

Wednesday 10th June 2020

WALT: Wind in the Willows – Synopsis

Mole meets Rat

With the arrival of spring and fine weather outside, the good-natured Mole loses patience with spring leaning. He has fled his underground home, emerging to take in the air and ends up at the river, which he has never seen before. Here he meets Rat (a water vole), who at this time of year spends all his days in, on and close by the river. Rat takes Mole for a ride in his rowing boat. They get along well and spend many more days boating, with “Ratty” teaching Mole the ways of the river, with the two friends living together in Ratty's riverside home.

Toad

One summer day, Rat and Mole disembark near the grand Toad Hall and pay a visit to Toad. Toad is rich, jovial, friendly and kind-hearted, but aimless and conceited; he regularly becomes obsessed with current fads, only to abandon them abruptly. Having recently given up boating, Toad's current craze is his horse-drawn caravan. He persuades the reluctant Rat and willing Mole to join him on a trip. Toad soon tires of the realities of camp life, and sleeps in the following day to avoid chores. Later that day, a passing motorcar scares the horse, causing the caravan to overturn into a ditch. Rat threatens to have the law on the car driver, while Mole calms the horse, but Toad's craze for caravan travel is immediately replaced by an obsession with motorcars.

The Wild Wood and Badger

Mole wants to meet the respected but elusive Badger, who lives deep in the Wild Wood, but Rat – knowing that Badger does not appreciate visits – tells Mole to be patient and wait for Badger to pay them a visit himself. Nevertheless, on a snowy winter's day, while the seasonally somnolent Rat dozes, Mole impulsively goes to the Wild Wood to explore, hoping to meet Badger. He gets lost in the woods, sees many "evil faces" among the wood's less-welcoming denizens, and succumbs to fright and panic and hides, trying to stay warm, among the sheltering roots of a tree.

Rat wakes to find Mole gone. Guessing his mission from the direction of Mole's tracks and equipping himself with two pistols and a stout cudgel, Rat goes in search, finding him as snow begins to fall in earnest. Attempting to find their way home, Rat and Mole quite literally stumble across Badger's home – Mole barks his shin on the boot scraper on Badger's doorstep. Badger – en route to bed in his dressing-gown and slippers – nonetheless warmly welcomes Rat and Mole to his large and cosy underground home, providing them with hot food, dry clothes, and reassuring conversation: "It takes all sorts to make a world."

Toad and motorcars

Badger learns from his visitors that Toad has crashed seven cars, has been in hospital three times, and has spent a fortune on fines. Though nothing can be done at the moment (it being winter), they resolve that when the time is right they will make a plan to protect Toad from himself; they are, after all, his friends, and are worried about his well-being.

With the arrival of spring, Badger visits Mole and Rat to take action over Toad's self-destructive obsession. The three of them go to Toad Hall, and Badger tries talking Toad out of his behavior, to no avail. They put Toad under house arrest, with themselves as the guards, until Toad changes his mind. Feigning illness, Toad bamboozles Rat (who is on guard duty at the time) and escapes.

Badger and Mole are cross with Rat for his gullibility, but draw comfort because they need no longer waste their summer guarding Toad. However, Badger and Mole continue to live in Toad Hall in the hope that Toad may return. Meanwhile, Toad orders lunch at The Red Lion Inn, and then sees a motorcar pull into the courtyard. Taking the car, he drives it recklessly and is caught by the police. He is sent to prison for 20 years.

Toad escapes from prison

In prison, Toad gains the sympathy of the gaoler's daughter, who helps him to escape disguised as a washerwoman. Though free again, Toad is without money or possessions other than the clothes upon his back. He manages to board a railway engine manned by a sympathetic driver, which is then pursued by a special train loaded with policemen, detectives and prison warders. Toad jumps from the train and, still disguised as a washerwoman, comes across a horse-drawn barge. The barge's female owner offers him a lift in exchange for Toad's services as a washerwoman. After he botches the wash, Toad gets into a fight with the barge-woman, who tosses him into the canal. In revenge, Toad makes off with the barge horse, which he then sells to a gypsy.

Toad subsequently flags down a passing car, which happens to be the very one he stole earlier. The car owners, not recognising Toad in his disguise, permit him to drive their car. Once behind the wheel, he is repossessed by his former exuberance and drives furiously, declaring his true identity to the passengers who try to seize him. This leads to the car landing in a horse-pond, after which Toad flees once more. Pursued by police, he runs accidentally into a river, which carries him by sheer chance to the house of Rat.

Recapture of Toad Hall

Toad now hears from Rat that Toad Hall has been taken over by weasels and stoats from the Wild Wood, who have driven out Mole and Badger. Although upset at the loss of his house, Toad realizes what good friends he has and how badly he has behaved. Badger then arrives and announces that he knows of a secret tunnel into Toad Hall through which the enemies may be attacked. Armed to the teeth, Badger, Rat, Mole and Toad enter through the tunnel and pounce upon the unsuspecting Wild-Wooders who are holding a celebratory party. Having driven away the intruders, Toad holds a banquet to mark his return, during which (for a change) he behaves both quietly and humbly. He makes up for his earlier excesses by seeking out and compensating those he has wronged, and the four friends live out their lives happily ever after.

- 1) Read the synopsis of Wind in the Willows

2) A synopsis is an outline of the plot of a play, film or book. Think of your favourite film or book and then write a one sentence synopsis of it. Have a look at the examples below. Extra points if they're funny.

Father reunites with long lost son and wants him to take over the family business.



Man enslaves chocolate making entertainers, and then slowly kills children in front of parents.



An alien falls to the planet earth, meets a group of boys that learn to love and appreciate him, and the boys help him return to his home.

