



THIS PACK is full of resources, ideas and activities based on Tom Palmer's brilliant new Squad spy series – on target to help boys and girls to READ FOR PLEASURE.



Dear Teacher or Librarian



We've put together this bumper pack full of fun literacy activities based around Tom Palmer's *The Squad: Black Op* and *The Squad: White Fear* books.

Tom Palmer is a football fan and writer. He didn't always do well at school, but once he got into reading about football – in newspapers, magazines and books – he decided to be a football writer.

He has now written fourteen books for Puffin, including five in his popular *Foul Play* series plus six in the brilliant *Football Academy* series for younger children.

Tom is also a specialist in promoting reading. He visits hundreds of libraries and schools every year up and down the UK inspiring thousands of young readers.

You can find lots more about Tom on his website www.tompalmer.co.uk, where he also writes a blog about his writing, his life and the schools he has visited.

We hope this pack will be an effective tool in helping you to encourage children to enjoy reading and writing for pleasure.

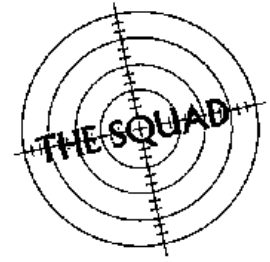
You are welcome to copy any of these pages you need as well as the free first chapters of all the books at www.tompalmer.co.uk. For more free resources sign up to Tom's termly literacy newsletter – email info@tompalmer.co.uk

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Happy reading!

Tom Palmer INTERVIEW



We asked Tom some questions:

1 How did you become a writer?

I think it started when I got into reading. That was when I was 18. But once I liked to read I started to want to write. To see if I could do it, I suppose.

2 Where do you get the ideas for your books from?

From real football crimes. Every day the newspapers have new stories about dodgy dealings in football. I start my ideas there, then exaggerate. If I need to...

3 How do you go about writing your stories, and how long do they take?

A Foul Play or Squad book takes four months to write. The Football Academy books take a month each. I start by going to the places the book is set, make a plan, then I write a first draft. I spend a lot of time making changes to improve it.

4 Do you base your characters like Danny Harte in the Foul Play books on anyone in real life?

Sort of. Danny is what I wish I'd been when I was 14, but wasn't. And my villains are based on real people, but if I said who they were some would sue me. Others might have me killed. Honestly!

5 What books do you enjoy reading?

Stories. Books about travelling to foreign countries. Crime fiction. Books about football abroad.

6 Can you recommend any good books for anyone who has enjoyed your Foul Play and Squad stories?

Yes. Keeper by Mal Peet, Young Samurai by Chris Bradford, Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz.

7 What advice do you have for anyone who wants to be a writer?

Read books by lots of different authors. Write about what you love, so it feels passionate. And never give up.

8 What do you do when you're not writing?

Spend time with my wife and daughter. Watch football. Read. And I've taken up running 10km races.

9 Which football team do you support, and why?

Leeds. Because I was born there and I love them.

Poland : The Setting for Black Op



Krakow is a beautiful city in the south of Poland, relatively near the border with Ukraine. It is the city where the England Football Team were based during Euro 2012 and is the setting for Tom Palmer's *Black Op* novel.

Black Op takes place a week before the tournament kicks off. The England team have arrived and – as well as training – are meeting groups of local people in their host city.

Tom went to Krakow to find out more about the city. It's important to him to get his facts right.

You can read more about Tom's research trip on my blog :
<http://footballdetective.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/poland.html>

This huge, hollow statue called "Eros Bound" is in the main square of Krakow.

One of the spies in the book uses the statue to covertly watch a pair of terrorists, looking through one of the open eye sockets. He then lures them inside the statue in a bid to stop them carrying out their terrible plans.

If Tom hadn't seen the sculpture in person, he would never have been able to imagine that twist in the story.



Every fifteen minutes a trumpeter plays from the top of this tower of St Mary's Basilica in Krakow. This fact is really important to the plot when the children tackle the group of men intent on killing the England football team.



Norway : The Setting for White Fear



Tom toured the coastline of northern Norway by plane, train, bus and boat to research settings and storylines for White Fear.

He had wanted to go to Tromsø for years because it is the most northern city on the world. It's almost at the top of Norway, with nothing but water and ice beyond it til you hit the North Pole.

White Fear is about 5 children who are trying to prevent war breaking out. As the ice melts in the Arctic Circle, more oil, gas and other resources are made accessible – and several countries want to lay their claim. It could easily be a source of enormous conflict within years.

You can read more about Tom's trip to Norway here:

<http://footballdetective.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/norway.html>



Lily and Kester (Tom's spy footballers) climb aboard the Norwegian coastal boat, the Hurtigruten, and head north to extreme peril. The research trip on the Hurtigruten gave Tom many ideas. Seeing the vast glaciers hanging over the fjords in a midnight half-light) helped describe the place and a feeling of fear.

In Tromsø, Tom took a cable car high into the mountains and hiked to see spectacular views of fjords and glaciers. He wrote down his descriptions and how his surroundings made him feel. He found lots of inspiration for storylines too - a mountain refuge hut would be perfect for the children to hide in when hit by a blizzard and now he knew exactly what they look like and how a hut could save the children's lives.



School And Library Football Reading ACTIVITIES



Have a **Morning Papers Reading Club** session one day a week. Invite football fans to come to talk about the latest football newspaper match reports, magazines and books. Choose big days such as the day before or after England games or after an important game your local team has played. Buy a selection of newspapers. Encourage the children to bring in a magazine, book or website print out.

Buddy up the older children with younger ones. Arrange for them to meet once a week to talk about and read a short football book together.

Have an **assembly** about football and reading. Make up a panel of guests. A sporty teacher or two? A football-loving Y5 or Y6? A local journalist who does a bit of football reporting? A coach from the local team. An author. Ask them questions about the football action and what they like to read about football. For more ideas have a look at *Love Football: Love Reading* on www.literacytrust.org.uk.

Football magazine debate. Buy all four main football magazines: *Kick*, *Match of the Day*, *Match* and *FourFourTwo*. Challenge a group of children to champion each magazine and give short presentations about why their magazine is the best. Have a vote to see which is the most popular.

Read aloud one of **Tom Palmer's free classroom read stories** like *Danger Academy*. FREE download of all eight chapters. Just five minutes each to read aloud www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/2433/PLRS_Danger_Academy_4_web.pdf

Watch a two-minute clip of football action from the night before. Then challenge the children to make up a **commentary**. Encourage them to do research on the players so that they can fill their commentary with facts. Play them examples of radio and TV commentary as preparation.

Visit a library or a bookshop and ask them to show you what football – and sporting – stock they have in. Ask a librarian or bookseller to give you a tour. This can help overcome some children's confusion about what libraries and bookshops are about.

Look at the **Premier League Reading Stars** resources on the www.premierleaguereadingstars.org.uk website. There are films and photographs of football stars talking about why reading is so important – and so much fun.

Mix some of the ideas above with **football activities** to keep everyone's adrenaline up. For example, run an activity followed by a penalty shootout, then another activity, then finish with a short game of football.

Send Tom Palmer's letter home with **Top Ten Tips for Parents on using Sport to encourage children to read** (see overleaf).

Dear Parent or Guardian



The 2012-13 football season is underway. And now there is more than there ever for children to read about the game. From websites to fiction. From newspapers to magazines. Football can get your children reading for pleasure. Here are ten top tips to help you with the football mad children in your life.

1 Set your home page on your computers to a decent football website like www.bbc.co.uk/football

2 Get your children on form for the new season using one of the guides to playing the game. The Usbourne Soccer School is particularly good. Also Know the Game: Football.

3 Deliver a newspaper football supplement to your child's room on Saturday or Sunday morning to get them used to reading previews, match reports and groundless transfer gossip.

4 Buy them a copy of one of the popular football magazines: Match, Kick or Match of the Day. Or FourFourTwo for older children. Some of the major clubs also have their own magazines. Or ask if your local library have them.

5 Find one of the child-friendly autobiographies of footballers, full of statistics, pictures and clean stories. The most popular ones are by Steven Gerrard, Wayne Rooney, Theo Walcott and Cristiano Ronaldo.

6 Play one of the fantasy football games in a newspaper, which means you all need to keep a close eye on who is injured and who has been dropped from teams. Another reason to read the football pages.

7 Find some of the superb football fiction at a library (or bookshop) near you. Authors include David Bedford, Michael Coleman, Narinder Dhami, Dan Freedman, Alan Gibbons, Michael Morpurgo, Tom Palmer, Mal Peet, Helena Pielichaty, Bali Rai and Johnny Zucker.

8 Put football newspaper articles and match reports on the fridge and on the back of the toilet door,

9 Ask your school or public library to run the National Literacy Trust's Premier League Reading Stars scheme. www.premierleaguereadingstars.co.uk.

10 Encourage a good male role model you know to recommend some of the techniques above to them.

Finally, read about football yourself. You'll enjoy it and your children will want to do it too.

Best wishes

Tom Palmer, author of The Squad : Black Op, White Fear and other Puffin Books.
www.tompalmer.co.uk

Black Op by Tom Palmer

READING COMPREHENSION

Puffin ISBN 978-0141337784



From Page 1

Three small figures moved rapidly across the night-time desert floor, sliding over shifting sands, keeping low.

Low because if they were visible they could be shot within seconds.

They stopped when they located a flickering light coming from an isolated camp. Their target. They knew from satellite images taken earlier in the day that the camp consisted of a large tent, a fire, a dozen camels, a Land Rover and a small army of men. They also knew that the target was heavily armed and, no doubt, under strict orders to fire at anything that moved. It was the base of one of the most dangerous terrorist cells in the world and it would be well defended.

The three figures had to get close to the tent without being spotted and listen to what was being planned.

It was a tough mission, but the trio was up to the job. Rob, Lesh and Lily worked for the British Government, half of a team of six who were deployed around the world and were known as the Squad. They were extremely clever, highly trained and had already been involved in a number of successful missions. The only difference between them and the other spies working for the British Government was that they were all just thirteen years old.

1 What time of day was it?

2 Why were the three children crawling?

3 What had taken photographs of the camp earlier in the day?

4 How many camels were there?

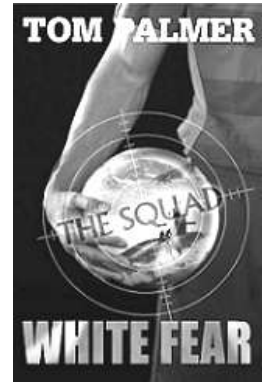
5 What is their mission?

6 How might the Squad team members feel to be doing this job at just 13 years old?

White Fear by Tom Palmer

READING COMPREHENSION

Puffin ISBN 978-0141337814



From Page 1

Four children crouched motionless on the top of the tallest building in the most northern city in the world, waiting for the order to jump.

Around them were some of the most spectacular views they had ever seen: vast snow-topped crags, deep gorges with fjords running through them, a row of black mountains in the distance. But they weren't there to look at the scenery. The trip was strictly business, not pleasure.

A fifth child – Lesh – sat in a wheelchair, waiting to relay that order and send the other four over the top. For Lesh, this was the first outing since his accident on their last mission. An accident that had left him paralysed from the waist downwards. So today he was determined to get everything right. To the second.

“Remind me why we are doing this?” Adnan, a stocky Asian boy, murmured to the two girls crouching next to him.

One was white with blond hair, Lily.

The other black with tight dark plaits, Hatty.

“There's someone we need to talk to,” Kester, the fourth member of the group, said. And this is the only way of reaching him.”

“Who?” Hatty asked.

“I'm not allowed to say.”

“Thirty seconds,” Lesh said.

“Why not? Hatty pressed

“Orders.”

1 What order were the children waiting for?

2 What was on top of the craggy mountains?

3 What are fjords?

4 What is Lesh sitting in?

5 How do you think Adnan is feeling?

6 Which child do you think is the leader?

School and Library Football Reading DISPLAY IDEAS



Ask a small group of football fans to become your **football display team**.

Using the ideas below, they should be able to create an exciting display to encourage reading around football..

Make sure you have a **large wall space**. It could be in the hall, the library or near reception so that parents can see it too.

Take some **photos** of teachers and children from the school wearing football tops and reading something to do with the game. Magazines. Books. Newspapers. Websites. Place the pictures around your display or about the school to attract people to your display.

Keep a space for **match reports** from the newspapers. You can either stick up reports from the newspapers or print them off the internet.

Part of the plan is to encourage reading, so have a **selection of books, magazines and newspapers** on a table next to the display. Provide seats for browsers to enjoy a good read.

You could even encourage a sporting book or magazine **swap shop** based underneath the display.

Create a Goal Wall. Make a 2D goal on a wall in school. Three strips of white card plus some basic string netting – real or drawn – at the back. Make lots of ball shaped sheets (see Page 9) where children can write the name of a book they've read, the author, give it a star rating and maybe even write a few words. If they liked it ask them to stick the ball in the back of the net. If they thought it was okay, have it hit the post and if they hated it, then they can stick it wide of the goal.

Find five **excerpts from football books** – fiction, player biographies, fact books. Copy them onto a blank sheet. Copy the books' covers. Stick them next to your display and challenge the children to match the text with the cover. (Tip: most books' first chapters are free on Amazon.) You can get Tom Palmer book covers by emailing him at info@tompalmer.co.uk.

Visit www.premierleaguereadingstars.com for images of footballers reading great children's fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays and match reports. Use these to add credibility to your display.

Football Book REVIEW



Use this sheet to write about your favourite book.

Fill in each section, then give the book a mark out of five by colouring in the stars.

Now cut it out and stick the ball on your display.



The Squad : CHARACTERS



Lily is a kind and friendly girl. But, when it comes to it, she is tougher than any of the others in the Squad. She is a very good runner, having been trained by her father to run in the hills of Yorkshire since she was six. Although she is not one of the leaders, she is always listened to by those who do lead. She speaks several languages and is very bright. Lily is a right back in the team.



Hatty is very different to Lily. She is hard and uncompromising. She pushes the other Squad members to make sure they do what she thinks is right. She comes across as mean. She doesn't trust outsiders. Most of the time this is useful, but sometimes it is dangerous. Hatty finds it hard to understand Lily, but, secretly, she envies her friendliness and gentler nature. Hatty is a central defender.



Lesh is the technical wizard of the Squad. He can use gadgets and is skilled in hacking into computer systems to find things out to help the Squad on their missions. He was born in Poland, but has lived with his parents in England for several years. Lesh has a very dramatic time in *Black Op*, meaning his role in the second book – *White Fear* – is very different. Lesh is a left back.



Kester is the leader of the *Squad*. But he relies a lot on Hatty for support. At the beginning of *Black Op* the Squad's leaders have to choose between Kester and Hatty. The fact that Kester was chosen still remains unresolved during the book. Under pressure, Kester shows great leadership qualities when the Squad are under great pressure. He is a central defender, alongside Hatty.



Adnan is the joker of the pack. When he is feeling tense he tries to make everyone laugh. Sometimes it works: sometimes it doesn't. Adnan is a loyal member of the Squad and would do anything for anyone. He is very experienced at outdoor activities and often takes the lead on missions in the wild. Adnan is a goal keeper. He also hates football.

The Squad DISCUSSION TOPICS



The Squad books *Black Op* and *White Fear* are about a group of child spies, all of whom have lost their parents. They are sent around the world to challenge threats to British citizens.

The themes in the books create a number of possible discussion topics. We've thought of some initial questions to support your class discussions.

If you talked about any other ideas, or your class would like to email Tom with their thoughts, he would be very interested, just email him at info@tompalmer.co.uk

Children without parents

Lots of children in stories do not have parents. That includes the five spies of the Squad. They might be orphans. The parents might have died.

- Can you think of books or films where children don't have parents?
- What do they get up to that you might not be allowed to do?
- Can you think of what children in books who *do* have parents are different?
- Why do you think authors kill off parents?

Where do baddies come from?

In *Black Op* and *White Fear* the villains are a former KBG agent from Russia and an American arms dealer respectively. Think of some books you have read, video games you have played and films you have seen. Where do the baddies come from? Russia has always been a popular choice. When South Africa was a pariah state, lots of villains came from South Africa. You might notice that many American films portray the British as baddies.

- Which books have villains that are strongly associated with a country?
- How does it make you feel if the British are the baddies?

Is football good enough for stories?

Many people think that football stories are good for getting boys (usually) into books, but then the children should move onto better books. Discuss it as a class.

- Do you think that football is a good subject for stories?
- Or, do you think proper stories should be about things like war, people having troubles in their lives, even about love.
- What do you think the value is of having stories written about football?

Children hurt in books

Talk about books you've read where children have been in danger. In both *Black Op* and *White Fear* one of the main characters is hurt during the book.

- How does that make you feel?
- Do you think an author should let a major character die? Especially a child? Or, does it add realism?
- Do you prefer books where children are supposedly in danger but you know they will never actually be killed?

When authors use real stories

Tom Palmer based *Black Op* on two real events. An attack on the Sri Lanka cricket team and another on the Togo football team. Both times by terrorists. Sports teams are a very visible target and, if terrorists are successful, it means that they get a lot of publicity for their cause. Think of books, games and films that you know

- Do you think it is right that an author should use a real tragedy to make up a story and be paid for doing it?
- What other real events have inspired stories?
- Are there any real events that you would like to read in a fiction book?

Stories about ecological issues

White Fear is about a war that could break out if the ice in the Arctic Circle melts. Once the ice has gone several countries will be able to drill for oil and other resources. The problem is that no-one is quite sure who owns what parts of the sea bed. Unfortunately it is issues like this that cause wars. It is a war that could happen when you are in your forties or fifties.

- How do you think the countries in the Arctic should work out who opens what part of the sea bed?
- How would you stop them arguing about who owns what?

One of the characters in the White Fear, Katiyana resorts to desperate measures to highlight the plight of how her people livelihoods are affected?

- How are her people being affected?
- What sort of direct action is justifiable?
- How much risk should people take?

We hope these discussion points have been interesting to you. Please let Tom know if you have any strong opinions about any of the above by emailing info@tompalmer.co.uk

Write Your Own Squad story



Help Tom come up with the idea for his next book. When he writes book three in *The Squad* series he'll need a place to set it and a good idea. Tom would love to hear your ideas about what his next book should be about.

football team.

Squad book one (*Black Op*) is about a secret spy ring who use a touring football team as their cover to stop a mad Russian murdering the England



In book two (*White Fear*) the children have to stop a world war breaking out. We need you to create a third mission for the child spy ring.

When Tom is planning a new book, he asks himself a few questions to help him work out what to write about. Have a look at these questions and think of the answers that you would want to read.

Where in the world would you like to set a spy thriller? (for instance, Tom wants to set his next book in the mountains of Switzerland)

Who would be the villain? (for instance, a scientist could be planning a dangerous attack on a UK city)

Do they have a personal reason? (for instance, one of their family was killed in a war years ago by the British).

What sort of settings would the book include? (If Tom set a book in Switzerland, the settings might include mountain sides, iced-over lakes, abandoned wooden cabins)

When would you set the story? (It could be set now, in the past or even in the future)

What would you call the book? (To fit in with the series the first word needs to be a colour. The second word needs to be a dramatic word.)

Design Your Own Squad Book Cover



Now design a cover to tell your story in pictures. Look at Tom's other book covers and see what they usually look like.

Would you draw one to fit in with the others?

Or would you re-jacket them all?

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The Squad

Black Op
White Fear

Set Special £10.80

Tick to order



The Squad is about a youth football team that represents the country around the world in international tournaments. But, secretly, five of them are spies, sent to stop foreign agents harming British interests.

Football Academy

Boys United, Striking Out, The Real Thing, Reading the Game, Free Kick & Captain Fantastic

Set Special £32.94

Tick to order



The stories of six boys who are part of a fictional Premier League football academy. (7+)

'I wanted to write a series of books based at a real football academy, a series that would be just like the academies at Manchester City or Arsenal or Swansea. I went to a couple of real academies and met the coaches and players to see what academies are really like. Then I wrote the books, making sure I made it as realistic as possible.'

Foul Play

Foul Play, Dead Ball, Off Side, Killer Pass & Own Goal

Set Special £31.46

Tick to order



A series about a boy called Danny who tries to solve crimes in the football world, using his experience reading detective stories to help him.

'There is loads of crime in football around the world. Kidnaps, bribery, exploitation of young players. I wanted to create a boy hero who would clean up the game and show a new generation that football is about more than money and puffed-up egos.'

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