

16th January 2024

Dear Parents/carers,

We are excited to announce that students in year 7 will be starting a new 'faster read programme' in English lessons this term. In English, we present students with lengthy, challenging texts, which may be difficult for them to access. Recent research has demonstrated that a 'faster read programme' could significantly improve students' reading ages and overall ability and approach to more difficult texts and vocabulary.

The idea is that students read two lengthy novels over the course of two half terms, pausing to discuss questions and vocabulary, and answering some comprehension questions. The students will be assessed this term through computerised NGRT tests. These tests provide reliable data as to the students' reading ages and any gaps in their learning. Many studies indicate the strong correlation between a child's reading age and their success in all academic subjects. Therefore, we are taking steps to prioritise reading skills this term. One lesson every fortnight will be dedicated to original writing based on the novel.

Students will begin Spring Term 1 with *Boy, Everywhere*, a thought-provoking novel about a Syrian refugee by A. M. Dassu. In Spring Term 2 they will move onto *Green Rising*, a hugely relevant novel about the climate crisis by Lauren James.

To supplement this rigorous focus on reading, we are asking the students to complete an independent reading challenge at home. They will be required to complete the reading of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Alongside this, they should complete a 200 to 500-word summary of the story and review of the novel. They can use the example review and criterion attached. The deadline for this will be posted on Teams. Please support your child with this project by reading with them as often as possible (at least once a week) and asking them questions about the content of what they are reading. We also invite you to complete a book review of the novel or any other book you have read recently.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

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Key Stage 3 Coordinator of English

Harry Potter – Reading Challenge Homework

To complement your reading of 'Boy, Everywhere' in English lessons, we are tasking you with reading 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' for your homework. Each week, you need to read a chapter and discuss the events with someone at home.

At the end of this half term, you need to submit a book review of 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'. We welcome parents/adults at home to submit a review alongside your review on the TEAMS assignment.

If you have a copy of the novel at home, then we welcome you to read from that; if you do not have a copy of the novel then this link contains an accessible PDF version.

The next page of this document contains review criteria. Please use this to help you shape your review.

[Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone](#)

Review criteria:

1. Briefly summarize the book. If you're wondering how to start a book review, the answer is simple - start by summarizing the story!
2. Evaluate the book's qualities. Did it immediately intrigue? Does it contain anything interesting that hooks the reader?
3. Include quotations from the book. What lines stood out? Why did they stand out?
4. Rate the book out of five. What star rating would you give it?
5. Give your recommendation. Should everyone read it? Should only certain ages read it?

Example:

J K Rowling's phenomenal imagination has created a stimulating fantasy world with the power to excite and involve readers of all ages - fantasy being an emotion in no way confined to children.

Harry's wizardry is a surprising discovery for the young boy, and the precursor of an enthralling chain of events which I am sure will continue in the stories I have yet to read. I have so far just completed 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone', in which I was captivated by Hogwarts School of Wizardry and its amazing premises, particularly as my grandson has recently finished building a Lego model of them.

Imaginary nations and locations are great ingredients for a good story.

Another strong appeal of the Harry Potter books is of course magic. How often have we felt that magic powers could help us through some of life's difficulties? And then there is flying - in the Hogwarts game of Quidditch, in which the competitors fly on broomsticks.

Your imagination runs riot in Harry Potter books, stimulated by the author's great story telling powers and an exciting scenario of the supernatural - including magic mirrors, invisibility cloaks, potion masters, transfiguration, giants, intelligent owls, trolls, poltergeists and ghosts.

Although the Harry Potter books are fantasy they also address some real life issues and problems. Harry's solitary existence and bullying by the Dursley family - his Aunt Petunia, his Uncle Vernon and their spoilt little brat of a son - is something no doubt many people can relate to. Harry is rescued from his odious adopted family through his enrolment at Hogwarts, where he meets a real friend in Ron Weasley. Ron's family also become great friends to Harry. His mum cooks him lovely sausage breakfasts, in complete contrast to the miserable bread and cheese he often has to endure at the Dursleys.

As well as the Weasleys, another fellow pupil at the school of Wizardry, Hermione, and the Hogwarts school gamekeeper, Hagrid, also offer Harry love and friendship – while Lord Voldemort, Professor Snape, Professor Quirrell and Draco Malfoy head a formidable list of villains.

I thoroughly enjoyed this Harry Potter book. J.K Rowling has obviously accumulated an extensive knowledge of wizardry, witchcraft, and the supernatural. Shakespeare wrote that 'there's more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in your philosophy.' I'm sure that all the Harry Potter stories more than prove his point.