

# The Wind in the Willows

*A Reading A-Z Level Z1 Leveled Book*  
*Word Count: 3,122*

LEVELED BOOK • Z<sup>1</sup>

## The Wind in the Willows

Part 12

### Connections

#### Writing

Write a paper in which you predict the consequences of Toad's actions, and then analyze the theme explored in his behavior and choices.

#### Social Studies

When can you bargain over the price of goods, and when are prices fixed? With a partner, research these practices in one other country and compare them to practices in your own.

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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 Toad's self-image affect his behavior?

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## Words to Know

affected	grudged
blood horse	Hackney
caravans	hapless
chauffeur	hitherto
churning	intoxicated
conceit	prudent
countenance	reflected
disposed	sensible
encumbered	sentries
fatal	strive
floundering	trappings
gaily	yarn

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL Z1

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

*In Part 11 of The Wind in the Willows, Toad, disguised as a washerwoman, continues to look for a way home. He meets a barge-woman who offers him a ride in exchange for some washing. She ends up throwing Toad off the boat. Toad steals her horse. Some time later, Toad meets a gypsy who offers to buy the horse.*

### X. The Further Adventures of Toad (continued)

**T**oad was completely taken aback. He did not know that gipsies were very fond of horse dealing, and never missed an opportunity, and he had not **reflected** that **caravans** were always on the move and took a deal of drawing. It had not occurred to him to turn the horse into cash, but the gipsy's suggestion seemed to smooth the way towards the two things he wanted so badly—ready money and a solid breakfast.

"What?" he said, "me sell this beautiful young horse of mine? O, no; it's out of the question. Who's going to take the washing home to my customers every week? Besides, I'm too fond of him, and he simply dotes on me."

"Try and love a donkey," suggested the gipsy. "Some people do."

"You don't seem to see," continued Toad, "that this fine horse of mine is a cut above you altogether. He's a **blood horse**, he is, partly; not the part you see, of course—another part. And he's been a Prize **Hackney**, too, in his time—that was the time before you knew him, but you can still tell it on him at a glance, if you understand anything about horses. No, it's not to be thought of for a moment. All the same, how much might you be **disposed** to offer me for this beautiful young horse of mine?"

The gipsy looked the horse over, and then he looked Toad over with equal care, and looked at the horse again. "Shillin' a leg," he said briefly, and turned away, continuing to smoke and try to stare the wide world out of **countenance**.

"A shilling a leg?" cried Toad. "If you please, I must take a little time to work that out, and see just what it comes to."

He climbed down off his horse, and left it to graze, and sat down by the gipsy, and did sums on his fingers, and at last he said, "A shilling a leg? Why, that comes to exactly four shillings, and no more. O, no; I could not think of accepting four shillings for this beautiful young horse of mine."

“Well,” said the gipsy, “I’ll tell you what I will do. I’ll make it five shillings, and that’s three-and-sixpence more than the animal’s worth. And that’s my last word.”

Then Toad sat and pondered long and deeply. For he was hungry and quite penniless, and still some way—he knew not how far—from home, and enemies might still be looking for him. To one in such a situation, five shillings may very well appear a large sum of money. On the other hand, it did not seem very much to get for a horse. But then, again, the horse hadn’t cost him anything; so whatever he got was all clear profit. At last he said firmly, “Look here, gipsy! I tell you what we will do; and this is MY last word. You shall hand me over six shillings and sixpence, cash down; and further, in addition thereto, you shall give me as much breakfast as I can possibly eat, at one sitting of course, out of that iron pot of yours that keeps sending forth such delicious and exciting smells. In return, I will make over to you my spirited young horse, with all the beautiful harness and **trappings** that are on him, freely thrown in. If that’s not good enough for you, say so, and I’ll be getting on. I know a man near here who’s wanted this horse of mine for years.”

The gipsy grumbled frightfully, and declared if he did a few more deals of that sort he’d be ruined. But in the end he lugged a dirty canvas bag out of the depths of his trouser pocket, and counted out six shillings and sixpence into Toad’s paw. Then he disappeared into the caravan for an instant, and returned with a large iron plate and a knife, fork, and spoon. He tilted up the pot, and a glorious stream of hot, rich stew gurgled into the plate. It was, indeed, the most beautiful stew in the world, being made of partridges, and pheasants, and chickens, and hares, and rabbits, and peahens, and guinea fowls, and one or two other things. Toad took the plate on his lap, almost crying, and stuffed, and stuffed, and stuffed, and kept asking for more, and the gipsy never **grudged** it him. He thought that he had never eaten so good a breakfast in all his life.

When Toad had taken as much stew on board as he thought he could possibly hold, he got up and said good-bye to the gipsy, and took an affectionate farewell of the horse; and the gipsy, who knew the riverside well, gave him directions which way to go, and he set forth on his travels again in the best possible spirits. He was, indeed, a very different Toad from the animal of an hour ago. The sun was shining brightly, his wet clothes were quite dry again, he had money in his pocket



once more, he was nearing home and friends and safety, and, most and best of all, he had had a substantial meal, hot and nourishing, and felt big, and strong, and careless, and self-confident.

As he tramped along **gaily**, he thought of his adventures and escapes, and how when things seemed at their worst he had always managed to find a way out; and his pride and **conceit** began to swell within him. "Ho, ho!" he said to himself as he marched along with his chin in the air, "what a clever Toad I am! There is surely no animal equal to me for cleverness in the whole world! My enemies shut me up in prison, encircled by **sentries**, watched night and day by warders; I walk out through them all, by sheer ability coupled with courage. They pursue me with engines, and policemen, and revolvers; I snap my fingers at them, and vanish, laughing, into space. I am, unfortunately, thrown into a canal by a woman fat of body and very evil-minded. What of it? I swim ashore, I seize her horse, I ride off in triumph, and I sell the horse for a whole pocketful of money and an excellent breakfast! Ho, ho! I am The Toad, the handsome, the popular, the successful Toad!" He got so puffed up with conceit that he made up a song as he walked in praise of himself, and sang it at the top of his voice, though there was no one to hear it but him.

It was perhaps the most conceited song that any animal ever composed.

"The world has held great Heroes,  
As history books have showed;  
But never a name to go down to fame  
Compared with that of Toad!

"The clever men at Oxford  
Know all that there is to be known.  
But they none of them know one half as much  
As intelligent Mr. Toad!

"The animals sat in the Ark and cried,  
Their tears in torrents flowed.  
Who was it said, 'There's land ahead?'  
Encouraging Mr. Toad!

"The army all saluted  
As they marched along the road.  
Was it the King? Or Kitchener?  
No. It was Mr. Toad.

"The Queen and her Ladies-in-waiting  
Sat at the window and sewed.  
She cried, 'Look! Who's that handsome man?'  
They answered, 'Mr. Toad.'"

There was a great deal more of the same sort, but too dreadfully conceited to be written down. These are some of the milder verses.

He sang as he walked, and he walked as he sang, and got more inflated every minute. But his pride was shortly to have a severe fall. After some miles of country lanes Toad reached the high road, and as he turned into it and glanced along its white length, he saw approaching him a speck that turned into a dot and then into a blob, and then into something very familiar; and a double note of warning, only too well known, fell on his delighted ear.

“This is something to like!” said the excited Toad. “This is real life again, this is once more the great world from which I have been missed so long! I will hail them, my brothers of the wheel, and pitch them a **yarn**, of the sort that has been so successful **hitherto**; and they will give me a lift, of course, and then I will talk to them some more; and, perhaps, with luck, it may even end in my driving up to Toad Hall in a motorcar! That will be one in the eye for Badger!”

He stepped confidently out into the road to hail the motorcar, which came along at an easy pace, slowing down as it neared the lane; when suddenly he became very pale, his heart turned to water, his knees shook and yielded under him, and he doubled up and collapsed with a sickening pain in his interior. And well he might, the

unhappy animal; for the approaching car was the very one he had stolen out of the yard of the Red Lion Hotel on that **fatal** day when all his troubles began! And the people in it were the very same people he had sat and watched at luncheon in the coffee room!

He sank down in a shabby, miserable heap in the road, murmuring to himself in his despair, “It’s all up! It’s all over now! Chains and policemen again! Prison again! Dry bread and water again! O, what a fool I have been! What did I want to go strutting about the country for, singing conceited songs and hailing people in broad day on the high road, instead of hiding till nightfall and slipping home quietly by back ways! O **hapless** Toad! O ill-fated animal!”

The terrible motorcar drew slowly nearer and nearer, till at last he heard it stop just short of him. Two gentlemen got out and walked round the trembling heap of crumpled misery lying in the road, and one of them said, “O dear! This is very sad! Here is a poor old thing—a washerwoman apparently—who has fainted in the road! Perhaps she is overcome by the heat, poor creature; or possibly she has not had any food today. Let us lift her into the car and take her to the nearest village, where doubtless she has friends.”

They tenderly lifted Toad into the motorcar, and propped him up with soft cushions, and proceeded on their way.

When Toad heard them talk in so kind and sympathetic a way, and knew that he was not recognised, his courage began to revive, and he cautiously opened first one eye and then the other.

"Look!" said one of the gentlemen, "she is better already. The fresh air is doing her good. How do you feel now, ma'am?"

"Thank you kindly, Sir," said Toad in a feeble voice, "I'm feeling a great deal better!"

"That's right," said the gentleman. "Now keep quite still, and, above all, don't try to talk."

"I won't," said Toad. "I was only thinking, if I might sit on the front seat there, beside the driver, where I could get the fresh air full in my face, I should soon be all right again."

"What a very **sensible** woman!" said the gentleman. "Of course you shall." So they carefully helped Toad into the front seat beside the driver, and on they went again.

Toad was almost himself again by now. He sat up, looked about him, and tried to beat down the tremors, the yearnings, the old cravings that rose

up and beset him and took possession of him entirely.

"It is fate!" he said to himself. "Why **strive**? Why struggle?" and he turned to the driver at his side.

"Please, Sir," he said, "I wish you would kindly let me try and drive the car for a little. I've been watching you carefully, and it looks so easy and so interesting, and I should like to be able to tell my friends that once I had driven a motorcar!"

The driver laughed at the proposal, so heartily that the gentleman inquired what the matter was. When he heard, he said, to Toad's delight, "Bravo, ma'am! I like your spirit. Let her have a try, and look after her. She won't do any harm."

Toad eagerly scrambled into the seat vacated by the driver, took the steering wheel in his hands, listened with **affected** humility to the instructions given him, and set the car in motion, but very slowly and carefully at first, for he was determined to be **prudent**.

The gentlemen behind clapped their hands and applauded, and Toad heard them saying, "How well she does it! Fancy a washerwoman driving a car as well as that, the first time!"

Toad went a little faster; then faster still, and faster.

He heard the gentlemen call out warningly, "Be careful, washerwoman!" And this annoyed him, and he began to lose his head.

The driver tried to interfere, but he pinned him down in his seat with one elbow and put on full speed. The rush of air in his face, the hum of the engines, and the light jump of the car beneath him **intoxicated** his weak brain. "Washerwoman, indeed!" he shouted recklessly. "Ho! ho! I am the Toad, the motorcar snatcher, the prison breaker, the Toad who always escapes! Sit still, and you shall know what driving really is, for you are in the hands of the famous, the skillful, the entirely fearless Toad!"

With a cry of horror, the whole party rose and flung themselves on him. "Seize him!" they cried, "seize the Toad, the wicked animal who stole our motorcar! Bind him, chain him, drag him to the nearest police station! Down with the desperate and dangerous Toad!"

Alas! They should have thought, they ought to have been more prudent, they should have remembered to stop the motorcar somehow before playing any pranks of that sort. With a

half-turn of the wheel, the Toad sent the car crashing through the low hedge that ran along the roadside. One mighty bound, a violent shock, and the wheels of the car were **churning** up the thick mud of a horsepond.

Toad found himself flying through the air with the strong upward rush and delicate curve of a swallow. He liked the motion, and was just beginning to wonder whether it would go on until he developed wings and turned into a Toad-bird, when he landed on his back with a thump in the soft, rich grass of a meadow. Sitting up, he could just see the motorcar in the pond, nearly submerged; the gentlemen and the driver, **encumbered** by their long coats, were **floundering** helplessly in the water.

He picked himself up rapidly and set off running across country as hard as he could, scrambling through hedges, jumping ditches, pounding across fields, till he was breathless and weary, and had to settle down into an easy walk. When he had recovered his breath somewhat and was able to think calmly, he began to giggle, and from giggling he took to laughing, and he laughed till he had to sit down under a hedge. "Ho, ho!" he cried, in ecstasies of self-admiration, "Toad again! Toad, as usual, comes out on the top! Who was it



got them to give him a lift? Who managed to get on the front seat for the sake of fresh air? Who persuaded them into letting him see if he could drive? Who landed them all in a horsepond? Who escaped, flying gaily and unscathed through the air, leaving the narrow-minded, grudging, timid excursionists in the mud where they should rightly be? Why, Toad, of course; clever Toad, great Toad, *good* Toad!"

Then he burst into song again, and chanted with uplifted voice—

"The motorcar went Poop-poop-poop,  
As it raced along the road.  
Who was it steered it into a pond?  
Ingenious Mr. Toad!"

"O, how clever I am! How clever, how clever, how very clever—"

A slight noise at a distance behind him made him turn his head and look. O horror! O misery! O despair!

About two fields off, a **chauffeur** in his leather gaiters and two large rural policemen were visible, running towards him as hard as they could go!

Poor Toad sprang to his feet and pelted away again, his heart in his mouth. "O, my!" he gasped,

as he panted along, "what a *fool* I am! What a *conceited* and heedless fool! Swaggering again! Shouting and singing songs again! Sitting still and gassing again! O my! O my! O my!"

He glanced back and saw, to his dismay, that they were gaining on him. On he ran desperately, but kept looking back, and saw that they still gained steadily. He did his best, but he was a fat animal, and his legs were short, and still they gained. He could hear them close behind him now. Ceasing to heed where he was going, he struggled on blindly and wildly, looking back over his shoulder at the now triumphant enemy, when suddenly the earth failed under his feet, he grasped at the air, and, *splash!* he found himself head over ears in deep water, rapid water, water that bore him along with a force he could not contend with; and he knew that in his blind panic he had run straight into the river!

He rose to the surface and tried to grasp the reeds and the rushes that grew along the water's edge close under the bank, but the stream was so strong that it tore them out of his hands. "O my!" gasped poor Toad, "if ever I steal a motorcar again! If ever I sing another conceited song"—then down he went, and came up breathless and spluttering. Presently he saw that he was

approaching a big, dark hole in the bank, just above his head, and as the stream bore him past, he reached up with a paw and caught hold of the edge and held on. Then slowly and with difficulty he drew himself up out of the water, till at last he was able to rest his elbows on the edge of the hole. There he remained for some minutes, puffing and panting, for he was quite exhausted.

As he sighed and blew and stared before him into the dark hole, some bright small thing shone and twinkled in its depths, moving towards him. As it approached, a face grew up gradually around it, and it was a familiar face!

Brown and small, with whiskers.

Grave and round, with neat ears and silky hair.

It was the Water Rat!



## Glossary

<b>affected</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	not real, natural, or sincere (p. 12)
<b>blood horse</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a horse that is purebred (p. 4)
<b>caravans</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	processions of people, often with vehicles or animals, traveling together (p. 3)
<b>chauffeur</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who drives others around in a vehicle as a job (p. 15)
<b>churning</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	moving or stirring powerfully or violently (p. 14)
<b>conceit</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an excessive amount of pride or self-esteem (p. 7)
<b>countenance</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person's face or expression (p. 4)
<b>disposed</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	likely to have a certain viewpoint or act a certain way; inclined (p. 4)
<b>encumbered</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	slowed or hindered; weighed down (p. 14)
<b>fatal</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	determined by fate; fateful (p. 10)
<b>floundering</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to move clumsily or helplessly, often in mud or water (p. 14)
<b>gaily</b> ( <i>adv.</i> )	happily (p. 7)
<b>grudged</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	refused to give or agree; gave or permitted unwillingly or resentfully (p. 6)

<b>Hackney</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an English breed of horse with a high stepping trot that is often used for certain types of performances (p. 4)
<b>hapless</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	unfortunate or unlucky (p. 10)
<b>hitherto</b> ( <i>adv.</i> )	until now (p. 9)
<b>intoxicated</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to excite someone to the point that he or she loses control (p. 13)
<b>prudent</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	acting with or showing good judgment when making decisions (p. 12)
<b>reflected</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	thought about something carefully and calmly (p. 3)
<b>sensible</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	showing thought, care, or good judgment (p. 11)
<b>sentries</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	guards or soldiers that protect something (p. 7)
<b>strive</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to make a serious effort to achieve something (p. 12)
<b>trappings</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	decorative equipment (p. 5)
<b>yarn</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a interesting or exciting story that may or may not be true (p. 9)