

TEACHER'S NOTES

MR BADGER tells the story of "The Wind in the Willows"

Suggested preparation for the performance by schools

If the young audience members are familiar with the book and its characters they will get more out of the performance – they will be prepared to listen attentively, follow the narrative and see how the characters react in different situations. It will also enhance their comprehension skills.

The performance is a low-tech, listening experience (with a limited amount of controlled interaction). Many children, used to movies, games and special effects, are unfamiliar with this "old school" type of storytelling – it is best if they are aware that they will need to listen actively to enhance the experience of the whole audience group.

A **Q & A session** after the performance provides the opportunity for the children to ask questions – it is worth preparing them for the type of questions they might like to ask.

Background

"The Wind in the Willows" by Kenneth Grahame was first published in 1908.

It is set in the countryside of England and follows the lives of four main characters:

Mole an innocent, childlike animal who ventures from his home for the first time

Ratty a debonair water rat (or water vole), who be-friends Mole and guides him through his adventures.

Mr Toad, the FAMOUS MR TOAD, who is rather boastful and badly behaved in many ways and yet he remains extremely likable and entertaining

Mr Badger, the oldest and wisest of the four friends

Portly, the young otter

The Wild Wooders – stoats, weasels and foxes, untrustworthy types

As these animals which in the British Isles they may not be familiar to the children so you could research some things about them, eg:

Where they live What they eat Their habits (are they nocturnal? etc)

What they look like What size are they? What is their life span?

The book "The Wind in the Willows" was written for the author's son and although it is a children's book it contains sophisticated language and ideas. In our storytelling performance we have kept much of the text from the original – the idea being to celebrate the beauty of the language and to keep the performance true to the integrity of the book.

This means that there are some words which may be unfamiliar to younger audience members which you might like to discuss beforehand, such as:

Conceited	Arrogant	Canary	Gypsy	Nocturnal
Motor-car	Banquet	Dungeon	Disguise	terror
Locomotive	Barge-woman	haunting	reputation	fascinated

The story explores themes like friendship, cooperation, the joys and beauty of nature, the need for courage in the face of adversity.

There are many abridged copies of the book featuring certain episodes which can be useful to look at; there are also some beautifully illustrated copies which are worth showing to the children in advance, as well as various DVDs/movies.

ACTIVITIES TO TRY

Make your own map of the secret underground passage.

Show the Riverbank, the Wild Wood and Toad Hall. You could draw some of the animals in the story on the map and some trees and the river.

Draw some of the animals that feature in the story. You can look up in books or on the internet what they look like. Make an animal mask using cardboard. Draw a picture of the face of your favourite animal onto a piece of white cardboard and colour it in with marking pens or coloured pencils. Cut out some eye holes so you can see through the mask and make some small holes at the sides so you can attach some elastic to hold the mask on your head.

You might need some help from grown-ups for this one

Make some simple puppets of the animals in the story from cardboard. Then you can act out the story for yourself using the masks.

An audio CD of Mr Badger's telling of the story is available for \$10.

Other merchandise – badges, postcards, posters, badger model animals

Chris John

Splash Theatre Company

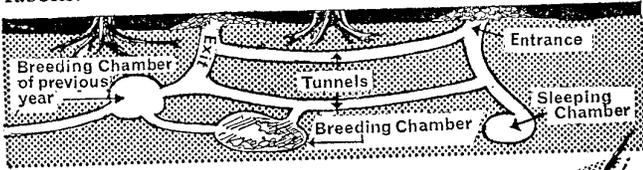
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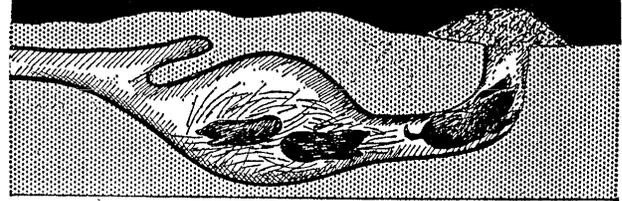
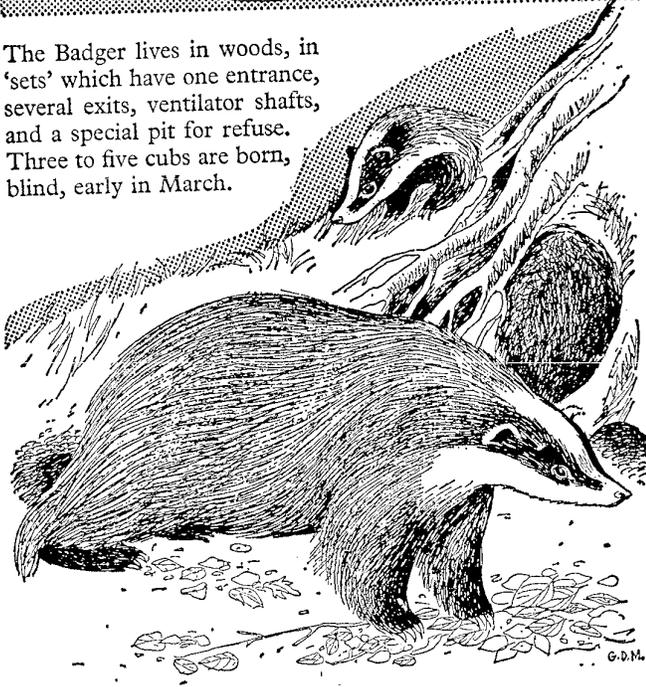
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THE BADGER

The Badger is clean and intelligent. It has a thick-set body, 2½ to 3 ft. long, standing about 1 ft. at the shoulders. Its muzzle is snout-shaped, ears small, tail short. The hair on its back is coarse grey; its belly and feet are black. The white head has two black stripes over ears and eyes. A night hunter, it eats among other things, nuts, berries, insects, mice, frogs and baby rabbits.



The Badger lives in woods, in 'sets' which have one entrance, several exits, ventilator shafts, and a special pit for refuse. Three to five cubs are born, blind, early in March.



THE MOLE

The Mole lives underground, so is rarely seen, but evidence of its busy life is visible on any lawn or meadow. It digs an extensive system of tunnels below ground level, pushing the surplus earth upwards to make molehills. The main thoroughfares run a long way under the turf - allowing the mole to rush from place to place. When hungry it must dig fresh tunnels in search of its vast diet of worms, snails, grubs and other insects. When exhausted it nests under an extra large molehill, called its 'fortress'. The mole is about 6 ins. long, with velvety black fur, a long flexible snout and small, hidden, sightless eyes. It has a keen sense of smell, useful when hunting worms, and very strong fore-paws, with stout digging claws and bare forward-facing palms. Every year it has one litter of two to six blind hairless, pink young.



which animal's footprint is this?