

Goodnight Mister Tom

During the Second World War, people were worried about British cities being bombed. Thousands of children were evacuated from cities to the safety of the countryside. *Goodnight Mister Tom* tells the story of an evacuee who is taken in by an old man called Tom Oakley.

“Yes,” said Tom bluntly, on opening the front door. “What d’you want?”

A harassed middle-aged woman in a green coat and felt hat stood on his step. He glanced at the armband on her sleeve. She gave him an awkward smile.

“I’m the Billeting Officer* for this area,” she began.

5 “Oh yes, and what’s that go to do wi’ me?”

She flushed slightly. “Well, Mr, Mr...”

“Oakley. Thomas Oakley.”

“Ah, thank you, Mr Oakley.” She paused and took a deep breath. “Mr Oakley, with the declaration of war imminent...”

10 Tom waved his hand. “I knows all that. Git to the point. What d’you want?” He noticed a small boy at her side.

“It’s him I’ve come about,” she said. “I’m on my way to your village hall with the others.”

“What others?”

15 She stepped to one side. Behind the large iron gate which stood at the end of the graveyard were a small group of children. Many of them were filthy and very poorly clad*. Only a handful had a blazer or coat. They all looked bewildered and exhausted. One tiny dark-haired girl in the front was hanging firmly on to a new teddy-bear.

The woman touched the boy at her side and pushed him forward.

“There’s no need to tell me,” said Tom. “It’s obligatory and it’s for the war effort.”

20 “You are entitled to choose your child, I know,” began the woman apologetically.

Tom gave a snort.

“But,” she continued, “his mother wants him to be with someone who’s religious or near a church. She was quite adamant*. Said she would only let him be evacuated if he was.”

“Was what?” asked Tom impatiently.

25 “Near a church.”

Tom took a second look at the child. The boy was thin and sickly-looking, pale with limp sandy hair and dull grey eyes.



Glossary

Billeting Officer — the person in charge of finding homes for evacuees

clad — dressed

adamant — unwilling to compromise

An extract from
Goodnight Mister Tom
by Michelle Magorian.

1 Why doesn't the author use Standard English for Tom's speech?

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1 mark

2 How do you think the Billeting Officer feels when she is talking to Tom? Explain your answer.

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.....

2 marks

3 Write down a word that the author could have used instead of "bewildered" in line 16.

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1 mark

4 What effect does line 17 have on the reader? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

5 Does Tom have to take in an evacuee? Explain your answer.

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1 mark

6 Give one reason why the author might have chosen to include a lot of direct speech in this text.

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1 mark

7 Do you think that Tom and the boy will get on? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

Total
out of 10