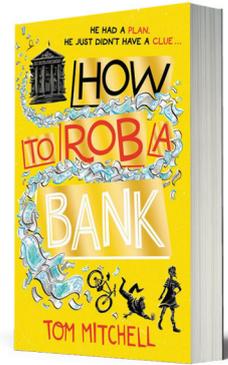


HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 1-3

'A few days after the fire, I saw Beth walking through the rec with a thick black sports bag over her shoulder. Harry trailed close behind, pulling a grey wheeled suitcase. It bounced across the uneven turf. He raised two fingers at me. I didn't know where they were going or where they'd been.' (page 16)

Activity: Create a storyboard to show what has happened in the story so far.

- Re-read Chapters 1–3 if you need to
- Plan how many events in the story you can show in the number of boxes there are on the storyboard
- Choose a style in which to present your work – you could use a comic strip approach with cartoon pictures and short captions; you could use stick figures to draw the story; you could choose just to use words to briefly summarise each section into one sentence

Use the storyboard on the next sheet.

★ Discussion points: Who is the narrator of the story? How do you know? When does the author first introduce the reader to the main character's name? How does Dylan feel about Beth and the fire? How does the author show you this?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and identifying key details that support the main idea
- Predict what might happen from details stated and implied

KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment
- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these



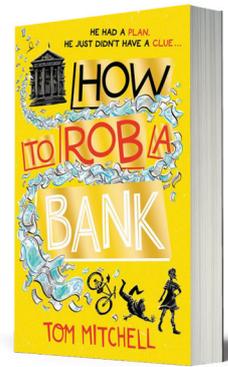


STORYBOARD



HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 4-6

Comprehension questions

1. Why did Dylan stop at the corner shop?

2. Why did Dylan think prison would be bad for him in particular?

3. Who is Dave Royston? What is he like?

4. What is Dylan's dad's profession?

5. Why did having or not having insurance matter?

6. How did watching 'Dog Day Afternoon' change Dylan's life?

7. What does TBH stand for (page 29)?

8. Why did Dylan think a post office might be a better target than a bank?

9. Who is Rita?

10. Why did Dylan choose to wear an Arsenal shirt and a baseball cap?

 **Discussion points:** Has watching a film ever inspired you to do something different? Or made you want to do something unusual?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by asking [and answering] questions to improve their understanding
- Participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously

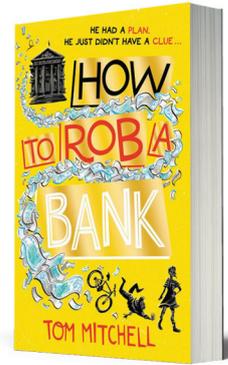
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through checking their understanding to make sure that what they have read makes sense
- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 7-9

'PUT ALL YOUR MONEY INTO THIS BAG. DO NOT TAKE BANKNOTES FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE DRAWER. DO NOT SOUND THE ALARM. THE PERSON BEHIND ME IS READY TO SHOOT YOUR ASSISTANT IF I GIVE THE SIGNAL. IF YOU TALK TO THEM, THEY WILL SHOOT YOU.' (page 38)

Activity: Imagine you are Dylan. Reflect on what has happened in Chapters 7–9 and write a diary extract about it. Use the comprehension questions below to help you. Write your diary entry on the next sheet.

Comprehension questions

1. Why did Dylan go to the post office?

2. What did it look like in the post office?

3. Who was inside the post office?

4. Why had Dylan hand written his note?

5. What did Dylan forget to take with him?

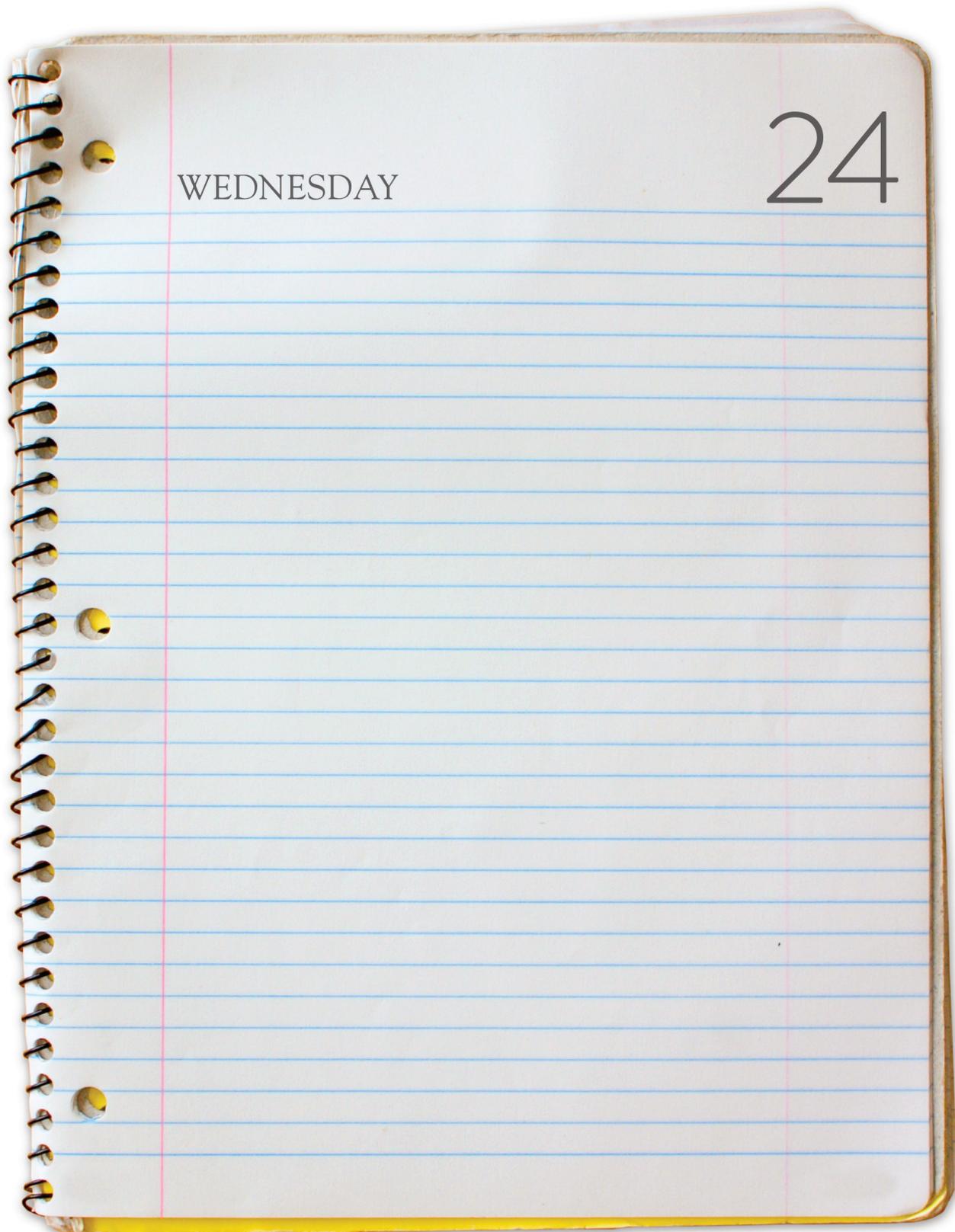
6. Who was Miss Riley?

7. How did Dylan explain the note to the old woman and Miss Riley?

8. How much money did Dylan have with him?

9. Who phoned Dylan when he got home?

10. Why did Dylan repeat the word 'Honolulu'?



KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by asking [*and answering*] questions to improve their understanding
- Summarise the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main idea

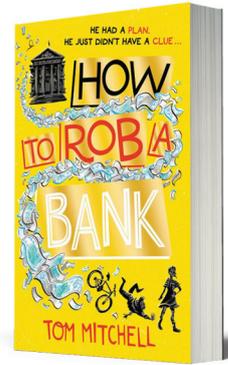
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through re-reading books encountered earlier to increase familiarity with them and provide a basis for making comparisons
- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 10-12

'As it was a special occasion Rita allowed me into her bedroom. We stood behind the net curtains and tried to hear what Mum and Marge were saying. The immediate shock of the violence had passed. They now argued as to whose fault it was. Marge was of the opinion that Mum not only had to clear up the murder scene but also owed compensation for Kevin's death.' (page 64)

Activity: Imagine you are Marge. Write a letter to your sister telling her about Kevin's death. Use information from the book as well as your own imagination. Remember to include a description of what happened from your perspective as well as details such as how you feel and what you want to happen next.

Write your letter on the next sheet.

 **Discussion points:** Whose fault was Kevin's death? What should have happened? What would you have said or done if you were Dylan's parents or Marge?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by checking the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- Predict what might happen from details stated and implied

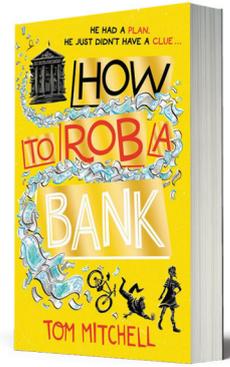
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment
- Read critically through knowing how language – including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features – presents meaning

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 13-15

'I'd sent this because, even though WhatsApp has government-standard **encryption**, Mum, the ultimate **authority**, could still demand to see my messages. I didn't want there to be anything **incriminating**, should I forget to delete them. Like that time a stranger sent me a picture of Megan Fox in a bikini. In the interest of full **disclosure**, I'd actually sent Beth the message first. Accidentally. Because that's the way your mind works. It's called your **subconscious** and is to blame when you have weird dreams about riding dogs through railway tunnels and the like.' (page 94)

Task: Can you explain what the words highlighted in this extract mean? Did you know that reading helps you to improve your knowledge of, and ability to use, new and interesting vocabulary? Challenge yourself to find out what all of the words on the next pages mean.

Ideas:

- First, talk to a partner or small group about what you think each word means
- Next, look up each word in the book to read it in context
- Then, look up each word in a dictionary and note its meaning

Explore the vocabulary on the next page.

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions
- Understand what they read by identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning

KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

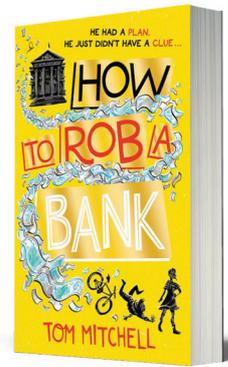
- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors
- Read critically through knowing how language – including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features – presents meaning

Word	Page reference	Definition
awkwardness	75	
consider	75	
conjure	75	
reasonable	75	
increment	76	
filtered	76	
retrieved	77	
clambered	77	
accumulated	78	
speared	79	
persevered	81	
freestanding	86	
intrigue	87	
convincing	92	
sophisticated	92	

Word	Page reference	Definition
hideous	92	
litigation	93	
encryption	94	
incriminating	94	
disclosure	94	
subconscious	94	
thumbed	94	
compensating	95	
abandoned	95	
gingerly	95	

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 16-18

'He stood dazed. "Shake his hand," she said to me, releasing her grip.

"Well, I'll need to see his CV first. And a covering letter. And the Saturday position is more training than job, so it won't pay much."

He was speaking for the sake of the audience. He was trying to wrestle control from Rita. It had been simpler for him before she'd turned up. Simpler for me too.' (page 111)

Activity: Imagine you are Rita. Help Dylan to create a covering letter that he can use to get a job at the bank. Use information from the book as well as your own imagination. Remember to include persuasive language and at least three reasons that Dylan deserves the job.

Write Dylan's covering letter on the next sheet.

 **Discussion points:** How old should young people be before they can get a paid job? Does it matter where they work? Does it matter how many hours they work? Does it matter how much they are paid? What job would you like to do when you are older?



KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by checking the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- Predict what might happen from details stated and implied

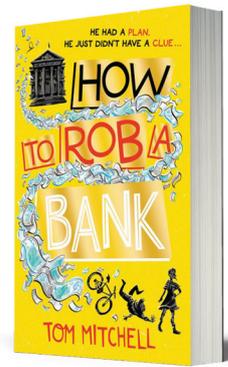
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors
- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 19-21

'How 50p would be missing when there was nothing smaller than ten pounds, I didn't know. Gradual led me down the corridor, explaining that he'd never seen anything like it on a first day and I had to understand that Gradual was the boss and I should take orders only from him because Tom, in particular, had been kicked in the head by a llama. Stopping at the bathroom door, he knocked and sighed.

"Everybody makes mistakes," he said. "It's how you respond to them that's the important thing..."
(page 136)

Activity: As the story progresses, we learn more about Max Gradual, his personality and his behaviour. Use the information in the story so far to build a character profile for Max Gradual. Extract as much information about him as you can find. Look for clues that show what he looks like, what he has, what he does, and what he likes or dislikes.

Character profile: Max Gradual

 **Discussion points:** Is Max Gradual a good boss? What does he do that is fair or unfair? Do you like the way he treats people?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
- Provide reasoned justifications for their views

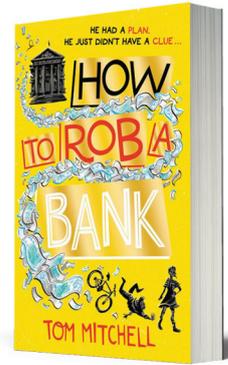
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through making inferences and referring to evidence in the text
- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 22-24

'Back at my desk, I checked my pocket for the USB drive and Jaz leant across and said, "Anyone ever tell you how much your girlfriend looks like Emma Stone? It's cray cray."'

"She isn't my girlfriend," I replied, not looking up from the pile of cheques in case my face might tell Jaz something I didn't want her knowing.' (page 154)

Activity: Find 12 names from the story listed below in the word search.

Q	B	E	T	H	L	J	F	D	K	S	M
W	X	Z	O	A	D	N	M	C	E	B	I
M	C	E	M	R	I	T	A	Q	V	L	S
A	F	P	O	R	W	G	X	F	I	Z	S
R	Q	E	H	Y	C	D	S	M	N	S	R
G	R	J	A	Z	E	Y	A	N	D	Y	I
E	T	Y	U	J	V	L	B	Z	A	K	L
R	G	S	E	M	M	A	S	T	O	N	E
T	V	H	T	U	K	N	L	P	X	A	Y
Y	U	B	N	I	V	I	O	W	J	M	A
M	A	X	G	R	A	D	U	A	L	I	P
D	A	V	E	R	O	Y	S	T	O	N	O

DYLAN
MAX GRADUAL
BETH
HARRY
RITA
MARGE
KEVIN
TOM
DAVE ROYSTON
JAZ
EMMA STONE
MISS RILEY



Discussion points: Could you describe each character in just a few words? How does the author help you feel like you know the characters? Which characters do you like / dislike?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of reasons
- Understanding what they read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

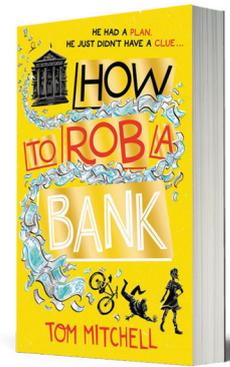
KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors
- Read critically through studying a range of authors, including at least two authors in depth each year

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 25-27

'The bite of the USB drive reminded me of this, reminded me of the endless lessons spent in RS, of how little time there was until Beth would be evicted from her second home of the holiday. Including today, there were nine days of the holiday left. I pulled out my phone, also tight against my thigh, and made some calculations.

9 days is 216 hours. 216 hours is 12,960 minutes. 12,960 minutes is 777,600 seconds.' (page 163)

Activity: Look at the below phrases used in the book *How to Rob a Bank*. What do they mean? Work with a partner, choose a phrase listed here or from elsewhere in the book and create a brief presentation to teach others about its meaning.

Time is the ultimate cilice.

Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.

Karma's a bitch.

Don't cry over spilt milk.

Take care of the present and the future will look after itself.



Discussion points: Which of these phrases do you like the most? Why? Do you agree with all of the phrases? Why/why not? Are there any phrases that you commonly use?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions
- Understand what they read by checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context

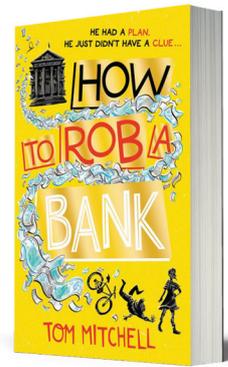
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- Read critically through knowing how language – including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features – presents meaning

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 28-30

'When the fireman next appeared at the window he wasn't wearing his protective helmet and he wasn't holding an angle grinder. He folded a rough sack, the type you might store potatoes in if you lived on a farm a hundred years ago, across the bottom of the window frame, covering the bars' stumps. And a bit like Rapunzel, he let a fold-up ladder drop and it unrolled like a carpet, the thin metal bars striking the floor. It was difficult to climb because it was flush with the wall and the rungs were pencil thin, but I pulled myself up until he gripped my wrists.' (page 181)

Activity: Write a news report about Dylan being rescued from the toilets in the bank by the fireman. You can use ideas from the story and your own imagination to write your newspaper article.

Ideas to include:

- A catchy article heading
- Who was involved in the event?
- What happened that was interesting?
- Why did that happen?
- Where did it all start?
- When did it happen?
- Quotes from witnesses
- Picture with a caption

Use the newspaper template on the next sheet to write your article.

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

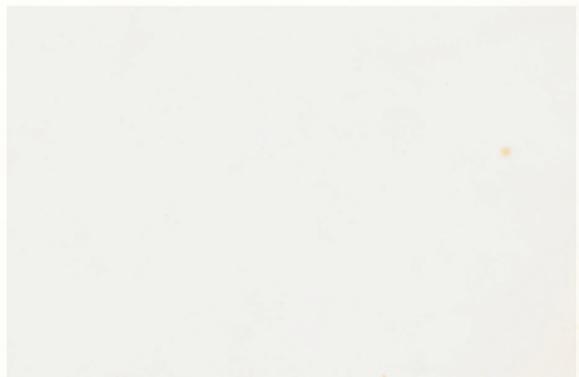
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- Understand what they read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

KS3 English NC links

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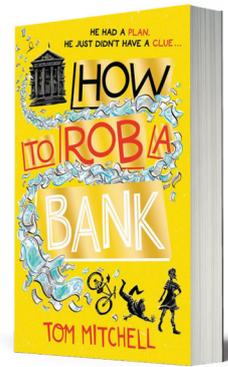
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- Read critically through knowing how language – including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features – presents meaning

The DAILY NEWS



HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 31-33

Comprehension questions

1. Why did Dylan think the sight of Tom loading the ATM was planned to tease him?

2. Who was in the office talking with Gradual?

3. What does Tom mean when he asks Dylan to do him a 'solid'?

4. Why is Tom's neck described as a diplodocus neck?

5. How many seconds did the hack USB need to be inserted for?

6. Why did Dylan use the word 'Mississippi' when counting?

7. Who was 'the beard'?

8. How did Dylan respond to Gradual's final chance offer?

9. What white lie did Mum tell about Rita?

10. What was the secret code?



Discussion points: How would you describe Dylan's emotional state as he put the code into the ATM machine? Suspense? Anxiety? Have you ever felt like this? For what reason?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by asking [and answering] questions to improve their understanding
- Participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously

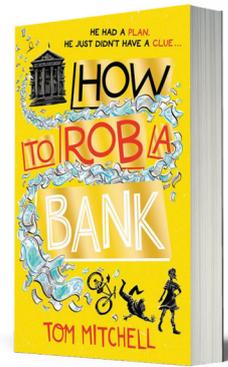
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- Read critically through studying setting, plot and characterisation, and the effects of these

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 34-36

'Here, on the damp wood of the old seat, I confessed. The threatening notes to elderly women in post offices, the dead cat, the hack code, everything.

And, while doing so, I had another one of those weird out-of-body experiences and Beth listened with a perfectly round mouth of amazement.' (page 216)

Activity: Use your knowledge of the characters along with your imagination to expand the conversation between Dylan and Beth in Chapter 34. Turn some or all of Chapters 34–36 into a playscript. Then act it out with a group.

Think about:

- How many speakers/characters there are
- Features of a playscript, for example, layout with colons and no speech marks
- Setting
- Stage directions
- Whether you need to change any of Dylan's narration into more speech by other characters to tell the story clearly in the play format



Discussion points: How did Beth react to hearing Dylan's confession? How might she have reacted differently? How might that have changed the end of the story?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience
- Understand what they read by drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

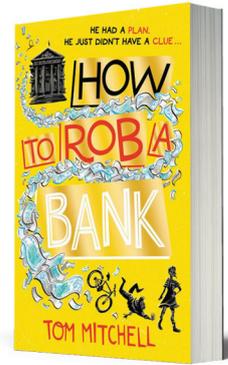
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HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 37-42

'I'd drawn the curtains to create the right atmos. Telling Rita there'd be an opportunity for questions at the end, I moved through the slides with a tap on the space-bar.

My plan was simple: gain access to the bank by climbing through the bar-less toilet window, break through the toilet door to the bank's rear corridor and (somehow) unlock the ATM access panel to retrieve my USB.' (page 230)

Activity: Write a set of instructions and guidance to help someone rob a bank.

Think about:

- Features of instruction writing, for example, numbered or bulleted steps, imperative verbs, concise sentences
- Layout and organisation, for example, chronological order, easy-to-read presentation
- Reassuring introduction or guidance section to help a non-thief with their confidence and anxiety
- Reflect on how Dylan was feeling and imagine you are writing for him as your audience

Plan your ideas in note form, then use the sheet on the following page to present your 'How to Rob a Bank' instructions.

 **Discussion point:** Was it worth breaking into the bank just to retrieve the USB stick? What were the risks and benefits of attempting the robbery and alternatively, of not going ahead with it?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Understand what they read by drawing inferences such as characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

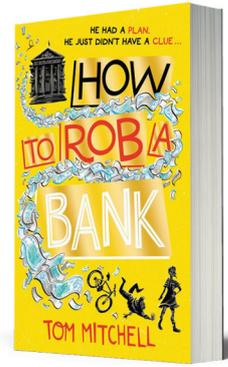
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HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL



CHAPTERS 43-45

'And as we waited for the bus to take us to the train station to take us to London to take us to expensive ice creams and chilli burgers, I took a photo of Beth and me, hiding my chin with my left hand as I did so. I posted it to Facebook, my fingers tingling, the first time I'd posted anything for months. It appeared in a stream of other people's holidays and I thought that if the summer had taught me anything about life, it was that anything could happen. Anything at all.' (page 277)

Activity: Write a detailed book review to conclude your work with the book, *How to Rob a Bank*. Present your book review so that it can be shared with others.

Design the book review with sections of your choice. Here are some ideas to help you:

- Book details, for example, title, author and publisher
- Your rating, for example, how many stars out of five you award it
- Synopsis, for example, a paragraph to summarise the storyline
- Characters and information about each one
- Your favourite parts and your least favourite parts
- Categorisation, for example, did it contain adventure, horror, humour or romance?
- Reasons why you liked or disliked it
- How it made you feel
- Plot twists
- Would you recommend this book to others and, if so, to whom?



Discussion points: What techniques did the author use that made this book humorous and engaging? Which ideas might you adapt and be inspired by for your own writing?

KS2 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- Explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary

KS3 English NC links

Pupils should be taught to:

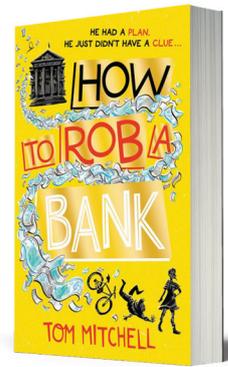
- Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors
- Read critically through studying a range of authors, including at least two authors in depth each year

HarperCollinsChildren'sBooks
presents

HOW TO ROB A BANK

TOM MITCHELL

READING GROUP QUESTIONS



Chapters 1–3: Who is the narrator of the story? How do you know? When does the author first introduce the reader to the main character's name? How does Dylan feel about Beth and the fire? How does the author show you this?

Chapters 4–6: Has watching a film ever inspired you to do something different? Or made you want to do something unusual?

Chapters 10–12: Whose fault was Kevin's death? What should have happened? What would you have said or done if you were Dylan's parents or Marge?

Chapters 16–18: How old should young people be before they can get a paid job? Does it matter where they work? Does it matter how many hours they work? Does it matter how much they are paid? What job would you like to do when you are older?

Chapters 19–21: Is Max Gradual a good boss? What does he do that is fair or unfair? Do you like the way he treats people?

Chapters 22–24: Could you describe each character in just a few words? How does the author help you feel like you know the characters? Which characters do you like / dislike?

Chapters 31–33: How would you describe Dylan's emotional state as he put the code into the ATM machine? Suspense? Anxiety? Have you ever felt like this? For what reason?

Chapters 34–36: How did Beth react to hearing Dylan's confession? How might she have reacted differently? How might that have changed the end of the story?

Chapters 37–42: Was it worth breaking into the bank just to retrieve the USB stick? What were the risks and benefits of attempting the robbery and alternatively, of not going ahead with it?

Chapters 43–45: What techniques did the author use that made this book humorous and engaging? Which ideas might you adapt and be inspired by for your own writing?

