

Mr Toad's Adventure

...lands him in a disaster



CONNECT Tell us about a time when you did something without thinking too much about it. What was the consequence?

REFLECT What are the various cars you have heard of? List them and then arrange them from most to least expensive.

IMAGINE You have a misadventure; a time when something that should have been fun turned out to be quite a disaster. Share the incident with the class.

BEFORE YOU READ

Kenneth Grahame (1859–1932) was a Scottish writer famous for his work *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He spent most of his childhood living with his siblings and his grandmother. He wrote various essays and children's stories. His stories for children capture the essence of childhood. *The Golden Age* (1895) and its sequel *Dream Days* (1898) are some of his other published works.

Mr Toad's Adventure is an excerpt adapted from *The Wind in the Willows* published in 1908. This story revolves around the adventures of four characters; Rat, Mole, Badger and Mr Toad of Toad Hall. Grahame used to make up these fantastical bedtime stories for his son, Alastair. During his lifetime, Grahame wanted to wander here and there. This can also be seen in this story as Mr Toad has the greatest desire of having adventures here and there.

READ

One bright summer morning, Mr Toad was walking briskly along the high road. He strode along till he reached a little town. He was exceedingly hungry after his long walk. So, he marched into an **inn**, ordered the best luncheon, and sat down to eat it in the coffee-room.

He was about half-way through his meal when a familiar sound, approaching down the street, made him start and fall a-trembling all over. The poop-poop!

He drew nearer and nearer. The car could be heard turning into the inn-yard and coming to a stop. The party entered the coffee-room, hungry, talkative and in all praise of the car that had brought them along so well. Mr Toad was all ears. He listened eagerly to their conversation for a time. But at last, he could stand it no longer and slipped out of the room quietly. As soon as he got outside, he **sauntered** round quietly to the inn-yard. 'There cannot be any harm,' he said to himself, 'in my only just looking at it!'

The car stood in the middle of the yard quite unattended. Mr Toad walked slowly round it, inspecting it.

'I wonder,' he said to himself,

'I wonder if this sort of car starts easily?'

Next moment, Mr Toad was found seated in the driver's seat holding the handle of the car. As the familiar sound of the car broke forth, the old passion seized on Mr Toad and completely mastered him. He pulled the lever and swung the car round the yard and out through the archway. All sense of right and wrong seemed temporarily suspended for Mr Toad. He sped so fast, not knowing where he was going. He was only conscious that he was Mr Toad once more, Mr Toad at his best and highest, Mr Toad the terror, the traffic-queller, the **Lord of the lone trail**, before whom all must give way or be **smitten**

into nothingness and everlasting night. He chanted as he flew, and the car responded with booming sound. He was living his hour, reckless of what might come to him.

He increased his pace, even more, when he heard the police siren. He thought he might escape, but he was caught at the next turn of the road. A chubby cop

inn: restaurant

sauntered: to walk in a relaxed manner

Lord of the lone trail: (here) king of the street

smitten: severely affected



with a handlebar moustache approached him with a **stern** look on his face and demanded, 'May I see your license, Mr?'

'License?' retorted Mr Toad, huffing in the driver's seat. 'I was just testing how fast this marvel could go. And, excuse me, I don't need any license!'

Next moment, Mr Toad was seen standing in the court of law. He was found guilty of stealing a car, driving dangerously and **cheeking** the police.

'Mr Clerk, will you tell us, what is the very stiffest penalty for such kind of offence,' asked the Chairman.

The Clerk scratched his nose with his pen. 'Some people would consider,' he

observed, 'that stealing the motor-car was the worst offence; and so it is. But driving dangerously and cheeking the police undoubtedly carry the severest penalty; and so they ought. Supposing you were to say twelve months for the theft, which is mild; and four years for the furious driving, which is lenient; and fifteen years for the cheek, which was pretty bad sort of cheek. Those figures, if added together correctly, **tot up** to twenty years.'

stern: serious

cheeking: disrespecting someone

tot up: add numbers to calculate





'An excellent suggestion!' said the Chairman approvingly. 'Prisoner! It's going to be twenty years for you this time. And

mind, if you appear before us again, upon any charge whatever, we shall have to deal with you very seriously!'



Brainstorm

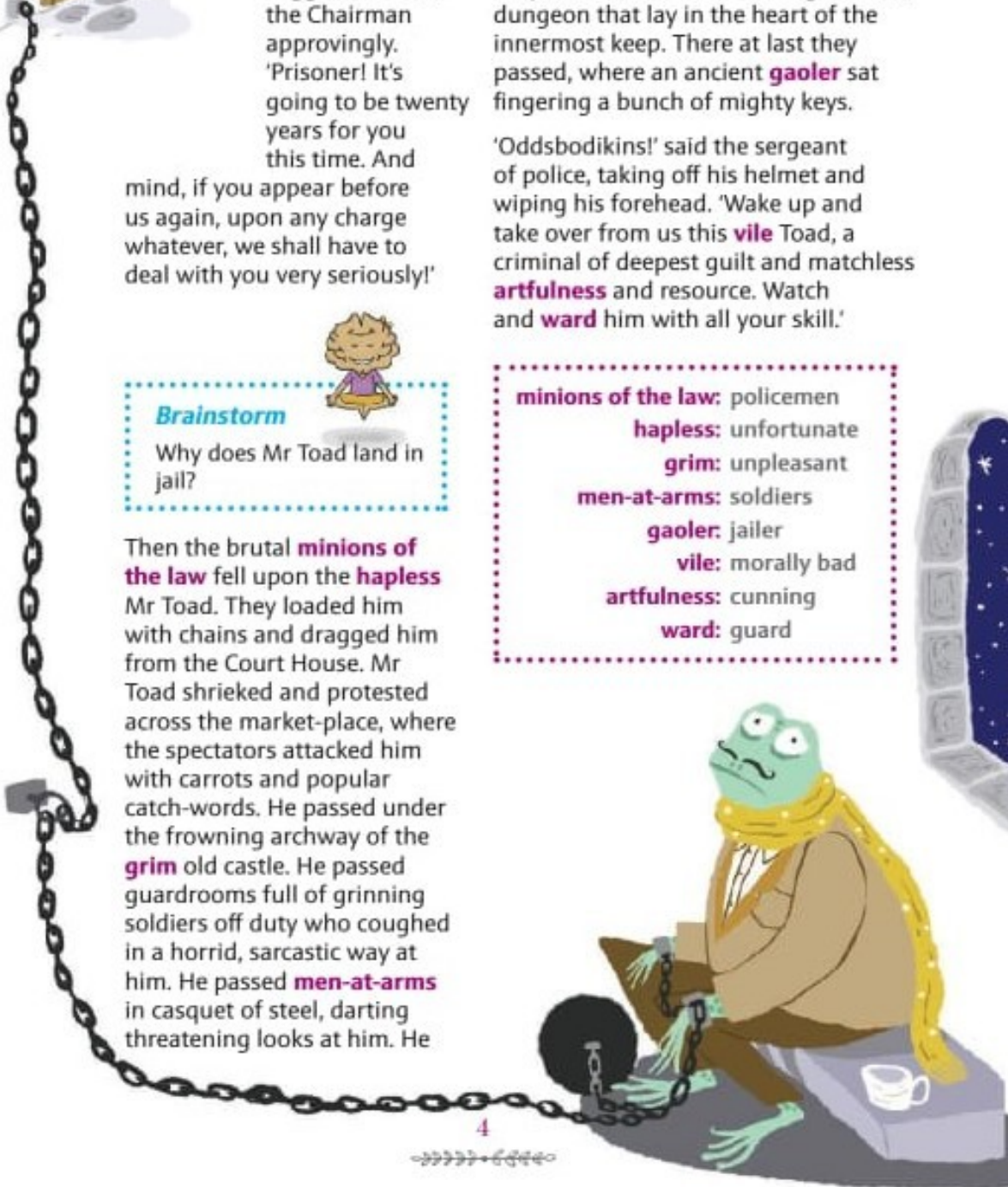
Why does Mr Toad land in jail?

Then the brutal **minions of the law** fell upon the **hapless** Mr Toad. They loaded him with chains and dragged him from the Court House. Mr Toad shrieked and protested across the market-place, where the spectators attacked him with carrots and popular catch-words. He passed under the frowning archway of the **grim** old castle. He passed guardrooms full of grinning soldiers off duty who coughed in a horrid, sarcastic way at him. He passed **men-at-arms** in casquet of steel, darting threatening looks at him. He

passed the thumbscrew-room. At last, they reached the door of the grimpest dungeon that lay in the heart of the innermost keep. There at last they passed, where an ancient **gaoler** sat fingering a bunch of mighty keys.

'Oddsbodikins!' said the sergeant of police, taking off his helmet and wiping his forehead. 'Wake up and take over from us this **vile** Toad, a criminal of deepest guilt and matchless **artfulness** and resource. Watch and **ward** him with all your skill.'

- minions of the law:** policemen
- hapless:** unfortunate
- grim:** unpleasant
- men-at-arms:** soldiers
- gaoler:** jailer
- vile:** morally bad
- artfulness:** cunning
- ward:** guard





The gaoler nodded grimly, laying his withered hand on the shoulder of the miserable Mr Toad. The rusty key creaked in the lock, the great door clanged behind them; and Mr Toad was a helpless prisoner in the **remotest dungeon** of the best-guarded keep of

the **stoutest** castle in all the length and breadth of Merry England.

remotest dungeon: an underground prison in a castle far away

stoutest: strong

CONSOLIDATE

A1. Mark these sentences as true (T) or false (F).

1. Mr Toad was startled by the sound of a truck.
2. Mr Toad didn't want to steal the car.
3. Mr Toad broke the traffic rules.
4. Mr Toad was let go because he was a wealthy merchant.
5. Mr Toad was a helpless prisoner in a remote dungeon.



Read and Answer

A2. Answer these questions.

1. What was Mr Toad doing when he heard the sound of the car?
2. Describe Mr Toad's adventure after he picked the car from the inn-yard till he was caught.
3. How did Mr Toad behave when he was caught by the traffic police?
4. Who was Mr Clerk? What was his opinion on the crime committed by Mr Toad?
5. Describe the journey of Mr Toad from the Court House to the dungeon where he was imprisoned.

A3. Think and answer.

1. Why do you think Mr Toad was consumed by the desire to drive the vehicle despite knowing that it didn't belong to him?



2. Do you think Mr Toad was a thief? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think the penalty meted out to Mr Toad was justified?

A4. Learn Interesting Terms



Hyperbole is using exaggerated statements or ideas that are not meant to be taken literally. For example,

Mr Toad would die a thousand times over if he could drive a motor-car just once.

Make up your own examples of hyperbole using the information given in *Mr Toad's Adventure*.

CREATE



Word World

B. We have already learnt about prefixes and suffixes in previous grades. Let's revise them quickly.

Prefix	Suffix
A prefix is a letter or a group of letters that is added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning.	A suffix is a letter or a group of letters that is added at the end of a word to change its meaning.
Example: The car stood in the middle of the yard quite unattended (un+attended).	Example: Wake up and take over from us this vile Toad, a criminal of deepest guilt and matchless (match+less) artfulness (artful+ness) and resource.

Let's learn some more prefixes and suffixes along with their meanings.

