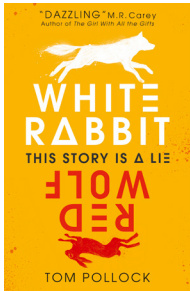




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## White Rabbit, Red Wolf

By Tom Pollock  
ISBN: 9781406378177  
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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Outline:

A taut thriller about murder, maths and the mind. Peter Blankman is afraid of everything but must confront truly unimaginable terror when his mother is attacked.

Seventeen-year-old Peter Blankman is a maths prodigy. He also suffers from severe panic attacks. Afraid of everything, he finds solace in the orderly and logical world of mathematics and in the love of his family: his scientist mum and his tough twin sister Bel, as well as Ingrid, his only friend. However, when his mother is found stabbed before an award ceremony and his sister is nowhere to be found, Pete is dragged into a world of espionage and violence where state and family secrets intertwine. Armed only with his extraordinary analytical skills, Peter may just discover that his biggest weakness is his greatest strength.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Tom Pollock is the author of urban fantasy trilogy *The Skyscraper Throne* and an ambassador for *Talklife*, the peer support network for youth mental health. *White Rabbit, Red Wolf* is his first book for teenagers. Tom lives and works in London and you can follow him on Twitter: @tomhpollcock

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

**These notes are for:**

- Secondary
- Ages 14+

**Key Learning Areas:**

- English

**Example of:**

- YA Fiction

**Themes/Ideas:**

- Mental Illness
- Fear
- Family relationships
- Nature vs nurture



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## Discussion Questions and Activities:

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?  
Revisit your answer after reading the book – how close were your predictions to the actual novel?

Discuss the thriller genre. What are some tropes or rules of the genre? Name some examples of books or films that are indicative of the genre. How does *White Rabbit, Red Wolf* fit in this genre? How does it subvert the genre?

What are the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Define the word *recursion*. Why do you think the author chooses this word to take the reader back in time?

What is the timeframe of the novel? How does the author create such a tense atmosphere?

How is mental illness explored and presented in this novel? Is the novel asserting that mental illness is a result of our environment?

The author has said of his own bulimia “it’s not hunger that drives the binges. It’s fear”. Research Tom Pollock’s own journey with mental illness. To what extent do you think this influences his writing? Can you only write about mental illness if you have personally experienced it?

Do you agree that Peter’s biggest weakness is at the same time his greatest strength? Explore the idea that the flipside of mental illness can be “extraordinary” skills.

Choose a character from the novel. Explore how they are initially presented to us vs what we know about them at the end of the novel. What techniques does the author use to reveal the characters?

Who is telling the story? How much do you trust the narrator? Why would you trust him? Why wouldn’t you trust him?

This novel explores fear. Are our fears caused by our environment or are we born with them? Is fear contagious? Can fear be used as a weapon?

How does Peter change throughout the novel? Create a word cloud or mind map of his character at the beginning of the novel and at the end. Which events caused specific changes in him?

What did you think about the end of the book? What do you think it is saying to you as a reader?

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