

QUICK CARD: AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND



<i>Reference</i>	<i>At the Back of the North Wind</i> . George MacDonald. (1871) ISBN: 978-1420932492
<i>Plot</i>	A sickly boy travels with the mythical North Wind to faraway lands and learns of her trustworthiness, faithfulness, and love.
<i>Setting</i>	The story, which transpires in the late 1800's Victorian England, takes place in three settings: It begins at the home of a poor cabman and his family during the childhood of the main character, Diamond. When Diamond's father loses his position, the family moves to cold and dreary London. Intermittently, Diamond travels with North Wind to a dreamlike land "at the back of the North Wind."
<i>Characters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diamond – (protagonist) a young cabbie's son who makes fantastic trips with the fabled North Wind. His sickly constitution casts into question the nature of these "trips." Are they real or hallucinated during fevers? Diamond's kindness, sensitivity and spiritual sensitivity cause some to call him "God's angel." • North Wind – mythical/poetic personification of the North Wind as a beautiful woman. Her nature in the story is one of the story's major questions: Is she good or evil? • Diamond's Parents – his father, the cab man, and his sweet mother • Diamond's sister and brother • Nan – Diamond's friend. She thinks he is a little touched in the head. • Old Sal – Nan's mean grandmother • Jim – Another of Diamond's friends • Mr. Raymond – Diamond's benefactor and the narrator of the story

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Evans – Mrs. Coleman’s intended • Mr. and Mrs. Coleman – employers of Diamond’s father at the story’s beginning • The Drunken Cabman – Diamond’s neighbor in the London mews • Diamond, the horse – the protagonist is named after this, his father’s strong and gentle white horse • Ruby, the horse – an angel disguised, this horse, which belongs to Mr. Raymond, pretends to go lame in order to create an opportunity for Diamond’s father to display his good character.
<i>Conflict</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man vs. Nature: Will Diamond go to the back of the North Wind? • Man vs. Nature, Man vs. God/Providence: Will Diamond’s family and friends prosper? • Man vs. Himself: Will Diamond overcome his doubts to trust and believe in the reality and goodness of North Wind? Will he have faith?
<i>Theme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childlike Faith • The Goodness of Providence • The Problem of Pain
<i>Literary Devices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personification – attributing human characteristics to inanimate things (depicting North Wind as a woman) • Mythopoeia – the making of myth or myths • Allegory – a kind of fiction in which there exists a one to one symbolic correlation between the characters and events and human life, events, and ideas. • Mythopoeic literature – employs myth to discuss human life, events and ideas. Macdonald’s fantasy falls short of pure allegory, instead partaking of myth to discuss larger universal ideas.