



Walton le Dale High School
-
Reading Warriors Programme
-
Information for Parents and Carers
2023-24

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If you have any questions or comments about the Walton le Dale High School Reading Warriors programme, please contact Rachel Long (r.long@waltonledale.lancs.sch.uk).

Why are we doing this?

Our aim is for *all* students to have had access to a range of high-quality, diverse and interesting texts throughout their 5 years with us.

Our aim is also for *all* staff and students to share in the joy of reading these texts together, and to benefit from the discussion and learning opportunities that this will bring.

Children love to hear stories read to them. These sessions should be a pleasure for all.

Why is reading so important?

- Reading skills impact the whole school. Children who are more skilled at reading will do **better academically** across the curriculum.
- It is proven to improve a person's **mental health** and **well-being**
- *'Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning.'* (KPMG, 2009)
- Students need to read well in order to access the exams at the end of KS4. **On average, the reading age for exam papers is 16.** By the end of secondary school, on average most children will have a reading age of 13, and disadvantaged children will have a reading age of 10.
- *'Speedy and accurate decoding at 6 years predicts success at 16.'* (Stanovich, 1986)
- *'Good reading at 10 predicts GCSEs at 16 and earnings at 42.'* (Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2015),
- In primary school, most children increase their reading ability year on year; this stops when they transfer to secondary school. The **gap** between their reading age and their chronological age **widens as they progress through secondary school.**
- Marianne Wolf argues that digital reading encourages **'shallow reading'** (rapid consumption of information) and that print reading encourages **'deep reading'** (critical analysis and quality of attention). She says that deep reading neural circuitry is compromised by shallow reading practices - the brain is changed by digital reading.
- *'Advantaged students who arrive in the classroom with background knowledge and vocabulary will understand what a textbook or teacher is saying and will therefore learn more; disadvantaged students who lack such prior knowledge will fail to understand and thus fall even further behind, relative to their fellow students'* (E.D Hirsch 2013).
- We have a **moral imperative** to encourage students to read widely and fluently. 'In addition to its substantial practical benefits, reading is one of life's profound joys. Every child should have the opportunity to experience the pleasure and enrichment which comes from reading a great novel, biography or play. The canon of English literature – from Christopher Marlowe to Ian McEwan – belongs to every English speaker, whatever their background and no matter where they live. Full participation in this intellectual and cultural heritage depends upon universal, high standards of literacy.' (DfE, 2015)
- 'Other **benefits** to reading for pleasure include: text comprehension and grammar, positive reading attitudes, pleasure in reading in later life, increased general knowledge' (Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

Why are we all reading?

- **1 in 11** children live in a house where there are no books. This rises to **1 in 8** for disadvantaged children.
- **Modelling** the skills of good reading is vital to encouraging children to read.
- The **shared experience of reading a book together** has been proven to create positive attitudes towards reading in children.

Why are we focusing on developing reading through reading for pleasure?

- 'The best way to promote [reading skills] development is by instilling in children a passion for reading. Children who love reading will read more and, over time, choose literature which is more demanding and

suitably stretching. It creates a virtuous circle: as **the amount a child reads increases, their reading attainment improves, which in turn encourages them to read more**. All reading makes a difference, but evidence suggests that **reading for pleasure makes the most**'. (DfE, 2015)

- 'Reading for pleasure is not only important because it improves performance in reading tests; it has a much wider significance for children's education. Research shows that it brings benefits that help pupils achieve more across the whole curriculum. These include a **broad vocabulary, text comprehension, grammar and general knowledge**. Reading for pleasure has also been found to be linked to **greater progress in spelling and mathematics skills**. Recent longitudinal research found the impact of reading for pleasure on progress in vocabulary, arithmetic and spelling between the ages of 10 and 16 to be four times greater than the impact of having a parent with degree' (DfE, 2015).

What will the sessions look like?

What is the format of the sessions?

- Each reading session is **25 minutes long**.
- The **format** of the session will be:
 - First 3-5 minutes - recap from last reading session.
 - 15-17 minutes - read (around 6-8 pages; choose an appropriate place to stop)
 - 5 minutes - discussion of what has been read
- Staff will help with difficult **vocabulary** by providing synonyms as they read.
- Students will be given a **bookmark** containing questions linking to our key **Reading Warrior skills**. Teachers will ask these questions and students will start to ask and answer these questions as their confidence and familiarity with the sessions increases:
 - **Clarify**
 - **Question**
 - **Summarise**
 - **Predict**

What should the children be doing?

- The children should be engaged in the story. They must be listening at all times.
- David Didau, an expert in setting up whole school reading programs such as this, suggests that we don't force the children to follow along as we read. Each pupil will have a book, as it is important for them to have the feel of a text in their hands, but we suggest that they:
 - Follow along if they can; most pupils will do this as a matter of course.
 - Just listen - you'll find that your weaker readers will prefer this and as long as they are focusing on listening, this is totally acceptable.
 - Read at their own pace - the fluent readers will do this, they might read ahead even but as long as they don't give 'spoilers', we will just let them enjoy themselves.
- We do not want students to read aloud. Some of them will really want to, but for lots of reasons **we would like the teacher to do all of the reading**.

What will happen if the children are not engaged?

- Our **expectations** for the reading will be the **same** as for all other lessons.
- The school **BfL** system and **sanctions** will be applied in the same way they are in all other lessons.

What will my child be reading?

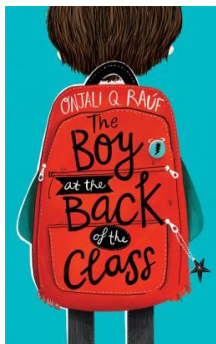
These are the texts that your child will be reading. They will read them on a carousel, so they may not read them in the order set out below.

Year 7

'A Wrinkle in Time' by Madeleine L'Engle

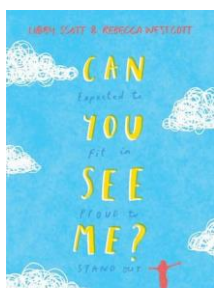


When Charles Wallace Murry goes searching through a 'wrinkle in time' for his lost father, he finds himself on an evil planet where all life is enslaved by a huge pulsating brain known as 'It'. How Charles, his sister Meg and friend Calvin find and free his father makes this a very special and exciting mixture of fantasy and science fiction, which all the way through is dominated by the funny and mysterious trio of guardian angels known as Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who and Mrs Which.



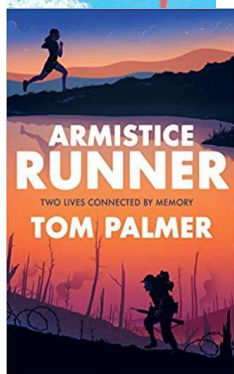
'The Boy at the Back of the Class' by Onjali Q. Rauf

Told with humour and heart, 'THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS' offers a child's perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense.



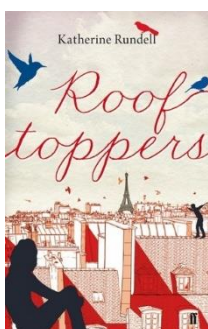
'Can You See Me?' By Libby Scott and Rebecca Westcott

Tally isn't ashamed of being autistic - even if it complicates life sometimes, it's part of who she is. But this is her first year at Kingswood Academy, and her best friend, Layla, is the only one who knows. And while a lot of other people are uncomfortable around Tally, Layla has never been one of them . . . until now. A coming-of-age story about learning to celebrate yourself and teaching the world to recognise you too.



'Armistice Runner' by Tom Palmer

Weaving past and present, this story follows both Lily, a runner in present day and her grandfather, who was a runner in the First World War. Lily has lots of worries. She's struggling to compete in her fell-running races and, worse, she's losing her gran to Alzheimer's. But then she discovers her great-great-grandfather's diaries from the First World War. Could his incredible story of bravery help her reconnect with her gran and even give her the inspiration she needs to push through and win?



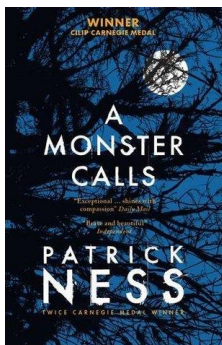
'Rooftoppers' by Katherine Rundell

This whimsical historical tale has something timeless and wonderful about it - like all the best children's classics. It's about a courageous, intelligent girl called Sophie, who was found floating in a cello case in the English Channel as a baby. The man who found her - Charles - decides immediately to do the only natural thing - raise and love this baby girl as if she was his own. He is quirky, eccentric and more concerned with raising a happy child, than one who fits into society's expectations.



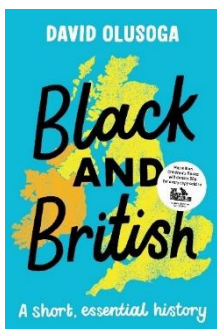
'Wonder' by R.J. Palacio

'Wonder' tells the story of a young boy, August Pullman aka "Auggie", who is going to begin attending school for the first time ever. Auggie has been home-schooled for years by his mother because he was born with severe facial deformities, requiring multiple operations over the course of his young life. Despite the myriad of surgeries that he has undergone, he still lives with significant facial disfigurement. Now, Auggie will be entering the fifth grade at Beecher Prep. This story highlights the cruelty of people's actions, bred from ignorance and fear. This story effectively prompts readers to examine the impact of their actions and words and is a wonderful lesson in empathy.



'A Monster Calls' by Patrick Ness

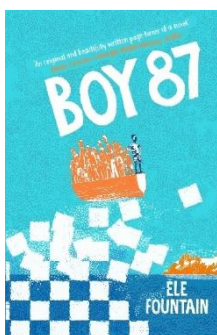
Connor, a young lad of 13 years has an encounter with a monster. His mother is suffering from cancer, at school he's bullied, his father has a new family... the monster tells him four tales. What are they about? This is an incredible book about the enormous burdens of responsibility and grief and loss.



'Black and British' by David Olusoga

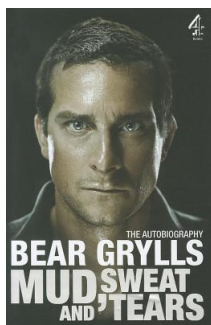
- A short, essential introduction to Black British history:
- When did Africans first come to Britain?
- Who are the well-dressed black children in Georgian paintings?
- Why did the American Civil War disrupt the Industrial Revolution?

These and many other questions are answered in this essential introduction to 1800 years of the Black British history: from the Roman Africans who guarded Hadrian's Wall right up to the present day.



'Boy 87' by Ele Fountain

Shif is just an ordinary schoolboy who loves chess and playing with his best friend. But, one day, he is forced to leave home to avoid conscription into the army. He embarks on an epic journey, in which he encounters dangers and cruelties - and great acts of human kindness - as he bravely makes his way to a future he can only imagine. Told in the powerful first person, this startling debut novel will encourage understanding and empathy in young readers, and allow the news headlines of the day to resonate with the humanity involved in creating them.



'Mud, Sweat and Tears' by Bear Grylls

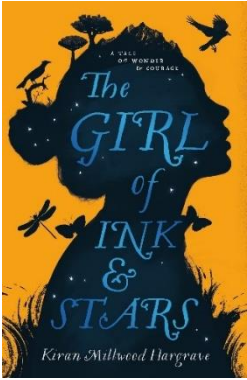
An Inspiring Journey in the Life of One of the Most Inspiring Persons in Our Generation. Bear Grylls comes clean from childhood to manhood. Readers learn about his childhood, family life and values, his time in the elite Special Air Service (SAS), expeditions into the wild and unknown, his love life, education, you name it.

'The Hunger Games' by Suzanne Collins

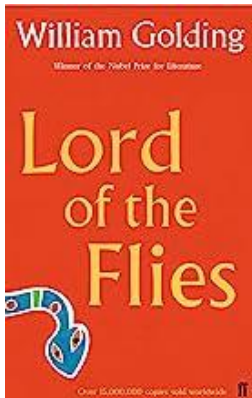


For years, *the Hunger Games* was massively popular, but I can promise you, this trilogy deserves all the hype. It is a thrilling tale of a post-apocalyptic society where the government forces teenagers to kill each other on live television. Only the winner makes it out of the arena alive.

'The Girl of Ink and Stars' by Kiran Millwood- Hargrave



Forbidden to leave her island, Isabella Riosse dreams of the faraway lands her father once mapped. When her closest friend disappears into the island's Forgotten Territories, she volunteers to guide the search. As a cartographer's daughter, she's equipped with elaborate ink maps and knowledge of the stars and is eager to navigate the island's forgotten heart. But the world beyond the walls is a monster-filled wasteland – and beneath the dry rivers and smoking mountains, a legendary fire demon is stirring from its sleep. Soon, following her map, her heart and an ancient myth, Isabella discovers the true end of her journey: to save the island itself.



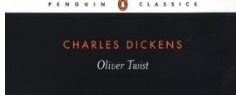
'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding

At the dawn of the next world war, a plane crashes on an uncharted island, stranding a group of schoolboys. At first, with no adult supervision, their freedom is something to celebrate; this far from civilization the boys can do anything they want. Anything. They attempt to forge their own society, failing, however, in the face of terror, sin and evil. And as order collapses, as strange howls echo in the night, as terror begins its reign, the hope of adventure seems as far from reality as the hope of being rescued. Labelled a myth, even a vision of the apocalypse, Lord of the Flies is perhaps our most memorable novel about “the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart.”

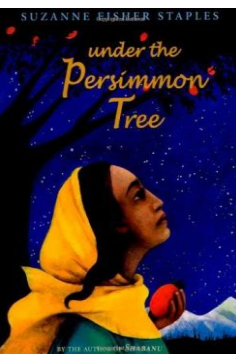


'Oliver Twist' by Charles Dickens

Born to a single mother who gave birth secretly, Oliver Twist seemed to have a dim future. The charities that took care of him, convinced that sooner or later he would end up on the gallows like all the beings of his generation, barely gave him enough to survive. Essentially this is a novel about grinding poverty, desperation, fear, temptation and the eventual triumph of good in the face of great adversity.

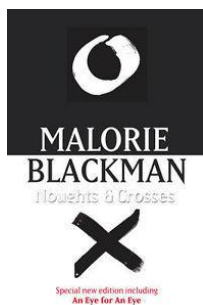


'Under the Persimmon Tree' by Suzanna Fisher Staples



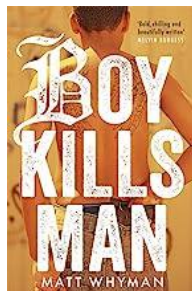
Under the Persimmon Tree is about Najmah, a girl of about eleven, who watches the Talaban kidnap her father and brother, and later her mother and baby brother are killed in an air raid. At the same time, the story of Nusrat, who is a blonde white girl from New York, who met and married Faiz, a doctor from Afghanistan. Faiz hearing about the war in Afghanistan feels he must return home and help his people. Nusrat returns with him and teaches school at a refugee camp in Peshawar, Pakistan. In alternating chapters, these stories are told. Najmah's story of traveling toward Peshawar and Nusrat's story of worrying about her husband who is helping his people in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan and

teaching the refugee children. There is much discussion of the political climate in Afghanistan during this period.



'Noughts and Crosses' by Malorie Blackman

Two young people are forced to make a stand in this thought-provoking look at racism and prejudice in an alternate society. Sephy and Callum are the best of friends. They grew up together and despite the animosity between their families now, they continue to see each other in secret. But as they grow older and the world encroaches on their friendship, they can deny no longer the big glaring barrier between them: Sephy is a Cross, Callum is a nought. Society, the world, their families, will never accept them.



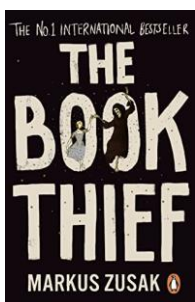
'Boy Kills Man' by Matt Whyman

In the South American town of Medellin, where drug dealers rule and hope is scarce, young assassins are in large supply. Take Shorty and Alberto: two hardened best friends from poor homes whose biggest dream is to see a live soccer match. These boys understand that the one true power they will ever possess comes in the form of a fully loaded Smith & Wesson. Pulling the trigger may not be a way out . . . but it's the only way to the top.



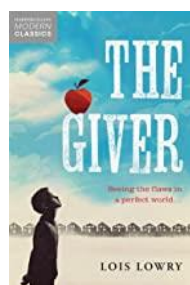
'The Hate U Give' by Angie Thomas

This riveting novel puts the police brutality and racial injustice prevalent in today's society into perspective. *The Hate U Give* is now thought of as one of the best pieces of young adult literature in history, continuing to break records today.



'The Book Thief' by Markus Zusak

The book chronicles the journey of a young girl growing up during World War 2 and her experiences dealing with death and the horrors of war. Death being the narrator of this book, softens the blow of the death of characters, telling us before it happens. This is the sort of book that restores your faith in humanity and leaves you feeling uplifted, even when it makes you shed a tear.



'The Giver' by Lois Lowry

At the age of twelve, Jonas, a young boy from a seemingly utopian, futuristic world, is singled out to receive special training from The Giver, who alone holds the memories of the true joys and pain of life. This is a dystopian novel about bravery, mortality and ethics.



'Sophie's World' by Jostein Gaarder

One day fourteen-year-old Sophie Amundsen comes home from school to two notes in her letterbox, with one question on each: "Who are you?" and "Where does the world come from?" A story questioning life in general and what it all means.

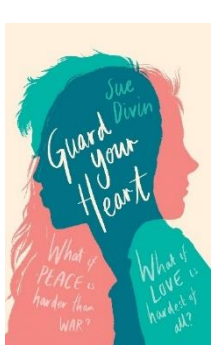
Year 10

'Ace of Spades' by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé



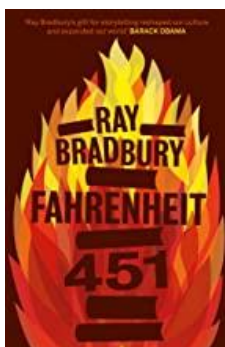
A compelling thriller with a shocking twist that delves deep into the heart of institutionalized racism. Set in a High School, where money paves the hallways, and the students are never less than perfect. Until now. Because anonymous texter, Aces, is bringing two students' dark secrets to light. Talented musician Devon buries himself in rehearsals, but he can't escape the spotlight when his private photos go public. Head girl Chiamaka isn't afraid to get what she wants, but soon everyone will know the price she has paid for power. Someone is out to get them both. Someone who holds all the aces. And they're planning much more than a high-school game...

'Guard your Heart' by Sue Divin



Derry. Summer 2016. Aidan and Iona, now eighteen, were both born on the day of the Northern Ireland peace deal. Aidan is Catholic, Irish, and Republican. With his ex-political prisoner father gone and his mother dead, Aidan's hope is pinned on exam results earning him a one-way ticket out of Derry. To anywhere. Iona, Protestant and British, has a brother and father in the police. She's got university ambitions, a strong faith and a fervent belief that boys without one track minds are a myth. Romeo and Juliet, set in Modern times.

'Fahrenheit 451' by Ray Bradbury

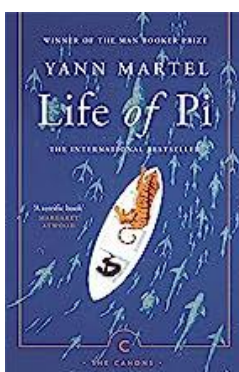


The burning of books is such an effective tool for controlling the population, so the message of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is scarily real. If society's wisdom could be taken away, then so could their freedom. If knowledge was burnt, then the people would be left in a complete state of utter innocent ignorance. There would be no room for free thought, that way they could be told anything about history and themselves. If all books were burnt, then they are just sheep to be led into a future dictated by the government. To make it worse the men who do it enjoy it.



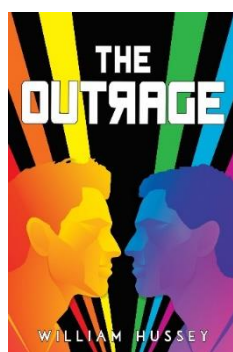
'I Am Thunder' by Muhammad Khan

High school urban drama about standing up for what you believe. Fifteen-year-old Muzna Saleem, who dreams of being a writer, struggles with controlling parents who only care about her studying to be a doctor. Forced to move to a new school in South London after her best friend is shamed in a scandal, Muzna realizes that the bullies will follow her wherever she goes. But deciding to stand and face them instead of fighting her instinct to disappear is harder than it looks when there's prejudice everywhere you turn. Until the confident Arif shows an interest in her, encouraging Muzna to explore her freedom.



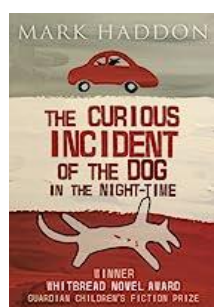
'Life of Pi' by Yann Martel

Life of Pi is a fantasy adventure novel. The protagonist, Piscine Molitor "Pi" Patel, a Tamil boy from Pondicherry, explores issues of spirituality and practicality from an early age. He survives 227 days after a shipwreck while stranded on a boat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.



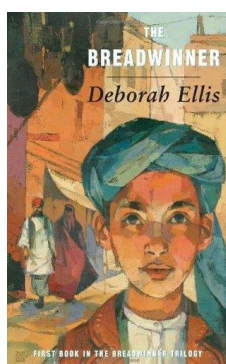
'The Outrage' by William Hussey

Imagine a world where to be gay or trans is a crime. You're a degenerate and treated as sub-human by members of The Protectorate, the leaders of this new world charged with keeping order and keeping everyone safe. This is the awful world in which Gabe lives. Our main character is forthright, angry and prone to making some stupid choices. But he's also loyal and loving and determined to stick up for what he believes is right - no matter the cost.



'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time' by Mark Haddon

First person tale of Christopher, a fifteen-year-old with Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning autism, and a talent for maths, who writes a book) about his investigations of the murder of a neighbour's dog. He loves Sherlock Holmes and is amazingly observant of tiny details, but his lack of insight into other people's emotional lives hampers his investigation. Nevertheless, he has to overcome some of his deepest habits and fears, and he also uncovers some unexpected secrets.



'The Breadwinner' by Deborah Ellis

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, 11-year-old Parvana has rarely been outdoors. Barred from attending school, shopping at the market, or even playing in the streets of Kabul, the heroine of Deborah Ellis's engrossing children's novel *The Breadwinner* is trapped inside her family's one-room home. That is, until the Taliban hauls away her father and Parvana realizes that it's up to her to become the "breadwinner" and disguise herself as a boy to support her mother, two sisters, and baby brother.

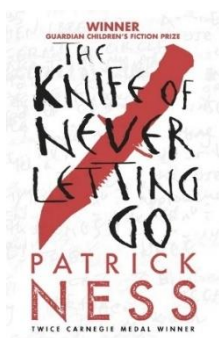
Year 11

HENRY FRASER
**The Little
big things**A young man's belief that everyday
can be a good day

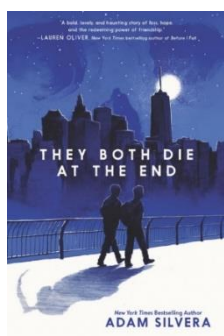
Foreword by J.K. Rowling

'The Little Big Things' by Henry Fraser

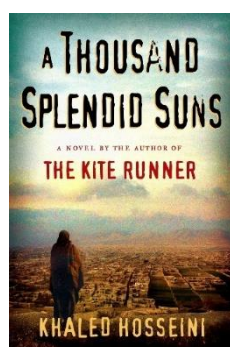
This book combines his wisdom and insight into finding the gifts in life's challenges, and will resonate with anyone facing an obstacle, no matter how big or small. It includes Henry's thoughts on how to look at the right things and avoid the wrong, finding progress in whatever you do, and acknowledging and accepting the darkness when it comes. Right at the heart of Henry's inspiring philosophy is his belief that every day is a good day.

'The Knife of Never Letting Go' by Patrick Ness

Todd Hewitt is the only boy in a town of men. Ever since the settlers were infected with the Noise germ, Todd can hear everything the men think, and they hear everything he thinks. Todd knows that the town is hiding something from him -- something so awful Todd is forced to flee with only his dog, whose simple, loyal voice he hears too. With hostile men from the town in pursuit, the two stumble upon a strange and eerily silent creature: a girl. Who is she? Why wasn't she killed by the germ like all the females on New World?

'They Both Die at the End' by Adam Silvera

On September 5, a little after midnight, Death-Cast calls Mateo Torrez and Rufus Emeterio to give them some bad news: They are going to die today. Mateo and Rufus are total strangers, but, for different reasons, they're both looking to make a new friend on their End Day. The good news: There's an app for that. It's called the Last Friend, and through it, Rufus and Mateo are about to meet up for one last great adventure—to live a lifetime in a single day.

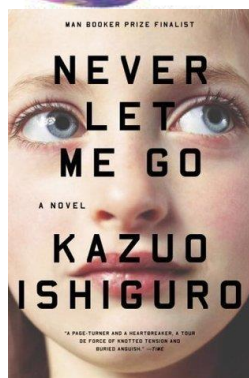
'A Thousand Splendid Suns' by Khaled Hosseini

Mariam is only fifteen when she is sent to Kabul to marry the troubled and bitter Rasheed, who is thirty years her senior. Nearly two decades later, in a climate of growing unrest, tragedy strikes fifteen-year-old Laila, who must leave her home and join Mariam's unhappy household. Laila and Mariam are to find consolation in each other, their friendship to grow as deep as the bond between sisters, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter.



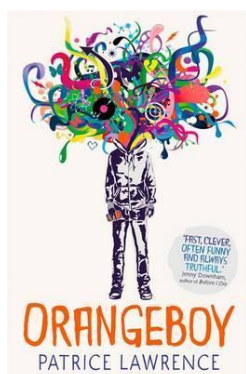
'Punching the Air' by Ibi Zoboi & Yusef Salaam

Punching the Air is such a raw and heartbreaking story about Amal Shahid who was wrongfully convicted for assaulting a white boy; raising important questions about how Black youths are treated and the severe constraints of America's failure in punishing forms of justice. This story is told in poetry in verse which makes it's unique and effective.



'Never Let Me Go' by Kazuo Ishiguro

Hailsham seems like a pleasant English boarding school, far from the influences of the city. Its students are well tended and supported, trained in art and literature, and become just the sort of people the world wants them to be. But, curiously, they are taught nothing of the outside world and are allowed little contact with it. *Never Let Me Go* is about three friends who are destined to let go of everything - their bodies, their dreams, their lives and the people they love. And there's NOTHING they can do to avoid that fate.



'Orangeboy' by Patrice Lawrence

Sixteen-year-old Marlon has promised his widowed mum that he'll be good, and nothing like his gang-leader brother Andre. It's easy when you keep yourself to yourself, listening to your dead dad's Earth, Wind and Fire albums and watching sci-fi. But everything changes when Marlon's first date with the beautiful Sonya ends in tragedy; he becomes a hunted man and he has no idea why. With his dad dead and his brother helpless, Marlon has little choice but to enter Andre's old world of guns, knives and drug runs in order to uncover the truth and protect those close to him. It's time to fight to be the last man standing.

What can I do to support this?

The most supportive thing that you can do is to encourage your child to see that reading is a **valuable** and **worthwhile** activity. The more your child sees that we all value reading, the more they will value reading.

Some practical tips:

- **Ask** your child about what they have read in school - discuss what they think about the story or the **characters** and why.
- You could read the **same book** as your child; all the books we have chosen should be available to borrow from your local library.
- **Encourage** your child to find some time to read and to fit this in around their other activities. Even 15 minutes can be really beneficial.
- It is easier for your child to build reading as a habit if they do it **regularly, preferably every day**. Reading at the same time each day is also useful for habit building. For most children, 15 minutes every evening before bed is more manageable than 2 hours at the weekend.
- **Talk** to your child about what you are reading, in order to show them that reading is a lifelong journey.
- If your child is unsure about what to read, encourage them to speak to our **school librarian**, Mrs Bradshaw. He is really knowledgeable about young adult books and will be able to recommend something that your child will enjoy.

What about mobile devices?

- Research shows that mobile phones are a **distraction** if they are close to us, or we can see them. It would be really helpful if your child's mobile phone was **in another room** for the duration of the time they are reading.
- Research shows that reading in print, rather than on screens, is much more beneficial. There are a variety of reasons for this, so it is much better if your child is reading print rather than digital texts.

What about audiobooks?

- We would encourage your child to **read print wherever possible**. However, listening to audiobooks is certainly beneficial, as long as your child is engaged in the story being told. It is much better for them to listen to a full audiobook, rather than short podcasts, as this will build their reading (or listening) stamina, and enable them to develop the skill of following a story.

Where can I find out more about this?

VIDEOS/PODCASTS:

David Didau - Leading a Whole School reading Curriculum (link to video [here](#))

BOOKS:

Alex Quigley - Closing the Reading Gap (copies are available in the staff library)

Alex Quigley - Closing the Vocabulary Gap (copies are available in the staff library)

James and Diane Murphy - Thinking reading (a copy is available in the staff library)

BLOG POSTS:

David Didau - A Reading Curriculum: gap widening vs gap narrowing (link [here](#))

David Didau - Why we need to read aloud (link [here](#))

Alex Quigley - Covid 19 and the Literacy Matthew Effect (link [here](#))

GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure: [here](#)