



The Midnight Gang

by David Walliams

2016 Harper Collins (476 pages)

NOVEL STUDY

The Midnight Gang by David Walliams

SUMMARY

This novel follows Tom his time spent in the children's ward at Lord Funt Hospital. After being admitted after a hit on the head from a cricket ball, Tom embarks on an adventure he will never forget. This story explores Tom's friendships and relationships with other children on the ward and some other unlikely allies that will change his life forever.

CHARACTER REVIEW

Tom
Porter
Amber
Robin
George
Sally
Matron

SEL THEMES IN THE BOOK

- Friendship
- Goal setting
- The Golden Rule
- Self-Regulation
- Problem Solving
- Feelings review: excited, curious, worried, scared/afraid, proud, frustrated, sorry, anger, misery, embarrassment, sad, happy, nervous, proud.



STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1 & 2

- **How did Tom feel when he first met the Porter?** *Scared, terrified (uncomfortable) & curious (comfortable).*
- **Why was Tom feeling curious?** *About the way Porter looked the way he does and why he doesn't have a name.*
- **Why was Tom not happy about getting lots of nice presents from his parents?**
- **How does Tom compare himself to the other boys at his school?** *He isn't posh and they look down on him with their 'aristocratic noses'.*

Activity.

- **Literacy Activity** – Write about a time when you were scared/ terrified of being somewhere new or alone. How did you feel? Did you overcome your problem?
- **Art Activity** – Using the descriptions in the book, create an image of the Porter, Nurse and Doctor.

Chapter 3 & 4

- **Why was Tom feeling miserable at school?** *Doesn't enjoy sports, would much rather read. Forced into things.*
- **Why can't Tom look at the Porter? Is this following the Golden Rule? How do you think Porter is feeling right now?**
- **What things does the Porter do to show he is very kind although Tom is not showing him respect?** *Smiles, introduces him to the children, sorts his bed/ pillows, nods at the children.*
- **How does Tom describe Sally?** *'Sorrowful figure'*
- **Tom is surprised when he meets Amber, why?**
- **What adjectives are used to show how the children feel about Matron?** *'tensed, shivered, crackling, nervous looks.*

Chapter 5 & 6

- **What should Tom and the other children do when Matron keeps teasing them?** *CSP, Make a plan – ignore her, walk away, make a joke of it, ask her calmly why she keeps teasing her, agree with her etc.*
- **Chapter 6 explains the times that Tom has been embarrassed at school. Have you ever felt embarrassed at school? Share this time with a friend.**
- **Make a prediction about what happens in midnight hour!**

Activity

- **Feelings Activity** – Make a list of all the feelings mentioned in chapters 5&6. Divide these feelings according to the person who felt them – Tom, Matron, George
- **Problem-Solving Activity** – At the end of chapter 5, Tom is faced with a problem. In co-operative learning groups, identify Tom's problem, how he/and others would be feeling, decide on a goal for Tom, think of 3 possible solutions, think about the consequences of each one, choose the best solution and make a plan that you think Tom should try out. Role-play this in your group.

Chapter 7-9

- **What did Amber and Tom give George when the Matron fell asleep?** *Compliments – 'Well done' 'You crafty devil'.*

- Tom felt 'restless' when the children left ward. What does this feeling mean? Have you ever felt restless about something?
- How did Tom want to react when he hurt his foot? *'Shout out in frustration'* How did he manage to stay calm?
- What can we tell from Chapter 8 about Sally and Tom? *Both very kind, good listeners, looking out for each other, new friendship.*
- Tom's worst fear is the dark. Discuss your fears or phobias with a partner.
- Why did Tom run into a problem in the corridor? *Fear and panic. Didn't stop and calm down.*

Activity

- **Art Activity** – using the description from Chapter 9, create drawing painting of the inside of Lord Funt Hospital.
- **Role play** – using the control signals, decide on some alternative solutions for Tom and role play an alternative ending for the problem in the corridor.

Chapter 10-12

- How did Tom feel when the other children laughed at him? What could Tom have done differently when speaking to them? *Stop, calm down, think about the situation.*
- Predict the meaning of the following words used in Chapter 12 – Following the Leader:
- Dutifully (p119) - Curtly (p122) - Mused (p123)
Then look up the words in a dictionary to check the definition.
- 'The Midnight Gang can only succeed if all members work together'. Write about a time when you have worked as a team to succeed in something.

Chapter 13 – 16

- Tom finds it difficult to think about the one dream he has that he would want to come to life. Why do you think he finds this so hard? *Pressure from peers? Put on the spot to think? Have you ever been put on the spot to think of a great idea, answer? Share this time with a partner.*
- Why was Tom impressed with Amber? *She is showing ambition by dreaming so big and setting such big goals for herself.*
- Why was Amber feeling embarrassed? *She hadn't actually hurt herself mountain climbing but actually falling off her top bunk.*
- Find 3 quotes from Chapter 15 that tell you how Amber feels in the freezer. *'tears welling in her eyes', 'it's perfect', 'look of pride'.*
- Porter states 'I would get fired on the spot' if anyone was to find out what he has done in the freezer so why has the Porter taken such a big risk? *Caring for patients without medicine, feeling happy/ comfortable can help too.*
- Tom's feelings about the Porter have changed by the end of Chapter 16. Have you ever misjudged someone before getting to know them?

Activity

- **Letter Writing Activity** – Pretend you are Tom. Write a letter home to your parents explaining what happened in the freezer. Describe how Tom felt and how he is now realising he had misjudged the Porter before getting to know him.
- **Craft/ Design Activity** – Create your own polar bear suit design using materials you have spare within the classroom or from home.

Chapter 17 & 19

- What did Robin say was the most important part of his dream? *How it made him feel.*
- How did he explain his feelings? *'Touching the sky'* What does this mean?



- Why does the Porter not hate Matron even though she is so cruel to him and the children?
- Porter states Matron has a 'dark heart'. What does the author mean by this?

Chapter 20 – 22

- Tom was feeling hopeful of getting to become a member of the gang. How does he react when he gets in? *Feels like dancing.*
- The Midnight Gang have an oath, what does this mean?
- Tom felt 'torn' when they get back to the ward, why? *Between the gang and Sally. Promised to tell her what they were up to. Doesn't want to break the promise he has made to both groups.*

Activity

- **Role Play** – In your groups, act out the scene between the Midnight Gang and Sally. Pay close attention to how each character would be feeling at this point. (Comfortable/uncomfortable feelings, facial expressions, tone of voice, body language).

Chapter 23 – 25

- Why does Tom feel surprised in the morning? How does this feeling change? *Disappointed when he realises he doesn't actually get anything he wants, but happy to play along with Tootsie.*
- How can you tell the children have a good relationship with Tootsie? *Smiling, saying good morning, playing along with her game.*
- How does the Matron tell Tom is lying to her? *His face turns red.*
- Think about how uncomfortable feelings can show on the outside. How can people tell when you are feeling uncomfortable? (Focus on feeling angry, frustrated, shy).
- Why does Tom describe Sally as 'special'? *Showing she a good friend by trying to help them even though she is still upset at them for not including her.*
- How does Tom feels about his life outside the hospital? *He is lonely, nothing to look forward to.*

Chapter 26 – 28

- Why did Dr Lupperts look baffled at Tom? *Most people want to leave hospital.*
- Dr Lupperts begins to feel stressed, how can you tell? *'flapping like a trapped bird', 'broke out into a sweat', 'going to faint', 'spluttered', 'going to pass out'.*
- Imagine you are the nurse in the room, how could you use the Control Signals to help Dr Lupperts? Role play the scenario with a partner.

Activity

- **ICT** – Develop a powerpoint that explains your dream, what it is and why you want to do it. How would it make you feel.
- **Creative Task** - Create a new board game for a younger child to play. Remember to include the instructions and any helpful hints for the person playing.

Chapter 29 – 32

- Robin is always making jokes but we see a different side to him in Chapter 29. Describe how he feels about Sally and Amber. *Cares for them, doesn't want to take the balloon.*
- Do you think Amber is being mean to Sally? *Yes and No, Amber knows Sally is too ill to leave the ward, thinks she will slow them down but also slightly protective of her.*
- Why was the Porter 'lost for words' in Chapter 31? *Felt sad for the Nelly and because she had called him beautiful.*



- Tom's voice was 'cackling with emotion', what types of emotions would Tom have been feeling after talking to Nelly? *Sad, worried, confused but also happy that Nelly seemed happy.*

Chapter 33 – 35

Activity

- **Science task** – As a class, find something in your classroom that fits into the palm of your teachers hand. Use balloons to try and make it float. How many balloons does it take?
- **Music task** – Using instruments you have in school, create the scene in chapter 34 where Tom makes his way down the bannister.
- **Geography task** – Look at a map of London and pencil the ambulance journey in Chapter 35.
- **Research task** – Each group will explore one of the famous London landmarks and report their findings in a large poster.

Chapter 36 – 40

- George was feeling grumpy and annoyed at Nelly for ruining his dream and doesn't support his friends when they get caught but how can we tell he isn't always selfish? *Thinking of Raj, wanting to stop and get food for his friend, shares his chocolates with everyone.*
- Porter smiles at the children but how can the children tell how Porter is really feeling when they leave him? *Terrible sadness in his eyes. 'It sounded like a final goodbye' – sound of his voice.*
- How can we tell that Tom has grown to care for the Porter? *His heart ached for him.*
- The children's ward is described as 'sombre'. What does this mean? What does this tell you about how the characters feel?
- How does Tootsie know there is something wrong? *The children have stopped playing along with her.*
- Why does Tom feel that he can now relate to the Porter? *He feels abandoned like Porter was.*
- How do you think Sally will feel about Tom's dream?
- What word would you use to describe Tom now? *Selfless.* Can you think about a time when someone has been selfless towards you? Share this time with the class.

Chapter 41 – 44

- Why did Sally lie about how she was feeling to her friends? *Wanted to keep her pain private from her friends and wanted to keep her comfortable/ happy feeling.*
- Tom's school motto is 'Never complain, even if you are in great pain', why is this not a good motto? *All feelings are ok, if you are in pain physically and mentally it is so important to share and talk about it. In your groups, create a new motto that could be used for your classroom or school.*
- What did Tom use to help him escape? *Some of the Problem solving chart.* What had Tom forgot to do? *Think about consequences and now he was in even more trouble.*
- What does Porter mean when he says they are 'a couple of lost souls'.
- Predict what you think happens to Tom and Porter next.

Activity

- **Writing Prompt** - Imagine that you are a reporter who was inside the hospital to cover the story of the secret dreams creations. Write a newspaper article to describe the events you have witnessed in the hospital.

Chapter 45 – 48

- **What does Tom find out about his parents in Chapter 45?** *They have been calling every day for him.*
- **Why is the Porter so close to his pet pigeon?** *Looks different from others, left by its mum too.*
- **Porter forgives his Mother for leaving him. Do you think this would be hard to do? Why? Discuss your answers with a friend.**
- **Have you ever forgiven someone for something they have done?**
- **'That life is precious. Every moment is precious. We should be kind to each other. While there is still time.'** What does the author mean by precious? Think about something that is precious to you.
- **What was Tom very determined about in chapter 47?** *Making Sally's dream come true. How can we tell at the start of Chapter 48 that Tom knows that this is going to be a big mission?* *He gulps. Nervous, scared. Excited?*
- **Tom gets a compliment in from Porter in Chapter 48, how does this make him feel?** *Embarrassed. Have you ever felt embarrassed getting a compliment before?*

Activity

- **Solo talk** – share a precious object or memory/ time with the class. This could be done through a powerpoint, display board/poster, photographs etc. The talk should last for no longer than 5 mins.

Chapter 49 – 53

- **Who uses the Control Signals Poster/Problem Solving strategies to help them with their problems in Chapter 49?** *Tom and the Porter. Do you think their plan is a good idea? (thinking about possible consequences – Tom doesn't think Matron will fall for the same trick again).*
- **Why did Porter not want Raj to go up to the ward?** *George was busy and they might get caught out. Also, perhaps he didn't want to disappoint Raj, George didn't manage to get him food. (Showing kindness/ empathy) Share a time when you have kept a feeling private because you didn't want to upset or worry a friend.*
- **Chapter 51 is called 'Suspicion' – What does that mean? Can you predict what might happen next?**
- **How do we know that Tom is feeling nervous about their plan?** *Describes Matron as 'watching everything like a hawk'. Discussion about similes.*
- **What simile does the author use to help us imagine what Matron looks after she had been hit?** *Splayed like a starfish.*

Activity

- **Language task** – Find as many similes in the book as you can. Create a poster that describes feelings as similes.
- **Role play/ music activity** – Create the scene with Big Ben striking midnight. Use drums to create the atmosphere that the midnight gang would have experienced. How would each character be feeling?

Chapter 54 – 56

- **Sally has been taken to the isolation ward. How do the characters feel about this? How can you tell?** *Worried, scared, concerned. They all stick together to help their friend.*
- **How do Tom's feelings change when he sees Sally in the ward?** *Comfortable (excited, 'heart pounding' 'thrill'.*
- **How does the author describe Tom walking into see Sally?** *Slowly, silently, tentatively.*
- **Listen to the song, 'Nessun Dorma'.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWc7vYignTs> The song that best fits the Midnight Gang. **What song reminds you of your friends and why?**

- **Sally started to cry during her dream, why? How was she feeling?** *A mix of comfortable and uncomfortable feelings. Happy, excited, surprised, shy. Worried, sad that these things might not happen for her in real life.*
- **How do you think the Midnight Gang are feeling at the end of Chapter 56?**
- **What do you think the hospital staff are going to do?**

Activity

- **Art activity** – Recreate the crown Porter had made for Sally using recyclable materials.
- **Writing task** – Predict how you are going to reach your life goals. Eg what job will you have? How much will you earn? What training/ learning will you need to carry out to achieve this? Where will you live? Who will you live with? What hobbies do you have?

Chapter 57 – 61

- **How does Tom know how all the staff are feeling at the start of Chapter 57?** *Their facial expressions and body language.*
- **Has Stillers actually been a nice character all along?**
- **What is just as important to having good health according to Sir Quentin?** *Happiness.*
- **Why was Sir Quentin ‘flabbergasted’?** *Porter doesn’t have a name.*
- **Why do you think Porter chooses ‘Thomas’ as his name?** *Looks up to Tom, admires his kindness, caring nature, loyalty to his friends.*
- **How do we know Sally follows the Golden Rule?** *She phoned Tom’s parents. (Tom looked out for her so she looks out for Tom.)*
- **Tom’s Dad gets very angry when he arrive at the hospital. How does he stay in control of his angry feelings?** *Uses the 3 steps for calming down before reacting.*
- **Thomas Senior becomes the Dr of Fun, why do you think Sir Quentin has given him this role?**
- **At the end of story we see Matron and Porter/ Thomas Senior get what they deserve. In small groups, discuss what you predict for the two characters after Tom leaves the hospital.**

Activity

- **Media activity** – Watch the short film of ‘The Midnight Gang’ by the BBC.