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Reading Notes

1. Mole _____ a meek, childlike underground dweller, moving up and out to experience life in the open air
2. Water Rat, Ratty _____ Mole's friend who lives by the river; invites Mole to stay with him
3. Otter _____ gregarious and bold river animal; friend of Rat's
4. Badger _____ sober and reserved friend of Rat's who lives in the Wild Wood
5. Toad _____ careless and outgoing friend of Rat and Badger's; lives in his ancestral home by the river
6. River _____ the lively and beloved home of Rat and Otter
7. bijou _____ a beautiful jewel
8. sculls _____ a pair of oars used by a single rower
9. hedgerow _____ a thick row of bushes or small tree forming a hedge (a barrier or boundary)
10. copse _____ a small grove of trees
11. weir _____ (pronounced like *we're*) a dam in a river, or a fence of broken branches or stakes put in a stream to catch fish
12. punting _____ propelling one's boat by using a pole against the river bottom

Vocabulary

1. Something up above was calling him **imperiously** _____ authoritatively
2. soft breezes **caressed** his heated brow, and after the **seclusion** of the **cellarage** he had lived in _____ touched gently and affectionately ... privacy ... cellar, underground storage space
3. the impatient and **contemptuous** Mole, who trotted along the side of the hedge **chaffing** the other rabbits _____ disdainful, disrespectful ... scorning, mocking
4. the **insatiable** sea _____ unable to be filled or satisfied
5. the Mole stepped **gingerly** down _____ delicately, carefully
6. This was an **impromptu** affair. _____ unplanned
7. the **emancipated** Mole _____ liberated

Comprehension Questions

1. Reread the first two sentences of Ch. 1. What do they tell us about the personality of Mole?
Mole is fastidious, hardworking, thorough, conservative; he cares for his little home. He is spring-cleaning because that is what his conscience tells him should be done in the spring.

2. What animals does Mole meet first above ground, and what happens?
Mole meets the rabbits who try to charge him a toll to pass on the road. He runs them over, jeering at their attempt to make him pay.

3. What bewitches, entrances, and fascinates Mole and changes his life?
The River

4. There are four “worlds” depicted in the first chapter. Name and describe each.
 1. Mole’s world is “in the earth,” “his dark and lowly little house.” (the self)
 2. Rat’s (and Otter’s) world is the River, “chasing and chuckling,” full of life. (the community, village)
 3. Badger’s world is the Wild Wood, a dark and somewhat dangerous place. (nearby communities with different cultures)
 4. Beyond the Wild Wood is the “Wide World,” “where it’s all blue and dim.” The animals are so far removed from this world that Rat does not consider it important enough to discuss. (the rest of the world)

5. Mole, Ratty, Badger, and Toad represent character types. Describe each in one sentence.
Mole is humble, quiet, and sensitive. Rat is a lover of the River; he is also outgoing and amiable. Badger is cautious and suspicious. Toad is a sanguine personality—boisterous and irresponsible.

Discussion Questions/Activities

1. Read the paragraph describing Mole's first encounter with the river, beginning, "He thought his happiness was complete." Underline the alliteration. What are the two metaphors used to describe the "personality" of the river?

alliteration: sleek, sinuous; chasing, chuckling; a-shake, a-shiver

metaphors: full-bodied animal & a man who holds one spell-bound by exciting stories

2. Water Rat describes his home, the River, starting with, "By it and with it and on it and in it ..." and continuing on for two paragraphs. Is this a universal sentiment, one that all people feel about their own towns, villages, or neighborhoods?
3. What two rules of "animal etiquette" have you learned? Are they good ones?

Rule 1: Never dwell on possible trouble ahead, nor even allude to it.

Rule 2: Never comment on the sudden disappearance of a friend.

4. Probably the most famous passage from *The Wind in the Willows* is "There is nothing, absolutely nothing half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." Begin reading with "Nice? It's the only thing." and continue to the end of the paragraph. Do you agree with Rat's description of the charm of boating? Does your family have a boat? Summarize or put into your own words what Rat says about boating. Is this true of all hobbies?

The essence of Rat's love for boating is a love of absolute freedom—freedom from worry (because one's mind is occupied), as well as freedom from the obligations and responsibilities of everyday life. Most hobbies do provide some level of freedom and escape for those who need it.

5. What is a mole? Where and how do moles live? What do they look like? Research moles, write a short report, and draw a detailed picture showing the distinctive features of moles.
6. "By it and with it and on it and in it," said the Rat. "It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world and I don't want any other." Of what quote from *Treasure Island* does this remind you?

When Billy Bones says rum has been "meat and drink, and man and wife" to him.

7. The author uses animals to describe the "human condition" and human characters types. What other books or stories do this? Why do you think this technique is effective?

The reader can view the characters objectively, without bias, and then transfer those observations to people.

Other similar books are Watership Down, Animal Farm, and Aesop's Fables.

Quotations

Who said that? When? And about what or whom?

1. "Bother! O Blow! Hang spring-cleaning!" _____ Mole

2. "Up we go! Up we go!" _____ Mole

3. "Sixpence for the privilege of passing by the private road!" _____ Elderly rabbit at the gap

4. "Onion-sauce! Onion-sauce!" _____ Mole (in response to the rabbit's demand for a toll)

5. "We don't go there very much, we river-bankers." _____ Rat (about the Wild Wood)

6. "Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World." _____ Rat

7. "That's just the sort of fellow he is! Simply hates Society!" _____ Rat (about Badger)
