The Wind in the Willows

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KENNETH GRAHAME

Grahame's early life was both tragic and idyllic. When he was five years old, his mother died of complications after childbirth. At this point, Grahame's father, a lawyer and an alcoholic, sent his four children to live with their maternal grandmother. Grahame's grandmother lived in a spacious but run-down house near the River Thames; biographers believe that it was Grahame's grandmother's home that inspired the setting of *The Wind in the Willows*. Though Grahame was a good student and wanted to attend University of Oxford, his father and grandmother wouldn't let him go due to the cost of tuition. They got him a job with the Bank of England, where he worked for almost 30 years. During his time at the bank he married Elspeth Thompson; they had one son, Alistair, who suffered from a variety of health conditions. Grahame retired in 1908, and many believe he retired because he was almost killed in a shooting incident at work several years earlier. Just before his retirement, Grahame and his wife took a trip—and Alistair agreed to stay home with his nanny, provided Grahame wrote him letters with bedtime stories. These letters eventually became *The Wind in the Willows*, which Grahame published right after his retirement. *The Wind in the Willows* has since become one of the most beloved works of children's literature, and it has been translated into a number of languages and adapted for the screen and stage on several occasions. Historians and biographers suggest that Grahame never fully recovered after Alistair committed suicide at age 19 in 1920. When Grahame died in 1932, he was buried in the same grave as his son.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Written between 1907 and 1908, *The Wind in the Willows* greatly reflects the English Edwardian era in which it was written. The Edwardian era spans King Edward VII's reign from 1901 to 1910. Though the era featured major income inequality (wealthy landowners became wealthier, while working-class people's fortunes didn't improve nearly as much), in popular culture it's often portrayed as more idyllic than it actually was. This is something historians often attribute to how devastating World War I was, and how wonderful the time before looked in comparison. During this time, artists and writers alike were inspired by the rising popularity of the automobile and the development of electricity. It's also possible to read *The Wind in the Willows* as a response to rapid industrialization in the latter half of the 19th century (it's sometimes considered a pastoral novel, or one that portrays rural life as simple and happy, with nature presented as superior to urban environments). The era also saw a renewed interest in the Greek demigod Pan, who goes unnamed but makes an appearance in the novel. For wealthy English landowners (which the novel's four main animal characters represent), leisure activities (like boating, hunting, and riding horses) were extremely important. Illicit drugs also became increasingly popular at this time—opium derivatives, cocaine, and alcohol were widely used. Some critics suggest that the way the novel frames Toad's obsession with cars actually mirrors how people were then starting to think negatively about drug use—and get people to give up substances through interventions, like the one Badger, Mole, and Rat stage by locking Toad in his own house. Only 12 years after *The Wind in the Willows* was published, Britain outlawed illicit drugs with the Dangerous Drugs Act.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Wind in the Willows is Kenneth Grahame's most famous book, but it wasn't his first. Prior to publishing it, Grahame published *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*, collections of short stories and childhood recollections intended for young readers. The first to adapt *The Wind in the Willows* for the stage was A.A. Milne, of *Winnie-the-Pooh* fame—his play, *Toad of Toad Hall*, premiered in 1929 and has remained popular ever since. *The Wind in the Willows* is considered to have been published during the Golden Age of children's literature. This era runs roughly from the mid-1800s to the start of World War I. Though Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* wasn't technically the first book of the era, it's often considered the first and one of the most important, as it represented a move away from didactic stories toward those that were more imaginative and fun. Other children's books and novels published during this time include J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, and the works of Beatrix Potter. And though *The Wind in the Willows* is commonly considered a children's book, many critics hold that it's actually a book for adults that children may also enjoy. In this way, *The Wind in the Willows* is similar to books like J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series and Neil Gaiman's novels *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* and *The Graveyard Book*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Wind in the Willows
- **When Written:** 1907–1908
- **Where Written:** Berkshire, England
- **When Published:** 1908

- **Literary Period:** Golden Age of Children's Literature
- **Genre:** Children's Novel
- **Setting:** An English riverbank and the surrounding countryside
- **Climax:** Toad, Mole, Rat, and Badger retake Toad Hall from the stoats and weasels.
- **Antagonist:** The ferrets, stoats, and weasels
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

A Long, Wild Ride. Disney adapted *The Wind in the Willows* in 1949. This inspired the Disneyland ride called Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, which is one of the few rides that hasn't been changed out since the park opened in 1955.

What's in a Name. Kenneth Grahame initially wanted to title his book something different, but his publisher ultimately decided on *The Wind in the Willows*. Many note that the final title is an odd choice, as the word "willows" never actually appears in the novel (though there are a handful of references to a singular willow).

PLOT SUMMARY

Mole has been spring-cleaning his small underground home all morning. Suddenly, seemingly for no reason, Mole throws down his broom and whitewash and scrabbles his way to the surface. He trots along until he comes to a **river**, the first he's ever seen. There, he meets Rat, who lives in a home built into the riverbank. Rat invites Mole to go on a picnic with him, so they take Rat's boat down the river. Mole immediately loves everything about boating and life on the riverbank. On the way back after the picnic, he becomes jealous—he wants to row. When Rat refuses to let Mole row, Mole snatches the oars and promptly capsizes the boat. Rat good-naturedly puts the boat back together, takes Mole back home with him, and invites him to stay for a while. Mole agrees.

Over the next few months, Mole learns a lot about boating and river life. One day, he asks Rat to take him to meet Toad, who's wealthy and conceited. Toad has a reputation for picking up expensive hobbies and then moving onto something new when the hobby proves too difficult. Toad's newest hobby is traveling in a caravan—and he expects Mole and Rat to go with him on his first adventure. Several days into the journey, a **car** races up behind the caravan, scaring the horse so badly that the horse dumps the caravan into the ditch. But Toad doesn't care about caravans anymore; he only cares about cars.

Mole has heard about Mr. Badger but hasn't met him. Since Rat won't take Mole to meet Badger, Mole decides to venture into the Wild Wood one winter day to call on Badger. Mole is soon lost and terrified—there are faces and odd sounds everywhere. When Rat realizes where Mole went, he tracks Mole into the wood and finds him in a hollow tree. The two rest for a while, during which time it starts to snow. They wander around, trying to get home, but end up discovering Badger's front door by accident. Badger ushers them in, feeds them, and invites them to stay the night. They also decide that since Toad has now crashed seven cars, they'll stage an intervention in the spring. In the morning, Otter arrives and walks Mole and Rat home.

Not long after, when Mole and Rat are out late, Mole suddenly senses his former underground home calling for him. Rat refuses to stop until Mole begins to sob. They return to Mole's house, clean it up a bit, and then young fieldmice singing Christmas carols stop by. With Rat's help, Mole serves the fieldmice a meal and enjoys a lovely evening in his former home. But he realizes that while it's nice to know he can always come back, he now belongs on the river.

Interspersed between the next several chapters are short anecdotes. In one, Otter's son, Portly, has gone missing. Worried for the young otter's safety, Mole and Rat go out looking for him at night—and they follow the sound of pipes to a beautiful island, where they encounter the demigod Pan protecting Portly. They worship the demigod, and Pan causes the friends to forget they ever saw this "Vision." Rat and Mole take Portly home to Otter. In another, a wayfarer rat shares a picnic with Rat and tells him all about his exciting travels between warm southern ports. Rat is ready to head south, but Mole convinces Rat not to leave.

Back in the main story, it's now spring. Badger calls on Rat and insists it's time for their intervention; Toad has just ordered a new car. Badger, Rat, and Mole head for Toad Hall, where they stop Toad from getting in his new car. When Toad refuses to promise to never touch a car again, Badger announces that he, Rat, and Mole will guard Toad in the house until Toad recovers. Toad seems to be improving when, one day, he tricks Rat into leaving him unattended and sneaks out. Before long, he encounters an unattended car at an inn and steals it. When he's apprehended soon after, the magistrate sentences him to 20 years in prison.

Prison is extremely depressing for Toad, but things start to look up when the gaoler's daughter takes over guarding him. She loves animals (as pets)—and as she and Toad get to know each other, she starts to feel sorry for him. She helps Toad switch clothes with her aunt, who's a washerwoman, and sneak out of prison in disguise. This works perfectly for Toad until he's trying to buy a ticket at the train station and realizes he has no pockets and no money in his cotton dress. The engine driver believes Toad's disguise and offers to take Toad in the engine in exchange for some washing. But soon, he notices a train following them carrying policemen and detectives, and Toad tells the engine driver the truth about his identity. The engine driver helps Toad sneak off the train into the woods.

Toad spends a cold night in the woods and starts walking the next morning. He soon meets a woman on a barge, who offers to give him a ride when she hears Toad's sorrowful tale (he lies that he's looking for his married daughter, who's in trouble, and left washing and naughty young children at home). When Toad boasts that he loves laundry, the woman asks Toad to do some of her laundry to compensate her for the ride. But Toad has never done laundry in his life, and it shows. When the woman realizes that Toad is a toad and not a human woman, she throws Toad into the river. In retaliation, Toad steals the woman's horse and gallops away. A few hours later, Toad sells the horse to a "gipsy" man for a few shillings and breakfast.

Toad feels so smart and proud of himself for getting the better of the barge woman that he starts to sing a song about how great he is. He feels even better when he hears a car coming; he can ask for a ride. But he slumps to the ground when he sees the car is the same one he stole. The drivers, though, don't recognize him, and pick Toad up—they believe he's a fainted washerwoman. Toad asks if he can sit in the front and then asks to drive. The drivers let him. Exhilarated and angry, Toad reveals his identity and drives the car into a pond when the drivers try to grab him. He runs away unscathed, proud of himself, but breaks into a run when he realizes a driver and some policemen are chasing him. Toad fears he'll be put back in prison. Suddenly, he falls right into the river.

Lucky for Toad, he manages to grab the bank right at Rat's doorstep. Rat helps Toad inside, lends him a suit, and feeds him, but he refuses to listen to Toad's exaggerated story of escaping from jail. He tries to guilt Toad into changing his behavior, and at first it seems to work—until Rat reveals that Toad can't go home, since stoats, weasels, and ferrets have taken over Toad Hall. Enraged, Toad goes to Toad Hall, first on foot and then in Rat's boat, to try to get his home back. A ferret shoots at him the first time he tries, and the second, stoats throw a rock in the boat, sinking it. When Rat remarks that Toad is a terrible friend since he ruins his friends' belongings, Toad feels awful.

Not long after this, Badger and Mole arrive—they've been camping and trying to keep an eye on Toad Hall. Badger reveals that there's a secret underground passage from the riverbank to Toad Hall; they can sneak in. Preparations begin the next day, and Mole distinguishes himself by dressing in Toad's washerwoman clothes, going to Toad Hall, and telling a guard that hundreds of animals are going to storm the hall later. He also learns that the Chief Weasel is holding a banquet later. Toad is jealous, both that Mole did something so heroic and that Badger praises Mole so much.

After dark, Badger leads his friends through the underground passage. He scolds Toad for not taking things seriously enough, but the friends' plan ultimately works. They burst out of the butler's closet, taking the weasels and stoats by surprise, and take back the house in minutes. Mole is given extra responsibility and extra praise, which again makes Toad jealous.

Toad sleeps in late the next morning, as usual. When he wakes, Badger says that Toad has to write invitations and invite animals to come to a banquet to celebrate his return home. Toad is angry about having to spend a beautiful day inside writing letters, but he feels better when he comes up with a program of songs and speeches (by him, about him) that he includes in each invitation. But Toad's friends discover this and tell him that under no circumstances can he sing or give speeches tonight. He must turn over a new leaf. Toad promises to do so and runs to his bedroom, sobbing.

In his room, Toad arranges chairs as for an audience and sings a song he wrote about his homecoming. Then, he combs his hair and goes downstairs to greet his guests. All night, Toad is quiet, polite, and modest—he's a totally new toad. After this night, Toad sends the gaoler's daughter a necklace and compensates both the engine driver and the barge woman for their help. Toad, Mole, Rat, and Badger continue to live peaceful, contended lives, and other animals greet and admire the four gentleman as they stroll through the Wild Wood.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Toad – One of the novel's four main characters, Toad is conceited, selfish, and extremely wealthy. He lives in Toad Hall, a grand country residence on the **river** left to him by his father (who is presumably deceased). Toad abuses his wealth and his power. He's known for picking up expensive hobbies and then casting them aside when something more interesting catches his eye. At first, Toad's friends see him as annoyingly selfish and boastful, but they see little harm in how he lives his life. This changes, though, when Toad is introduced to **cars**. Badger refers to Toad's overwhelming love of cars as an "affliction." Toad is a terrible driver and refuses to hire a driver. He crashes eight cars over the course of the novel, which lands him in the hospital and causes him to get in trouble with the police. Being behind the wheel causes Toad to be overcome with feelings of anger and power—all he cares about while driving is his own enjoyment. Toad also doesn't seem to be able to control himself around cars: when he encounters a car at an inn, he steals it without even thinking, and this lands him in jail. At first, jail seems to do its job: Toad regrets his actions and wishes he'd listened to his friends. But as he befriends the gaoler's daughter and formulates an escape plan, Toad's conceited nature returns. As Toad journeys home disguised as a washerwoman, Toad is remorseful for what he's done but nevertheless deceives and insults every person who tries to help him. It's a shock for Toad when he gets to Rat's house and discovers that Rat isn't interested in hearing about Toad's exploits and just wants Toad to change his ways. And Rat gets his wish after Badger leads the friends in retaking Toad Hall, which weasels have taken over in Toad's absence: just before

the banquet honoring his return, Toad decides to change. He ends the novel transformed into the modest, kind country gentleman his friends expect him to be.

Mole – Mole is the first character readers meet; he leaves his cozy underground home at the beginning of the novel and never looks back. Mole is young, and he comes of age and finds himself when he meets up with Rat and agrees to stay with Rat on the **river**. At first, Mole is jealous and impulsive: for instance, the first time Rat takes Mole on a boat, Mole tries to take the oars and row despite not knowing how. And later, Mole becomes frustrated that Rat won't take him into the Wild Wood and so decides to go there alone. But when Mole makes these mistakes and has to suffer the consequences (capsizing the boat and being terrified in the Wild Wood, respectively), Mole promptly learns his lesson and accepts Rat's attempts to mentor him. Through this, Mole becomes increasingly polite and loyal to Rat. He also decides that he loves life on the river, and that the river is his home. He and Rat return to Mole's underground home once, and while it's a fun experience, it doesn't change Mole's mind about where he belongs. He does, however, appreciate Badger's underground home more than Rat does, as being a mole, Mole is used to being underground and finds it invigorating. By the time Mole meets Toad, Mole is still interested in adventure and exploration, but he's far more mature about it than Toad is. Mole and Rat only join Toad on the caravan excursion because Mole wants to go (though not badly enough to insist on going without Rat), so Rat agrees they should both go to make him happy. Then, as Toad becomes obsessed with **cars**, Mole moves into more of a supporting role. While Badger and Rat spearhead the intervention to try to get Toad give up cars, Mole mostly works in the background. When the friends retake Toad Hall, Mole is assigned supporting tasks—and gets lots of praise for doing them promptly and well, and for thinking outside the box.

Rat – Rat is the first creature that Mole meets on the riverbank. He lives in a neat, well-furnished home built into the riverbank and loves nothing more than being out on his boat in the **river**. Though Rat is wealthy and respected, he's extremely modest and is willing to generously help anyone who needs it. So, when Mole shows up across the river, he doesn't hesitate to take Mole on a picnic and then invite Mole to be his roommate so he can teach him how to live on the river. Indeed, Rat becomes a mentor to both Mole and Toad. He teaches Mole how to boat, swim, and safely navigate the Wild Wood; and along with Badger, he's an instrumental figure in trying to make Toad see the error of his ways and give up **cars**. Part of Rat's willingness to help intervene with Toad, though, does have to do with Rat's extreme preference for a quiet, idyllic river life; he sees cars as rudely and violently intruding on the life he's built for himself. But Rat also wants to please his friends and hates disappointing people, so he often gets drawn into situations he'd rather not, such as when Toad convinces him and Mole to join him in a caravan journey. Though he's very practical and is always well prepared for any situation, Rat is also a romantic. When he's not boating or picnicking, Rat is often writing poetry or just talking about how much he loves his life on the river. He also briefly considers heading south for the winter one year after speaking with a wayfarer rat, who tempts him with stories of warm southern ports, wine, and shellfish. Mole, though, convinces Rat to stay, thereby repaying some of Rat's kindness.

Badger – Badger is one of Rat, Toad, and eventually Mole's good friends. He's a wealthy older gentleman who lives in the heart of the Wild Wood, in an extensive underground home that uses elements of a human city that used to sit where the Wild Wood sits now. Among those who live along the riverbank or in the Wild Wood, Badger is universally respected. No one dares go against what he says, and even poor animals like the young hedgehogs like and respect Badger, and trust that if they ever need a warm meal or refuge from the cold, Badger will gladly help them. Badger is so respected in the community that he can effectively do whatever he likes. Rat explains that Badger is extremely shy and isn't at all interested in extending or accepting dinner invitations; in fact, he prefers to keep to himself. And while this kind of behavior would be seen as rude in another animal, with Badger it's just accepted that he'll show up if and when he wants to, not before. Because Badger doesn't go out much, he also doesn't believe manners or proper grammar are as important as his friends do—but again, this is excused because of his status in the community. Badger was friends with Toad's father, so he takes a great deal of interest in Toad's bad behavior and spearheads the effort to stage an intervention when Toad becomes obsessed with **cars**. Later, Badger leads the effort to retake Toad Hall from the weasels and stoats, and he's an instrumental force in convincing Toad to finally change his ways and be modest. Badger's role in retaking Toad Hall does have one unintended result, though: despite it being well-known that Badger has a soft spot for children, mother weasels begin to threaten their misbehaving kids that Badger will punish them if they don't straighten up.

Otter – Otter is one of Rat, Badger, Mole, and Toad's friends. He's not a wealthy landowning gentleman like his friends, though; rather, his character is based off of Cockney street vendors. He's confident and headstrong, but he is always willing to support and protect his friends (as a bigger animal, he can protect his smaller friends like Rat and Mole in the Wild Wood). Otter is also the first to know about any gossip circulating on the riverbank. He has a young son named Portly.

The Gaoler's Daughter – The gaoler's daughter takes over guarding Toad from her father when Toad is in prison. She's a pretty and kind young woman who loves animals as pets, though she doesn't share this with Toad. Eventually, she develops sympathy for Toad and helps him escape by devising a plan with her washerwoman aunt. Later, when Toad is reinstalled at Toad Hall, he sends the gaoler's daughter a

beautiful gold and pearl locket.

The Engine Driver – The engine driver drives the train that takes Toad away from prison and into the country. He's a kind man who initially takes pity on Toad because he believes Toad's washerwoman disguise and the story that Toad has naughty kids he must get home to. Even when the engine driver learns the truth, he still agrees to help Toad evade capture—he doesn't like **cars** and thinks Toad should be punished, but he hates policemen telling him what to do and animals crying even more.

The Woman – Toad encounters the woman on a barge when he escapes from jail. She's a stout woman, with big arms and mottled skin. The woman kindly offers to take Toad down the **river** when she believes Toad is actually a human washerwoman. However, the woman forces Toad to prove he's a washerwoman by asking him to do some laundry for her in exchange for the ride—and when she discovers he's neither a washerwoman nor a human, she throws him into the river. Toad steals her horse, but he later compensates her for it.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The "Gipsy" Man – Toad encounters the "gipsy" man after stealing the woman's horse. The man agrees to purchase the horse and give Toad a meal of wonderful stew. (Today, "gipsy" or "gypsy" are considered ethnic slurs for the Romani people.)

Portly – Portly is Otter's young son who, at one point, goes missing for days. This is concerning because Portly doesn't yet know how to swim well. Rat and Mole find Portly sleeping safely between the demigod Pan's hooves.

The Wayfarer – The wayfarer is a seafaring rat who nearly convinces Rat to go south with him when they share a picnic. He was born in Constantinople and spends his time in Italian or French ports eating shellfish.

The Hedgehogs/Billy – When Rat and Mole wake up at Badger's house, they discover two young hedgehogs, one named Billy, taking refuge from the snow in Badger's kitchen. They clearly admire Badger in particular, and gentlemen more generally.

The Chief Weasel – The Chief Weasel leads weasels, stoats, and ferrets in storming Toad's house, Toad Hall.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

FRIENDSHIP AND MENTORSHIP

The Wind in the Willows follows four animal friends—Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad—who live lives of luxury along an English **river**. As the seasons pass, the friends explore the river, go on picnics, tell stories, and venture into the nearby Wild Wood. But the novel also focuses on a more serious matter: the intervention Mole, Rat, and Badger stage when Toad (who's wealthy and conceited) develops what his friends deem a dangerous and distasteful interest in **cars**. Particularly as Rat and Badger discuss Toad's flaws, they insist that it's their duty as Toad's friends to essentially mentor him—to set him straight and help him become a better, kinder, more thoughtful person. With this, *The Wind in the Willows* proposes that friends have a responsibility to help one another make good choices and fit in with the rest of society.

Toad's relationship with his friends at the beginning of the novel shows that when friends don't try to encourage good behavior in one another, they can end up enabling or even encouraging *bad* behavior. From the moment Toad comes up in conversation in the novel's first chapter, Rat and Otter frame him as someone who's conceited, selfish, and entitled. Rat explains that Toad has an annoying habit of picking up expensive hobbies and then dropping them when they no longer interest him—and also forcing his friends to join him on his various escapades, whether his friends want to or not. And Rat suggests that most of the time, he and Toad's other friends *don't* want to join in: when Toad was interested in living in a houseboat last year, nobody wanted to visit Toad in his new abode. But everyone did anyway, just to appease him. And the friends' unwillingness to say anything about Toad's entitled behavior means that Toad never gets feedback that he's being rude and obnoxious to his friends—indeed, he sees nothing wrong with later bullying Rat and Mole into going with him on a trip in his caravan. So, because Toad's friends are never explicit that they find him entitled and conceited, Toad never changes his behavior.

When Toad's friends do begin to intervene, Toad resists, and his behavior initially worsens—suggesting that *accepting* help is just as important a part of mentorship as *offering* help. At one point, Toad develops an obsession with buying (and subsequently crashing) expensive cars. When Badger arranges an intervention to stop this—he, Mole, and Rat decide to stay at Toad's house and supervise Toad until he gets over his desire to drive—Toad's behavior gets worse. He's rude to his friends for the few weeks that they stay at his house, and then Toad tricks Rat into leaving him unsupervised so he can sneak out. In this way, Toad overtly rejects his friends' mentorship by striking out on his own. And away from his friends and their mentorship, Toad's behavior gets even worse: Toad steals a car, is imprisoned, and ultimately escapes prison and faces a difficult journey home. Toad becomes even more entitled on the trip

home, without his friends to guide him. He manipulates and insults people who try to help him, and he even tries to steal the same car he was imprisoned for stealing earlier. As he travels, he composes and sings a song that the narrator deems "perhaps the most conceited song that any animal ever composed." Toad's behavior on this journey shows what when a person refuses mentorship: Toad becomes worse than ever without his friends to guide his behavior.

But Toad's transformation at the end of the novel shows the profound, beneficial changes that can occur when a person finally accepts their friends' mentorship and help. Upon reuniting with Rat at the end of his journey home from jail, Toad is at first excited to tell Rat all about his adventures. But Rat makes it clear that he doesn't find Toad's story amusing—and that Toad is actually hurting his friends by continuing to be reckless, conceited, and entitled. But none of this truly makes an impression on Toad until after his friends have led the charge to retake Toad Hall from the stoats, weasels, and ferrets (who took over the house when Toad was imprisoned). The following morning, Badger insists that Toad must hold a banquet—and he and Rat forbid Toad from singing any songs or giving any speeches that will feed his ego. Finally, Toad decides to listen to his friends. At the banquet, Toad gives Badger credit for the banquet itself and for retaking Toad Hall, and he throws himself into asking about others' wellbeing instead of talking about himself. Following this, Toad compensates all the people he took advantage of on his journey home—with Badger's encouragement and input into how to best do so. When the novel ends, Toad is a new toad: thanks to his friends' interventions and his decision to finally listen to them, Toad is modest, generous, fair, and genuinely fun to be around. With this, *The Wind in the Willows* suggests that people shouldn't give up on stubborn friends like Toad, as Toad does eventually come around.

Toad isn't the only animal in the novel who becomes kinder, more secure, or happier thanks to his friends' help. When Mole (who has been living with Rat on the riverbank for some time) feels a sudden pull to return to his old underground home, Rat insists they go to Mole's home and spend the night there so that Mole can decide where he wants to live. Rat goes out of his way to make the night pleasant rather than trying to selfishly influence Mole one way or the other, and his support helps Mole decide that while he loves his underground home, he loves his life on the river even more. Mole later repays the favor by stopping Rat from leaving with a wayfarer rat headed south for the winter, something that would take Rat out of his community and deprive him of his security and friendships. With this, the novel positions friends as capable of showing people who they really are—and helping their friends make choices that support their true identities.

MANNERS, CONDUCT, AND CONSEQUENCES

As Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad enjoy their lives along an English **river**, the narration regularly offers asides telling readers that the way the animals behave is guided by "animal etiquette," or agreed-upon ways that animals should interact with one another in their riverside society. Manners, whether they be related to animal etiquette or more human concerns (such as being modest about one's wealth or apologizing when one has done something offensive) are a major concern in the novel. Indeed, much of Mole, Rat, and Badger's intervention when Toad becomes dangerously obsessed with **cars** focuses on teaching Toad to use his manners and think of others before he thinks of himself. In this way, *The Wind in the Willows* is an exploration of how and why manners matter, and what the consequences are of not using one's manners. The novel suggests that manners and proper conduct exist to create a society where things function smoothly—and in order for this to happen, members of society must alter their behavior and fall in line with what's considered appropriate. Moreover, if a person or animal doesn't adhere to proper conduct, they may face grave consequences.

Manners are important for the animals of the novel, because being polite and adhering to proper conduct (as well as recognizing one's own improper behavior and apologizing for it) helps others feel comfortable. In this sense, the novel frames manners as being a way to show respect, kindness, and compassion for one's companions. Early on in the book, Mole learns how to navigate life on the river. During Mole's first picnic with Rat, Otter appears out of the river suddenly—and then disappears just as suddenly. The narrator notes at this point that it's against animal etiquette to ask about another animal's sudden appearance or disappearance, so although Mole is curious as to where Otter went, he knows he can't politely ask Rat about him. And because Mole doesn't break animal etiquette and ask, this allows the rest of the outing to proceed relatively smoothly, and it results in Rat inviting Mole to stay with him. In addition, the novel suggests that apologizing and making amends for misdeeds are also important parts of social etiquette. Mole, for one, makes several mistakes: trying to take the oars from Rat and row before he knows how, for instance, or venturing into the Wild Wood on his own despite being warned against doing so. In each case, Mole apologizes profusely and admits he was wrong. Apologizing allows him to preserve his friendship with Rat and teaches him how to behave in the future.

Toad, on the other hand, has bad manners and a remorseless attitude that damage his friendships, his reputation, and even his livelihood. Early on, Toad is characterized as conceited: within minutes of meeting Mole for the first time, Toad boasts about how grand his house is. His unwillingness to downplay what his money enables him to buy and do is something the

novel frames as impolite, especially since Toad forces his friends to join him in whatever expensive hobby he's recently picked up. Toad's behavior turns him into someone his friends have to contain and look after rather than someone they respect and genuinely enjoy being around. In this way, his impropriety prevents him from being treated as an equal or taken seriously, since he won't show his friends the same politeness and respect that they show him. Things come to a head when Toad discovers cars, something that the novel frames as a symbol of Toad's selfishness, conceit, and bad manners. Toad is described as a terrible driver specifically because he doesn't care about others: he injures (or threatens to injure) passersby, is rude to police who try to reprimand him, and thinks only of his own pleasure and amusement as he drives. Good manners, the novel suggests, means thinking of others before oneself—and because Toad is unable to do this, all aspects of his life suffer.

The novel suggests that there will always be consequences for those, like Toad, who behave badly. Toad endures personal suffering and severe punishment for his actions: he's hospitalized multiple times as the result of his car accidents, and he's eventually sentenced to 20 years in prison for stealing a car and driving recklessly—essentially, for not using his manners on the road. When he later escapes from prison and embarks on a wild journey home, Toad's bad manners haunt him and make his journey difficult at every turn. For instance, when Toad insults a woman who's giving him a ride on a barge, she throws Toad in the water. Later, when people pick him up and offer to take him to town in the very car Toad went to prison for stealing, he tries to steal it again—which results in Toad driving the car into a pond, being pursued by policemen, and running right into the rushing river. And when Rat rescues him, Toad has to face another serious consequence of his actions: weasels, stoats, and ferrets from the Wild Wood no longer respect him, so they've taken over Toad Hall and have no plans to give it back. Toad's poor manners, then, result not just in him being jailed and disappointing his friends—for a time, they also result in him being kicked out of his own home.

While Toad is an extreme case, the novel suggests that everyone will suffer consequences of some sort for poor manners. For instance, when Mole jealously tries to take over rowing from Rat, he capsizes the boat—something that instantly teaches him not to be selfish and envious. And when he enters the Wild Wood alone, his terrifying experience of being harassed by sinister animals is another effective consequence: Mole never enters the Wild Wood alone again. Mole is, in this sense, framed as someone readers should emulate, as he takes manners seriously and cares about how his actions affect other people. Most importantly, he learns from the consequences of not being polite or not following proper conduct the first time, which is the most surefire way to avoid the kind of serious ramifications that Toad suffers.

NATURE, LEISURE, AND THE MODERN WORLD

The Wind in the Willows follows the lives of four animal friends as they explore the **river** and the woods where they live. For the three who live on the riverbank—Mole, Rat, and Toad—the river itself is a source of endless entertainment, awe, beauty, and even quasi-religious experiences. And for Badger, who as a larger animal can live safely in the heart of the nearby Wild Wood, the entire landscape surrounding the river is akin to a playground. In this way, the novel frames nature as something fulfilling and protective—it's a source of beauty, comfort, and amusement. In contrast, Toad's love of driving (and crashing) **cars** represents modern industrialized society's destructiveness and ugliness—and the novel ends with Toad giving up cars and settling down to be a gracious country gentleman at Toad Hall. *The Wind in the Willows* thus suggests that leisurely enjoying the natural world is far more fulfilling than indulging in the dangerous, fast-paced trappings of modern society.

From the beginning, *The Wind in the Willows* frames nature as containing everything a person (or animal) needs to live, happy and fulfilled. Much of the novel takes place outdoors, on the river where Mole, Rat, and Toad live. As Rat explains to Mole when they first meet, the river has everything he needs—it gives him entertainment, food, and even a place to do his laundry. In addition, Rat tells Mole that the "Wide World" (that is, the world beyond the riverbank and the Wild Wood) isn't worth paying any attention to—suggesting that Rat and his neighbors need nothing but the natural playground that surrounds them. Rat's belief that the natural world offers far more fun and fulfillment than anything else is best encapsulated in one of the novel's most famous lines: "there is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." With this, Rat acknowledges that there are, of course, other things he could spend his time on. But what matters most to him, and what the novel suggests is most important, is being out in nature and enjoying all it has to offer.

The natural world is also framed as almost a living being or a spiritual presence that's awe-inspiring and worthy of respect. Rat and Mole in particular often hear the wind whispering and singing to them, which gives nature some human qualities. And at one point, Otter's young son, Portly, goes missing, and the adult animals all fear for the child's safety. But Mole and Rat eventually find Portly asleep, with the demigod Pan (a Greek god of nature and animals), whom the novel refers to as the "Friend and Protector," watching over the young otter. Pan is essentially nature personified, and the implication of this mystical experience is clear: nature will protect those who appreciate it, as Rat and Mole do. But on the other hand, nature is sometimes awe-inspiring in a darker way, as when Mole gets stuck in the Wild Wood in the middle of a blizzard. Nature can

be delightful—but it's also something that beings should respect and not try to outsmart or ignore.

By contrast, the ugly, industrialized modern world—which in the novel is symbolized by cars—threatens the untainted natural world and idyllic way of life that Rat and his friends love. From the start, the novel frames cars as violent and threatening. Toad, Mole, and Rat first encounter a car when they're out walking with Toad's caravan, and the car rushes up behind them so fast and so loudly that the horse pulling the caravan dumps the cart in the ditch, seriously damaging it. The whole experience is described as frightening, and for Rat—who instructs Toad to file a complaint against the driver for reckless driving—the car is nothing but a menace. Toad, on the other hand, is immediately taken in by cars—that is, he's tempted and intoxicated by the supposed delights that the fast-paced modern world offers. But Toad's friends all insist that this is a mistake for a host of reasons: Toad's love of cars puts him in situations where he threatens people's safety, cars are noisy and disruptive to the happy sounds of nature (like the titular "wind in the willows"), and focusing so much on cars means that Toad cares little for his friends and his home. Cars—and the modern world they represent—essentially cause Toad to be selfish and to devalue or forget everything else that the novel suggests is more important or worthy of his attention.

Ultimately, then, the novel suggests that it's necessary to reject the dangerous modern world and focus instead on nature. It's significant that the novel's happy ending only comes when Toad finally promises to give up cars and also to be more modest and generous to other people and animals. These two shifts are linked: Toad's conceit and self-centeredness are, per the logic of the novel, what lead him to adore cars in the first place—so, giving up cars means he becomes a humbler and more generous toad. After Toad's transformation, all four friends are able to live in "great joy and contentment" together as they take strolls through the Wild Wood and enjoy the natural landscape. This suggests that the trappings of the modern world can be dangerous and corrupting (as they were for Toad), and that a more pastoral way of life is healthier and more fulfilling.

The Wind in the Willows is certainly a product of its time—when it was published in 1908, cars were still relatively new. Still, despite how much the world has changed and how industrialized it has become in the last century, the novel's message still holds true: nature can offer a peaceful, awe-inspiring reprieve from the fast-paced modern world.

HOME, IDENTITY, AND ADVENTURE

Though *The Wind in the Willows* focuses heavily on the outdoors, the novel also devotes a lot of attention to the four main characters' domestic, interior spaces. Mole begins the novel in a neat, tidy, underground home and soon joins Rat in a well-furnished house built into the riverbank. Badger lives in an extensive home built into tunnels under the Wild Wood, while wealthy and pompous Toad lives in the nicest house on the **river**, Toad Hall. For each animal, their homes, and the choices they make about their homes, are reflective of their identities—Toad's lavish country house, for instance, reflects his wealth and self-centeredness. But characters' identities also aren't set in stone, which the novel shows most clearly when Mole abandons his underground home and makes a new life for himself as a river-dweller. But wherever a character makes their home, and whatever their house might say about them, *The Wind in the Willows* nevertheless presents home as a place where people (or animals) feel safe, loved, accepted, and certain of who they are. Moreover, the novel suggests that it's better to stay close to home and have adventures there than it is to wander far and wide.

A person or animal's home, the novel suggests, is in many ways a reflection of who they are and what they value. Mole, for instance, is pleasantly surprised when he first enters Rat's home, as Rat's home is exactly like Rat. It's neat, put together, and well-stocked—his home is prepared for anything, just as Rat is highly practical and organized. But the house is also somewhat romantic in that it's situated right on the bank of the river, meaning that the view is fantastic, but the location isn't necessarily practical (being so close to the water means the house floods occasionally in winter). Rat is a poet, and though he's sensible and always prepared, he's also very interested in romantic delights—and his home's location reflects this. Badger's home also reflects his personality and what he values. It opens into a cold, long, dark hallway that reflects Badger's initially gruff and imposing demeanor. But just as Badger proves to be a loyal, generous friend to everyone who gets to know him, the rooms off the cold hallway are warm, cozy, and stocked with food and other delights. Additionally, an animal's home is one of the places where it's easiest for them to show off who they are. It's no accident that at one point, Badger, Toad, Rat, and Mole prepare to retake Toad Hall (which weasels, stoats, and ferrets from the Wild Wood have overtaken) at Rat's house. The house, like Rat himself, is centrally located and involved in everything, and it contains everything they need for their mission. And Toad Hall is known for its lavish banquets and parties, where Toad can, at first, show off his immense wealth. Whereas Rat's house reflects that he prizes being prepared, Toad Hall reflects that Toad values wealth and power above all else.

But one's home and identity, the novel shows, aren't set in stone: identities can change, and a being's home can change to reflect that. This is most apparent when, in the novel's first pages, Mole decides to leave his cozy underground home and move in with Rat on the river. Moving houses brings about a major change in Mole: he suddenly realizes that while he loves being underground, he loves being above ground more, because he can feel the sun and enjoy the delights the river has

to offer. He essentially rethinks and reworks his very nature, as moles are naturally creatures that live underground. But this transformation doesn't mean Mole totally gives up on his old identity, either: when he and Rat briefly return to Mole's home around the holidays and spend a happy evening entertaining field mice, Mole is thrilled to realize that his original home and his original identity will always be there for him. However, he also realizes that he's changed, and now, he calls the river his home. Toad's identity and home change in a slightly different way. While at first, Toad uses Toad Hall to boast, show off his wealth, and house his expensive toys, things change after Toad is imprisoned for stealing a car and other animals overtake Toad Hall while he's is away. After his friends help him take back Toad Hall and Toad throws a banquet to commemorate his return home, he finally decides it's time to be the modest, generous gentleman his friends want him to be—and the gentleman that Badger implies that Toad's late father would be proud of. In light of this change, Toad's grand home begins to reflect his generosity and hospitality to his guests. It exists for their comfort and entertainment, not just to prop Toad up and make him look better.

Finally, *The Wind in the Willows* shows that it's far more fulfilling to stay at or near one's home, where one can feel safe and secure in one's identity, than it is to go on far-off adventures. Rat initially introduces this idea when Mole points to the distance beyond the Wild Wood and asks what's out there. Rat tells him that's the "Wide World," and there's no reason to ever be curious about it—it's best to focus on one's home and one's life nearby. This goes on to guide the friends' behavior throughout the novel, as journeying more than a day's walk or boat trip away from home is, per the logic of the novel, inappropriate—it deprives a being of the safety and security they derive from being closer to home, in their own community. This doesn't mean, though, that the desire to travel further afield doesn't grip the characters from time to time. Rat even comes close to heading south with a wayfarer rat, as the wayfarer's stories make Rat's life on the river seem small and confined. But Mole intercepts Rat and convinces him to stay. Home, the novel suggests, is where people can feel safe, secure, and as though they're part of a community—and one doesn't have to travel far away and give up that security to have exciting, fulfilling experiences.

GREED, ARROGANCE, AND SOCIAL CLASS

Much of *The Wind in the Willows* focuses on Badger, Rat, and Mole's intervention to change Toad's rude and arrogant behavior. Toad is extremely wealthy and lives off his father's money, in a grand (and, in his opinion, the best) estate on the **river**. He pursues expensive hobbies until he gets tired of them, and he constantly boasts about his wealth and insults those of lower classes. And while it's implied that Badger, Rat, and Mole are all fairly well-off, they're far humbler than he is about their wealth and privilege, something the novel suggests makes them morally superior animals. Through Toad, then, *The Wind in the Willows* shows how wealth and privilege, if left unchecked, can make people greedy and morally corrupt. But through Badger, Rat, and Mole, the novel suggests that people can also choose to use their wealth and status to help others rather than mistreat them.

Toad as an extreme example of how unchecked wealth and privilege can make people arrogant, cruel, and reckless. For Toad's friends who live similar but slightly less privileged lives of luxury, Toad's greed and wealth is mostly just an annoyance. Toad's friends find it rude when he flaunts his wealth and boasts about all he owns in front of them, and they're annoyed when he insists that they stay with him on his houseboat or accompany him cross-country in his caravan. But Toad's greed and arrogance prove to be self-destructive and eventually bring about his undoing. From the moment Toad discovers **cars**, he turns into a selfish menace, getting into accidents, threatening to run down passersby, and being rude to policemen when they try to reprimand him for his terrible driving. But none of this stops Toad from buying (and promptly crashing) seven cars—and then stealing one, which lands him in prison. Toad is conceited and thinks only of himself, so it doesn't bother him to know he's endangering people or stealing their prized possessions. He believes that he's entitled to whatever he wants, even if what he wants poses a risk to others.

Toad's unchecked wealth and privilege also make him feel like he has the right to talk down to and otherwise abuse people and animals of lower classes. The various lower-class people he meets during his escape from jail are, on the whole, kind and helpful to Toad—the gaoler's daughter helps him break out of prison, the barge woman gives Toad a lift down the river, and the "gipsy" man gives Toad breakfast and some cash in exchange for a horse. But despite the kindness these people show Toad, Toad never treats them with respect. Toad laments that the gaoler's daughter isn't of a higher class and believes she's falling in love with him, despite no evidence of this—reflecting Toad's classist, conceited nature. When the woman discovers that Toad has tricked her into helping him, Toad insults her weight and "mottled" skin (a sign that she's lower class and has to work in the sun) and eventually steals her horse to punish her for the transgression of laughing at him. And when Toad encounters the "gipsy" man, his first thought is to try to overpower the man and take the man's stew by force—again, something that doesn't acknowledge the man's humanity or dignity. In addition, Toad imperiously talks down to animals coded as lower-class (such as the weasels) and makes them perform tasks for him while refusing to give a straight answer as to whether he'll pay them. Toad's wealth and status make him arrogant, and so he feels justified in abusing others, lording his wealth over them, and demanding respect—even

when he doesn't respect others in return.

By contrast, Badger, Mole, and Rat, are much humbler and use their wealth and status to help lower-class animals. Badger is something of a grand old gentleman who lives a more remote life than his friends. The novel implies that Badger is wealthy by taking readers on a tour of his extensive country home stocked with all manner of foodstuffs and other goodies, and by noting that he was a friend of Toad's father (from whom Toad inherited a fortune). But unlike Toad, who abuses his power, Badger uses his power to help others. The young hedgehogs who join Rat and Mole in Badger's kitchen one snowy morning note that *everyone* knows Badger is a kind, generous gentleman—if one needs shelter or a meal, he's the person to go to. He even sends the hedgehogs home with pocket money, seemingly for no reason other than to be kind. Rat and Mole also use their wealth to help other animals, some who are better off than they are (such as Toad) and some who aren't (such as the cold and hungry caroling fieldmice, or even Portly and Otter when young Portly goes missing). And importantly, they never abuse the power they have as wealthy gentlemen: after the four friends take back Toad Hall, when Mole is tasked with overseeing weasels while they make up bedrooms for them, Badger gives Mole permission to whip the weasels if they do a poor job. But instead of whipping them, Mole sends the weasels on their way with food for the road, a mark of his kindness and compassion. With this, the novel suggests that money and status don't inevitably corrupt—beings can choose to treat one another with kindness.

The novel's exploration of class is complicated by the fact that the main characters are all wealthy, landowning gentlemen—and while lower-class people and animals exist in the novel, they mainly exist as an unseen presence in the background that enables the four friends to adventure instead of attending to domestic tasks. Rat and Toad, for instance, clearly employ kitchen staff, but the only indication that those employees exist is the fact that dinner bells ring to signal that a complex banquet is ready. And indeed, this reflects some of the contentious class relations of the Edwardian era (when the novel was written), a time when the wealth gap was widening in author Kenneth Grahame's home country of England and elsewhere. Still, the novel's message remains clear: people with wealth and privilege have a choice in how they treat others. Money, in other words, isn't an excuse to be selfish, condescending, or abusive.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE RIVER

The river symbolizes growing up, freedom, and independence. Early in the novel, it's the catalyst for young Mole's coming-of-age. Readers first meet Mole as Mole is spring-cleaning his underground home—but Mole suddenly throws down his cleaning supplies, leaves his home, and in his wanderings, encounters the river. Mole has never seen a river in his life, and it opens up a whole new world for him. Finding the river also introduces him to the riverbank-dwelling Rat (who quickly becomes his friend, mentor, and roommate), and their time on the river empowers him to learn new things and decide what he wants his life to look like. With Rat's guidance, Mole learns to swim, row, and safely navigate the river. It proves a harsh teacher at times, as when Mole first snatches the oars from Rat so he can try rowing himself and ends up capsizing the boat. But in the end, Mole emerges from his first summer on the river a more mature, "emancipated" animal who is fulfilled by his new above-ground life. Life on the river provides him freedom and independence that, he suggests, he never could've enjoyed had he stayed in his underground home.

The river also helps Toad decide to essentially grow up, stop being conceited and selfish, and assume his role as the gentleman of Toad Hall. While Toad's love of **cars** symbolizes his impulsiveness and immaturity, it's an unexpected dip in the river that helps Toad decide that it's time to change his ways and give up cars forever. In much the same way that falling into the river humbles Mole when Mole erroneously tries to row before he knows how, the river is a calming, humbling force that encourages Toad to be gracious and mature.

CARS

Cars symbolize Toad's immaturity and his total lack of regard for anyone but himself. They also symbolize the modern, industrialized world, which the novel frames as being in opposition to the idyllic natural setting it presents. Toad first sees a car when he, Mole, and Rat are out in Toad's caravan (a large horse-drawn carriage). The car zooms up behind the party quickly, making noise and raising dust, and it frightens the horse so badly that the horse dumps the caravan into the ditch. This is a dangerous experience—but rather than see the car's driver as a menace, Toad is entranced. Thus begins his love of cars and of driving, which results in Toad purchasing and then crashing seven cars in a short amount of time. He spends weeks in the hospital for injuries sustained in crashes, and he gets in trouble regularly for being rude to policemen who try to check his poor behavior on the road. But Toad doesn't care at all—he cares only for himself, and for the freedom and excitement that only a car can provide. His friends, namely Badger, frame Toad's love of cars as akin to an addiction or an illness, describing it as an "affliction" that's

negatively affecting Toad's ability to be compassionate and considerate. Ultimately, Toad's friends are able to make him see that cars are going to be Toad's undoing: if he wants to both survive and stay out of prison, he must give up cars. In the end, Toad does just that, which symbolizes his choice to mature and think of others, as the novel suggests a good gentleman should.

More broadly, cars symbolize the modern world that the novel implies is encroaching on areas like the idyllic riverbank and surrounding rural areas. While boats and even Toad's caravan (that is, non-mechanized modes of transportation that suggest an earlier, simpler time before the car's invention) are framed as positive or neutral entities, the car is portrayed as nothing but a menace. Toad's selfishness is certainly an issue—but more than that, it's that his selfishness causes him to fall in love with a modern machine that so violently threatens his and his friends' simple, pastoral way of life.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Oxford University Press edition of *The Wind in the Willows* published in 2014.

Chapter One Quotes

"Believe me, my young friend, there is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. […]

"In or out of 'em, it doesn't matter. Nothing seems really to matter, that's the charm of it. Whether you get away, or whether you don't; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all, you're always busy, and you never do anything in particular; and when you've done it there's always something else to do, and you can do it if you like, but you'd much better not."

Related Characters: Rat (speaker), Mole, Toad

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

In one of *The Wind in the Willows*' most famous lines, said by Rat as he rows Mole across the river right after they meet, Rat insists that the only thing worth doing is spending time in boats. This statement supports the novel's broader message that it's better to immerse oneself in nature than in the fast-paced modern world. As Rat happily chats on about how much he loves being on the boat, he paints a picture of an idyllic life where nothing much happens—but the world around him is beautiful, and he feels fulfilled, nonetheless. The novel goes on to suggests that modern inventions or city life aren't peaceful or fulfilling in this way; Toad later puts people in danger as he zooms around in his various cars, caring about getting from point A to point B (which directly contrasts with what Rat says here about one's destination not being the point). Slowly pottering around in nature is something that Rat, and the novel as a whole, hold up as ideal.

Also, what Rat has to say marks him as upper-class, as he can afford to spend his days "messing about in boats." This means he doesn't have to spend his days working for a wage—his life is taken up by leisure and keeping himself entertained. And though he talks on and on about doing nothing, enjoying the journey, and avoiding other tasks, he's really saying something very simple. Because of his wealth, he can give himself over to spending his time on boats and doesn't have to worry about anything else.

"Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World," said the Rat. "And that's something that doesn't matter, either to you or to me. I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if you've got any sense at all. Don't ever refer to it again, please."

Related Characters: Rat (speaker), Mole, The Wayfarer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10

Explanation and Analysis

Rat is taking Mole on a picnic in a boat, and Mole is asking about the surrounding landscape, specifically the dark sky beyond the Wild Wood. Rat's explanation—and specifically, saying that the Wide World beyond doesn't matter to either of them—guides the way the novel portrays adventure. Namely, *The Wind in the Willows* proposes that adventures are best when they take place close to home; traveling far away into the Wide World is inappropriate (and is even an inappropriate topic of conversation, since Rat asks Mole to never bring it up again). Further, Rat saying that neither of them will venture that far if they've "got any sense at all" suggests that in Rat's understanding, it's foolish to travel far away from home.

Despite how firm Rat is about his beliefs in this passage, though, his later actions suggests that beliefs like this can change over time. When Rat meets a wayfaring rat who tells him stories about idyllic ports in southern Europe, Rat briefly considers leaving the riverbank and only stays because Mole won't let him leave. Staying, of course, means that Rat stays true to his assertion here that he'll never leave the riverbank. But the fact that he considers leaving and listens so raptly to the wayfarer's stories suggests that Rat's view in this passage might be a little narrow. While the novel upholds its assertion that it's best to stay close to home physically, it is, perhaps, fulfilling and entertaining to talk about and tell stories about traveling farther away.

"Ratty, my generous friend! I am very sorry indeed for my foolish and ungrateful conduct. My heart quite fails me when I think how I might have lost that beautiful luncheon basket. Indeed, I have been a complete ass, and I know it. Will you overlook it this once and forgive me, and let things go on as before?"

"That's all right, bless you!"

Related Characters: Mole, Rat (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

Mole has just attempted to take the oars from Rat and row, which resulted in him capsizing the boat and dumping its contents (including himself and Rat) into the river. Now, he's apologizing to Rat.

Throughout the novel, Mole is cast as the character who readers should emulate. Mole consistently learns from his mistakes, as he's done here: he knows now that he was foolish and selfish to try to take the oars from Rat when he doesn't yet know how to properly row. And now, Mole is demonstrating how to atone for his actions with a thorough, genuine apology. He apologizes for the way he's behaved (his "foolish and ungrateful conduct"), and then for jeopardizing Rat's prized possessions (his mention that he could've forever lost "that beautiful luncheon basket"). This allows Mole to show Rat that he respects him and his belongings, and that he plans to do better in the future. He's learned from this experience and won't do something like this again—and he'd like Rat's forgiveness so they can move on and continue having a good time.

Fortunately for Mole, Rat is a good-natured and forgiving sort; he laughed the entire time he was helping Mole out of the river and rescuing the various items from the boat. By so breezily accepting Mole's apology, Rat lets Mole know that he won't hold this against Mole. Indeed, not long after this, Rat goes on to invite Mole to stay with him and learn how to live on the river. So Mole's apology helps Mole cement his relationship with Rat and eventually become Rat's mentee. Through his apology, Mole shows that he's open to learning new things and is willing to take responsibility for his actions when he does make mistakes.

Chapter Two Quotes

"Finest house on the whole river," cried Toad boisterously. "Or anywhere else, for that matter," he could not help adding.

Here the Rat nudged the Mole. Unfortunately the Toad saw him do it, and turned very red. Then Toad burst out laughing. "All right, Ratty," he said. "It's only my way, you know. And it's not such a very bad house, is it? You know you rather like it yourself."

Related Characters: Toad (speaker), Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

Rat has brought Mole to meet Toad for the first time; Mole just politely complimented Toad's house to make small talk. Immediately, Toad's conceited nature stands out. He doesn't respond with a more polite "thank you," or ask about Mole's living situation—instead, he takes Mole's polite and mostly meaningless compliment and uses it as a springboard to talk about himself and how great he and his belongings are. Insisting that he has the finest house not just on the river, but anywhere, shows how highly Toad thinks of himself—he thinks he's better than everyone else.

Rat expects this behavior from Toad and prepared Mole for it, which is why he nudges Mole. The fact that Rat does this shows that at this point in the novel, he doesn't see Toad's conceitedness as something to get too worked up about. It's just how Toad is, and it's a quality that Rat works around and rolls his eyes at. However, this also means that Rat is enabling Toad's behavior, since he never lets Toad know that this kind of talk isn't appreciated.

When Toad turns red, it suggests that he knows he's being

impolite. However, Toad is so conceited and selfish that he really doesn't care. This is why he doubles down and says it's "only [his] way." This is another way of Toad saying that he's conceited, but it's okay because it's just how he is. He then suggests that it's also okay for him to speak this way because he's right, and he *does* own the best house on the river. This isn't something readers can verify, but given that Toad's behavior is framed as uncouth and impolite, the novel implies that Toad is still being rude by saying this.

"What dust clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts I shall fling carelessly into the ditch in the wake of my magnificent onset! Horrid little carts—common carts—canary-coloured carts!"

Related Characters: Toad (speaker), Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

Three days into Rat and Mole's journey with Toad in his yellow caravan, a car zooms up behind the party, frightening the horse and causing the horse to dump the cart in the ditch. Toad, though, isn't upset—he's entranced by the car and wants one for himself.

It's clear from the way Toad talks here that he's selfish and thinks only of himself. Both Rat and Mole (to say nothing of the horse and the caged bird in the caravan) are extremely upset about what happened; they found the driver's behavior both rude and frightening. But all Toad wants is to be as powerful as the car. Further, the fact that he can use the car to harm to others is actually attractive to him—he wants to "fling [cars] carelessly into the ditch" as he zooms past. So, instead of feeling sympathy for his friends and other people and animals who use the road, Toad sees them as extra entertainment for him as he drives.

Mentioning "canary-coloured carts" when he talks about the carts he'd like to throw in the ditch is a way for Toad to demonstrate how wealthy he is, and how little he values his belongings because of this. Toad has a reputation for picking up expensive hobbies and then dropping them when they're not fun anymore. And in this situation, moments ago, his "canary-coloured" caravan was his pride and joy. Now that he's found the next best thing, though, Toad sees no issue with smashing up his cart. The amount of money he spent on the cart isn't an issue for him; he sees the cart as totally disposable. This reflects how much money Toad has to throw around: he doesn't have to choose his hobbies wisely or think about selling accoutrements from his previous hobbies after he's done with them. As soon as a hobby is no longer fun, all the things that went along with that hobby are disposable.

It's also worth noting that Toad's newfound love of cars symbolizes a love of the fast-paced modern world. And even Toad, through his descriptions here, casts the industrialized world as destructive to a more rural and non-mechanized way of life. Cars and the modern world they represent, the novel shows, are threatening a more idyllic and rural way of life—a life that all the novel's other characters thoroughly enjoy.

Chapter Three Quotes

Such a rich chapter it had been, when one came to look back on it all! With illustrations so numerous and so very highly coloured! The pageant of the river bank had marched steadily along, unfolding itself in scene-pictures that succeeded each other in stately procession. Purple loosestrife arrived early, shaking luxuriant tangled locks along the edge of the mirror whence its own face laughed back at it. Willow-herb, tender and wistful, like a pink sunset cloud, was not slow to follow. Comfrey, the purple hand-in-hand with the white, crept forth to take its place in the line [...]

Related Characters: Rat

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

It's now winter, and Rat spends most of his time entertaining guests in front of the fire. He and his guests talk most about the previous summer, which the narrator describes in this passage.

The tone of the passage highlights how entertaining nature can be, for someone willing to pay attention. In particular, the "pageant of the river bank" suggests that the river is a source of beauty and entertainment for the animals who live near it. Further, that pageant is always changing as the various characters—wildflowers—take their place on the stage. Ascribing human characteristics to the flowers also

has the effect of making these plants seem like friends that regularly visit at a particular time of year. Each plant has its own unique qualities, such as the purple loosestrife (which makes bottlebrush-shaped spikes of small flowers) showing up early and then admiring its reflection in the mirror—it is, perhaps, a bit vainer than its fellows. The willow-herb is another wildflower that grows in spikes of small flowers, but unlike the loosestrife, it's shyer and more of a dreamer, like Rat himself. Describing the plants in this way encourages readers to look at the natural world in a way they perhaps haven't before. Every part of nature, this passage suggests, is unique and worthy of attention and respect.

❝ There was plenty to talk about on those short winter days when the animals found themselves round the fire; still, the Mole had a good deal of spare time on his hands, and so one afternoon, when the Rat in his armchair before the blaze was alternately dozing and trying over rhymes that wouldn't fit, he formed the resolution to go out by himself and explore the Wild Wood, and perhaps strike up and acquaintance with Mr Badger.

Related Characters: Rat, Mole, Badger

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

Rat has been putting off introducing Mole to Badger all summer. It's now winter, and Mole decides to take matters into his own hands and go looking for Badger himself. Beginning this passage by mentioning that there's a lot to talk about around the fire opens up the possibility that Mole doesn't get as much enjoyment out of this activity as Rat does. This could reflect that Mole isn't fully integrated into the riverbank community yet—another reason why he decides to go seek out Badger. Meeting this older gentleman will mean that Mole is then acquainted with one of the most important animals in the community, which will not only satiate his curiosity but will also make him feel more knowledgeable about where he lives.

But on the whole, the novel frames Mole's choice to go into the Wild Wood alone as a foolish one. Rat has warned Mole several times to stay away from there, though not in straightforward terms. The Wild Wood is full of animals who are okay sometimes, but whom Rat says are untrustworthy—and when Mole does enter the wood, they purposely frighten him. Mole is also disregarding what Rat has said about Badger: that he doesn't appreciate when people call on him. Badger visits people when he feels like it and doesn't adhere to the same code of conduct as the other animals do. So, the fact that Mole decides to disregard all the advice Rat has given him casts Mole as foolish and somewhat rude—and he's going to have to face the consequences of his actions later, when he gets lost in the wood.

Chapter Four Quotes

❝ The Badger did not mind that sort of thing at all, nor did he take any notice of elbows on the table, or everybody speaking at once. As he did not go into Society himself, he had got an idea that these things belonged to the things that didn't really matter. (We know of course that he was wrong, and took too narrow a view; because they do matter very much, though it would take too long to explain why.)

Related Characters: Badger, Rat, Mole, Toad

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Badger is serving Rat and Mole dinner after rescuing them from the cold. Rat and Mole are so hungry and excited that they're not using their table manners, but this doesn't faze Badger.

Badger is an interesting character in the novel in terms of how he thinks about manners. While the novel overwhelmingly suggests that manners are important (as it does explicitly here), Badger is, unlike Toad, never punished for not using good manners. It's implied that it's the combination of Badger being such an esteemed and wealthy gentleman, and being so kind and generous, that excuses him from having to adhere to normal codes of conduct. Essentially, people in this community are willing to excuse behavior that for anyone else would be considered rude, because Badger is such a kind person in other ways. (This is also why Toad doesn't have an excuse for using bad manners. He's wealthy like Badger, but he isn't kind to others and so doesn't have that to fall back on.)

The narrator's address to readers situates the novel as one intended to teach young readers good manners. It's interesting that the narrator insists it would take too long to explain why manners matter—simply, society agrees on what "good" manners are so that social interactions proceed smoothly and everyone in an interaction feels comfortable.

His two friends assented, quite understanding his point. No animal, according to the rules of animal-etiquette, is ever expected to do anything strenuous, or heroic, or even moderately active during the off-season of winter.

Related Characters: Badger, Rat, Mole, Toad

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 64

Explanation and Analysis

Badger has just announced that he, Rat, and Mole must stage an intervention to save Toad from his inappropriate love of cars—but they must wait until spring to do so, per animal etiquette.

The fact that the animals can't do anything "strenuous, or heroic, or even moderately active" during winter speaks to how totally nature dictates life on the riverbank and in the Wild Wood. Each season requires different activities. In spring, animals prepare for summer; they then spend the summer enjoying themselves on the river. In the fall, animals prepare for winter and then spend their winters resting and talking about how much fun they had in the summer. Particularly when it comes to winter, this is by necessity: smaller animals, like Mole and Rat, can't move through the snow very easily, so they're mostly stuck at home. The only time of year they can really get out and enjoy themselves, then, is summertime.

Then, it's worth considering why the novel focuses so much on "animal-etiquette." Animal etiquette, per the novel, is a set of manners separate from manners human readers might be familiar with. It guides things such as how animals walk together, and what is and isn't appropriate to comment on when it comes to another animal's behavior. The etiquette in the novel is mostly specific to animals, but it does remind readers that what's considered polite and appropriate changes depending on the setting and time period. Essentially, it suggests that it's important to read the room when one decides how to act—different situations will require different manners.

Chapter Five Quotes

The Rat said little or nothing, only taking care that each guest had what he wanted, and plenty of it, and that Mole had no trouble or anxiety about anything.

Related Characters: Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

Rat and Mole have made an impromptu visit to Mole's former underground home, and they're entertaining some caroling fieldmice. This visit home has been a very anxiety-inducing experience for Mole. Mole was proud of his home before he left—and upon his return, it was devastating for him to see the place covered in dust, and to realize he didn't have anything to feed Rat. But Rat, being someone who's always prepared and always able to smooth over awkward situations, takes the lead and quietly makes this a night Mole can remember fondly. This shows how generous and kind Rat is—and it also shows how to be a good co-host. Rat is letting Mole do the real hosting work; Mole is entertaining the fieldmice and is getting to catch up with his old friend. But Rat is making sure that Mole can do this without anxiety, and without worrying about the fact that his home reflects that his home has become run-down in his absence. Rat wants to make Mole happy, so he's happy to do this—it's just how he shows that he cares about his friend.

He was now in just the frame of mind that the tactful Rat had quietly worked to bring about in him. He saw clearly how plain and simple—how narrow, even—it all was; but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him, and the special value of some such anchorage in one's existence. He did not at all want to abandon his new life and its splendid spaces [...] But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own, these things which were so glad to see him again and could always be counted on for the same simple welcome.

Related Characters: Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99-100

Explanation and Analysis

Mole and Rat have just gone to bed at Mole's underground house, after entertaining some caroling fieldmice. Mole is now relaxed enough to acknowledge that he's had such a good evening because Rat worked quietly, behind the scenes, to make this experience a good one. When Mole was overcome with shame and embarrassment that his house was dusty and he had nothing to serve Rat or the fieldmice,

Rat took care of it, making mulled wine and sending a mouse to the shops for food. In this way, Mole realizes that Rat has been an exceptional friend to him. The fact that he notices this means that in the future, he might be able to replicate Rat's kindness and pay it forward to someone else.

This trip home has also helped Mole come to a better understanding of who he is. Mole genuinely loves his underground home—he made it and furnished it himself, and he's extremely proud of it. He loves that it's here, as he knows he'll always have this place to come back to. But being back here has also shown Mole that now, he belongs on the river. He loves his life above ground in the sunlight, and he loves having such a good friend and roommate in Rat. For now, at least, these things are more important to him than living underground. This highlights the novel's insistence that a person's identity necessarily changes as they grow and enjoy new experiences. But Mole can still tap into his old identity as someone who lives underground anytime he likes by returning to this home—his identity, in this sense, is fluid.

Chapter Six Quotes

"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."

Related Characters: Badger (speaker), Toad, Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

Badger has rounded up Rat and Mole to intercept Toad before Toad can get into his eighth car (he crashed the previous seven). Badger decides that it's time to stage an intervention.

As Badger speaks, he lays out exactly why now is the time for an intervention. He notes that he and Rat have been warning Toad before this that his behavior is inappropriate. It's hard to tell how true this is. Rat's "warnings," up to this point, have been to simply point out to Mole that Toad is entitled, thereby embarrassing Toad; or to angrily shout that he's reached his limit with Toad when things have gone horribly wrong (as he did after the car caused the yellow caravan to crash into the ditch). But in any case, Toad's friends' warnings haven't worked up to this point, so it's time to take things a step further.

Then, Badger shifts to noting that Toad is messing things up for his family and friends by continuing to drive recklessly and get in so much trouble. Noting that Toad is squandering money his father left him is an indicator that Toad's fortune isn't bottomless, something that Rat and Badger have discussed before. But it also suggests that Toad isn't behaving in a way that would make his father proud, which is part of why his behavior is so unacceptable.

However, Badger focuses most of his speech on noting how Toad is ruining things for all his animal friends. He's making it so that the police don't trust any animals, since Toad is so rude to them and keeps getting in trouble for driving recklessly. And Toad's foolish behavior is damaging his friends' reputations beyond just with the police, since Toad regularly endangers the public with his driving. Finally, Badger insists that it's his, Rat, and Mole's responsibility, as Toad's friends, to intervene. With this, Badger implies that friends should step in to help one another, and that they should keep trying when initial attempts don't work.

"Toad, I want you solemnly to repeat, before your friends here, what you fully admitted to me in the smoking-room just now. First, you are sorry for what you've done, and you see the folly of it all?"

There was a long, long pause. Toad looked desperately this way and that, while the other animals waited in grave silence. At last, he spoke.

"No!" he said, a little sullenly, but stoutly; "I'm *not* sorry. And it wasn't folly at all! It was simply glorious!"

Related Characters: Badger, Toad (speaker), Rat, Mole

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Badger has just spoken to Toad privately and supposedly convinced him to give up cars. Now, in front of Rat and Mole, Toad reveals he doesn't take what Badger said seriously.

It's significant that Badger first wants Toad to apologize. Apologies, by their very nature, are a way for people to acknowledge that they've done harm and then promise to do better. Badger coaches Toad through how to do this by telling him to apologize (admit that he's done harm, such as by endangering the public and by damaging his friends' reputations) and then do better in the future (by admitting he was foolish to get involved with cars at all, and then vowing to never touch a car again). The fact that Badger coaches Toad through this so closely suggests that Toad doesn't have a good grasp on what makes a good apology—he needs this coaching to be effective at all.

However, Toad isn't interested in apologizing and changing his ways, which reflects how selfish and conceited he is. For now, it doesn't matter to Toad that he's putting people in danger and is seriously hurting his friends' reputations. All he cares about is his own enjoyment. So, in this passage, Toad is still at the beginning of his journey of becoming more polite and compassionate. He still thinks he's the only person who matters, and he actively rejects his friends' attempts to help him.

Chapter Seven Quotes

❝ Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror—he felt wonderfully at peace and happy—but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near.

Related Characters: Mole, Rat, Portly

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128-29

Explanation and Analysis

Mole and Rat are out looking for Otter's young son Portly, who's gone missing. It's nearly dawn, and Rat and Mole are about to come upon the demigod Pan protecting the baby otter.

Pan is the half-human, half-goat Greek god of nature and animals, among other things. Within *The Wind in the Willows*, he's essentially nature personified (given human characteristics). And in this passage, as Pan's power grips Mole, it shows how powerful nature is—it *demands* respect from mere mortals like Mole. But this respect isn't something nature demands so that worshipers are sad or angry, or otherwise subjugated by some violent presence. Rather, worshiping and acknowledging the nearby "august Presence" makes Mole happy and content. This shows readers that respecting nature is how people (or in this case, animals) can best enjoy nature. If people and animals respect it, nature will essentially show its true colors—its power, its beauty, and even its ability to protect those who do respect it.

❝ Trembling he obeyed, and raised his humble head; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns [...]

Related Characters: Mole, Rat, Portly

Related Themes:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

This is the moment when Mole first looks up and sees the Greek demigod Pan, whom the novel never calls by name (he's instead the "Friend and Helper" here). This passage—indeed, this whole chapter—shows just how powerful nature can be. Mole is "humble" in nature and Pan's presence; there's no room for him to be full or himself, or to think he's better or stronger than the natural world. He has no choice but to obey and lift his head to look in Pan's eyes.

The way the novel describes the "clearness of the imminent dawn" and Nature holding her breath for this moment suggests that it pleases nature to arrange for awe-inspiring moments like this. The fact that this is taking place right at daybreak suggests that this is a transformative experience, and that Mole won't be the same afterwards. But it also draws on the fact that sunrises are beautiful, and they represent the start of a new day. Noting that Nature is also flushed with more color than usual suggests that what Mole is seeing is more beautiful than what he'd see normally, adding to the mystical feel of this passage and the encounter on the whole.

Calling Pan "the Friend and Helper" further develops the idea that nature is awe-inspiring and demands respect. Nature, of course, doesn't have to protect anyone—it's framed as a being with the ability to be both giving and frightening in turn. But if nature personified is known as the

Friend and Helper, it opens up the possibility that under the right circumstances, nature will conspire to help people out in times of need.

Chapter Eight Quotes

"But look here! You wouldn't surely have Mr Toad, of Toad Hall, going about the country disguised as a washerwoman!"

"Then you can stop here as a Toad," replied the girl with much spirit. "I suppose you want to go off in a coach-and-four!"

Honest Toad was always ready to admit himself in the wrong. "You are a good, kind, clever girl," he said, "and I am indeed a proud and a stupid toad."

Related Characters: The Gaoler's Daughter, Toad (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

The gaoler's daughter, who has recently taken over guarding Toad while he's in prison, feels bad for Toad. She's just suggested that perhaps Toad could trade clothes with her aunt, a washerwoman, and sneak out—and Toad finds the suggestion abhorrent.

In Toad's initial reply to the gaoler's daughter, his loathing for people of lower classes shines through. He implies that he's far too wealthy and superior for it to ever be appropriate for him to dress up as a washerwoman. In this way, he betrays his classism, as he believes that washerwomen are beneath him. And in saying this, he also insults the gaoler's daughter, who is working-class like her washerwoman aunt. She's trying to help Toad, but because Toad is so conceited and arrogant, he refuses her help and insults her to boot.

The gaoler's daughter has no issue calling Toad out on his rudeness and making it clear that if he wants out of prison, he has to go along with her plan. A coach-and-four (a carriage pulled by four horses) isn't going to magically show up to whisk Toad away in the manner he's accustomed to. If he's not willing to realize that he'll be much less conspicuous journeying home as a washerwoman, he'll be stuck in prison until he's served his sentence.

Toad is willing to admit his faults—though he doesn't apologize for insulting the gaoler's daughter and her aunt. But as readers have seen throughout the novel and continue to see as Toad journeys home, he's often willing to say things like this and then never take action to change his attitude or behavior. Admitting he made a mistake is just a tool Toad uses to take advantage of people, as he does here.

To his horror he recollected that he had left both coat and waistcoat behind him in his cell, and with them his pocket-book, money, keys, watch, matches, pencilcase—all that makes life worth living, all that distinguishes the many-pocketed animal, the lord of creation, from the inferior one-pocketed or two-pocketed productions that hop or trip about permissively, unequipped for the real contest.

Related Characters: Toad

Related Themes:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

Disguised as a washerwoman, Toad is at the train station trying to get a ticket home—and he realizes he left his money and other belongings in his cell. All the things that Toad normally carries mark him as wealthy. For instance, his pocketbook is his wallet and probably contains his money, and the keys to Toad Hall mark Toad as a wealthy landowning gentleman. Toad's watch is, no doubt, an expensive one and is a way for him to signal his wealth and prestige.

Without all of these things, and without the pockets to put these things in, Toad feels like a working-class toad—and this is very uncomfortable for him. This then reflects Toad's classism and arrogance. He insists that all the items that usually live in his pockets are all the things that make "life worth living," the implication being that he'd rather die than be poor. In this sense, Toad demands respect from other animals and people but isn't willing to respect those he considers to be inferior. And in contrast, Toad referring to himself as a "many pocketed animal, the lord of creation," speaks to how conceited he is. He believes it's his right to lord his power over those in the lower classes, simply by virtue of the fact that he has money and the corresponding pockets to put it in.

Chapter Nine Quotes

❝ […] "I've no doubt you'll go bravely, and face all the trouble and discomfort and change and newness, and make believe that you're not very unhappy. But to want to talk about it, or even think about it, till you really need—"

"No, you don't understand, naturally," said the second swallow. "First, we feel it stirring within us, a sweet unrest; then back come the recollections one like one, like homing pigeons."

Related Characters: Rat (speaker), Mole, Portly

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

Rat is sitting on the riverbank with some swallows in late summer, and he doesn't understand why they're all talking about heading south already.

Rat is an animal who lives in one place all year. His home on the river is comfortable in summer and in winter (though he acknowledges that some rooms occasionally flood in the winter). And as a rat, he doesn't feel the pull to travel south each year, as migratory birds do. Rat also has very distinct ideas about how one should adventure. He believes animals should stay close to home and learn all there is to learn about the place where they live, in every season. Traveling too far afield—like to the south—is too much adventure for him. So, when Rat thinks about all these birds heading south, he thinks of it as an unhappy journey. It's uncomfortable, new, and too much trouble, in his perception.

The swallow, though, helps Rat to see that for migratory birds, heading south for the winter isn't a terrible fate—it's exciting, and it's what they're supposed to do. They have a different idea of what it means to be home, as they keep various homes around the world, depending on the season. Listening to the swallows talk about this helps Rat develop empathy for them and understand more about how they live their lives. This, in turn, helps Rat become a better friend, as it's easier for him to empathize with others in the future.

Further, the swallows also acknowledge how powerful nature is in this passage. They're listening to and obeying nature's call when they feel the "sweet unrest" calling them south—and as one bird explains, it was terrible the one year he disobeyed and stayed in England for part of the winter. But Rat isn't quite able to connect this to, for instance, the pull he and Mole felt when they encountered Pan guarding young Portly. Mole and Rat felt much the same urge to do exactly what nature told them to do in that chapter, but because Pan wiped Rat's memory of the experience, Rat has no idea that he's responded to much the same call as the swallows do every year.

Chapter Ten Quotes

❝ It is all very well, when you have a light heart, and a clear conscience, and money in your pocket, and nobody scouring the country for you to drag you off to prison again, to follow where the road beckons and points, not caring whither. The practical Toad cared very much indeed, and he could have kicked the road for its helpless silence when every minute was of importance to him.

Related Characters: Toad, Rat, Mole, Portly

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

The morning after Toad escapes from prison, he wakes up and begins to walk home. But he soon becomes annoyed with the road, which refuses to help him. Normally, Toad is a person like what the narrator first describes. He usually moves through the world as a wealthy landowning gentleman, with money and no arrest warrant—and with no goal in life other to amuse himself. So, part of the reason Toad is so upset in this passage is because for the first time in his life, he has to actually get from point A to point B, and do so quickly while evading capture. This isn't something he's used to doing, and it's difficult, since it seems he's never bothered to learn about any of the roads surrounding his home riverbank. It reflects Toad's privilege that he's never had to worry about this sort of thing before.

Toad also reads as extremely entitled and arrogant here. He expects the landscape around him to come alive and tell him how to get home—but unlike his friends, Toad has never shown nature much respect. Indeed, Toad is still obsessed with cars, objects that the novel casts as trying to infiltrate and destroy the quiet, rural, idyllic way of life that Toad used to live. So ,while Rat and Mole, for instance, revere and respect nature, which allowed them in Chapter Seven to find the baby otter Portly nestled between the demigod Pan's hooves (that is, they got help from nature's "Friend and Protector"), Toad has done nothing to earn nature's help. He expects it, but that doesn't mean nature will deliver.

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.

Related Characters: Toad

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

Toad is journeying home from prison. He's just crashed the same car that he was imprisoned for stealing, and he's evaded the drivers—for now. Escaping makes Toad feel like he's the smartest, cleverest toad there ever was. But the novel has shown multiple times that this isn't true; Rat even noted at one point that Toad isn't particularly intelligent. So, this gives readers reason to believe that Toad hasn't actually evaded the drivers, and it's probably also a bad idea to make such a ruckus in the woods when he's on the run. There's no one to hear him now, but that's no guarantee that there won't be someone to hear him soon.

The fact that Toad comes up with this wildly conceited song highlights just how self-centered and arrogant he is. He thinks so highly of himself that the only option, he believes, is to sing about it. Toad believes he can behave like this because he never takes his friends' disapproval or advice seriously. It's especially nonsensical that Toad is singing this song when only he can hear it. He just wants to stroke his own ego and make himself feel better about his supposed good qualities—something the narrator encourages readers to see as arrogant, silly, and not at all something to emulate.

Chapter Eleven Quotes

"Now, Toady, I don't want to give you pain, after all you've been through already; but, seriously, don't you see what an awful ass you've been making of yourself? On your own admission you have been handcuffed, imprisoned, starved, chased, terrified out of your life, insulted, jeered at, and ignominiously flung into the water—by a woman, too! Where's the amusement in that? Where does the fun come in? And all because you must needs go and steal a motor car."

Related Characters: Rat (speaker), Toad, The Woman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 207-08

Explanation and Analysis

Toad has just arrived on Rat's doorstep after escaping from prison. He's told Rat his story, expecting Rat to be impressed—but Rat is anything but. The narration prior to this implied that Toad exaggerated his story to make himself look better, and to make it a bit more exciting. But Rat still picks up on the truth of what happened—and most importantly, that Toad didn't really have a good time on his trip home. The trip was scary, and people weren't nice to Toad when they realized he was tricking them (or when he insulted them). Is it really fun, Rat asks, to be thrown in the water? Is it really fun to have been chased and scared? For Rat, these are rhetorical questions; the answer is no, as far as he's concerned. These aren't things that anyone should aspire to do, and to Rat, this means that Toad's story isn't nearly as entertaining as Toad wants it to be. By pointing this out to Toad so gently, Rat makes yet another attempt to change his friend's behavior. Behaving so selfishly, Rat insists, leads to Toad getting himself into these frightening situations—and if he'd only shape up, he wouldn't have to suffer.

Then, Rat also takes great care to link Toad's conceited, selfish behavior to cars. All of this happened, per Rat, because Toad decided he just had to steal a car. Cars represent the extreme height of Toad's self-centeredness and conceit, and if Toad would only give them up, Rat believes, his life and friendships would be better.

"Well, what did I tell you?" said the Rat very crossly. "And, now, look here! See what you've been and done! Lost me my boat that I was so fond of, that's what you've done! And simply ruined that nice suit of clothes that I lent you! Really, Toad, of all the trying animals—I wonder how you manage to keep any friends at all!"

Related Characters: Rat (speaker), Toad

Related Themes:

Page Number: 215

Explanation and Analysis

Just after reaching Rat's house, Toad learns that the stoats and weasels have taken over Toad Hall. He's now been twice

to try to get his house back—and he ignored Rat's advice both times.

Rat makes it clear that Toad is suffering the consequences of not listening to him and taking Rat's advice seriously. Rat has been here the entire time (unlike Toad, who was away in prison), so Rat knows what's going on and can therefore dispense good advice. It's selfish and conceited of Toad, the novel suggests, for him to think that he can get away with not listening to Rat.

But what Rat focuses even more on is the fact that Toad doesn't respect anyone's belongings—including his own. Most recently, Toad took Rat's boat to Toad Hall, dressed in a borrowed suit. Stoats dropped a rock in the boat, sinking it and soaking Toad. But Toad hasn't apologized—indeed, it seems to have not occurred to him that Rat might be upset that Toad ruined his belongings. And this, Rat insists, is one of the reasons Toad's friends are so fed up with him. They generously lend him their belongings, and Toad destroys them without a second thought. At some point, Rat suggests, Toad is going to have to face consequences that are much more serious than a scolding. Eventually, he's going to lose friends over this.

"You don't deserve to have such true and loyal friends, Toad, you don't, really. Some day, when it's too late, you'll be sorry you didn't value them more while you had them!"

"I'm an ungrateful beast, I know," sobbed Toad, shedding bitter tears. "Let me go out and find them, out into the cold, dark night, and share their hardships, and try to prove by—hold on a bit! Surely I heard the chink of dishes on a tray! Supper's here at last, hooray!"

Related Characters: Rat, Toad (speaker), Badger, Mole

Related Themes:

Page Number: 216

Explanation and Analysis

Rat has just told Toad that Badger and Mole have been camping out on the edge of Toad Hall to keep tabs on what's happening there, as well as to devise a plan to take it back. Rat makes it clear that Toad's friends are much kinder to him than he's ever been to them. They're loyal and want to see Toad succeed—but Toad seldom thanks them or apologizes when he does something that gets in the way of their attempts to help him. And Rat implies that at some point, Toad is going to lose his friends. This is the consequence of not treating them with kindness and compassion—and it's what will happen if Toad doesn't change his ways and accept their mentorship. When Toad loses all his friends, moreover, Toad won't have anyone to tell about his grand exploits. Without an audience, Toad won't have anyone to talk about himself to, even in a more appropriate manner.

Though Toad is totally capable of apologizing and admitting he's done something wrong, he never internalizes this. Indeed, Toad's selfishness keeps him from ever internalizing that he's made a mistake. Here, the fact that dinner will arrive soon is enough to totally turn Toad's attention away from his apology—which makes his apology seem particularly hollow. In order for Toad to improve, the novel suggests that Toad must stop thinking of himself in this way, and focus more on finding ways to serve, acknowledge, and respect his friends and all they do for him.

Chapter Twelve Quotes

A fine idea had occurred to him while he was talking. He would write the invitations; and he would take care to mention the leading part he had taken in the fight, and how he had laid the Chief Weasel flat; and he would hint at his adventures, and what a career of his triumph he had to tell about; and on the flyleaf he would set out a sort of programme of entertainment for the evening— [...]

Related Characters: Toad, Badger, The Chief Weasel, Rat

Related Themes:

Page Number: 242

Explanation and Analysis

Badger has just informed Toad that Toad must throw a banquet to celebrate his return to Toad Hall, and Toad must spend his morning writing out the invitations. Toad only agrees because he has this "fine idea" as he's speaking to Badger.

Badger wants Toad to throw the banquet in the first place because he wants Toad to shape up, be modest, and use this opportunity to show the community that he's changed. Badger doesn't want Toad to be the pompous, conceited toad who spent time in prison for stealing a car—he wants Toad to be the gracious country gentleman that Toad's father wanted his son to be. When Toad agrees to write the invitations and go along with Badger's wishes, it seems at first that Toad has agreed to change his ways.

Of course, Toad has done no such thing—he's going to use

this banquet to make himself look better and to totally ignore his friends' contributions to the battle last night. The storming of Toad Hall was Badger's idea, and Rat was the one to provide everyone with the appropriate weapons. But Toad seems prepared to ignore all that if he's going to focus on "the leading part he had taken in the fight." The fact that Tod also wants to talk about his adventures and his "triumph" at the banquet also shows that Toad still doesn't see a problem with being imprisoned for theft, and then tricking people who tried to help him on his way home. To Toad, that's just a grand story now that he can use to impress others—not something that will offend his friends.

❝ Otter [...] threw his arm round Toad's neck, and tried to take him round the room in triumphal progress; but Toad, in a mild way, was rather snubby to him, remarking gently, as he disengaged himself, "Badger's was the mastermind; the Mole and the Water Rat bore the brunt of the fighting; I merely served in the ranks and did little or nothing."

Related Characters: Toad (speaker), Otter, Badger, Rat, Mole, The Chief Weasel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 242

Explanation and Analysis

At the novel's final banquet celebrating Toad's return to Toad Hall, Otter tries to celebrate Toad's supposed heroics the night before. But Toad brushes Otter off and gives credit to Badger, Mole, and Rat.

This is a huge change for Toad. Before this banquet, Toad wouldn't have needed Otter to take him around the room—he would've already made sure everyone knew just how important he was to last night proceedings. That behavior reflected Toad's conceit and selfishness. But now, Toad crediting Badger, Mole, and Rat with getting Toad Hall back shows just how far he's come. Now, he's modest. Though it is true that Toad did do some arguably heroic things last night, like strike down the Chief Weasel, Toad realizes now that it doesn't reflect well on him to take credit for everything and not acknowledge how his friends helped him. He has truly taken his friends' advice and mentorship to heart: now Toad is modest and kind, and he's trying hard to help his friends and make them proud. His transformation is complete.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER ONE

Mole has been busy all morning, spring cleaning his home. After applying some whitewash, suddenly Mole throws up his paws and hurries out of his house, without even putting a coat on. Something up above seems to be calling to him as he scrabbles up the tunnel and finally emerges in the sunlight of a meadow. The sunshine is warm, and the birds are singing. Happily, Mole makes his way across the meadow to a hedge. There, an old rabbit asks the Mole to pay a toll to pass the hedge, but Mole insults the rabbit and hurries on. He strolls through the countryside and is thrilled to apparently be the only idle person in the world.

This introduction to Mole paints him as an animal who's industrious and self-sufficient—but one who also yearns for something more. The thing that calls him out of his tunnel is, presumably, the sunlight and life aboveground. This frames the world aboveground as almost a living thing, capable of calling to animals and exerting power over them. Mole's choice to insult the rabbit and refuse to pay the toll suggests that rabbits, within the world of the novel, aren't considered worthy of respect or attention.

Mole can't imagine being any happier when suddenly, he comes to a **river**. He's never seen one before, but this one seems like a "sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal," "gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh." Mole is entranced. He trots alongside the river in much the same way a child trots alongside an adult who has interesting stories to tell. Finally, Mole sits on the grass. But across the river in the bank, he notices a hole that would make a lovely home—and in that hole is a twinkling eye. It belongs to the Water Rat.

Here, nature is personified (given human, or in this case animal, characteristics) when the narrator describes the river as an "animal" that's at once graceful, powerful, and good-humored. And for Mole, this "animal" is captivating—he's never seen such a thing before. This passage also characterizes Mole as young and perhaps immature, as he's likened to a young child who wants to hear stories from an older adult. Mole will indeed learn many things from the river and will mature as the novel progresses.

The animals eye and then greet each other. The Rat invites Mole to come over, and then ignoring Mole's peevish reply, tugs on a rope. This reveals a boat that Mole loves instantly. Rat rows across the **river**, helps Mole into the boat, and then begins to row back across. When Mole admits he's never been in a boat, Rat is aghast. Rat insists that there's nothing "half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." He's so caught up in what he's saying that the boat rams into the bank, throwing Rat to the bottom of the boat—but Rat keeps talking. He says that around the river and boats, fun is all that matters. It doesn't matter if you reach your destination—or indeed, if you don't get anywhere at all.

Rat emerges as a more mature figure, someone capable of mentoring Mole and introducing him to a new way of life on the river. He graciously ignores Mole's "peevish" reply (which could just reflect that Mole doesn't know what's going on and feels a bit uncomfortable) and immediately starts telling Mole about life on the river. His saying that "messing about in boats" is the only thing worth doing is one of the most famous lines in the novel. It encapsulates the idea that the most fun and fulfilling life is one spent outside (particularly on the water).

Rat suggests they spend the day on the **river**, and Mole promptly agrees. So, Rat fetches a big wicker picnic basket, passes it to Mole, and gets in. Mole is ecstatic when Rat explains what's in the basket (a variety of cold meats and pickled goodies). But Rat says this is all normal for him; this is usual picnic fare. Mole can barely hear Rat, he's so excited. He daydreams for a while, until the Rat compliments his black velvet smoking jacket. Then, Mole apologizes for being rude and asks Rat to tell him about life on the river. Rat says the river is his family and his world. Every season brings new joys and delights. When Mole asks if life on the river isn't lonely, Rat scoffs—the riverbank is so crowded that some animals are actually moving away.

For Mole, all of this is new. He's never been in a boat before, nor has he ever enjoyed such a lavish picnic on the river with a friend. Mole's awe when Rat describes the "normal" items in the basket subtly implies that Mole isn't quite as well-off as Rat and can't afford food like this. So, Rat is introducing Mole to a higher-class way of life than Mole is used to as he also introduces Mole to life on the river. Rat also frames the river as a source of companionship and happiness, which continues to establish the river (and nature more broadly) as awe-inspiring entities that can provide for those who appreciate them.

Gesturing to the woodlands, Mole asks what's out there. Rat explains that that's the Wild Wood, where animals who live on the riverbank don't really go—some of the animals there are alright, and Badger is an upstanding gentleman whom nobody messes with. But there are also foxes and weasels, some of whom are alright, but most of whom aren't at all trustworthy. Then, Mole asks what's beyond the Wild Wood, out where it's "all blue and dim." Rat says that's the Wide World, and the Wide World doesn't matter to him or to Mole. He asks Mole to never mention it again.

Rat's assessment of the Wide World also suggests that it's inappropriate to adventure too far from home—or even to discuss the world outside of one's nearby community. Whereas the river has been described as exciting, abundant, and beautiful, the "blue and dim" Wide World sounds dull and lifeless.

Then, Rat steers the boat into a lake of sorts and then onto the shore. He helps the awed Mole ashore and then lets Mole unpack their picnic basket. Mole finds each food item exciting and happily digs in. When they've been eating for a few minutes, Rat asks what Mole is staring at. Mole says he sees a streak of bubbles on the water. At this, Rat chirrups—and Otter hauls himself out of the river. Otter good-naturedly reprimands Rat for not inviting him on the picnic, and he greets Mole. He explains that he actually came here to get some privacy. Just then, Badger emerges from a hedge—but he ignores Rat's invitation to join them, returning to the hedge. Disappointed, Rat says this is normal. Badger "hates society."

Again, Mole's excitement as he unpacks the picnic basket's delights suggests that this caliber of picnic is new for him; he seems to be used to simpler fare, which points to him being not as well-off as Rat. If Otter is here for privacy, this reinforces Rat's earlier observation that the riverbank community is getting crowded. This implies that there may be a class divide between the animals who live in the Wild Wood and the animals who live on the riverbank—the river seems to be where the prime real estate is located.

Otter tells Rat that he's seen Toad out in a brand-new boat. Rat explains to Mole that Toad loves picking up expensive hobbies, like sailing or punting; last year, he kept a houseboat. He always makes his friends join in and then moves onto something new. Just then, the picnic party sees a brand-new boat in the distance—the rower is clearly Toad, and he's doing a terrible job of rowing. Otter chuckles, snatches a mayfly out of the air, and disappears into the **river**. Mole is surprised, but animal etiquette means it'd be rude to ask about Otter's disappearance.

As Rat describes Toad and his hobbies, his annoyance is clear. In order to afford hobbies like this, Toad must be quite wealthy—perhaps even wealthier than his friends. Toad's terrible rowing, however, suggests that he's doing a poor job of looking the part of a wealthy gentleman. The note about "animal etiquette" suggests that manners are a huge concern on the riverbank. This reflects the context that the novel was written in (Edwardian-era England), where propriety and gentlemanly behavior were extremely important. For the animals, it's important to use goods manners so that social situations can proceed smoothly, which is why Mole doesn't say anything about Otter's disappearance.

Rat suggests they head back, so Mole takes on the daunting task of packing up the picnic basket. Then, Rat rows them home while muttering "poetry-things." Mole, though, is restless and asks if he might row. Rat says Mole needs a few lessons first. But Mole grows suddenly jealous—he leaps up, grabs the oars, and tries one stroke. This capsizes the boat; the water is extremely cold. Mole can feel Rat laughing as Rat drags Mole out of the water by his collar. On the shore, Rat tells Mole to run a bit to dry himself while he dives for the basket.

Now that Mole has been on the river for a few hours, he's feeling pretty full of himself—rowing doesn't look so hard now. But as soon as Mole oversteps and tries to take the oars, he learns that he should listen to Rat's advice, such as that Mole isn't ready to row yet. Falling into the cold river is a shock for Mole, and it serves as immediate feedback that for his rude, impulsive behavior.

Mole is very ashamed, so when Rat has gotten everything ready to go again, Mole asks for forgiveness. Rat cheerily says it's all right, and he invites Mole to stay with him for a while. That way, Rat can teach Mole to row and swim. Mole is so overcome that he can barely speak. Rat looks away as Mole brushes tears off his face. Finally, they reach Rat's home, and Rat lights a fire. Then, Rat tells Mole exciting stories about the **river** all evening. They have supper, and then Rat shows Mole to a guest room.

Mole realizes that by trying to take the oars from Rat, he seriously overstepped and may have offended Rat. In order to preserve the relationship, then, he knows he must apologize. For his part, Rat shows that he's generous and good-natured when he not only accepts Mole's apology but offers to take Mole in and teach him how to live on the river. In this moment, Rat becomes Mole's formal mentor, who will induct Mole into the riverside way of life.

This day is the first of many similar days for the newly "emancipated" Mole. Throughout the summer, he learns to swim and adores the rushing **river**. Occasionally, he hears the wind whispering into the reeds.

Referring to Mole as "emancipated" suggests that Mole's former underground life held him back from experiencing something greater—that is, the natural world and all of the beauty and joy it has to offer. Now, he's growing up and becoming more worldly—and he's also becoming more in tune with nature.

CHAPTER TWO

One bright summer morning, Mole asks Rat for a favor. Rat, though, isn't listening; he's been with his duck friends since early morning and is now composing a song about how the ducks turn tail-up to eat from the river. Mole isn't a poetic animal, so he admits he's not a fan of the song (apparently, the ducks don't like it much either). But finally having Rat's attention, Mole asks if they can call on Mr. Toad. Rat agrees immediately; Toad is always accepting visitors.

It's a sign of Rat's high social class that he can spend his time relaxing in nature and writing songs. It seems like this is all he does with his days, which suggests that Rat is wealthy—he doesn't have to work and can instead live a life of leisure.

As Rat and Mole settle into the boat, with Mole rowing, Rat explains that Toad is good-natured, if not particularly intelligent. He's conceited, but he has other great qualities. Presently, they come around a bend in the river and can see the grand estate, Toad Hall (Toad is very wealthy). Rat guides Mole to the boathouse, which looks deserted. Looking around, Rat says that Toad must have given up boating. Who knows what his newest hobby might be.

Mole has been with Rat long enough, and has paid enough attention to his mentor, to be trustworthy with the oars now. This highlights Mole's willingness to listen and learn, as well as Rat's ability to teach his pupil. Rat notes that Toad, on the other hand, is conceited—meaning that he lacks the same humbleness and willingness to learn from his friends.

Rat leads Mole across the lawn until they find Toad resting in the garden. Toad leaps up immediately, and without waiting to be introduced to Mole, says he was going to send for Rat and Mole today. They must have a meal. Rat suggests they sit a while first, sinking into a chair. Mole observes politely that the house is lovely, and Toad boasts that it's the finest house on the river. He notices Rat nudge Mole and turns red—but then laughs, says this is just how he is, and notes that it's inarguable that the house is fine.

Toad immediately proves Rat's point when he can't help but boasting about how great his estate is. And though it's somewhat embarrassing for him to notice that Rat and Mole disapprove of his arrogance (hence why they nudge each other), this doesn't actually change Toad's behavior. Instead, he doubles down and insists that the house is great. Toad realizes that his behavior is annoying his friends, but he isn't yet willing to change that behavior, nor are his friends yet willing to intervene.

Then, Toad says he wanted to talk to Rat anyway; it's extremely important. Sighing, Rat says this must be about Toad's rowing, which needs work. But Toad looks disgusted and says boating is a waste of time. He's done with it, and now he's discovered what a real hobby is. At this, he leads Rat and Mole to the stable and draws out a "gipsy caravan" painted bright yellow. He cries that it represents "real life," and that he'll be able to see the whole world. Mole is intrigued, so he follows Toad into the caravan to admire the interior. There's even a caged bird inside, in addition to games and provisions. Toad says it has everything they need—and they'll set off this afternoon.

Toad saying that boating is a waste of time probably offends Rat, given that he previously said boating is the only thing worth doing. But again, Toad doesn't seem to care that he might be offending his friend; what matters to him that he *has new hobby, and that* he *has fun. This passage also characterizes Toad as entitled, as he announces that they're all leaving on a trip this afternoon without even asking Rat and Mole if they'd like to come. He expects them to go along with what* he *wants, with no regard for what* they *might want.*

Rat refuses, so Toad begs him to come. Going away, Toad insists, will "make an animal" out of Rat. Rat insists that he's not going, and Mole isn't either. Mole, loyal to Rat, says he's obviously staying, though it would've been fun. Seeing how disappointed Mole looks, Rat's resolve wavers. Toad suggests they have lunch and talk it over, since he really just wants to make his friends happy. Over lunch, Toad—who can tell Mole is inexperienced and young—regales Mole with tales of the road. Soon, it seems like a given that they're all going. Afraid to disappoint his friends, even Rat agrees.

Toad saying that a trip in the caravan will "make an animal" out of Rat seems to be a play on the phrase "making a man" out of someone. This trip, in other words, will elevate Rat from a childish state and turn him into what Toad deems to be a real adult. Again, is likely insulting for Rat to hear, since he enjoys his life on the river and is seemingly wise and mature enough to mentor Mole. But Toad proves extremely persuasive, so his rudeness and entitlement go unchecked.

Thrilled, Toad tells Rat and Mole to capture his old gray horse—who does not want to be caught—and Toad packs some final provisions. Soon, they're off. The afternoon is idyllic: passersby stop to compliment the cart, and the sunlight is beautiful. In the evening, the travelers pull over, let the horse graze, and eat their supper. As the stars come out, Toad talks about all he's going to do in the coming weeks. Finally, they all climb into their bunks. Toad sneers that *this* is the life for a gentleman; now Rat can talk about his **river**. Sadly, Rat says he thinks about his river all the time. Mole takes Rat's paw and suggests they run away in the morning, but Rat says they must stay for Toad's sake. He's not safe on his own.

Everything seems fine at first, since it's a lovely day and people compliment the caravan (which no doubt fuels Toad's ego). But Toad remains convinced that his interests and his life are far more important than those of his friends—indeed, Rat seems genuinely upset to be away from his beloved river, but Toad doesn't care at all. Mole, by contrast, shows that he cares about Rat when he comforts him and suggests they head home. Yet Rat knows that Toad needs supervision, or disaster might strike. This also illuminates a troubling part of Rat and Toad's dynamic: Rat essentially feels like he has to babysit Toad, which means that they don't connect as equals.

In the morning, Toad refuses to wake up. So, Rat and Mole attend to the horse, do the dishes from the night before, and walk to the village for breakfast foods that Toad didn't pack. All the hard work is done by the time Toad gets up, so he remarks that life is easy on the road. The day is pleasant, but in the evening Rat and Mole make Toad do his fair share of the work. By the following morning, Toad is disillusioned by life on the road. But the travelers continue on—until disaster strikes.

Rat and Mole may be fairly well-off, but they still understand that dishes don't wash themselves, and that food doesn't appear out of thin air. They're far more attuned to the way that life actually works than Toad is, as he seems to believe that these tasks will just magically get done. A more sinister possibility is that Toad knew *Rat and Mole would take care of such things and chose to take advantage of his friends' generosity.*

While Mole walks with the horse (who feels very left out), Rat and Toad walk behind the cart. Rat pretends to listen to Toad as Toad chatters on. Then, in the distance behind them, they see a cloud of dust and hear a faint "Poop-poop!" sound. They all ignore this—until suddenly, the "poop-poop" (a **car**) drives up behind them, passes them, and then turns into a cloud of dust ahead. The horse is terrified and, in his panic, causes the caravan to overturn in the ditch. Rat shouts at the driver, threatening to drag them through the courts for driving so rudely. But Toad sits in the middle of the road, murmuring "poop-poop!" with a satisfied expression on his face.

The horse is coded as being from the servant class of animals—he wasn't given a choice in whether to come on this trip, and he doesn't get to join in any of the fun. Mole shows that he has compassion for lower-class animals by spending time with the horse and treating him as an equal. The car's first appearance in the novel is extremely scary and violent—it completely disrupts this caravan outing, and Rat takes issue with the driver's rudeness—again suggesting that good manners are necessary for society to run smoothly. Toad, though, seems entranced by the car—which foreshadows that cars will probably be Toad's next expensive hobby.

Finally, Mole calms the horse down. The caravan is damaged, and Mole and Rat aren't strong enough to get it out of the ditch themselves, so they ask Toad for help. But Toad doesn't move—he continues to sit and say, "poop-poop!" When Rat shakes Toad, Toad says he's seen "the poetry of motion" and laments that before this moment, he never dreamed of what's possible.

Once again, Mole and Rat take on the difficult work of trying to get the caravan moving and working, while Toad sits idly by. Moreover, Toad's musing that he's seen "the poetry of motion" suggests that he doesn't see any issue with what the car did—he's more interested in the car's novelty and beauty than the driver's bad manners. It doesn't matter to him that his friends were scared and his cart is broken (another indicator of his wealth, as Toad seems to view the cart as replaceable or disposable).

Mole turns to Rat, concerned, but Rat says there's nothing to do. Toad, Rat explains, is "possessed," and he'll be like this for a few days and will be totally useless. So, Rat grabs the distraught bird in her cage and the horse, and he leads Mole down the road to get help. Mole is concerned for Toad's safety, but Rat is too angry to care. Before too long, though, Toad runs up behind his friends. Rat tells Toad to lodge a complaint against the driver with the police once they get to town; then, Toad must arrange for someone to fix the cart. He and Mole will get rooms for them at an inn. Toad says he could never complain about that "beautiful, [...] heavenly vision." He's done with carts. Now he's discovered **cars**, and can't wait to throw carts into the ditch as he zooms by.

This isn't the first time that Rat has ended up in a situation like this with Toad—his patience is wearing thin after having to clean up after Toad so many times. This is Mole's first outing with Toad, though, so he's not so frustrated that he can't think of Toad's safety. Toad reveals how selfish and conceited he is when he tells his friends about his newfound love of cars. Again, he's not upset that the car ruined their outing and jeopardized their safety—cars are "beautiful" and powerful in his mind, and Toad wants one so that he *can be powerful. Toad apparently wants to scare and even harm others, again highlighting his selfish nature.*

Rat gives Mole a despairing look and says that when they get to town, the two of them can get a train back to the **river**. At the town, they drop Toad in the station waiting area, leave the horse at the inn, and arrange for someone to deal with the cart. Then, they catch the train and deposit Toad at Toad Hall. Rat and Mole are home in time for a late supper. The following evening, Rat strolls up to Mole with news: Toad has just bought a big, expensive **car**.

Rat may be doing what he believes just needs to be done when he arranges for the cart to be fixed and gets everyone train tickets home. But by doing this, he also enables Toad's behavior. Toad never experiences consequences for being so unhelpful and selfish—and, as a result, it never occurs to him that buying a car (and driving it recklessly, as he plans to) may be a bad idea .

CHAPTER THREE

Mole has been waiting a long time to meet Badger. Badger is rarely out and about, but he seems to influence everything. Rat always refuses to take Mole to meet Badger, or to invite Badger for supper. Badger, according to Rat, "hates society, and invitations, and dinner, and all that sort of thing." He also insists that they can't just go call on Badger, since Badger lives in the middle of the Wild Wood—but Rat is unwilling to explain exactly what he means to Mole, who believes Rat's earlier sentiment that animals in the Wild Wood are fine.

Rat is showing Badger respect by doing what makes Badger comfortable—not showing up at his house uninvited, and not inviting him to dinner. The fact that Badger "hates society, and invitations, and dinner" suggests that doesn't find etiquette and formal social conventions as important or enjoyable as the other animals do. Moreover, Rat's caginess when it comes to telling Mole more about the animals in the Wild Wood suggests that the creatures who live there might not be as nice and helpful as Mole would perhaps like to believe.

So, Mole passes the summer happily and doesn't think of Badger much until winter. As the **river** rushes past Rat's house, Mole wonders about Badger. Rat spends his days sleeping, scribbling poetry, and entertaining guests. When guests come, they spend their time laughing and reminiscing about the summer they just had. Around the warm fire, the animals talk about how the plants first started to emerge in the spring, and then how summer brought the countryside fully to life.

Nature is clearly important to the characters: in the dead of winter, when it's too cold to go outside, the animals talk almost exclusively about their summer in the countryside. Their conversations make it clear that nature is a source of beauty, entertainment, and joy for them. In lieu of spending time outdoors in the winter, the animals find safety, warmth, and comfort in Rat's house. In this way, the novel portrays both the natural world and the domestic world as important spaces.

But Mole continues to think about Badger, and one afternoon, while Rat is dozing, Mole decides to go out and meet Badger himself. It's cold, and the land is barren, but Mole is entranced—it's like the leafy places in summer have been caught naked, their mysteries exposed. It's all very exciting as Mole enters the Wild Wood. But as dusk falls, "the faces beg[i]n." Mole notices evil-looking faces peering at him from holes and tunnels, so he hurries on, wondering if he's imagining things. Before long, it seems like there's a hateful face in every tunnel. To escape them, Mole veers off the path—and then, the whistling starts. It's faint at first and seems to be coming from behind him, but then it comes from all directions.

Mole doesn't fully understand yet how the community on the riverbank and in the Wild Wood functions, so he's very curious. But his choice to set off on his own to find Badger is framed as dangerous and selfish—Badger will think Mole is rude if Mole winds up on his doorstep, and Rat has alluded to the possibility that the Wild Wood is more sinister than it might seem. Indeed, almost instantly, Mole realizes he should've listened to Rat: the forest, and the animals in it, seem intent on frightening him.

Mole is terrified by the time the pattering begins. It seems at first like leaves falling, but then he realizes it's definitely feet. Mole listens, and suddenly, a rabbit races right for him and mutters for Mole to get out. The pattering starts to sound like something—or someone—is chasing down their prey. Mole runs, falling over things, and then he finds a hollow of an old tree. Since he's exhausted, he decides to rest. He wishes he'd listened to Rat.

Mole quickly sees the error of his ways. He knows now that Rat wasn't trying to ruin Mole's fun by refusing to take him into the Wild Wood. Rather, Rat was trying to keep him safe—and Mole would be safe now, had he listened. In this way, Mole is very different from Toad, who isn't willing or able to own up to his mistakes. For now, though, it's unclear how Mole is going to get out of this frightening situation.

Rat, meanwhile, wakes with a start and realizes Mole isn't there. Seeing that Mole's coat and galoshes are gone, Rat steps outside. He finds Mole's tracks leading right for the Wild Wood, so he arms himself with some pistols and a cudgel and follows his friend. At first the faces appear for Rat—but when they see his weapons, they leave him alone. The whispering and pattering stops too, leaving everything still and quiet. Rat calls for Mole and finally locates him in the tree hollow. Rat explains to his friend that riverbank animals seldom come here alone—and to be safe, one has to know about the passwords and signs and such that keep a small animal safe. Otter and Badger, of course, are safe in the Wild Wood, but even brave Toad won't come here alone.

Because Rat is observant and values being prepared, he immediately realizes what happened and how to safely remedy it. He also shows that he's not going to hold a grudge or punish Mole for disobeying him. Rather, he's going to gently and kindly teach Mole that setting out on his own was a bad idea, so that Mole knows exactly why he shouldn't do this again. This makes Rat a good mentor (though, of course, it helps that Mole wants to please and learn from Rat—unlike Toad).

Mole feels better already, with Rat here and especially with Rat's weapons. Rat says they have to get going before it gets too dark, but Mole insists he's too tired to leave now. Rat agrees to let Mole sleep until the moon rises to give them light. Finally, Mole wakes up, and the friends head out—and discover that it's snowing hard. The snow transforms the woods, covering up the frightening holes with fine powder. Holding hands so they don't lose each other, Rat and Mole head out and spend two hours wandering in the now-unfamiliar woods. Then they collapse on a log to rethink their plan.

Even though Rat has implied that they're still in danger, Mole feels better just having Rat around, which is a testament to how powerful friendship can be in making beings feel safe and comforted. The snowstorm also presents another problem, since it so dramatically changes the landscape. In this situation, nature isn't the benevolent, delightful force it was in the summer. Now, it demands Mole and Rat's awe and respect, and there's no guarantee that they'll get out of the Wild Wood unscathed.

The Wild Wood seems to go on forever, and the snow makes things dangerous—not only can Rat and Mole barely walk through the deep snow, but they've both fallen in holes hidden by the snow. Rat suggests they head down into a dell ahead and find a place to rest. As they're poking around, Mole trips, falls, and grabs his leg, squealing in pain. Rat kindly examines Mole's cut and notes that the cut is clean—it wasn't made by a rock or a stump. As Mole, forgetting his grammar, says it doesn't matter "what done it," Rat pokes around in the snow—and then whoops with joy.

Again, nature is no longer a wonder or a delight—it's causing injury and fear, and it's making it difficult for Rat and Mole to find their way home. But again, Rat is observant and seems to know something that Mole and readers don't, so perhaps not all is lost. The note that Mole forgot his grammar implies that using proper grammar is important—per the novel, a cut on one's leg is no excuse to forget one's manners.

Mole comes to look at what Rat found: a door-scraper. Mole is unimpressed; clearly, some "careless and forgetful person" left a door-scraper lying around. Rat tells Mole to stop being silly and help him dig. After a few minutes, Rat reveals a doormat, which Mole declares is more "domestic litter." They can't eat it, and it isn't going to tell Rat anything useful. Angry now, Rat tells Mole to be quiet and scrape. Mole obeys, though he thinks Rat's mind is leaving them. But then, 10 minutes later, Rat's cudgel hits something hollow. With Mole's help, the friends reveal a door with a bell pull and a brass plate that reads, "Mr. Badger."

Door-scrapers were small metal bars, commonly attached to doorsteps, that guests could use to scrape mud off their shoes. So, Rat realizes from the moment he finds the door-scraper that he's probably found Badger's doorstep, and that Badger might be willing to shelter or otherwise help him and Mole. Mole is so cold and upset that he's having trouble following Rat's lead in this situation. Yet Rat's instincts prove to be correct, again emphasizing the importance of humbling oneself and trusting in one's mentors.

Mole falls backward in surprise, praising Rat's critical thinking skills and intellect. He insists Rat has to go somewhere his intellect will be appreciated. Rat cuts Mole off and tells him to ring the bell while he knocks on the door. Mole does as he's told.

Rat keeps Mole focused on the task at hand: getting inside Badger's house so they can be warm. Being praised for his intellect may be nice, but Rat shows that it's important to give this kind of praise at the right time—otherwise, it's meaningless.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rat and Mole wait for what seems like a long time until they hear shuffling on the inside of the door. Then the door opens a few inches, and Badger, gruff and suspicious, warns that he'll be really angry if this happens again. But when Rat announces himself, Badger's voice changes dramatically. He invites Rat and Mole into a long, dark, drafty hallway and says it's not a good night for small animals to be outside. But he leads them to the kitchen, where there's a fire and supper. The kitchen is large, with a roaring fire, two benches, and a massive trestle table. Hams and onions hang from the ceiling. Badger fetches dressing gowns and slippers so his friends can change out of their wet clothes, and he bandages Mole's injured leg.

The way Badger initially opens the door may indicate that Rat was right to warn Mole about the Wild Wood's inhabitants—Badger seems to expect that his caller is playing a rude trick on him, meaning that he doesn't expect his fellow Wild Wood residents to be particularly polite or kind. Badger's home, meanwhile, reflects his personality: the dark, almost frightening hallway mirrors Badger's gruff exterior—but inside, as evidenced by the warm, bright kitchen, Badger is a caring and generous animal. It's extremely important to him to make sure that his friends are warm and fed, and that they receive the medical attention they need.

When Mole and Rat are warm, Badger calls them to the feast he's laid out on the table. Nobody speaks for a while as they eat (and when they do speak, their mouths are full), and Mole and Rat put their elbows on the table. Badger doesn't think this matters since he doesn't go into "Society" much, but the narrator assures readers that manners *do* matter. Finally, Mole and Rat tell Badger their story. Badger listens without judging them for their bad decisions.

The novel frames Badger as an older gentleman who, because he's wealthy and respected, can get away with behaving however he wants. Table manners aren't important to him like they are to his friends (or, per the narrator, like they should be to readers). But though the narrator insists manners do *matter, the narrator also implies that being a kind and generous person is more important than keeping one's elbows off the table.*

When supper is over, Badger leads his friends back to the fire and asks for news from the **river**, and specifically of Toad. Rat says things are bad—Toad had yet another crash last week. Toad refuses to hire a driver. He's had seven cars and seven crashes now, and Mole adds that Toad has been in the hospital three times. He's also had to pay lots of fines. Rat observes that Toad is rich but not a millionaire. Unless they step in and intervene, as Toad's friends, Toad is going to ruin his life or get himself killed. Badger severely says that they can't do anything now (animal etiquette insists that nobody does anything strenuous during winter), but he promises that once summer comes, they'll force Toad to be reasonable.

Toad is engaging in risky behavior and is getting in trouble for it—but those consequences (like fines and ending up in the hospital) aren't enough to change his behavior. In light of this, Rat and Badger decide that it's their responsibility, as Toad's friends, to help him change his ways and become a better person. But while they insist they're obligated to help their friend, they're also bound by animal etiquette and the rules that guide seasonally appropriate behavior. So, their intervention will have to wait a bit longer.

Badger notices Rat nodding off. Mole laughs—he's not tired, and though he can't identify why, it's because he's an animal who's supposed to be underground. Unlike Rat, he finds Badger's underground house invigorating. Badger fetches candles and shows Rat and Mole to a long room. Half of it is a storeroom, and the other half is a bedroom. Rat and Mole fall into bed and follow Badger's instructions to not bother getting up too early in the morning.

This visit to Badger's house helps show Mole that he and Badger have more in common than they might have thought at first, by virtue of being animals who naturally live underground. In a way, Mole is going against his true nature as a mole (moles, of course, normally live underground) to live on the river with Rat, even though the novel implies that Mole is happier in his new home, with friends, than he was before.

When Rat and Mole enter the kitchen late the next morning, there are two young hedgehogs eating oatmeal at the table. The youngsters stand and nod respectfully to Rat and Mole, and one—Billy—explains that they got stuck in the snow on the way to school. They knocked on Badger's door, since everyone knows he's a kind gentleman. The hedgehogs explain that the weather is terrible, and that Badger is busy in his study. Everyone knows that Badger is actually just "busy" napping, but this is totally appropriate for an animal this time of year.

The young hedgehogs' story of calling on Badger for help cements Badger's reputation as a kind and generous animal, willing to help anyone and everyone. In this way, although he, like Toad, is wealthy, he doesn't use his status as an excuse to treat other animals poorly. In return for his help, the hedgehogs, Rat, and Mole show Badger respect by not interrupting his busy nap schedule. The hedgehogs also suggest that nature is something to respect and be wary of at this time of year; it can make life difficult for anyone, even those who live in the Wild Wood.

The doorbell rings. Since Rat is busy eating buttered toast, he sends Billy to get it. Billy returns with Otter, who throws himself on Rat—everyone on the riverbank has been worried about Rat, but Otter was certain Rat ended up at Badger's. The snow outside is terrible; Otter had fun playing in it, but it was surely terrifying. There are so many birds out. Otter came across a rabbit who only told him about Rat's whereabouts after Otter cuffed his ears. The rabbit shared that "They" were out hunting Rat and Mole and scoffed when Otter asked why he didn't help Rat and Mole. When Mole asks, Otter says he wasn't scared and shows his gleaming teeth.

Otter makes it clear in this passage that he runs in different circles than Rat and Mole do. Otter's character was modeled after British street vendors, and so it's implied that he's of a lower class than Rat, Mole, and Badger. It's obvious to other animals that he's not someone to mess with, since he's a big animal with sharp teeth—and big, important friends, like Badger. Otter also demonstrates his power by cuffing the rabbit's ears to get information; he isn't afraid to demand what he wants by any means necessary.

Badger comes into the kitchen a bit later, greets everyone kindly, and invites Otter to stay for lunch. Then he sends the young hedgehogs home with pocket money. Over lunch, Mole and Badger talk about living underground. Badger beams as Mole describes how at home he feels here, and how being underground allows an animal to forget the outside world. Badger adds that underground, if you want more space, you just dig a new room, and you never have to worry about weather ruining your house.

There seems to be no reason for Badger to give the hedgehogs money, except that he's kind and generous. Again, he uses his wealth to help others rather than to lord over them or make them feel inferior. The other characters' high opinion of him suggests that he (unlike Toad) is someone readers should admire and emulate. What Mole says about being able to forget the outside world when one is underground suggests that on some level, he sees being underground (or, more generally, withdrawing from society) as restorative.

After lunch, Badger takes Mole on a tour of his house. Mole is in awe of the size and scale, but Badger explains that this spot used to be a human city, and that his house uses elements the humans built. Nobody knows exactly what happened to the people, but they left over time, and the woods took over the land. The animals, Badger says, will always be waiting to move back into their rightful homes. He notes that now, all sorts live in the Wild Wood, which makes Mole shudder. Badger promises to send word around; nobody will intimidate his friends.

Given that The Wind in the Willows *takes place in early 20th-century Britain, the fact that humans gradually left the woods likely reflects Britain's gradual transition from agrarian to urbanized over the preceding century. In suggesting that the woods rightfully belong to the animals, Badger characterizes humans (and the modern industrialized world they represent) as invaders rather than peaceful neighbors. This attitude is meant to make readers question how they, as humans, view nature—and how their actions affect the landscape and the animals who live there.*

When Badger and Mole return to the kitchen, Rat is pacing restlessly; being underground is emotionally difficult for him. Rat is dressed and ready to go, and Otter explains that they'll be safe since he's going to walk them home. Badger notes that his passages run all through the woods, so Rat and Mole can leave by a shortcut. Presently, he leads them down a damp, winding tunnel, says goodbye quickly, and covers the tunnel entrance with dead leaves. Rat, Mole, and Otter are on the edge of the Wild Wood. Otter leads them across the fields and away from the "dense, menacing" Wild Wood. Mole realizes that he belongs in the fields and pastures. Those places aren't "Nature in the rough," but there's enough adventure to be had.

Otter shows himself to be a devoted, caring friend (much like Badger) when he insists on walking Rat and Mole home. For Mole, the trip into the Wild Wood is transformative. As he noted earlier, he learned that he should listen to Rat's advice. But now, he also realizes that he's not interested in venturing into new places that are so "dense" and "menacing." Instead, places like the fields and pastures offer adventure without having to sacrifice the safety and security of being close to home.

CHAPTER FIVE

It's mid-December, and Rat and Mole are running past a sheep pen after a day's outing with Otter. They follow a nearby track that leads them to a village. Mole is concerned; animals, as a general rule, don't appreciate villages. But Rat says that this time of year, humans are all inside, and it's fun to peek in their windows. Rat leads Mole along the orange windows. Inside each one is a small theater performance: people laughing, putting children to bed, and smoking, totally unaware that they have an audience. Mole and Rat's favorite is a window with a birdcage in it; the bird is sleeping, and cold drafts ruffle his feathers.

Looking in the humans' windows like this offers Rat and Mole a unique opportunity to observe humans in much the same way that humans watch animals in zoos. But they seem to think this is even better, since they're seeing people totally relaxed and in their own homes; the people aren't performing for anyone. This suggests that for both humans and animals, home is important because it's a place where beings feel protected and free to be themselves.

On the far side of the village, Rat and Mole can smell their fields again and know they're getting close to home. Rat walks a bit ahead and so doesn't notice when Mole suddenly stops in his tracks. The narrator explains that humans don't experiences the senses like animals do—for animals, "smell" is more than just nice smells. Smells can be warnings or summons. In this case, a smell stops Mole short, and soon, Mole realizes what he's smelling: home. It feels like invisible hands are pulling him to his old home, which he hasn't thought about since abandoning it that summer day. Mole's home clearly misses him and wants him back. It's not angry at all about being abandoned.

The narrator acknowledges that within the world of the novel, some things are the same for both people and animals (such as the importance of one's home). But there are things that human readers are never going to fully grasp about an animal's experience, and the way animals smell is one of those things. So, this passage encourages readers to develop empathy for Mole and consider what it must feel like to be able to sense his old home calling to him.

Mole knows he has to obey this summons, so he calls for Rat to stop. But Rat is too far ahead to hear Mole—clearly, he's too intent on getting home, and he can smell snow coming. So, he tells Mole they can't stop. Mole feels a huge sob coming, but he ignores it and feels as though he's betraying his old home. He follows Rat. Rat doesn't notice anything amiss until they're very close to the **river**. At this point, Mole sits down and sobs with grief. After a while, Mole chokes that "it" isn't as nice as Rat's house, or Toad Hall, or Badger's home, but it was his and he loved it. He explains that he smelled his home and suddenly wanted it, but he felt he had to leave it when Rat called. He dissolves in sobs again.

For now, Mole's loyalty to his new friend and mentor outweighs his loyalty to his old home. This is, in part, because it seems like Mole doesn't want to return to his old home alone—if he's going to go, he wants to go with Rat. The fact that Rat doesn't notice Mole's anguish is, the narrator notes, due to Rat being too intent on getting home before the snow. But being too focused on this task blinds him to the fact that Mole needs a friend to listen to and comfort him.

Rat pats Mole's shoulder and says he's been a "pig." When Mole's sobs turn to sniffs, Rat gets up and says it's time to go—and heads back from whence they came. Confused, Mole follows, and Rat explains that they're going to find Mole's home. Mole should start sniffing for it. Mole says they need to get to the **river** bank for supper, but cheerily, Rat says they're going to Mole's old home no matter what. When they get to the spot in the road where Mole stopped, Rat feels a sort of electric shock go through Mole's body.

Rat starts to make up for ignoring Mole by insisting that they immediately head back to Mole's old home. This is how Rat shows Mole he cares about him—getting a meal, or warming up, aren't nearly as important as showing his friend that he cares. In this passage, Rat also starts letting Mole take the lead; their relationship is starting to become one of equals, not just of a mentor and a mentee.

Rat follows Mole as Mole sniffs and wanders like a sleepwalker. Suddenly, Mole dives into a tunnel. Soon, he and Rat emerge on the doorstep of Mole End. The garden area contains ferns and plaster statues of "heroes of modern Italy." There are benches and a goldfish pond. Mole unlocks the door, beaming—and then collapses in tears when he sees everything covered in dust and looking "shabby." Rat ignores Mole and looks around, complimenting Mole on the architecture and furnishings. He then instructs Mole to get rid of some of the dust while he lights a fire.

Seeing Mole's home gives readers some insight into the kind of animal Mole was before he joined Rat. He clearly valued his outdoor space and wanted to show off his worldliness and class with his Italian statues. This is perhaps why Mole is so upset by the interior that's become "shabby" in his absence—this undermines Mole's pride in his home's appearance and ability to entertain guests (like Rat). But Rat again shows that he's a considerate, supportive friend by helping to make the place homey and pleasant.

Before long, there's a fire in the hearth, and Mole is feeling better. But he sobs again when he remembers that there's no food here. Rat scoffs, and after hunting around the kitchen, finds a can of sardines, some biscuits, and German sausage. When Mole continues to moan, Rat digs through the cellar and comes back with bottles of beer. As he sets the table, he asks Mole to tell him about the house. Mole is shy at first, but he soon speaks freely about where he acquired all his belongings and how he got the money to buy them. Rat tries to conceal his hunger until he is able to coax Mole to the table.

Mole is in a tough spot because he wants to be polite and be able to entertain Rat. But that's just not possible right now, since he hasn't been home in months. Rat, though, is a gracious guest and demonstrates for Mole how to make the best of this situation. He unearths whatever food and drink he can find and, to make Mole feel better, lets Mole talk about the house he designed. In this way, Rat uses his own good manners and resourcefulness to show his friend how to make the best of a less-than-ideal situation.

Just as Rat sits down, though, he and Mole hear scuffling on the gravel outside. Mole says it must be the fieldmice; they carol this time of year and always come to Mole End last. Mole always gives them hot drinks, and when he can afford it, supper. Rat and Mole head for the door and open it just as the mice start singing a Christmas carol. When they're done with their song, Rat praises the mice and invites them in. Mole hisses that there's no food for the guests, but Rat promptly calls over one of the older fieldmice, gives him some coins, and sends him to the shops for food.

With the fieldmice's arrival, Mole gets to slip back into his old life for a night, and that makes him feel happy and welcome here in the underground community. But he still needs Rat's help to manage his emotions and help the night proceed smoothly; Rat arranging for a mouse to buy food will ensure a much more pleasant evening.

As Mole asks the fieldmice about their families, Rat makes mulled ale. When it's done and everyone has had some to drink, Mole tells Rat that the fieldmice usually perform plays as well. He tries to get one of the young mice to perform a bit from last year's play, but the mouse is too frightened. Fortunately for him, the mouse Rat sent out returns with a huge basket of food. Mole takes his place at the head of the table, pleased with how this trip home turned out.

Rat continues to step into a more supportive role this evening. This is purposeful: Rat seems to want Mole to feel like he's in charge and can relax in his own home, sentiments that Mole didn't experience when he first found his house covered in dust. It's only through Rat's quick thinking and support that Mole can feel truly comfortable.

When the fieldmice finally leave, Mole and Rat sit by the fire and drink some more before finally heading to bed. Before Mole closes his eyes, he looks around the room at his belongings and his home. Mole realizes that Rat wanted him to be happy like this. He also realizes that his home is plain and simple, but it's meaningful. Mole isn't ready to abandon life on the **river** aboveground, but it's nice to know his home is always ready to welcome him back.

Importantly, Mole now sees exactly what Rat was doing: rather than rushing Mole or trying to influence him one way or the other, Rat wanted Mole to enjoy his old house so that he could make an informed decision about where he wants to live. Mole fully grasps the significance of Rat's support, and perhaps in the future, Mole will be able to pay the favor forward to another friend. This experience also shows Mole just how much he's changed. He'll always be an underground animal at heart—but now that he's experienced the beauty, happiness, and camaraderie of his riverside lifestyle with Rat, he knows that the river is where he truly belongs.

CHAPTER SIX

It's early summer now, and Mole and Rat are having breakfast and discussing what to do with their day. There's a knock at the door, and Mole leads Badger into the kitchen. This is a big deal—Badger doesn't usually call on other animals. Badger stares at Mole and Rat and then announces, "The hour has come!" Rat is confused, but Badger says it's time to "take [Toad] in hand," as they discussed in the winter. Badger says he's heard that a new **car** is arriving at Toad Hall today. Toad is surely getting dressed in the "hideous" clothes that turn him from a toad to a violent creature, and it's up to the three of them to "rescue" Toad.

In this passage, it's easy to see how powerful nature is—the seasons dictate when Badger can appropriately intervene in Toad's shenanigans. The way Badger describes Toad in this passage makes it clear that he sees cars as a corrupting force that makes Toad uncivilized and dangerous. He also insists that as Toad's friends, it's their responsibility to help him be better.

Badger leads the way down the road. He, Mole, and Rat walk single file, which is how groups of animals are supposed to walk. When they reach Toad Hall, there's a big red **car** in the driveway. Toad rushes out the front door, dressed in goggles, a cap, gaiters, and a huge overcoat. He sees his friends and starts to invite them to come along, but he falters when he notices their expressions. Badger tells Rat and Mole to bring Toad inside and then tells the chauffeur to take the car back. Then, Badger tells Toad to take off his ridiculous clothes. When Toad refuses, Rat and Mole take the garments off of Toad.

The note that Badger, Mole, and Rat are walking properly down the road and following animal etiquette contrasts with Toad's behavior. Toad's love of cars is framed as selfish and a reflection of his arrogance and lack of concern for others. When he's driving, as Badger and Rat have discussed already, Toad doesn't follow any rules. Badger can easily send the car back and overpower Toad, which again makes it clear that he's a powerful, respected figure in the community.

Toad giggles, seeming to understand what's going on. Badger scolds Toad for squandering his father's money and for ruining all the animals' reputations by driving terribly, crashing his **car**, and fighting with the police. He leads Toad into the smoking room for a more hard-hitting conversation. As soon as they're gone, Rat scoffs that a conversation will never work. But he and Mole sit and listen to Toad sob, and 45 minutes later, Toad and Badger come back out. Badger announces that Toad has vowed to give up cars forever. The only thing left is for Toad to apologize to his friends and admit he was silly for getting involved with cars at all.

Badger is essentially accusing Toad of hurting his friends and endangering the community by continuing to drive so recklessly, but Toad isn't taking these concerns seriously. Badger suggests that Toad also isn't doing what's necessary to appropriately honor his father's memory. To Badger, the solution is obvious: as Toad's friend, he believes that it's his responsibility to point out Toad's bad behavior and try to force Toad to apologize and change his ways.

Toad is silent—and then says that he's not sorry, and that **cars** are "glorious," not silly. Badger is perplexed, but Toad says he'll say anything under pressure. He's not sorry, and he definitely won't promise to never touch a car again. Indeed, he can only promise that he'll drive off in the first car he sees. Badger stands and says he knew it would come to this: he, Mole, and Rat will now stay in the house to supervise Toad until Toad sees the error of his ways. Rat and Mole take Toad upstairs and lock him in the bedroom, promising that this will be fun once Toad is over this "painful attack." After this, Toad won't waste his money, and he won't have to be ordered around by female nurses in the hospital ever again.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Toad is unwilling to cooperate. He's so selfish that everything Badger told him is going in one ear and out the other—all he cares about is the control and power he feels when driving a car. But Toad's experience in the hospital (being bossed around by female nurses) suggests that Toad's power behind the wheel isn't actually so absolute. Indeed, when he inevitably crashes, he winds up in a place where someone the novel implies is normally less powerful—a woman—can boss Toad around.

Badger, Mole, and Rat arrange to watch Toad in shifts. At first, Toad seems to *try* to upset them by arranging chairs into a **car** shape and pretending to drive, making "ghastly" noises. But as time goes on, Toad becomes depressed. One morning, when Rat relieves Badger, Badger warns Rat that Toad isn't to be trusted—Toad is still in bed and seems too subdued to be true. Badger leaves to go for a walk as Rat sits by Toad's bedside. Without thinking, Rat reveals that Mole has gone out with Badger. Toad insists he can't possibly get out of bed—he won't be around much longer. It seems too much to ask to request that Rat fetch the doctor, and perhaps a lawyer as well.

Just as when he's in the hospital, Toad is powerless now that his friends are keeping him under house arrest. But Toad also isn't being mature about—pretending to drive and making the "ghastly" noises reads as childish, which in turn suggests that Toad really does need this kind of supervision. From this passage, it's clear that the friendship dynamic between Toad and the others is somewhat warped: Toad is more like a child in need of parenting than an equal, which is taxing on his friends.

The request for the lawyer disturbs Rat, so he leaves immediately for the village. Toad, of course, isn't ill at all, so as soon as he sees Rat leave, he gets dressed and ties a rope out of sheets. He climbs out his window and heads in the opposite direction as Rat did. When Badger and Mole return and discover what happened, Badger brutally scolds Rat. He says they should stay at Toad Hall for a bit longer, since there's no telling when Toad will return on a stretcher, or escorted by police. Toad no doubt thinks he's very clever, so he might do any silly thing.

Toad has no interest in accepting his friends' help at this point. So, he prioritizes his own desires—and he doesn't express any remorse that Rat is going to get in serious trouble with Badger. But even as Toad rejects his friends' help, Badger insists that they can't give up. They may have failed to control Toad this time, but Badger knows it's essential that they be here for Toad and help pick up the pieces whenever he does return home.

Toad, "gay and irresponsible," is walking along the road miles away from home. He's very pleased with himself; it seems like nature is singing a song praising him. He sighs that Rat isn't smart at all. When he returns, he should try to remedy that. As Toad marches along, thinking these conceited thoughts, he spots an inn and realizes he hasn't eaten breakfast. He stops in and orders a huge luncheon. Halfway through the meal, he hears his favorite sound: poop-poop! Toad hears the **car** turn into the yard and tries to control his emotions. The party from the car comes into the coffee room, and Toad can't stand it. He pays his bill and goes outside to inspect the car.

Right now, Toad seems to think that his friends are just trying to spoil his fun. He doesn't understand that they're trying to help him because he's so conceited and cares only about what he wants, no matter the consequences. The passage highlights this when Toad hears the car pull into the inn and can't control himself. Toad is motivated by his overwhelming desire to be behind the wheel of a car, and it seems likely that this is going to lead to disaster.

There's nobody watching the **car**. Before Toad knows it, passion seizes him, and he's driving down the road as fast as the car can go. Toad is the "the terror, the traffic-queller, the Lord of the lone trail." He doesn't know where he's going—he's just recklessly following his instincts.

By stealing this car, Toad shows that he doesn't respect other people or their belongings. Indeed, he seems proud of his crime, bragging that he's "the Lord" of the road. The novel suggests that it's his instinct to act this way—it's something innate to Toad, meaning that he'll have to learn to say no to these urges at some point.

Later, Toad stands trial: the Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates states that Toad has been found guilty of stealing a **car**, of endangering the public with his driving, and of "gross impertinence" to the police. The clerk lists his suggested sentences for each offense and suggests a total of 20 years in prison. The Chairman sentences Toad to 20 years, and "brutal minions" chain Toad. They drag him across the marketplace, where people throw vegetables and insults at him (they all love seeing "a gentleman in difficulties"). They take Toad into ancient towers and down stairs until they reach a dark dungeon kept by an ancient gaoler (jailer). The gaoler obediently locks Toad in a cell.

Since Toad's friends weren't successful in containing him, Toad now has to face serious legal consequences for his actions. All of Toad's crimes have to do with not using his manners and disrespecting others, and for these crimes, Toad is removed from society. The note that people love seeing a gentleman in trouble suggests that wealthy animals like Toad do attract ire from the lower classes—though given how the other animals respect and admire Badger, it seems likely that Toad's arrogant attitude is more offensive than his wealth in and of itself.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A small wren is still singing, even though it's past 10 p.m. It's been a hot day, and Mole is stretched out on the bank, trying to cool off. Minutes later, Rat returns from a day spent with Otter. He's clearly preoccupied. Rat explains that the otters tried to serve him a pleasant dinner, but Rat felt terrible—Otter's son Portly is missing again, and the family is worried. Mole notes that Portly always goes missing, but other animals take care of him, and he always comes home. Rat explains that it's different this time: Portly has been gone for days and doesn't yet know how to swim well. Otter is concerned about the weir, since the snowmelt is still coming fast, and there are traps around. Otter has been spending nights by the ford, a favorite spot of Portly's.

Mole and Rat's concern about Portly's disappearance exemplifies how close-knit their community is. Moreover, it again speaks to the idea that the natural world isn't always delightful and protective—it can also be dangerous. A weir is a type of small dam; it may make the water deeper and more dangerous, especially if snowmelt is causing water levels to rise anyway. These fears about how the river might end up hurting Portly outweigh what Mole has to say: that the community will look out for Portly and ensure that no harm comes to him.

Rat and Mole sit in silence, thinking of poor Otter. Then, Mole says he can't possibly go to bed—they should go out and look for Portly by moonlight. Rat agrees, so they fetch the boat and head out. Rat paddles cautiously; the dark shadows make the **river** difficult to navigate, and there seem to be strange voices speaking. Things become less frightening when the moon rises, casting everything in a warm white glow. Rat ties the boat to a willow so he and Mole can search one bank first, and then the other. Finally, the moon sets.

For Rat and Mole, it's obvious that they must help Otter by going out to look for Portly. This shows how unselfish the two of them are, as they're more than willing to lose out on a night of sleep to help. At night, the river and the banks are much less inviting, again suggesting that nature can be fearsome as well as beautiful and enjoyable.

It's dark and scary again for a while, and then faint light illuminates the landscape. Everything is still until a breeze rustles the rushes. Suddenly, Rat sits straight up and then lays back. He says he heard something so beautiful, he wishes he hadn't heard it—not hearing it now is painful. He hears the sound again and explains to Mole that he can hear piping in the distance. Mole is a bit confused, but he rows when Rat tells him to. All he can hear is the wind. Listening, Rat guides Mole along a stream and into a backwater, until they come to a bunch of flowers on the bank. At this point, Mole can hear the music too. He understands why Rat is crying. The melody is intoxicating and seems to summon the friends.

As the river cycles from frightening to inviting and back again, it suggests that nature is never just *good or bad—it can be either, and it's sometimes both. Things get a little stranger when Rat starts to hear the piping. This introduces a mystical, spiritual element to the novel—Rat could be hearing something akin to the titular wind in the willows, or there could be an actual being making this music. Either way, Mole and Rat's reaction shows how much they revere nature. They're willing to submit to nature's power and come when it calls, just as Mole obeyed the summons to leave his underground home at the beginning of the novel.*

The flowers seem more vividly colored and strongly scented than usual. After a bit, Rat and Mole come upon the weir, which turns the water green and makes it foamy where it dams the **river**. In the middle of the stream there's a small island covered in trees. They land the boat silently and then climb up the bank to where fruit trees circle a green lawn. Rat says that they'll find Him here—and Mole suddenly feels overcome with awe. He drops to his knees, feeling at peace. Rat looks terrified. Mole knows he can't refuse the summons, so he looks up. Ahead is the "Friend and Helper," with curved horns, kind eyes, muscled arms, and pan pipes. Nestled between his hooves is Portly.

The "Friend and Helper" is Pan, a Greek demigod who's half human and half goat. Pan oversees nature, among other things. Encountering him on this island, with Portly sleeping between his hooves, suggests that nature can be a protective force. For those who obey "the summons," respect nature, and look at it with awe, the novel suggests that nature will give back and be helpful. But personifying nature like this also speaks to how powerful nature is. Pan doesn't have *to protect Portly—his protection isn't guaranteed.*

Mole and Rat bow their heads and worship as the sun peeks over the horizon. When they look up, the "Vision" is gone, and birds are singing. They're suddenly miserable—but then a breeze blows on their faces, and they forget what they saw. Dazed, Mole and Rat look at each other again and then notice Portly. Rat heads for the baby otter, while Mole tries once more to remember his wonderful dream. But he shakes his head and continues on.

The omniscient third-person narration in this passage clues readers in to the fact that Pan has probably wiped Mole and Rat's memories of the encounter. This plunges them back into the real, tangible world and their task at hand: getting Portly home safe. For now, their desire to help is fighting with their desire to figure out what happened and recapture the magic of a few minutes ago.

Portly wakes up and is, at first, thrilled to see Mole and Rat. But then he becomes anxious, as children who wake up in strange places tend to be. Mole comforts Portly while Rat inspects deep hoof marks in the grass. But Mole calls Rat back to their task, and they promise Portly a ride in Rat's boat. They set off soon after. To Mole and Rat, the world is lovely but seems less rich than it did a while ago. Rat steers for where he knows Otter is waiting, and when they're in sight of their friend, Mole lifts Portly onto dry land. Rat and Mole watch the father and son embrace and then head home.

Mole and Rat have just had a religious experience, so it makes sense that the world around them doesn't seem quite as bright as it did not long ago—seeing Pan changed their perspective. But they remain dedicated to their task of helping Portly and Otter, showing that Rat and Mole's top priority is to serve their neighbors.

Mole is exhausted, but he insists it's not that he was up all night. Rat says he feels like he just experienced something "very surprising and splendid and beautiful," but he also can't remember what. They can still hear some music in the reeds, and Rat can even pick out some words. He can hear the singer saying that he helps people but makes them forget so they don't descend into unhappiness. Rat hears a few more verses but then loses the thread. Mole realizes a moment later that Rat is fast asleep.

Readers are aware that Rat and Mole just had a mystical, spiritual experience, but neither of them remember this. In the song Rat hears (which is presumably Pan's song), readers learn why: Pan wants people to be happy, and after seeing how awe-inspiring he is, nothing else will be quite as good and it'll be harder to enjoy life. He must be a mostly unseen presence to ensure that people continue to appreciate nature. In this way, the novel suggests that the natural world—rather than the spiritual realm—is where beings should direct their focus.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Toad gives himself over to misery once he's imprisoned in the dungeon. He believes this is the end of him: he'll no longer be handsome, popular, rich, or free. Sobbing, he realizes he was horrible for committing his crimes, and he hopes that "wise" Badger, "intelligent" Rat, and "sensible" Mole don't forget him. Toad spends weeks crying, wishing he'd listened to his friends. He refuses meals—until he realizes he can pay for luxuries to be ferried into the prison.

At first, prison seems to be doing its job. Toad is remorseful and acknowledges that his friends had the right idea—and that stealing a car was morally wrong. But Toad's privilege keeps him from really internalizing these ideas, as he seems to perk up once he realizes that money can buy him some comfort. With this, the novel links Toad's selfishness and unwillingness to change to the fact that he has a constant supply of cash and can essentially use his money to distract himself from his problems.

The gaoler has a lovely, kindhearted daughter who adores animals. She keeps several as pets, and one day, she asks to take over guarding Toad. At first, she enters his cell with warm food—but Toad kicks his legs and sobs, refusing the meal. She leaves him alone, and as Toad smells the food, he starts to think of poetry, meadows, Toad Hall, and his friends. He also thinks of how clever he is. These thoughts revive Toad so that when the gaoler's daughter returns with buttered toast later, he munches his toast and happily tells her all about himself and Toad Hall. When the girl fetches more toast, Toad tells her about his friends. When she leaves for the night, Toad is back to his old self. He sings himself a few songs and sleeps well.

The gaoler's daughter's interest in Toad seems to bring about a transformation in him—she's willing to listen to him, which no one else has been willing to do since he's been imprisoned. Put simply, Toad needs an audience in order to be happy, whether that's his friends at home or the gaoler's daughter. He loves showing off and wants to impress people, and he doesn't know how to function if he can't do those things. This is all a part of his conceited nature, suggesting that Toad's change of heart in the previous passage was only temporary.

Over the next several weeks, the gaoler's daughter starts to feel sorry for Toad. His offense seems trivial to her. For his part, Toad believes the girl is falling in love with him, and he wishes the "social gulf" between them wasn't so wide. But he's annoyed one morning when she doesn't seem as interested in what he has to say. She begs him to listen and says her aunt is a washerwoman. Toad tells her not to feel bad about it—his aunts should be washerwomen too. She snaps at him and says that her aunt does the prisoners' laundry. The aunt is quite poor, and Toad has claimed that he's very rich. So, it seems like the aunt and Toad could come to agreement, and perhaps Toad could escape wearing the aunt's clothes. The two have very similar figures.

Toad has no evidence that the gaoler's daughter is falling in love with him—this seems to be a product of his imagination, and it reflects how self-important he is. His high opinion of himself made even more obvious when he brushes off the gaoler's daughter's attempt to help him escape prison. She's trying to help Toad at great risk to herself (she could get in trouble for aiding his escape), but that's of no concern to Toad—he just resents the implication that he could realistically pose as a washerwoman.

Toad scoffs that his figure is elegant, for a toad. The gaoler's daughter tells Toad he's being proud and ungrateful. After some arguing, Toad agrees that he's being silly and asks to meet the aunt. So, the next evening, the girl shows her aunt into Toad's cell, where Toad has gold coins laid out. The aunt insists that she be bound and gagged, so she can hopefully keep her position. This thrills Toad: it'll prop up his reputation as a "desperate and dangerous fellow." Once the aunt is tied up, the gaoler's daughter helps Toad into the cotton dress—and laughs, since Toad looks just like her aunt.

Ultimately, the gaoler's daughter is able to get Toad to see that he's being rude and selfish. She tries to help him see that it's elitist to refuse the help because being a washerwoman is something that Toad thinks is beneath him. This also points to Toad's classism: the way he speaks about the gaoler's daughter and her aunt makes it clear that he doesn't think highly of working-class people, particularly women.

It takes Toad several hours, but it turns out to be easy to get out of the prison. Guards help him and joke with him. Their humor is crude and clumsy, but Toad keeps his annoyance in check until he's outside the prison. Once free, Toad hurries off. He knows he needs to get somewhere where his disguise won't be recognized. Fortunately, he spots a railway station and discovers there's a train going the right direction in 30 minutes. But at the ticket counter, when Toad reaches for his waistcoat pocket, there's no pocket—and no money. Toad realizes his waistcoat with his money, keys, and other accoutrements are still in his cell. He's no different now than the "inferior" people with no pockets.

Toad's classism continues to shine through here when he's so annoyed by the guards' "clumsy" humor. The implication is that whatever they're saying isn't funny if one is wealthy and educated, as Toad is. But it bruising Toad's ego to realize that for all intents and purposes, he's just like the people he recently insulted, since he has no pockets and no money. For now, Toad is a working-class washerwoman for all intents and purposes, and he can't rely on his money or reputation to help him.

The clerk just stares and laughs when Toad promises to send along his ticket money tomorrow. He asks the "madam" to stand aside, and another gentleman calls Toad "woman" as well, which makes Toad very angry. Toad wanders down the platform, crying, knowing this will all be over soon and he'll be back in his cell. He wonders if he can squeeze under a seat, but just then, the engine driver asks Toad what's the matter. Toad sobs that he's a washerwoman and needs to get home to his kids, who are surely playing with matches. The engine driver proposes that if Toad washes a few of his shirts, he'll take Toad in the engine. Toad happily climbs up, vowing to send a lot of money to the engine driver once he gets home.

Were it obvious that Toad is actually a wealthy gentleman, it's possible that his promise to pay for his ticket tomorrow would work. But the clerk's laughter suggests that he doesn't trust working-class people to pay up—and since Toad is disguised as a washerwoman, he's no different than the actual working-class people on the platform. Fortunately for Toad, there are people who feel sorry for him. But Toad is, of course, lying about having naughty kids at home, and it doesn't seem to occur to him that this lie might be exposed and get him in deeper trouble.

The train pulls out of the station and soon, there are fields and trees on either side. Toad Hall, friends, and money seem to be getting closer every second. Toad knows his friends will love to hear his story of his grand escape when he gets home; they'll praise him for being so clever. In his happiness, Toad starts to jump and sing. He stops immediately, though, when after some looking and listening, the engine driver says there's another train behind them. Toad becomes depressed and barely acknowledges when the engine driver says the train is chasing them. The engine driver cries that there are odd people in the other train: old guards, policemen, and plainclothes detectives.

At first, things seem to be working out perfectly for Toad, which makes him feel clever and powerful. But Toad also doesn't seem to realize that his friends won't be pleased to hear his story, as they'll likely take offense to his lying and cruel treatment of working-class people. For now, Toad doesn't yet have to worry about that, since the train of police pursuing him is a more pressing concern. Clearly, Toad isn't as clever as he thought he was, since his pursuers seem to know exactly who—and where—Toad is.

When the engine driver says the people on the other train are shouting for his train to stop, Toad falls to his knees. Toad confesses that he's actually "the well-known and popular Mr. Toad" of Toad Hall, and he's just escaped from a dungeon. Mr. Toad admits that he "borrowed" a **car** while its owners were eating, and magistrates don't think highly of actions like that. The engine driver says that he really should give Toad up, especially since he hates cars. But he hates when policemen tell him what to do, and he hates seeing animals cry. He promises to help Toad.

Toad makes sure the engine driver realizes that he has a reputation as a "well-known," "popular," and wealthy gentleman. He also avoids saying that he actually stole the car (though the engine driver seems to understand that Toad did steal it). All of this shows that Toad isn't willing to fess up to his crimes or be humble. He thinks his reputation should be enough to convince the engine driver to help him—and he's just lucky it works this time.

For a while, Toad and the engine driver shovel more coals into the furnace, but it doesn't do enough. The engine driver explains that there's a tunnel ahead and woods on the other side. They'll go fast through the tunnel—the other train will slow down—and on the other side, Toad will be able to jump out and hide. The plan works perfectly; from the bushes, Toad watches the police chase the engine-driver's train. He laughs until he realizes it's late and cold, and he has no money. The woods seem unfriendly, and animals jeer at Toad. Finally, Toad curls up in a hollow tree.

Toad likes to think of himself as clever and in charge—but in this situation, he doesn't have to do anything but follow the engine driver's instructions. He benefits from the engine driver doing the hard work—much like when Rat and Mole did all of the work on the caravan trip, or when the gaoler's daughter facilitated his escape—and then takes credit for it. But Toad seems just as afraid of the woods now as Mole was when he ventured into the Wild Wood alone. That experience humbled Mole and transformed his behavior, so perhaps it will do the same for Toad.

CHAPTER NINE

Rat is restless, and he doesn't know why. It's still summer, but the leaves are just starting to turn, and change is in the air. There seem to be fewer birds every day, and Rat is very aware of this. The narrator explains that like everything else, "Nature's Grand Hotel has its season." Guests pack up and depart, and those who stay behind for the off season become depressed and defensive as they try to convince their friends to stay too. Those who leave clearly don't know how great the "hotel" is in the off season.

This passage's description of autumn, and the migratory birds that leave the English riverside for the south, again emphasizes that nature is a powerful force—Rat, and other "guests" who stay behind, can't convince anyone to stay. Rat may just be annoyed because he doesn't feel as powerful and in-control as he usually does in the summer, when life is exactly how he likes it.

Rat is so anxious that he struggles to settle on any one task. He wanders around fields and through the wheat, where he can usually chat with the mice. But today, the mice are busy digging or planning other houses aboveground. One field mouse apologetically acknowledges that it *is* too early to move, but they have to get started before it's too late. Annoyed, Rat returns to the **river**, which never leaves for the winter.

The new houses the mice are planning are presumably winter homes; they probably have to leave the field before farmers harvest the wheat. For them, the changes are practical—their safety depends on moving. Rat has a home that's safe and comfortable all year, so he doesn't quite grasp their urgency (this highlights Rat's relative privilege, too).

In some of the trees by the **river**, Rat spots several swallows. He asks the swallows if they're really leaving now. One says that they're just making plans—talking about the journey and what they'll do is half the fun. Rat admits he doesn't get it; change is hard and scary. Another swallow says Rat has it all wrong. The urge to fly south is pleasant, not anxiety-inducing, and traveling is how the birds get to catch up with one another. One bird says he stayed behind once and it was nice at first, but then was just cold and depressing. He eventually headed south and thoroughly enjoyed the warm sun. The birds forget Rat as they dive back into conversation about the south.

For Rat, it would be difficult to leave his cozy home on the river, which he's spent so much time furnishing and making his own. But the birds and the mice in the previous passage see things differently: just as Rat feels compelled to stay home and enjoy his cozy fire and the river, they feel compelled to make their homes in different places depending on the season. They still have things in common, though: recall how Rat and his friends spent all last winter by the fire, talking about the summer. That serves much the same purpose as the birds talking about the south now—it allows them to connect and relive happy times.

But Rat isn't offended. Rather, he's fascinated. What would the south be like? Rat closes his eyes, imagining, and when he opens them the **river** looks gray and cold. He interrupts the birds and ask why they ever come back here, if the south is so great. One explains that the urge to fly north again is much the same; they all want to enjoy English streams and meadows during the summer.

Suddenly, Rat starts to see the world a little differently—he's developing empathy for the birds and their way of life. But his question as to why the birds don't stay in the south shows that Rat doesn't quite grasp how powerful nature is—within the logic of the novel, animals migrate simply because that's what nature tells them to do.

Rat leaves the birds, feeling an urge to go south. There are seas, villas, and olive groves to explore, but instead of setting off, Rat buries himself in a hedge near the lane. But after a while, a wayfarer rat interrupts Rat's reverie and sits down beside him. The wayfarer is older and worn. After some silence, the wayfarer lists all the things he can hear, like moorhens and cows, and says that Rat's life on the **river** is great if one is strong enough. Rat says his life is the best, but without conviction. The wayfarer says that really, life on the river is amazing—he's done it for six months now and is heading back to his life in the south.

The birds' tales of the south aren't enough to convince Rat he should pack up and go. Retreating into the hedge is an attempt to take comfort in the landscape he loves and feel better about his year-round life on the river. The wayfarer, though, makes it clear that Rat could live a different life if he wanted to. They're both rats, but the similarities end there: the wayfarer seems to have spent most of his life living a totally different lifestyle than Rat.

As the rats converse, the wayfarer shares that he's been on a farm a bit north from here, but he's really a seafaring rat. He was born in Constantinople to Norwegian rats. These days, he calls any port between London and Constantinople home. Rat asks about the wayfarer's "great voyages," but the wayfarer says he sticks to ships that travel along the coast. When Rat asks for more stories about the south, the wayfarer is happy to oblige.

Rat's query about the "great voyages" suggests that he has a very specific idea of what life is like for a rat on a ship. But the wayfarer gently insists that Rat probably doesn't have a nuanced understanding of his life. Nevertheless, through listening to the wayfarer's stories, Rat will get to vicariously experience some adventure and learn about other ways of living.

The wayfarer says he left Constantinople this last year due to family troubles. He spent several days in Greece and the Levant and then the ships traveled to Venice. Venice is amazing: a rat can wander, feast by the Grand Canal, and enjoy shellfish. The wayfarer spent some time in Sicily, and then moved on to Corsica. Rat remarks that it must be a hard life, but the wayfarer winks—it's hard for the crew, but not for a rat who sleeps in the captain's quarters. Resuming his tale, the wayfarer describes how the crew arrived in Alassio and took barrels of alcohol to shore, where he slept in olive groves and watched the peasants work. Then they journeyed to Marseilles, where the wayfarer ate more delicious shellfish.

The wayfarer's tone as he talks about the food he eats and the easy experience he has sleeping in the captain's quarters mirrors Rat's earlier assertion that there's nothing worth doing as much as "messing about in boats." Both rats live lives of luxury, where all they have to care about is their own amusement and pleasure. But Rat and the wayfarer amuse themselves in very different ways. The wayfarer doesn't have a home like Rat does—instead, he seems to view the whole world (or at least Europe) as his home.

At this, Rat asks if the wayfarer is hungry and agrees to bring a picnic to share. He hurries home, packs foods he's sure the wayfarer will enjoy, and returns to the roadside. As they eat, the wayfarer describes the rest of his trip through Spanish, French, and then English ports to an inland farm. Rat is spellbound. The wayfarer stares Rat in the eye as he speaks, and his eyes seem like the sea, or like rubies. Rat can't tell if the wayfarer just talks, or if he's singing—or if he's listening to the wind instead. The wayfarer describes fishing, perilous nights, and harbor lights. Finally, the wayfarer says it's time for him to continue his journey. He'll reach the port and find a ship heading south—and he knows Rat will come too.

Rat is essentially playing host here, and it's important to him to make sure his guest feels comfortable and heard (hence choosing particular foods). The wayfarer starts to really enchant Rat's imagination with his stories, making Rat feel like he's already traveling the world and not stuck at home. It's interesting when the wayfarer says he knows Rat will follow. After all, in the first pages of the book, Rat told Mole that the Wide World wasn't something to concern himself with. Now, it seems like Rat might go against that and leave his home for the Wide World after all.

As the wayfarer walks away, Rat packs his picnic basket, returns home, and then packs a satchel. He's about to step outside just as Mole returns home, surprised to see Rat in this state. Rat dreamily says he's going south—but Mole, frightened, holds Rat back. Rat's eyes are gray and distant, not their usual brown. Once Rat stops fighting, Mole settles him in a chair. Rat falls asleep and wakes later, looking dejected—but his eyes are brown again. He attempts to explain to Mole what happened, but he can't convey all he heard and felt.

Mole, as Rat's pupil, has internalized his mentor's advice—so it's shocking for him when Rat prepares to go against his own warnings and leave home. Mole essentially returns Rat's favors and kindness by restraining Rat and making sure that he doesn't make the mistake of leaving the riverbank. Mole's experiences (and indeed, Rat's advice) have taught Mole that such a far-off adventure is too risky.

All Mole knows for sure is that Rat isn't leaving, but Rat is still sad and disinterested in daily life here. Casually, Mole brings up the harvest and soon, Rat happily joins in the conversation. Then, Mole fetches paper and a pencil for Rat and remarks that Rat hasn't written any poetry in some time. Rat insists he's too tired—but later, when Mole walks past, Rat is absorbed in his work.

This passage shows how mature and generous Mole has become over the last year and a half he spent with Rat. It's important to him to lift his friend's spirits, which he does by reminding him how happy their life is here—and by getting Rat back into poetry, something that makes Rat feel fulfilled. Rat's mentorship of Mole has been so effective that Mole has become something of a mentor himself.

CHAPTER TEN

Since the hollow tree's opening faces east, Toad wakes early in the morning. His toes are also cold, so just before he wakes he dreams that he's at home and his blankets get up and leave the room to get warm downstairs. When he wakes up, he remembers he's free and feels suddenly exuberant. He's ready for the world to help him and amuse him, as it used to. So, Toad wanders hopefully down the road and through the woods. Before long, though, Toad is annoyed—he'd like the road to tell him where to go, not just be silent.

Toad's nonsensical dream of his blankets getting up and leaving him freezing suggests that it's hard for him to accept that he's not actually home in comfort at Toad Hall. Toad's entitlement also shines through when the narrator notes that Toad wants the world to help and amuse him. But as previous chapters have shown, nature isn't always helpful, especially to those who don't respect it as much as the novel suggests they should.

Eventually, the road meets a canal. Around a bend, Toad sees a horse plodding along and pulling a barge. There's a stout woman on the barge, and she greets Toad with a "good morning." Toad laments that it would be a good morning if he weren't out looking for his married daughter, while his washing work and his mischievous small children wait at home. He tells the woman his daughter lives near Toad Hall, and the woman says she's going that direction. She offers to give Toad a lift and helps him into the barge. Toad is thrilled; he always comes out on top.

Toad genuinely believes he's better than the working-class people who help him (and that he's impersonating), so he doesn't feel guilty about taking advantage of their kindnesses and hoodwinking them. At this point, the barge woman hasn't asked for any compensation—she seems to just be willing to help someone in need. Toad doesn't recognize this, though, instead focusing on how clever he thinks he is to have fooled her.

The woman asks Toad about the washing business, which he airily deems the best work in the country. He says he has 20 girls working for him; they're "nasty little hussies," but he keeps them in line. Toad also boasts that he adores washing. The woman says this is fantastic—she also loves washing, but her husband is a shirker, and since he's off hunting, she can't do the laundry. Toad tries to change the subject, but it's too late: the woman asks Toad if she can do him a favor by letting him wash some of her underwear for her, since he likes washing so much.

Toad warms to his subject at first; it seems to delight him to speak poorly of the young women he supposedly employs, and it's fun to playact for a moment. But of course, things backfire when the woman offers to do Toad a favor and let him do some of her laundry. Again, it seems like she's just trying to be nice and help out a washerwoman who loves her job. The joke, though, is on Toad: given his immense wealth, he's probably never done his own laundry before.

There's no way for Toad to escape. The woman won't let him steer, and it's too far to leap to the bank. He decides washing can't be that hard, gathers the supplies, and tries to remember what he's seen through laundry windows. But a half-hour later, Toad is extremely angry. He keeps dropping the soap and the garments are still dirty. The woman gazes out the front of the barge, fortunately—but Toad's paws are getting wrinkly. He's proud of his paws, and he hates this. Suddenly, the woman laughs: Toad is obviously lying and has never done laundry in his life.

It's obvious that Toad has never washed clothes before, and the fact that he hates the task primarily because his paws are getting wrinkly is another mark of Toad's privilege. As a wealthy gentleman, Toad's paws probably aren't marked by calluses or other signs that he works with his hands. In this way, Toad is really objecting to the fact that he now looks like a lower-class person who has to work.

Toad loses control. He shouts that the woman can't speak that way to her "betters," insults her weight, and snaps that he's a distinguished toad who won't let a barge-woman laugh at him. The woman peers under Toad's bonnet and remarks that Toad really is a toad—and she can't have a "nasty, crawly" toad on her clean barge. She grabs Toad by the legs and throws him into the water. When Toad finally crawls onto the bank, he sees that the woman is laughing. He vows to get revenge.

The woman has only laughed at Toad and pointed out the truth: that Toad lied. But in response to this perceived transgression, Toad feels justified in insulting her and trying to put her in her place. He expects respect from lower-class people, even when he takes advantage of them and hasn't earned *their respect. So, Toad doesn't elicit much sympathy when the woman throws him overboard—like Mole's experience when he ventured into the Wild Wood, this is a lesson in how all actions have consequences.*

After taking a moment to recover, Toad gathers up his skirts and races after the barge. He ignores the woman's taunts, unties the horse, and leaps on, galloping away. The horse gallops for a bit, but it's not particularly fit. It slows to a walk. Toad tries not to think about how long it's been since he last ate as they amble along. After a while, the horse suddenly stops, almost unseating Toad who was nearly asleep. Toad looks around and sees a caravan nearby, with a "gipsy" man sitting out front. The man has a fire going—and on it is a pot filled with a wonderful smelling stew. Toad is suddenly wildly hungry, but he can't decide if he wants to fight the man or try something else.

It's not enough for Toad to just insult the woman's appearance and leave it at that. Now he steals her horse, with seemingly no recognition that she needs the horse to do her job—this could seriously affect her life. Then, when Toad comes across the "gipsy" man, it again shows how little he values people of lower classes. (Note that "gipsy" or "gypsy" is considered an ethnic slur for the Romani people, so its use here reflects the era in which the book was written.) Toad's first thought is to overpower the man to take the stew, which would deprive the man of his dignity and bodily autonomy.

Finally, the "gipsy" man asks Toad if he'd like to sell his horse. Toad had no idea "gipsies" love to buy and sell horses—but here's an opportunity to get a meal and money. Toad insists he can't sell his "beautiful young horse"; the horse is well-bred and loves Toad. But he asks anyway what the man might pay for the horse. The man offers a shilling per leg. Toad pauses to do the math and then insists his horse is worth way more than four shillings. The man says his final offer is five shillings.

The way the narrator has described the horse in no way suggests that he's young and beautiful—he's an old horse who's functional but not particularly impressive. This will be obvious to the man if he knows anything about horses. Toad's ability to effectively lie is slipping, and his difficulty with simple math makes him look even less clever.

Toad thinks it over. He's hungry, has no money, and is far from home. Five shillings doesn't seem like enough—but then again, he stole the horse, so it's all profit. Toad says he'll only accept six shillings and six pence, in addition to a meal; and he'll throw in the horse's harness. The "gipsy" man agrees after some grumbling. He then hands over the money and serves Toad as many servings of his stew as Toad can eat. An hour later, the man points Toad in the right direction, and Toad sets off.

Toad continues to think only of himself; he expresses no interest in giving the man a fair deal. Toad's dishonesty and selfishness also contrast sharply with how honestly and generously the man agrees to this deal and then feeds Toad. Toad might look down on the lower classes, but the novel portrays the working-class people he encounters as morally superior to Toad in every way.

Toad is in great spirits. He has money, he's almost home, and the food makes him feel "careless" and confident. He walks along, thinking of his adventures, and decides he's the cleverest animal in the world. As he lists what's happened in the last few days, he becomes so conceited that he composes a song in his own honor. The narrator only lists a few of the "milder" verses, in which Toad saves the day in a variety of situations. Toad walks and sings until he reaches a road—and hears a **car** coming. He decides to hail the car and ask for a ride to Toad Hall.

Toad falls back into his old ways as soon as he's physically comfortable again. Now that he's eaten, it's easy for him to focus on how great he is, and it no longer matters so much that he's far from home and doesn't have much money. The song he sings only drives home how conceited he is. It also seems like Toad's choice to hail the car is probably a bad one, since he can't control himself around cars and could get himself in even deeper trouble.

Confidently, Toad steps into the road—until he sees that the **car** is the very same one he stole not so long ago. He sinks to the ground, figuring he'll go back to jail. He laments that he's so conceited. But the car soon stops, and the men get out. They believe Toad's washerwoman disguise and think he's fainted, so they pick Toad up to take him to the nearest village. This makes Toad feel courageous again; clearly, the drivers don't recognize him. He slowly sits up, thanks the men, and asks if he can sit in the front to get the fresh air in his face. The men oblige.

When Toad thinks he's going to suffer consequences (if the drivers recognize him), he feels terrible and regrets his actions. But as soon as he thinks he can get away with tricking them, he's back to his old, conceited self. This suggests that Toad hasn't suffered consequences bad enough to make him permanently change his ways yet.

Suddenly, old yearnings grip Toad again—why shouldn't he give in? He asks the driver if he can try driving, and the man laughs. He and his fellow agree it won't do any harm to let a washerwoman drive. Toad slides to the driver's seat and starts off slow. As he gets faster, one of the men warns him to be careful—and Toad loses his temper. He shouts that he's not a washerwoman; he's Toad, the "motor-**car** snatcher" who always escapes and is fearless. The driving party is aghast that the very Toad who stole their car is now driving it, and they try to restrain him.

For Toad, "why shouldn't he give in?" is a rhetorical question. In his mind, there's no reason he shouldn't give in. But given that Toad has been imprisoned and faced a lot of unnecessary hardship for doing things like this, there are, of course, many reasons why he shouldn't drive. One of them shows up later in this passage: cars cause Toad to lose his temper and make him even more conceited than usual. Admitting to his crimes suggests that Toad believes he's going to get away with this, and it's unclear if he's right.

This is a mistake, since they don't stop the **car** first. Toad turns the wheel and crashes through a hedge—and the car goes right into a pond. Toad flies through air and likes the sensation until he hits the ground. Then, he leaves the drivers struggling in the muddy pond and runs away as fast as he can. When he's far away, he laughs and picks up his conceited song again—until he notices a driver and policemen running after him. Toad races on, regretting how self-centered he's been. Toad is a stout animal and can't outrun the policemen, but as he looks back at his pursuers, the ground suddenly disappears. Toad ran right into the **river**. He vows to never steal a car again as the river sweeps him along. When he finally manages to grab the riverbank, Rat emerges out of a dark hole in the bank.

Toad shows how little he cares about other people's belongings when he crashes the car into the pond. This may ruin it, but Toad doesn't care—it's not his. Then, it's significant that Toad starts to regret stealing the car once he falls into the river. The river represents the natural world's power—and the novel has implied that cars (and the modern world they represent) disrupt nature. The fact that the river is able to overwhelm both Toad the car so easily suggests that nature isn't something to be disrespected or ignored.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Rat pulls Toad out of the **river** by his scruff. Toad is relieved and happy—at his friend's house, he won't have to worry about being caught or about trying to be a lowly washerwoman. Immediately, in a shout, Toad starts to tell Rat about his exploits. But Rat very seriously tells Toad to go clean up and change so he looks like a gentleman. *Then* they can talk. Toad considers arguing but then sees himself in a mirror and heads right upstairs. In clean clothes, Toad thinks everyone was an "idiot" for ever mistaking him for a washerwoman.

Toad assumes that Rat won't just be thrilled that he escaped, but that Rat also won't try to turn Toad in. While it's still unclear whether Rat is going to report Toad, it seems pretty clear he doesn't approve of what Toad has been up to. None of this really gets through to Toad, though, as he now feels safe and so is back to being full of himself. He belittles all the people who helped him when he suggests they were "idiots" for believing his washerwoman disguise.

Downstairs, Rat has lunch ready on the table. As Toad eats greedily, he tells Rat about his adventures, focusing on his cleverness and boasting. But Rat becomes more and more serious. Finally, when Toad is done talking, Rat asks if Toad doesn't see that he's made a fool of himself. Does he really think being imprisoned, insulted, and thrown into the water by a woman is amusing? And all because he needed to steal a **car**? Cars are nothing but trouble, but does Toad really need to *steal* them? It would be better to be bankrupt than a convict. Also, this reflects terribly on Toad's friends—Rat is getting tired of people saying he spends time with jailbirds.

Toad wants to impress, and he wants Rat to praise him. But Rat does the exact opposite: he's not impressed, and he's not going to dance around the fact that he's really upset with Toad's behavior. Per Rat, Toad's adventure home wasn't fun (and indeed, Toad spent much of the journey cold, hungry, and worried he wouldn't make it), and it's silly to pretend it was. Rat also tries to appeal to Toad by reminding him that his bad behavior causes bad things to happen to his friends—Rat's reputation is suffering.

Fortunately, Toad has a good heart. Though he genuinely thinks his exploits were fun and has to work hard to suppress strange noises (like "poop-poop!"), he sighs and says Rat is right. He's done with **cars** after his dip in the **river**, though he has another idea related to cars. Seeing Rat recoil, Toad says they can talk about it later—but for now, he'd like to have coffee with Rat and then stroll home to live a quiet, respectable life. He wants to entertain his friends, not go on adventures.

Toad knows what he's supposed to say here (that he's done with cars and wants to live a respectable life), and so he says it. He also appeals to Rat's sense of responsibility to his friends by saying that he, too, wants to just entertain those he loves. But it seems clear that Toad doesn't really mean it. If Toad thinks his adventure was fun and nothing to be ashamed of, he'll see no problem with doing it again.

Suddenly excited, Rat shouts that clearly, Toad hasn't heard: the stoats and the weasels have taken over Toad Hall. Rat explains that when Toad was imprisoned, everyone gossiped. Everyone on the **river** stuck up for Toad, but animals in the Wild Wood said Toad got what he deserved and was never coming back. Badger and Mole tried to defend Toad to other animals, and they also moved into Toad Hall to make sure it was ready for Toad when he returned. Well, one dark night, armed weasels, ferrets, and stoats stormed Toad Hall. Badger and Mole couldn't hold them back. Wild Wooders have been living at Toad Hall since then, apparently making a mess, sleeping in late, and singing vulgar songs. They tell people they plan to stay for good.

Here, Toad discovers another unexpected consequence to being imprisoned for stealing the car. He's essentially been kicked out of his own home because nobody respects him anymore. Interestingly, though, the stoats and weasels are treating Toad's home with about the same amount of regard as Toad treats other people's belongings. Just as Toad didn't worry about taking care of the car he stole, the stoats and weasels don't seem to care about keeping Toad Hall looking nice. In this way, Toad is getting a taste of his own medicine.

At this, Toad gets up and says he'll go get rid of them, refusing to listen to Rat's warnings. He marches to his gate with a big stick, where he encounters a ferret. As he starts to sputter at the ferret, the ferret lifts a gun and shoots at him. Fortunately, Toad drops to the ground, so the bullet doesn't hit him. He scampers back to Rat's house. Rat says it's no good to try again, but Toad takes Rat's boat up the **river** anyway. From the river, Toad Hall looks tranquil and deserted—until, when Toad is under the bridge, a boulder falls through the front of the boat. The boat sinks, and Toad looks up to see two laughing stoats. He heads back to Rat's house again.

As Toad attempts to get his house back all on his own, he has to confront the consequences of no longer being respected in the community. Indeed, as he goes out and puts himself in danger, he ignores Rat's warnings. Toad is still too full of himself to listen to Rat, who's been here the whole time and so has a better understanding of the situation. There's also no clear indication that Toad asks permission to take Rat's boat, which is another way he disrespects his friend.

Rat angrily says that he told Toad what would happen—and now, Toad has ruined one of Rat's suits and lost his favorite boat. Rat snaps that it's a wonder Toad keeps friends at all. Toad immediately apologizes and promises to seek Rat's approval for everything he does going forward. Appeased, Rat tells Toad to sit down for supper and be patient. They can't do anything until they've spoken with Mole and Badger. Toad realizes he hasn't asked after his friends. Rat explains that while Toad was out gallivanting, Badger and Mole have been camping and keeping an eye on Toad Hall, planning how to get it back. Rat says that Toad really doesn't deserve such loyal friends.

While Rat softened his language somewhat earlier in the novel, he's done worrying about hurting Toad's feelings. Now, he's honest about the fact that Toad is being rude, entitled, and selfish—and Rat doesn't like it. This has some effect on Toad, as Toad seems to remember that he should be polite and take an interest in his friends' well-being. But Rat uses this as yet another opportunity to point out Toad's flaws and all the ways in which Toad is falling short of being a good friend.

Toad sobs and agrees with Rat—until he hears supper dishes on a tray and is immediately distracted. Rat reminds himself that Toad has been eating prison food for a while, so he encourages Toad to eat. Then, after supper, someone knocks on the door. It's Badger, and Badger looks like he's been away from home for some time. He's muddy and tousled, but he grips Toad and welcomes him home. Badger then serves himself cold pie. Toad is concerned, but Rat says that Badger is always a bit short when he's hungry. Not long after, Mole lets himself in and immediately dances around Toad. He says Toad must be clever to have gotten away.

This passage highlights Toad's selfishness by showing that Toad cares more about getting a warm meal than he does about changing his ways to be a better friend. It's also significant that Toad is so put off by Badger's gruff entrance. Toad seems to expect people to always be polite and warm to him, so it's a shock when Badger isn't. Once again, Toad expects politeness and kindness that he only occasionally shows others, which reflects his selfishness.

Rat tugs on Mole's sleeve, but it's too late. Toad puffs up and says his friends don't think he's clever—but he escaped from the strongest prison in the country, captured a train, and took advantage of people with his disguise. Mole says he'd love to hear the story while he eats. But as Toad pulls out his coins and says he got them dealing horses, Rat grumpily tells him to be quiet. He asks Mole for an update, and Mole says little has changed: the sentries throw stones and laugh at them. Deep in thought, Rat starts to say what Toad should do. But Mole interjects with what *he* thinks Toad should do, and Toad interrupts that nobody can order him around.

Mole has matured a lot over the course of the novel, but he's still younger than his friends and is easily enchanted by wild stories like Toad's. In addition, he doesn't quite grasp the importance of not encouraging Toad in the moment. So, Mole is something of an enabler for Toad—someone is excited about what he's experienced rather than disapproving. But the problem of taking back Toad Hall is more important than any of this, which is why their argument about their plan takes over the conversation.

Badger tells Rat, Mole, and Toad to be quiet. Once he has their attention, he makes them wait quietly while he finishes eating. Then, he turns to Toad, scolds him, and says that Toad's father would be ashamed. When Toad sobs, Badger says they can forget the past. But they still have to figure out how to take Toad Hall, and they can't just storm it. Badger says he has a secret: there's an underground passage leading from the riverbank to the middle of Toad Hall. Toad is dismissive, but Badger says that Toad's father told him about it. Toad's father made Badger swear to not tell Toad about it except in case of emergency, since Toad can't keep secrets.

Badger demonstrates his power over his friends yet again by stopping their fight instantly—and then making them wait until he's ready to engage. As Badger turns to Toad, he again suggests that Toad needs to make his friends and family members proud by exhibiting good behavior. Toad then has to confront that he doesn't know everything, and that he might not be as important as he thought, when Badger shares this secret about the underground tunnel. Toad's father seems to have known that Toad would abuse this knowledge.

Toad sulks for a moment, and then acknowledges that he has "the gift of conversation." Badger then explains that Otter disguised himself as a sweep and went to Toad Hall. He learned that the Chief Weasel's birthday is tomorrow night, so everyone will be in the dining hall—unarmed. There will be sentinels, of course, but fortunately the passage leads into the butler's pantry. They can then jump out and scare the weasels out of Toad Hall. With the plan settled, Badger sends everyone to bed.

Toad frames the fact that he can't keep secrets as "the gift of conversation," which shows just how unwilling he is to admit his faults. Even when his friends explicitly point out his faults, he refuses to see them as faults. This helps explain why he's so averse to changing his ways: he refuses to recognize that he isn't perfect.

Toad is, at first, too excited to sleep, but he soon falls asleep and dreams of winding up in Toad Hall, triumphant and with friends willing to praise his cleverness. By the time he wakes up late in the morning, everyone else is done with breakfast. Mole is out, Badger is reading, and Rat is busily divvying up weapons. Toad picks up a big stick, swings it, and says he's going to "learn 'em." Rat scolds him; "learn 'em" isn't good English. Badger says it's fine English, and anyway, they want to "learn 'em," not "teach 'em." Rat isn't convinced, but he defers to Badger.

The narrator's tone suggests that it's considered rude for Toad to wake up so late when all his friends are up and about their business so early. But, again, Toad doesn't seem to see an issue with this because he only cares about himself. And whereas Rat coaches Toad on his grammar, Badger doesn't value propriety as much as the other animals—and others allow him to do want he wants because he's so well-respected and wealthy.

Soon after, Mole tumbles in the door. He says he's been pestering the stoats. He put on Toad's washerwoman outfit and went to Toad Hall, where he teased the sentries. Toad praises Mole, but privately, he's jealous—he would've done what Mole did, if only he'd thought of it first and hadn't overslept. Mole continues his story and says that when the sergeant came up, he said that tonight, a hundred bloodthirsty badgers, boats of rats, and armies of toads will storm Toad Hall to take it back. Mole ran away then, but he peeked back, and the sentries were clearly nervous. Toad laments that Mole spoiled everything, but Badger says Toad has no sense. Mole did wonderfully. This makes Toad jealous again.

Toad desperately wants to be the smartest, most cunning animal in his friend group, which is why he scolds Mole for tricking the stoats. But Toad isn't as clever as he thinks he is, so he doesn't understand what actually happened here (Mole has convinced the stoats that many foes are coming from outside of Toad Hall, when really, four foes are going to take Toad Hall from the inside). Badger's reprimand stings because Toad wants to impress him. Praising Mole also establishes him as someone Toad should emulate.

The bell rings for lunch, so everyone eats, and then Badger excuses himself to take a nap. Rat resumes his weapon preparations, while Mole takes Toad outside and asks Toad to tell him about his adventures. Mole is a good listener, and Toad gladly tells his story—but it's not truthful. It's more the story of what might have happened if Toad had thought of things in time, but that's what makes a good story, after all.

The lunch bell is the first indication that Rat employs kitchen servants, which marks him as wealthy. As the narrator assesses the story Toad tells Mole, they suggest that stories don't have to be true to be valuable—an outlandish but entertaining story is still worth telling. Nevertheless, Rat has suggested that Toad shouldn't be praised for dramatic, heroic things he didn't ever do, as this praise just enables his reckless behavior.

CHAPTER TWELVE

When it gets dark, Rat calls everyone to the parlor and arms his friends with all manner of weapons. Badger laughs and then instructs everyone to follow him, Mole first, then Rat, and then Toad. He leads everyone down the **river** and then swings down into a hole. The others follow—though Toad falls into the river. Badger is angry and threatens to leave Toad behind if something happens again. Toad shivers and follows at a distance. But when the lantern gets far away, and Rat whispers for Toad to hurry up, Toad panics. He rushes forward, running into Rat and knocking Mole into Badger. Not knowing what happened, Badger pulls a pistol. He's enraged when he realizes what happened and barely agrees to let Toad continue with them.

For Toad, this expedition is both exciting and terrifying. He wants to please Badger, but Toad isn't very athletic and struggles to just do as he's told. This is because Toad isn't used to taking orders from anyone, let alone someone like Badger, whom he wants to impress—as the owner of a grand house like Toad Hall, Toad is usually the one bossing other people around. So, this expedition is an opportunity for Badger to teach Toad that he doesn't have to be in charge all the time. Sometimes, it's okay to give others the limelight.

After a while, Badger says they must be under Toad Hall. They can suddenly hear cheering and stamping, and the passage starts to slope up. The celebratory noise gets more distinct as Badger reaches the trapdoor. The friends push it open and climb up into the pantry, which opens right onto the hall. As the cheering in the hall subsides, the voice of the Chief Weasel says he'd like to thank Toad for his hospitality. He's written a song to thank Toad—but just as he begins to sing, Badger flings the door open.

The Chief Weasel is, of course, being sarcastic and rude when he thanks Toad for his hospitality. Toad hasn't given the weasels permission to be here, and they're stealing from him by eating his food. But again, Toad has done similar things to other people—yet he can only recognize this kind of behavior as bad when someone else treats him this way.

The terrified weasels dive under tables and out windows. China crashes as Badger, Mole, Rat, and Toad shout their war cries and swing their sticks. Most of the weasels flee, leaving a dozen or so captured on the floor. Badger praises Mole and sends him outside to deal with the sentries, and then he sits. He's hungry, and Toad hasn't offered anyone food yet. Toad is hurt. Why isn't Badger praising him? But Toad and Rat scrounge up some food. Just as they sit down to eat, Mole comes back and says that the sentries are no longer an issue. Most rolled into the **river**, and Mole took their guns.

Since Toad's friends did the hard work of making the plan to take Toad Hall back, Badger implies that the least Toad could do is thank them by feeding them. Toad sees things differently, though: he no doubt thinks he was very brave for participating at all, and so he *should be the one receiving praise and supper. He's still thinking of himself first.*

Badger praises Mole again and then asks him to do one more task: Mole is to take the captured weasels upstairs and supervise them as they make up four bedrooms. Mole can whip them if they don't obey, and he should kick them out when they're done. Mole promptly takes the prisoners upstairs and returns soon after. He says the weasels were very apologetic, blamed everything on the Chief Weasel, and said they'll make it up for their ill conduct at any time. He sent them away with bread. As Mole digs in to his food, Toad swallows his jealousy like a gentleman and thanks Mole for his help. Badger praises Toad.

Mole has been gracious and deferential to Badger, which is part of the reason Badger is giving Mole more responsibility and praising him when he does well. Importantly, Badger gives Mole a lot of power over the weasels—but Mole chooses not to abuse his power and is instead kind to them. Again, this characterizes him as someone Toad (and readers) should emulate. Toad, meanwhile, gets the positive feedback from Badger that he's been craving when he thanks Mole, which suggests that being polite and considerate of others is praiseworthy.

The next morning, Toad sleeps in, as usual. But when he gets downstairs, what's left of breakfast is cold and unappetizing. Mole and Rat are outside, chatting and laughing, and Badger is engrossed in the paper. Vowing to get revenge later, Toad makes himself breakfast. When he's about done, Badger says Toad has a day of work ahead of him. Toad must throw a banquet immediately to celebrate his return. Toad jokes that it's silly to throw a banquet in the morning, but Badger tells Toad to stop being silly. He must write invitations now; the letter paper is all set out.

It seems intentional that Toad wakes up late to a cold breakfast—Badger may be trying to quietly punish Toad for sleeping in like this. Then, Badger takes it upon himself to guide Toad and make sure Toad does the appropriate thing: throw a banquet. The fact that the stationery is already set out suggests that Badger isn't playing around; Toad has no choice but to obey.

Dismayed, Toad says he can't possibly write letters on a beautiful morning like this. He needs to enjoy himself and swagger around his property. But seeing Badger ignore him, Toad says he'll obviously "sacrifice this fair morning on the altar of duty and friendship." Badger is suspicious, but he heads to the kitchens to order the banquet. As soon as he's alone, Toad has an idea: he'll write the invitations, but he'll talk about his adventures and the leading role he played last night. In each invitation, Toad writes a program for the evening, featuring speeches and songs, written and performed by him.

Toad still only cares about his own happiness, so the thought of sitting inside writing letters is abhorrent to him. His response to Badger about sacrificing the morning reads as somewhat sarcastic—and indeed, as Toad drafts the program, it becomes clear that Toad isn't doing what he's supposed to do. Instead, he's making this all about him and his heroic exploits. This will no doubt go overly poorly with his friends, given Rat and Badger's earlier reactions to Toad's story.

Toad finishes by noon, and since a young weasel is at the door asking if he can help, Toad sends the youngster to deliver the invitations—and maybe Toad will pay him later. When Mole comes in for lunch, he expects to find Toad depressed. But instead, Toad is swaggering, and this is suspicious. After lunch, Rat and Badger stop Toad from heading out to the garden and sit him in a smoking-room chair. Rat says that at the banquet, there will be no speeches and songs. This isn't up for debate. Toad begs to sing one song, but Rat says that all of Toad's songs are just ways to boast and exaggerate. Toad has to turn over a new leaf, and this banquet is the perfect opportunity.

Whereas Mole treated the weasels kindly and fairly last night, Toad does the opposite. The weasel seems like a good kid trying to atone for poor behavior, and it's cruel of Toad to be cagey about whether he's going to compensate the weasel. Finally, Rat and Badger call Toad out on his terrible behavior. They insist that Toad can't just talk about himself—he has to think of his guests and their enjoyment. They won't let him embarrass himself any longer.

Toad thinks for a while and then emotionally says that he just wants to "blossom and expand" for one more evening. But he knows he's wrong, and he promises to change. He'll never embarrass his friends again. Toad runs from the room, sobbing. Rat tells Badger he feels terrible. Badger agrees, but he says this was a necessary intervention. Toad has to be respected, not a laughingstock. Rat also notes that he caught the weasel Toad sent to deliver the invitations. The invitations were a disgrace, so Mole is writing new ones now.

Toad's selfishness and conceit make feel good, but he's also starting to see that his friends won't tolerate his behavior any longer. It seems like maybe he's beginning to care more about impressing his friends and making them proud than about continuing his selfish ways. Rat and Badger explain here why they're being so tough on Toad: Toad, as a wealthy country gentleman, must be taken seriously. In other words, they're trying to help Toad for his own good.

As the banquet gets closer, Toad sits in his bedroom. He's sad at first, but then giggles, locks the door, and arranges all his chairs around him for an invisible audience. He sings one final song to the chairs about his homecoming, and then he sings it again. With this done, Toad brushes his hair and goes downstairs to greet his guests, who cheer when Toad enters the room. They congratulate him on his courage and his cleverness, but Toad only murmurs demurely. When Otter tries to take Toad on a triumphant lap around the room, Toad quietly says that it was all Badger's idea. Everyone is shocked that Toad is so modest and quiet tonight.

Toad seems to realize his friends won't appreciate a song like this. Finally, Toad's friends' mentorship resonates with him: out of the blue, he becomes modest and quiet at the banquet. Toad is also much more comfortable telling the truth than he was before—storming Toad Hall was *all Badger's idea, so Toad is just giving credit where credit is due. This is a huge change for Toad, who hours ago wanted to give speeches that portrayed himself as the hero.*

The banquet itself is a success. Though everyone else laughs and jokes, Toad only makes pleasant small talk with those seated on either side of him. Some of the younger guests whisper that this isn't as fun as it used to be, and they beg Toad to sing or give a speech. Toad refuses and instead asks after the animals' children. He's truly a new toad.

Toad is behaving himself without his friends having to constantly coach him, which shows that Toad has finally internalized their lessons. He also realizes now that it's polite to show interest in other people, which is why he's asking after others' children.

After this, Badger, Mole, Rat, and Toad continue to live their lives. After consulting with his friends, Toad sends a lovely gold and pearl locket to the gaoler's daughter, and he sends money to the engine driver. Badger encourages Toad to compensate the barge woman for her horse (fortunately, the horse is valued at exactly what Toad sold him for). Now, when the four friends stroll through the Wild Wood, the inhabitants greet them respectfully. The mother weasels make their kids look at the four gallant gentlemen. If their kids are acting out, though, the mother weasels tell them Badger will come and get them. This is, of course, totally untrue—Badger loves children—but it's a very successful threat.

It's another sign of how much Toad has transformed that he not only compensates those who helped him on his journey, but consults his friends as to how best do that. He's internalized their lessons on manners, fairness, and honesty, and he shows them he values their opinions. And Toad's transformation changes things in the Wild Wood, too: now, Toad has earned the weasels' respect, which makes the Wild Wood a safe place for strolls. Toad's good manners have truly opened doors for him and his friends, as they're now happy and free to enjoy the natural world around them in its full capacity.

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