

Let's Talk About ...

NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY



“Books written for children are intrinsically humanizing to any reader and are no less affecting than books written exclusively for adults. Adults also enjoy reading again books they loved as children.” – Elizabeth R. Baer, for the American Library Association, 1984

Featured book:

Wind in the Willows, by Kenneth Grahame (1908) presents a fantasy world peopled by males only, free from constraints, demands, and responsibilities. Kenneth Grahame began this book unwittingly, by telling bedtime stories and writing letters about Toad and Rat to his only child, Alastair. But is it a book for children? Peter Green, Grahame’s biographer comments: “There has been much discussion as to whether *The Wind in the Willows* is indeed a pleasure for all ages, is a book for children or for adults. It is both. For children, a fantasy world that triumphantly fuses disparate levels of reality; for adults, hauntingly evocative language and demure social satire; for both, that immensely potent myth.” Perhaps it is this very duality that makes the book so well-loved: while on the one hand decrying encroaching technology and materialism, Grahame lauds the pleasures of sumptuous feasting and bodily comfort. The book’s structure itself seems to reflect this duality by use of alternating chapters: one full of action with Toad and his motorcar, the next a discursive, philosophical reflection on the joys of rural life. (Source: *Theme pamphlet by Elizabeth R. Baer, for American Library Association, 1984*).



Discussion Questions:

 [compiled from Let's Talk About It program scholars]

- How are time and perspective woven into the story?
- Discuss the human characteristics and values portrayed through animals in the story.
- What does the wind in The Wind in the Willows symbolize?
- Is this a book you would want to share with your children or grandchildren?
- Is the story still relevant today?



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