Independent writing activity – diary entry in role: Goodnight Mister Tom

As part of their work on World War II, children read Goodnight Mister Tom as a whole-class text. Children discussed their first impressions of Mr Tom in pairs (task 1). Then they made notes on Willie as he was at the beginning of the book, and halfway through the book. These notes were written up into a profile of Willie (task 2). Children watched a short video extract of Goodnight Mister Tom and then produced a diary entry for Willie towards the end of the book (task 3).

Task 1: First impressions of Mr Tom

In pairs discuss the first impressions you get of Mr Tom, referring to the text to show where you get your ideas.

Chas notes that at the beginning, Mr Tom seems 'grumpy' and is able to refer to the way he says 'Yes' very sharply, and is almost rude to the billeting officer, to support this point: 'He doesn't seem to want any children and he is not being helpful'.

Chas refers to the fact Mr Tom 'snorts' when the billeting officer says Mr Tom can choose his child.

Chas goes on to comment that Mr Tom also seems quite bad tempered and scary with Willie at first, as though he doesn't really want him there, because he glares at him and tells him to come 'harshly'. There is recognition that Mr Tom gradually seems to soften towards Willie. Chas observes: 'I think he sees Willie is nervous and feels sorry for him'.

When asked how this other side of Mr Tom is shown, Chas points out that he tries to make him feel at home and cooks him a nice meal: 'But he doesn't mind when
Willie can't eat it. He sort of understands how Willie is feeling, so he is really kind-hearted on the inside'.

In this discussion, Chas shows that he can look closely at a section of text and make inferences based on textual evidence. Comments are tied to specific words or phrases (AF2) and there is some development of explanation which suggests he is fulfilling the criteria for AF3 L5 b2.

Task 2: How does Willie change during the book?

Willie is a very small, pale boy who is weak and sickly looking. He is very timid and never pushes himself forward. At first he is very confused and worried, as he is scared of being told off by his mother. Willie's mother beats him and treats him very badly as she does not feed him good food and care for him. He was ashamed he was so naughty (or so he was told). He thought of himself very badly. He also cannot read and write and so he felt left out.

As the days go by Willie becomes less worried and less scared of being at Mr Tom's. He doesn't look so pale and thin, because of all the good food. Tom teaches him to read and write and he picks it up quickly. Will is very good at drawing and painting. He draws lots of things in the country and everyone is very impressed. He made friends too, which never happened to him before. And he hadn't had a birthday, he couldn't believe that all the presents were for him. Tom treats him very well and he quickly becomes a completely different boy.

Although rooted in narrative, this response demonstrates some inference across the text. There is understanding of how Willie changes and although there are no explicit textual references, Chas is showing indications of fulfilling the criteria for AF3 b1 at level 5, securely supported by attainment at level 5 in AF2.
Task 3: A diary entry for Will towards the end of the book. The diary entry reads:

"While devistating time it has been for me, I have had a fantastic time with Mr. Tom. I have learned how to read and write, (which is why I am writing this here diary.) Also I have made about a dozen new friends. And I had a brilliant birthday, but that was the happy times. Just about four days ago, I had to leave Mr Tom's lovely country home and come back here to war-time London. (Also known as the Blitz) As I waved goodbye to Mr. Tom, I thought I would never set my eyes upon him again. I fell into a deep sleep, and here I am, London in the centre of war, a horrible place to be at this point in time."

The word 'devistating' has had a box drawn around it, with the annotation 'Choice of word 'devastating' shows understanding of Will's horrific experience and its impact on the reader (AF6 L5 b3)'.

The second paragraph has the annotation 'Shows understanding of the significance in the text of the difference between the country world of Mr Tom, which is safe and friendly, and the hostile, dangerous world of war time London where Will's mother lives (AF3 L5 b1)'.
The diary entry reads 'When I got home I thought it would be alright but it wasn't. All my mum did was shout, shout, shout! Also she said there was a surprise waiting for me but it wasn't much of a surprise to me, she had put a baby in a cardboard box! All she could say was: "A bit of discipline, that's all she needs." Then my mum accused me of stealing my own birthday presents! What is the matter with her? And she slapped me because I forgot my belt, then sent me to bed! "A typical habit for boys," she said. [new paragraph] The next day, after I had eaten my boiled egg for breakfast, I told my mum I made friends with Jewish girls, she exclaimed: "You're a blasphemer! You know what we do to blasphemers!" Despite the fact I was her own son, she threw me and my sister into a large, pitch black cupboard, and locked it securely. By my reckoning I was in that horrible cupboard for a week. [new paragraph] Mr. Tom rescued me, but I sob in my hospital bed as I mention this, my young sister did not survive. And here I am now, in a comfy hospital bed, mourning my little sister, choosing whether to stay in hospital and have the medication I need or to go back to the country with Mr. Tom. Which is choose? Which to choose? But this is just the beginning, the end may never come. My mothers screaming is still ringing inside my head: "Blasphemer! Blasphemer! Blasphemer!" Just cannot cope with this any more.' Teacher's annotations: The first paragraph is annotated with the note 'Selects relevant points for emphatic account, incorporating references to the text/video version where appropriate (AF2 L5 b1, AF2 L5 b2)'. The phrase 'What is the matter with her?' is highlighted and annotated with the note 'Use of interior monologue

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shows understanding of Will's baffled response to his mother's behaviour (AF3 L4 b2)'. The phrase 'Mr. Tom rescued me, but, I sob in my hospital bed as I mention this, my young sister did not survive' is annotated with the note 'Significant contrast - the survival of Will compared with the death of his sister - neatly highlighted in one sentence (AF6 L5 b1)'. The final paragraph is annotated with the note 'Exploration of Will's dilemma focuses on key theme- the impersonal efficiency of hospital care versus the individual, eccentric love of Mr Tom (AF6 L5 b1)'.

Assessment summary

In this collection of responses to *Goodnight Mister Tom*, Chas shows an ability to make inferences closely linked to a section of text (AF3) and also based on evidence from across a text, though attainment at level 5 is slightly less secure here. Relevant points are selected from the text (AF2), and in task 1 references are used to support ideas (AF2). In his response to the third task, Chas shows an ability to empathise with the character of Willie and select relevant points from the text or video, incorporating some references where appropriate (AF2), though no distinction is made between the two sources. Some awareness is also shown of the key theme in the book (AF6).

Across the three tasks, Chas demonstrates that he can fulfil the criteria for AFs 2, 3 and 6 at level 5 in the context of reading a narrative text.

Node information
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