)
despondent (<i>adj.</i>)	having or showing feelings of sadness or hopelessness (p. 4)
detestable (<i>adj.</i>)	causing or deserving disgust or dislike (p. 12)
flustered (<i>adj.</i>)	nervous, confused or agitated; upset (p. 16)
frivolous (<i>adj.</i>)	silly or not important; not serious (p. 15)
haughty (<i>adj.</i>)	showing a pompous or proud attitude (p. 14)
humbugging (<i>v.</i>)	tricking or deceiving others (p. 5)
laborious (<i>adj.</i>)	dedicated to hard work and effort (p. 17)
pantry (<i>n.</i>)	a small room or closet connected to a kitchen where food, dishes, or cooking utensils are stored (p. 10)
peevishly (<i>adv.</i>)	in a way that shows annoyance (p. 13)

portentous (<i>adj.</i>)	of, relating to, or containing a warning or sign of something bad (p. 4)
privations (<i>n.</i>)	states of not having basic things one needs to live comfortably (p. 3)
tousled (<i>adj.</i>)	untidy, messed up, or disordered (p. 3)
unhallowed (<i>adj.</i>)	against normal social or religious standards (p. 8)
vengeance (<i>n.</i>)	punishment given in return for an offense or injury (p. 16)
victuals (<i>n.</i>)	food; supplies of food (p. 4)
volatile (<i>adj.</i>)	unable to pay attention or maintain focus on one thing; fickle (p. 9)