



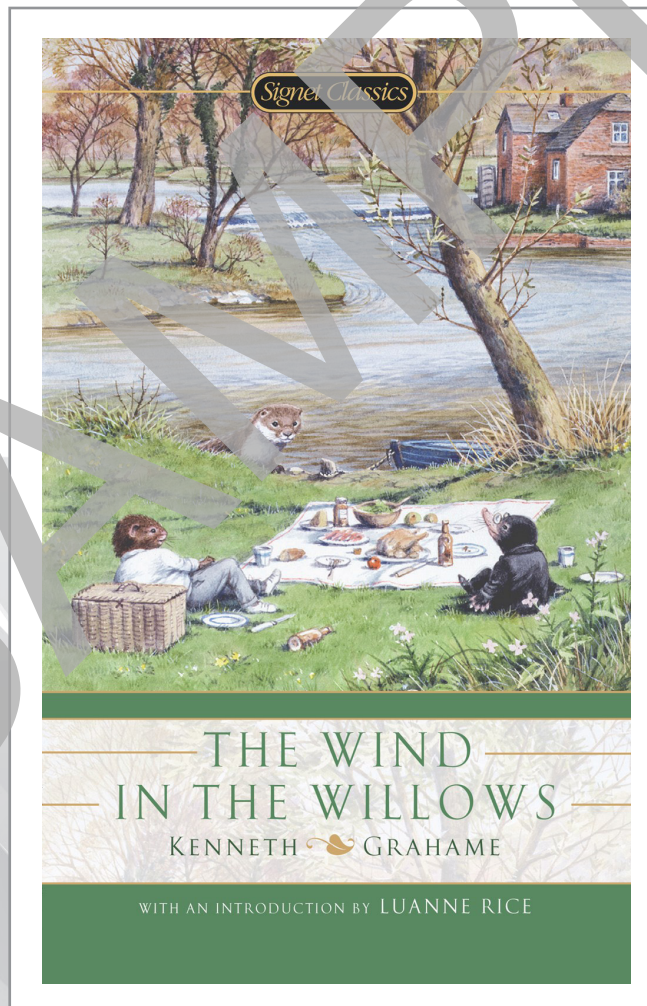
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# The Wind in the Willows

Kenneth Grahame



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Wind in the Willows

Kenneth Grahame

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Table of Contents

Summary .....	3
Initiating Activities.....	4
Bulletin Board Ideas .....	6
Vocabulary Activities.....	6
Author's Craft .....	8
Twelve Chapters .....	17
Chapters contain: Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Culminating Activities .....	33
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	34
Assessment.....	35

## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying  
and categorizing, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Writing

Descriptive, figurative  
language, persuasive

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot,  
conflict, figurative language,  
fantasy

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect, propaganda,  
fantasy and realism,  
comparison/contrast,  
inference

### Vocabulary

Prefixes/suffixes, root words

### Listening/Speaking

Discussions, role-play

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## Summary

Mole, disgusted with spring cleaning, sets out to see what is going on in the world around him. He meets Water Rat, with whom he goes on a boat ride, has a picnic, and becomes friends. Rat introduces Mole to Toad in Toad's grand home, and then the three set out on an adventure in one of Toad's newest fascinations—a gypsy cart. Disaster strikes when a man in a motor-car scares the horse, causing the cart to be wrecked. However, as a result, Toad becomes enamored with his newest craze—a motor-car.

By winter time, Mole has become impatient to meet Badger and proceeds to enter the Wild Wood in search of him. Mole gets lost in a snowstorm. Rat finds him, and together they chance upon Badger's home, where they are welcomed, warmed, and fed by the reclusive Mr. Badger. Mole and Badger become friends as they find they share common ideas of "home," and Badger gives Mole a tour of his home. As Mole and Rat make their way back to the river, Mole is drawn to his former home. The resourceful Rat puts together a feast for himself, Mole, and the Yuletide carolers who arrive. After spending the night, they return to the river.

In early summer, Mr. Badger, Mole, and Rat go on a mission of mercy to rescue Toad from himself and his latest and most powerful motor-car. They accost Toad, strip him of his riding gear, lecture him on his folly, lock him in his room, and attempt to guard him. Ingenious Mr. Toad escapes, steals a motor-car, and is eventually arrested and imprisoned.

Rat and Mole set out to find Little Portly, the Otter's missing son. While rowing, they are drawn to an island in the river from which they hear beautiful music emanating. There they see Pan, the country-god, playing his flute while standing watch over Little Portly. Little Portly is rescued, but, as decreed, Mole and Rat become instantly oblivious to the wondrous scene they have witnessed.

While stagnating in prison, the gaoler's daughter befriends Toad and helps him escape as a washerwoman. Realizing he has no money to buy a ticket, Toad begs a ride from the engine-driver of a local train. The police realize what he has done and give chase, but Toad escapes into the woods. Back at the river, fall has come, and one by one the animals are departing southward or preparing for winter, leaving Rat despondent. Along comes a seafaring rat, enthralling Rat with tales of his travels. In a dreamlike state, Rat packs and sets out to live the seafaring life, but Mole compels him to stay home. Patient Mole gradually revives Rat from the depths of depression with accountings of local happenings and lures him to begin writing poetry again.

Toad makes his way to a nearby canal where he is offered a ride by a barge-woman. His false identity revealed, he is thrown from the barge. He seeks revenge by stealing the barge-woman's horse and selling it to a gypsy. Nearing home, he chances upon the same motor-car which he had stolen earlier. Still in his disguise, he finagles a ride and an opportunity to drive the car again. After crashing the car and being nearly caught by the police, he falls into the river and is carried along by the current until he manages to pull himself out at the door to Rat's hole.

During Toad's absence, his home has been taken over by stoats, weasels, and ferrets. Badger and Mole develop a plan by which the four friends could retake Toad Hall by entering the house through

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a secret passage. They quickly rout the weasels, ferrets, and stoats in a surprise attack. Then they invite their friends to a celebration banquet.

At last, all is nearly returned to normal. The four heroes are lauded by the river folk and those of the Wild Wood. A reformed Toad duly thanks and properly compensates the gaoler's daughter, the engine-driver, and the barge-woman (the last, against his will).

## Initiating Activities

1. Prediction: Have students examine the cover illustration and title, then flip through the book. Ask: What kind of book do you suppose this will be? What is suggested by the title? Ask students to determine the four animals present and the setting. What evidence is there that would lead you to believe that this is a book of fiction or non-fiction, or of fantasy or realistic fiction?
2. Reviews and Summary: Read aloud the remark on the back cover and the back-cover summary. Ask: What does the back-cover summary tell you about what to expect from this book?
3. Have students read about the life of Kenneth Grahame. Have them list 10-15 important events in his life. Research and tell the students how *The Wind in the Willows* came to be written.
4. Prereading Discussion Topics: Encourage free, open-ended discussion on these topics, or use them as writing assignments.

*Friends:* What are some characteristics of people you consider to be your closest friends? What does it take to be a good friend to someone? Should friends always be honest with one another?

*Getting Back to Nature:* Would you rather live in the city or the country? Do you like looking at plants and animals? How often do you "get back to nature"? What are the good things about spending time in the country? Do you think people who live in the country tend to have a different attitude toward wildlife than city-dwellers?

*Facing a Frightening Situation:* What makes you afraid? Heights? The dark? Diving in deep water? Electrical storms? What do you think about when you are afraid? How do you overcome your fear? Do animals become afraid? What do you think they fear?

5. Response Log: Have students keep a response log as they read. In one type of log, the students pretend to be one of the characters. Writing on one side of a piece of paper, the student writes in the first person about his or her reaction to what happened in the chapter. A partner responds to these writings on the other side of the paper, as if talking to the character.

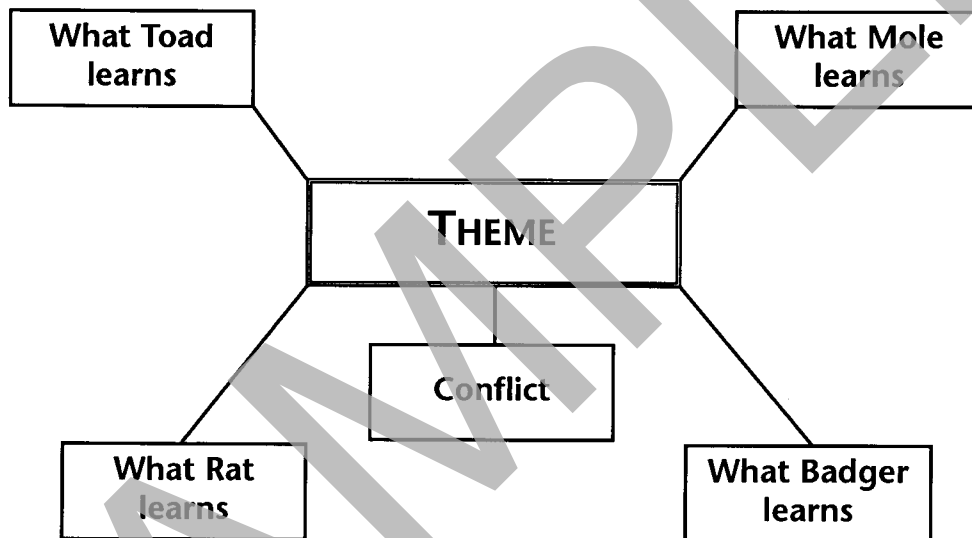
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## Climax

Explain that the climax of a story is the point at which the conflict reaches its highest intensity and the reader's emotional response is at its greatest point. Ask: What was the climax of this story? (*Page 198, Toad crashes the motor-car, is again chased by the police, and jumps into the river to swim home.*) Was it a surprise, or was it predictable? Did the story end with the climax, or did it have a resolution?

## Theme

Theme is an important idea that emerges from a story. Authors don't usually state the theme of a work outright, but let their readers decide for themselves which ideas are most important. For clues to theme, readers can look at the characters, the main events, and the conflicts in a story. You should also take a close look at what the characters learn, and how they change from the beginning of the story to the end. Most stories have several themes. At the conclusion of the novel, brainstorm some possible themes of *The Wind in the Willows*. The following diagram should help you get started.



What issues did the author raise for you?

Some universal themes:

- Friendship
- Courage
- Survival
- Kindness
- Values

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## Supplementary Activities

1. Prediction/Writing: What do you think will happen next?
2. Music: Sing some English carols and/or have the students make up a carol in small groups about what they do during the winter holidays.

## Chapter 6: “Mr. Toad”—Pages 97–115

### Vocabulary

wonted 97	arraying 98	habiliments 98	ere 99
gaiters 99	gauntleted 99	panoply 100	contemptuously 101
discourse 101	dubiously 102	sullenly 102	scandalized 102
eloquent 102	repentant 103	emphatically 103	persuasion 103
uncouth 104	languid 104	artfullest 105	nuisance 106
improvised 108	mullion 108	caustic 108	duffer 108
crestfallen 108	turbid 109	merits 110	sonorous 112
incorrigible 112	rogue 112	ruffian 112	cowering 112
impertinence 112	cheeking 113	portcullis 114	abhorrence 114
casquet 114	corselet 114	vizards 114	warders 114
halberds 114	gaoler 114	murrain 114	

### Discussion Questions

1. Explain why you would or would not like to have your plans disrupted as Badger did to Mole and Rat. (*Answers will vary, but they should be based on the way Badger disrupted Mole and Rat’s plans for the day on short notice.*)
2. Explain how you think Toad felt when Badger, Rat, and Mole took charge of him. (*Answers will vary.*)
3. Give examples from your own life when the clothes you had on made a difference in the way you acted. (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Describe how someone you have known acted like Toad. (*Comparisons to Toad’s actions should be included. A listing of those actions can be found on pages 100-101.*) Did anyone ever try to change him/her and, if so, how did they go about it? What was the result?
5. Who do you think knew Toad best—Badger, Rat, or Mole? Why? (*Answers will vary.*)
6. Explain why you think the brain did or did not triumph over brute force in this chapter. (*Answers will vary.*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Prediction/Writing: What do you think will happen to Toad now?
2. Compare/Contrast: Compare the punishments for Toad’s crimes with punishments for similar crimes in our society today. The following chart may be used for this purpose. Some research