

The Cement Garden – Tom

His looks

“He was small for a **six-years old**, and **frail**. He was **pale**, a little jug-eared, had an idiotic grin and black hair which grew in a thick, lopsided fringe.” (45)

His character

Tom is **curious**: he wants to see the cement bags in the cellar. (12)

There he also finds some of his “old toys. He turned them over contemptuously with his foot and told me they were for babies.” (13)

“Tom was **scared of his father** [...]” (13)

Tom is sometimes “pissing in his bed” (15).

“Tom had a couple of friends he sometimes played with in the street [...]” (23)

Every three mornings it is Jack who walks Tom to his school: “Sometimes he screamed and kicked and had to be carried out of the house. One morning, shortly before the end of term, he told me quite calmly as we walked along that he had an ‘enemy’ at school. [...] ‘He’s gonna bash my head in’¹ [...] Tom was just the kind to be picked on. [...] Worse, he was clever in a niggling, argumentative way – **the perfect playground victim.**” (44-45)

Tom gets beaten up after Jack unsuccessfully threatens Tom’s “enemy”: “his face was swollen and red, and a corner of his mouth was torn” (45).

Tom **wants to be a girl**: “‘What’s it like being a girl?’ [...] he said he was *tired* of being a boy and he wanted to be a girl now. [...] ‘Because you don’t get hit when you’re a girl.’ [...] ‘I’ll wear a dress and make my hair like yours and go in the girls’ entrance.’” (46-47)

His teacher writes: “‘Tom is a pleasure to have in class.’ [...] ‘He is **gentle but spirited** child.’” (48)

¹ Consider the chant “‘Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!’” in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, Chapter 7. Tom’s “enemy” even looks like Jack in *Lord of the Flies*: “red-headed and freckled” (45).