

# THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



**Teaching guide for schools based on the  
thrilling classic novel by  
Kenneth Grahame**

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# Dear Teachers,

Welcome to this teaching guide designed to engage your pupils in the adventures of Toad and his pals.

Our Education Team has designed these high-quality teaching resources to support your school's English and Drama curriculum and develop pupils' love and learning of Kenneth Grahame's timeless English classic, *The Wind in the Willows*. The resources will also enhance a visit to see the production on stage. Keep an eye on our website for performance dates and special offers for schools. The resources are aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils and Lower Key Stage 3, but the activities can be adapted to be used with pupils of all ages.

## How to Use This Teaching Guide

This teaching guide consists of discussion, writing and drama activities based around five key themes in the novel. Each theme comprises of background information for you and fully-resourced activities to develop your pupils' literacy and love of the story.

The teaching guide and resources have been designed for maximum flexibility in its implementation. Your pupils will require knowledge of the novel – or an abridged version – in order to engage in the activities in this resource pack. If you would like to download a free copy of Kenneth Grahame's original novel, please refer to this website:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27805/27805-h/27805-h.htm>

The novel has been divided into five sections, each of which focuses on a specific and important theme in the novel. You may choose to complete the activities as you read the novel as a class. For this reason, the resource pack is designed to be comfortably completed in a half term or, if used as part of a larger school scheme of work, contribute to a full teaching term. Alternatively, if your pupils already have a knowledge of the novel or have seen a performance of the production, you may choose to dip in and out of the themes as you see fit.

In the Additional Resources pack, which accompanies this teaching guide, we refer to the author of *The Wind in the Willows* by his first name, Kenneth, to foster your pupils' familiarity with his inspiration and ambitions, and develop a personal connection with his masterpiece.

We hope you thoroughly enjoy using this resource pack and look forward to receiving your feedback.

## the Education Team



## Teaching Guide and Additional Resources Overview

Title	Theme	Discover	Literacy Focus	The Novel
<b>Splashing About</b>	Countryside Life	The life of Kenneth Grahame	Biography Letter writing Anthropomorphism	Chapters 1-3
<b>A Need for Speed</b>	Transport	Inventions	Research Non-chronological reports Debating	Chapters 4-5
<b>In the Dock</b>	Justice	Courtroom trials	Persuasive writing Speeches	Chapters 6-8
<b>My Pals</b>	Friendship	Play scripts	Characterisation Role Play	Chapters 9-10
<b>Home, Sweet Home</b>	Home	Growing up	Setting Creative story writing	Chapters 11-12

# THEME ONE: Splashing About

This theme and activities draw on the events of Chapters One to Three of the novel. If you are using these resources to support your pupils' reading of the novel, ensure they have read these chapters before beginning these activities. Alternatively, these activities can be enjoyed after reading the whole novel.

## About the Theme

The inspiration for the animals and adventures in *The Wind in the Willows* draws significantly on Kenneth's Grahame's happiest childhood memories of the time he spent living with his Granny Inglis. Her house was located beside the River Thames and, as young boy, Kenneth Grahame enjoy much of his time splashing about in a boat on the water.

During Kenneth Grahame's lifetime, he witnessed the movement of people from the countryside to cities, which were quickly expanding to meet the demand for more housing. The river, and in particular the River Thames, became a special and significant place for him. The river provided peace and protection from the increasingly speedy vehicles racing along country lanes and the broader modernisation of the countryside.

## EXPLORE – Discuss

If necessary, remind your pupils of the genre of 'biography'. What information would you expect to learn about some's life from a biography? Read the biography of Kenneth Grahame together as a class (Resource A in Additional Resources).

## Key Word: Biography

*A biography is an account of someone's life written by someone else.*

Throughout Kenneth Grahame's childhood and career working at the Bank of England, he was rarely very far from the River Thames and it became the significant setting in his novel. After reading the biography, discuss these key questions as a class:

- What was the impact of growing up beside the River Thames on Kenneth's imagination and writing?
- What are some of the things you imagine a young Kenneth got up to on the river beside his Granny's house?
- Kenneth never wrote an autobiography. If he had, what do you expect would be the main differences?

## ACTIVITY – Letter Writing

Kenneth and his son, Alistair, enjoyed telling bedtime stories and it was in these evenings together that father and son began to develop the main characters in *The Wind in the Willows*. This is how the novel begins. Later on, whilst Kenneth was at work in London, he wrote a series of letters to Alistair, telling him of the latest adventures his four furry friends found himself in. These letters eventually formed the novel that we know and love today.

Ask pupils to choose a wild animal that is commonly found in their local area. For example, if they live in a big city they might hear packs of foxes roaming along streetlight lit roads in the evening. Alternatively, if they live beside a forest they might see fallow deer leaping through nearby fields. Give pupils a few minutes to brainstorm the features and behaviours of this animal.

## Key Word: Anthropomorphism

*Introduce the concept of anthropomorphism, which is when an author gives non-human beings and objects human characteristics, such as human ambitions, emotions and behaviour. Anthropomorphism is a type of personification; a concept that your pupils may already be familiar with.*

Your pupils need to imagine they have just met the wild animal they brainstormed for the first time. Where were they? What time of day was it? Who spoke first and what was said? Using the rubric provided in Resource B, ask your pupils to write a letter to a family member recounting their meeting. Remind your pupils to refer to their brainstorm for ideas about how to describe the features of their animal in detail. Your pupils could sign the letter using a pseudonym, just as Kenneth did when he published his stories in his local Bloomsbury magazine.

## Key Word: Pseudonym

*A made up name used by an author when they want to keep their own name a secret.*

## ACTIVITY – News Flash!

Resource C in Additional Resources is about the current status of Kenneth Graham’s much loved countryside animals. Read the newspaper article, which has been adapted for pupils, with your class. You may need to explain some vocabulary – for example: specie, conservationist, predator, cattle, vaccination.

In small groups, pupils should choose of the animals and create a newsbeat feature for a local television programme. Your pupils will need to assign themselves roles (suggested below) and the news reporters will need to remember to present an unbiased account to their viewers. Once the groups have prepared and rehearsed their roles, set up a stage for groups to present their news flash reports to their peers.

Suggested news flash roles:

- Two news reporters
- A reporter working in the field
- A conservationist who wants to protect the local wildlife
- A local resident or worker who finds life and work disrupted by local wildlife

## THEME TWO: A Need for Speed

This theme and activities draw on the events of Chapters Four to Five of the novel. If you are using these resources to support your pupils' reading of the novel, ensure they have read these chapters before beginning these activities. Alternatively, these activities can be enjoyed after reading the whole novel.

### About the Theme

Through Toad's passion for speed, *The Wind in the Willows* documents the development of different modes of transport through time. The novel provides a whistle-stop tour of automobile development, from Ratty and Mole's excursion on a simple rowing boat to a furious journey on a steam engine and Toad's infamous encounter with a modern motorcar.

Kenneth Grahame was interested in different modes of transport too. For him, however, he feared the rise of motorcars careering along windy countryside lanes. He felt threatened by this new form of transport, that were a sign of city-life creeping into the countryside. Kenneth Grahame much preferred life beside the quiet river and had many fond memories of splashing about in the river on a boat.

### EXPLORE: Discuss

Tensions between characters arise as a result of their preferred mode of transport. Ratty enjoys splashing about in a boat on the river with Mole, whilst Toad prefers life in the fast lane with a motor car. Ask your pupils to explore the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of transport in partners before discussing as a whole class.

- What is your preferred mode of transport? Why?
- Why is Toad's affection for horse-drawn carts short-lived?
- What type of car do you think would appeal to Toad?
- Why are Toad's friends particularly concerned about motorcars?
- What sort of vehicle do you think will appeal to Toad next? Why?

### ACTIVITY: Non-Chronological Report Writing

*The Wind in the Willows* documents the development of different modes of transport through time, from riverboats to the rise of the motorcar. Set your pupils to task researching the different forms of transport that feature in the novel using Resource D in Additional Resources to record their notes. Provide your pupils with access to a range of research materials including books, online encyclopaedia programmes and internet searches. Towards the end of this research phase, give your pupils an opportunity to share their ideas with each other to top up their knowledge.

Using the paragraph organiser provided in Resource E in Additional Resources, ask your pupils to write a draft report with the title 'The Development of Transport Through Time'. Encourage them to use all they learnt during their research phase and think carefully about the first sentence of each paragraph, so that their reader understands what each paragraph is about.

### **ACTIVITY: Debate**

This activity requires your pupils to work in pairs. Ask one partner to assume the role of Ratty and the other to imagine they are Toad. Individually, they should bullet point the benefits of their preferred forms of transport – Ratty and his rowing boat; Toad and his motorcar – and the disadvantages of their partner's preference. For extra challenge, encourage your pupils to think of counterarguments to their debating partner. What is your partner likely to say about the disadvantages of your preferred mode of transport? How could you counter that argument?

Once prepared, give partners an opportunity to conduct their debate. Pupils should begin their debate by outlining their point of view. Explain to pupils that a successful debater will listen carefully to their opponent and respond to the specific points they raise with their knowledge of the transport in question.

Afterwards, you could ask your pupils to perform their debate in front of their peers, who could cast vote to determine who presented the most convincing case for their mode of transport.

## THEME THREE: In the Dock!

This theme and activities draw on the events of Chapters Six to Eight of the novel. If you are using these resources to support your pupils' reading of the novel, ensure they have read these chapters before beginning these activities. Alternatively, these activities can be enjoyed after reading the whole novel.

### About the Theme

Child-like Toad, who is able to charm his way out the most difficult of problems, is a consistent source of comic relief in the novel. The reader is attracted to his splendid ideas – be it caravanning through the countryside, getting behind the wheel of a motorcar, escaping his friends' makeshift jail in his own home. We are then left perplexed, if not a little impressed, at his skill of wriggling out of the stickiest situations.

Alongside providing comedy, the adventures of Toad also demonstrate how we must face consequences for our actions. Just like Mole made a bad decision to enter the Wild Woods alone and had to be rescued by his mentor, Rat, Toad is repeatedly warned about his dangerous behaviour and winds up in the dock on trial for stealing, threatening the safety of the community and his impertinence towards a police officer – all despite his friends intervening along the way. Ultimately, Kenneth Grahame reveals the characters' flaws in much the same way we can see the shortcomings in our own lives and of those around us. This gives his characters an ultimately human dimension and we find them, ultimately, familiar.

### EXPLORE: Discussion

In Chapter Six, Badger, Rat and Mole arrive at Toad Hall to find a shiny new motorcar parked outside. Badger stages his first major intervention and summons Toad to listen to some hard facts about his life. Read the extract below, which recalls Badger's scolding of Toad, to your class:

*'You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you, you've gone on squandering the money your father left you, and you're getting us animals a bad name in the district by your furious driving and your smashes and your rows with the police. Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and that limit you've reached. Now, you're a good fellow in many respects, and I don't want to be too hard on you. I'll make one more effort to bring you to reason. You will come with me into the smoking-room, and there you will hear some facts about yourself; and we'll see whether you come out of that room the same Toad that you went in.'*

Discuss the following questions as a class. Encourage your pupils to draw on evidence from the passage above and incidents from the book to support their answers.

- How do you think Toad feels at this point?

- Badger leads Toad into the smoking-room to tell him some ‘home-truths’. What would you say to Toad if you were there?

## Key Word: Home-truth

*An unpleasant fact about yourself, as pointed out by someone else.*

## ACTIVITY: Persuasive Speech Writing

In this activity, your pupils must imagine they are called to court to stand as character witnesses in the trial of Toad. Individually, your pupils must decide whether they believe Toad to pose a threat to the public or not.

Discuss the features of persuasive speech writing with your class. What makes a powerful speech? Explain that their audience is made up of the Members of the Jury deciding the fate of Toad. Pupils should use Resource F in Additional Resources to gather ideas for the points they want to make in their speeches. For extra challenge, encourage your pupils to think of counter-arguments to the points those arguing the opposite might raise in their speeches.

## ACTIVITY: In the Dock!

Stage a mock trial of Toad in your classroom with your pupils assuming the roles found within courts of law across the country. This activity is designed to be used flexibly to accommodate the number of pupils in your class. Ideally, it suits groups of 20 to 30 pupils and, if you have a school space available to you, even better!

This activity requires your pupils to spend time preparing, rehearsing and executing their courtroom roles. Resources G and H guide you and your pupils through the preparation they will need to do to become courtroom participants and the running of the trial. A list of essential and additional participants is below. Some terms, for example ‘prosecution lawyer’ and ‘defence lawyer’ may need to be explained to your pupils whilst you are explaining and designating roles.

In the novel, the trial of Toad takes place in a Magistrates Court, which does not have a jury. For the purpose of involving as many pupils as possible in this exercise, the context of this trial has been adapted for a court with a judge and jury.

### Essential Participants

- One judge
- Two to four lawyers (prosecution and defence)
- One defendant (Toad, accused of the crime)
- Two to five witnesses
- One Courtroom Clerk
- One Courtroom Usher
- 12 Jury members (You can vary the number depending on your class size)

### **Additional Participants**

- Some pupils could be asked to produce a newspaper or TV report of proceedings.
- Some pupils could be asked to produce an artist's impression of the accused, Toad, in the dock during the trial.

Please refer to Resources G and H in Additional Resources for further information for you and your pupils.

## THEME FOUR: My Pals

This theme and activities draw on the events of Chapters Nine to Ten of the novel. If you are using these resources to support your pupils' reading of the novel, ensure they have read these chapters before beginning these activities. Alternatively, these activities can be enjoyed after reading the whole novel.

### About the Theme

*The Wind in the Willows* is one of the most famous examples of anthropomorphism, a concept your pupils will know about if they have completed the activities in Theme One, Countryside Life.

### Key Word: Anthropomorphism

The human traits that Kenneth Grahame bestows his characters ensure that readers are able to understand the relationships they form with one another. Mole is timorous and naïve; however, he musters the courage to face his fears in the Wild Wood and slowly learns how to navigate his way through the open air and relationships he forms along the way. Rat is strong and self-assured, a perfect friend for a young, shy Mole. Badger is the grown-up amongst the four friends. Whilst reclusive and moody, his friends rely on him to avoid the dangers that lie before them in the Wild Wood and devise a plan to recover Toad Hall from the stoats and weasels. The infamous Toad provides a comic contrast to the others. He is unpredictable: he can be boastful and arrogant, and then he can be embarrassed and remorseful. Whilst he never seems to realise the error of his ways until it is too late, he is warm and endearing company for his friends, which is why they stick by his side.

In contrast to the warmth and affection the four main characters inspire, the creatures that live in the Wild Wood are wicked. They meet their downfall at the end of the novel when the loyalty of Mole, Ratty and Badger to Toad defeats their control of Toad all, just as good triumphs over evil.

### EXPLORE: Discussion

Remind your pupils of the concept of anthropomorphism.

- Why does Kenneth Grahame choose to write a story about the adventures of animals rather than children?

## ACTIVITY: From Page to Stage

Remind your pupils that Kenneth Grahame originally wrote about the adventures of Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad in a series of letters to his son, Alistair. Later in his life, these were put together to form the novel that we know today. Subsequently, the novel has been adapted for the stage. This activity gives your pupils to have a go at adapting a passage of text from the novel into a play script. The suggested passage draws on the important theme of friendship; however, this exercise could be carried out with other passages that you choose.

Begin by asking your pupils what the main differences are between a novel and a play script. Use Resource I in Additional Resources to explain the main features of a play script. Your pupils will need to include these features in their own adaptations. You could use an extract of a play script available in your school to give examples of these features.

A suggested passage of text from Chapter 10, 'The Further Adventures of Toad', can be found in Resource J in Additional Resources. This extract has been chosen because it includes lots of dialogue between Toad and the Bargewoman and for its comedy, which we believe your pupils will enjoy staging. It is a long extract, so you may decide to give pupils or partners sections of the extract to develop into their own play scripts.

Your pupils will not be able to include all the detail in the novel, so discuss how to identify what the most important parts are to include. Encourage your pupils to think about what their actors are going to say (and write this in their own words) and how they are going to move on stage.

## ACTIVITY: Performance

Using their play scripts from the previous activity, 'From Page to Stage', give your pupils an opportunity to rehearse and perform their scenes in front of their peers. If you divided up the extract to give to partners, make sure pupils perform these in order to complete the comic scene.

Your pupils will need to think carefully about how they want to depict the characters on stage. Ask them to use all they know about Toad's personality and interactions with other characters to inform their performance. The scene takes place on a barge on the river. Encourage your pupils to think about how are they going to bring the scene to life for their audience? What could they do and say to set the scene? Pupils should pay careful attention to their own play scripts for inspiration and directions.

## THEME FIVE: Home, Sweet Home

This theme and activities draw on the events of Chapters Eleven to Twelve of the novel. If you are using these resources to support your pupils' reading of the novel, ensure they have read these chapters before beginning these activities. Alternatively, these activities can be enjoyed after reading the whole novel.

### About the Theme

#### Key Word: *Dolce Domum*

*'Dolce Domum'* is the title of the novel's final chapter. It is the Latin for 'Sweet Home'.

Throughout the novel and in amongst the action, the idea of 'home' provides a reassuring backdrop to the unfolding narrative. Mole's humble home is underground, but it does not feel quiet as safe and hidden as Badger's house, which is also deep underground. Similarly, Mole does not feel safe out in the open by himself and gets homesick. Badger's house is so hidden away – so much so that Mole cannot find it by himself – that we know nothing threatens his home, in spite of its location in the Wild Wood. Similarly, the wise Badger does not flounder with the responsibility of rescuing his good friend Toad from himself and the stoats and weasels. Rat's home is on the bankside, just above the water's edge. Other animals see his home as they pass along the flowing river, just as they see sociable Rat out and about. It is not surprise that he becomes Mole's first friend. Toad's home stands proud above ground and out in the open. It reflects his high-spirited personality, luxurious life and, above all, his need to be seen.

During the course of the novel, we encounter each of these animals in their home and on the road. The characters feel the push and pull of home as they navigate their way to friends' homes and new environs, such as the Wild Wood, and back again. Home serves as a metaphor for growing up as children wobble their way into adulthood, enjoying the comfort of their family but seeking the thrill of adventure and independence all at the same time. The comfort of home and the desire to leave only to return again are familiar feelings for many readers, which makes the novel so appealing to audiences of different ages.

## EXPLORE: Discussion

By now, your pupils will have read the whole novel. Before launching into the questions posed below, recap whereabouts in the novel and how we encounter each of the four main characters' homes.

- How do the character's homes in the novel reflect their personalities?
- Which character do you think feels most happy and secure in their home? Why?
- How would each of the four main characters react on returning home after some time?

## ACTIVITY: The Missing Epilogue

### Key Word: Epilogue

*An epilogue is a speech or passage of text at the end of a novel. It provides closure and usually wraps up any loose ends in the story.*

Task your pupils with writing an epilogue for the novel. This will follow the final chapter, 'Dolce Domum,' and their focus should be on Mole returning to his home underground. Whilst he makes his way through the countryside and down into his small quarters, he reflects deeply on his experiences of visiting his friends' homes and adventures in the Wild Wood, which with the company of his friends he now feels safe and happy to do.

Resource K in Additional Resources provides your pupils with a rubric to organise Mole's reflections. Explain that they must keep the tone and language of their epilogue the same as the novel. For example, they should write in the third person and use lots of descriptive language.

## ACTIVITY: Tour Guide

In pairs, ask your pupils to assume the role of Mole, Rat, Badger or Toad. They must imagine they are going to welcome a group of visitors into their home for the first time. What will they show their visitors? Are they eager to show the visitors around every room, or would they rather stay in the living room or not visit at all? Remind your pupils that the visitors (their audience made up of their peers) will only have their imagination to bring the house to life. The 'tour guides' will need to think carefully about what they are going to say, where they are going to direct their visitors and how they are going to mime opening doors, pointing out features and handling objects as they go.

## FEEDBACK

**We hope you and your pupils have enjoyed using this education pack and that it has enriched your understanding and study of *The Wind in the Willows*.**

We value your comments – positive or otherwise – to help us improve our offering to schools. Please write to us at [education@windinthewillowsthemusical.com](mailto:education@windinthewillowsthemusical.com).

