

TERMS TWO & THREE: JANUARY – APRIL

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

YEAR 8 NEWSLETTER



Dear parents,

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2026.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your son back to Northampton School for Boys. We hope you had a restful Christmas break.

As a school, we believe that the study of English empowers and inspires our students. Our curriculum centres around challenging and thought-provoking texts encompassing different times and cultures, encouraging students to make connections with a variety of voices and perspectives.

As such, our Key Stage 3 Curriculum is structured chronologically with Y7 focussing on Old English (Beowulf) in the Autumn term, Middle English (Arthurian Legends and Chaucer) in the Spring term and Early-Modern English (Shakespeare) in the Summer term. In Year 8, we turn our attention to 19 – 21 century literature.

Every full term, we will release an English Department newsletter with information on:

- The knowledge and skills being covered in lessons
- Guidance on home learning
- Advice on complementary reading

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant member of staff using the contact details provided to the left.

We wish you and your son the very best wishes for a successful Spring term at NSB.

Contacts:

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The English Team

WHAT WILL STUDENTS BE LEARNING THIS TERM?

All students will be studying an exploration of Romantic authors, notably William Wordsworth, before embarking on an exploration of traditional and more contemporary Gothic fiction. Students will explore the craft of authors, and will do so by transforming their analytical understanding into developing and maturing their own creative voice. Alongside this study of 18th and 19th century literature, students will also study crime writing with a scheme of learning following one of Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Sherlock Holmes' detective stories. With thematic connections and share contextual connections, the study of Romanticism and the Gothic, and 'Sherlock Holmes' will continue to guide students through a rigorous chronological exploration of the English Literary Canon.



WRITING

- I can write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts.
- I can produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose.
- I can select appropriate and effective vocabulary.
- I can organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events.
- I can vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect.
- I can write with technical accuracy.
- I can use correct spelling.



HOME LEARNING

In Term 3, students in Year 7 will be completing reading home learning, and comprehension quizzing, which are thematically complimentary to their study of Chaucer in lessons. All of this, as before, will be on Teams. In Term 4, students will be working through Teams quizzes for common punctuation errors to secure their own learning.



HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD AT HOME?

DISCUSSIONS

One way to support students in recalling their learning and developing their understanding is to discuss their learning with them, asking them questions or asking them to teach you about the topic. By the end of the Spring term, students should be able to discuss:

1. What is the sublime?
2. How did the Enlightenment influence Literature?
3. What were some of the concerns held by Victorians?
4. What are the key features of the Gothic genre?
5. What is so compelling about the sublime?
6. How do people respond to 'wow' and 'woah' moments?
7. Why is crime literature so enduring?
8. How does Sherlock Holmes solve crimes?

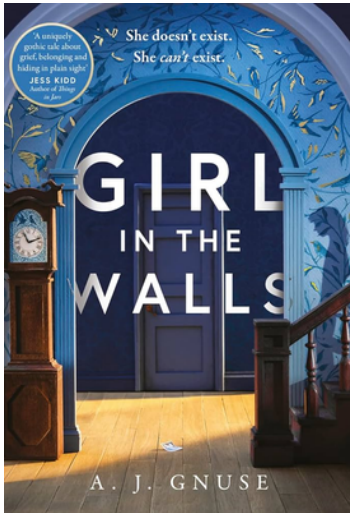


ENCOURAGING AND DISCUSSING READING

Research shows that students who read frequently make the most academic progress. Whether it's a novel, an audiobook or a newspaper, we advise that students read for a minimum of 20 minutes, 3 times per week.

Our top 6 recommendations can be found on the next page.

BOOKS TO COMPLIMENT STUDENTS' STUDY OF ROMANTICISM AND THE GOTHIC, AND SHERLOCK HOLMES:

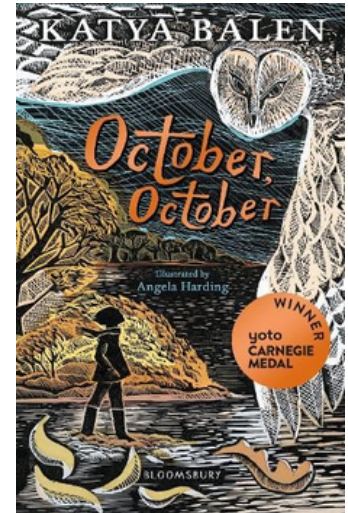


‘Those who live in the walls must adjust, must twist themselves around in their home, stretching themselves until they’re as thin as air. Not everyone can do what they can.

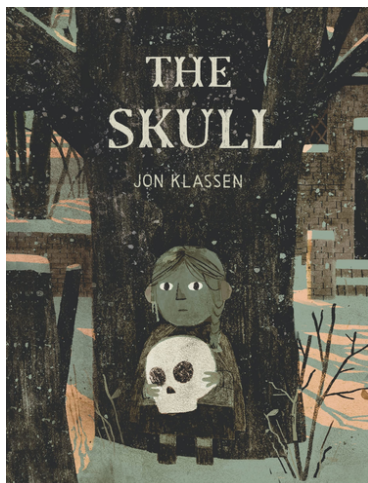
But soon enough, they can’t help themselves. Signs of their presence remain in a house. Eventually, every hidden thing is found.’



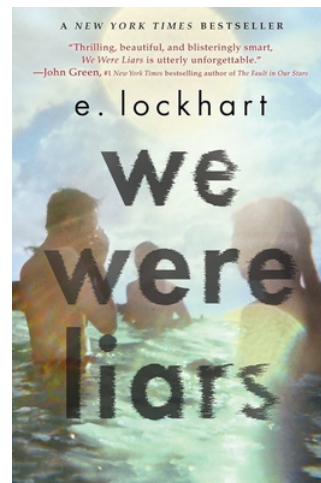
The Forgotten Garden, by Kate Morton, is a multi-generational mystery about a lost child abandoned on a ship in 1913, whose quest for her identity is passed down to her granddaughter, Cassandra, leading them both to the secrets of a mysterious Cornish estate, Blackhurst Manor, and its overgrown, forgotten garden, where the truth of a dark family history and lost fairy tales are uncovered.



October, October is about a wild, forest-dwelling girl named October whose life is upended when her estranged mother appears, leading to her father's injury and forcing her into the unfamiliar city for the first time, where she grapples with change, grief, new friendships, and finding her place between two worlds..



The Skull by Jon Klassen is a spooky yet cozy retelling of a Tyrolean folktale about a brave, runaway girl named Otilia who finds shelter in a dark forest house inhabited by a lonely, fearful skull, and together they must confront the scary thing that comes for the skull each night, discovering friendship, courage, and home along the way. It is perfect for young, independent readers who enjoy slightly eerie but ultimately comforting stories.



We Were Liars is a suspense novel by E. Lockhart about a beautiful, wealthy family with dark secrets they hide on their private island. The story follows a teenage girl with amnesia as she slowly uncovers the truth about a summer that ended in tragedy for her and her close friends, the "Liars". The blurb highlights the core elements: a family's perfect facade, a private island, young love, destructive friendships, a revolution, an accident, and the secrets and lies that hold the truth.



The Inheritance Games blurb introduces Avery Grambs, a teen who suddenly inherits the vast fortune of a deceased billionaire, Tobias Hawthorne, a man she's never met, forcing her to move into his puzzle-filled mansion with his resentful family, especially the four magnetic Hawthorne grandsons, as she deciphers why she was chosen and navigates deadly games to claim her inheritance.