

TERMS TWO & THREE: JANUARY – APRIL

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

YEAR 9 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.

Our broad study of the Literary Canon enables students to nurture their appreciation of the history and power of language; students are taught to harness the rich qualities of that language to articulate themselves in a variety of spoken and written contexts, confidently and coherently. The ability to discuss, explore and evaluate concepts and ideas with clarity is central to the academic narrative of which we are proud.

It is our goal that your son will leave us with an understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives, a range of critical perspectives and the ability to communicate with confidence and flair. Ultimately, we hope your son's experiences in our English classrooms at Northampton School for Boys will resonate with him through the years and foster a life-long love of reading.

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

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WHAT WILL STUDENTS BE LEARNING THIS TERM?

All students will be studying villains throughout Literature, and dystopic reading. This combines both reading and writing skills, ensuring students have a firm foundation ahead of GCSE study in Year 10. Students will explore villains – from Greek mythology to contemporary literature – considering authors' purposes and intentions, craft and vision for their work. Further to this, students will also explore features of writing following their term 2 exploration of dystopic reading, exploring features of crafted, purposeful writing.



WRITING

- I can select appropriate and effective vocabulary.
- I can construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs.
- I can vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect.
- I can write with technical accuracy.

READING

- I can make clear points about a text in order to build an argument.
- I can identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints.
- I can use references to the text/ quotations to support my ideas.
- I can deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts.
- I can link texts to literary traditions and genre.
- I can compare and contrast texts.



HOME LEARNING

As in previous terms, students will complete weekly home learning set on Teams. Each week, students will watch a short clip and read an extract about a famous villain, nominated by members of staff. This will be followed by a Teams Quiz – this will check for comprehension, recall, inference, and analysis, with a combination of multiple choice and student written answers.



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 Autumn term, students should be able to discuss:

1. What is discrimination?
2. Why do prejudice and inequality prevail in today's world?
3. How can inequality and discrimination be positively challenged?
4. How can works of literature offer a glimpse into the real world, and how can expectations and stereotypes be subverted?
5. What is the plot, and purpose, of 'Noughts and Crosses'?
6. Who was Maya Angelou, and what is the message of 'Still I Rise'?
7. What are the key features of the dystopian genre?
8. Why is dystopic literature so compelling, and how does it echo the real world?

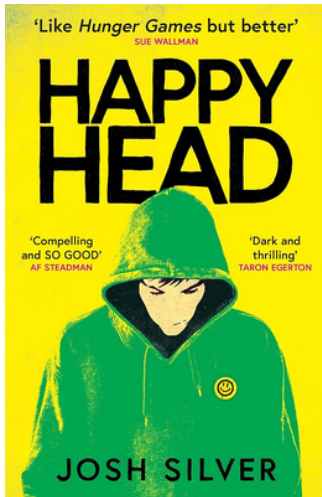


ENCOURAGING AND DISCUSSING READING

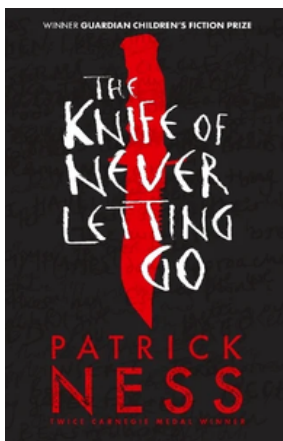
Research shows that students who read frequently make the most academic progress. Whether it's a novel, an audiobook or a newspaper, we advise that students read for a minimum of 20 minutes, 3 times per week.

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

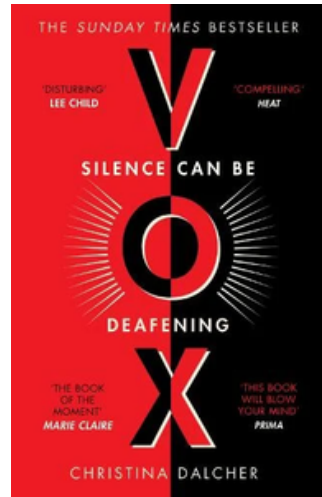
BOOKS TO COMPLIMENT STUDENTS' STUDY OF DYSTOPIA READING AND WRITING, AND VILLAINS THROUGHOUT LITERATURE:



HappyHead by Josh Silver is a YA dystopian thriller where Seb joins a futuristic mental health retreat, HappyHead, to fix unhappiness, but discovers sinister, game-like challenges led by a mysterious rebel, Finn, forcing Seb to question the program's true, dark purpose and fight for survival in a system that's far from helpful, all while navigating a tense LGBTQ+ romance.

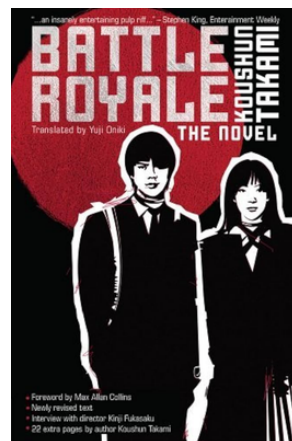


Aaliyah is an ordinary thirteen-year-old living in the Midlands – she's into her books, shoes, K-pop and she is a Muslim. She has always felt at home where she lives ... until a terrorist attack in her area changes everything. When her school bans the hijab and she is intimidated and attacked for her choices, she feels isolated. Together, can Aaliyah and her friends halt the tide of hatred rippling through their community?



Set in an America where half the population has been silenced, VOX is the harrowing, unforgettable story of what one woman will do to protect herself and her daughter. On the day the government decrees that women are no longer allowed to speak more than 100 words daily, Dr. Jean McClellan is in denial—this can't happen here. Not in America. Not to her.

This is just the beginning.



A class of junior high school students is taken to a deserted island where, as part of a ruthless authoritarian program, they are provided arms and forced to kill one another until only one survivor is left standing. Criticized as violent exploitation when first published in Japan – where it then proceeded to become a runaway bestseller – Battle Royale is a Lord of the Flies for the 21st century, a potent allegory of what it means to be young and (barely) alive in a dog-eat-dog world.



Luka Kane has been inside hi-tech prison the Loop for over two years. A death sentence is hanging over his head but his day-to-day routine is mind-numbingly repetitive, broken only by the books brought to him by the sympathetic warden, Wren. Then everything starts to change: rumours of war are whispered in the courtyard and the government-issued rain stops falling. On Luka's last, desperate day, Wren issues him a terrifying warning.



Steelheart by Brandon Sanderson features a world where "Calamity" gave ordinary people superpowers, creating tyrannical "Epics," led by the invincible Steelheart, who rules Chicago; the story follows David Charleston, whose father was killed by Steelheart, as he joins the Reckoners, a group hunting Epics, seeking revenge by uncovering Steelheart's weakness, which he alone has seen: Steelheart can bleed.