

Talking about *The Wind in the Willows*

by Kenneth Grahame · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/wind-in-the-willows/

Warming *up*

Easy openers. Anyone at the table can answer these, including the youngest.

1. Whose home would you move into tomorrow: Mole's snug underground Mole End, Ratty's riverbank hole, or Toad Hall?
2. Rat says there is nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. What's this family's version of messing about in boats?

The real *conversation*

Pick two or three, not all of them. Parents answer too, honestly.

1. Toad is vain, reckless, and ruinously fond of the newest thing, and his friends never, ever give up on him. What do Rat, Mole, and Badger see in him? What do you do with a friend like Toad?
2. Mole abandons his spring cleaning in the first paragraph: flings down his brush, climbs into the sunlight, and finds a whole world. What made that the right day to bolt? When has abandoning a plan gone wonderfully for you?
3. The Wild Wood terrifies Mole, but Badger lives right in the middle of it, snug and unbothered. How much of scary is just unfamiliar? How would you tell the difference?
4. One winter night Mole catches the scent of his old home and it nearly breaks his heart; he'd forgotten he even missed it. Rat, halfway to somewhere else, turns them both around at once. Why is that small turn-around one of the kindest things anyone does in the book?
5. Toad's friends lock him in his bedroom 'for his own good,' and he climbs out the window in twenty minutes. Were they right to try? Can you actually help someone who doesn't want helping?

The big *one*

Save it for last.

Rat loves his river more than anything, and one restless autumn day, a seafaring stranger's stories very nearly carry him off south forever, until Mole quietly blocks the door. What's the difference between the adventures you dream about and the life you actually love? And would you have stopped Rat, or let him go?

Do it *together*

Pack the picnic basket properly. Rat's picnic basket is announced in one glorious breathless run: coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrolls... Write your family's version first (everyone shouts ingredients into one unpunctuated sentence), then actually pack it and go. Riverbank preferred, any patch of grass accepted. The only rule is Rat's: there must be no hurry about any of it.