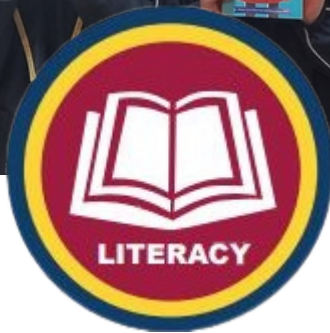


Literacy Newsletter



Beginnings

Welcome to the first literacy newsletter. As a school, we are passionate about reading and encouraging our students to enjoy a wide range of texts. We aim to create a culture of reading for pleasure to develop our students' reading skills, improve their vocabulary and develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. We hope this newsletter is an interesting and useful way to stay informed about some of the ways we are supporting our students with their literacy skills.



National Storytelling Week 27th Jan - 4th Feb 2024

This fantastic annual event is a joyful celebration of the power of sharing stories. Stories teach us about the world, they allow us to step into someone else's shoes and feel empathy, they help us to relax and escape and they can help develop essential literacy skills. At Biddenham we celebrated this in lots of different ways. Staff shared their favourite stories in lessons and tutor time, we looked at how storytelling can be used in teaching and we ran some storytelling sessions in the library at lunch and break times, with various staff members attending to read extracts from their favourite novels.

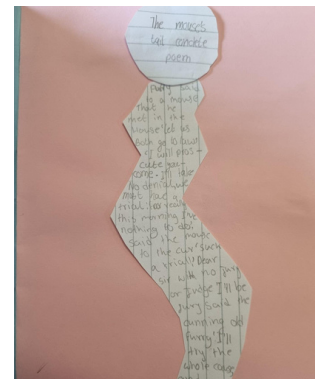
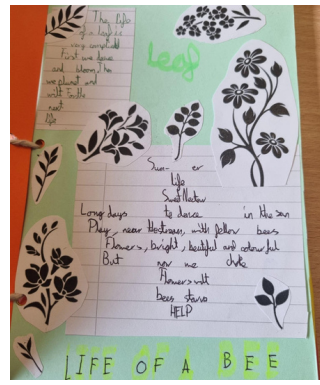


Bedrock Learning

This year we have introduced Bedrock and it is being used by our Year 7, 8 and some Year 9 students. Bedrock is an online learning platform designed to support students with their literacy skills, with a focus on grammar and vocabulary. It has also been used in science as homework for KS3 students, focusing on keywords. Students have been working on Bedrock in tutor time and at home, with our recommendation of a minimum of forty minutes per week. In assemblies this week we have celebrated those students who have achieved the most points on Bedrock, those who have improved the most and the students who have put in the most effort.

Year 7 Poetry Anthologies

Year 7 students have been working on their own poetry anthologies in their English lessons. Miss Davis organised this competition supported by the English department and they received some wonderful entries! Students were inspired by their studies of different forms of poetry, including concrete poetry, erasure poems and haiku. Well done to everyone who submitted an entry for the competition.



"I think that the book was great because the characters' stories were different and I hadn't read anything like it before. It was really interesting and at the end of the book there wasn't a cliffhanger like the previous book we read in tutor time. The book was called 'Floodland' and was by an author called Marcus Sedgwick. My favourite part of the book was when Zoe found something out at the end- this is a spoiler so I won't ruin what it was! I think it was easier for my teacher Mr Evans to read the book because it meant we finished the book quickly. I think that students my age would enjoy this book rather than younger children. I don't think younger children would understand it as well as students my age."

Faster Reads

We have introduced a new 'faster reads' programme with our Year 8 students. This involves listening to their tutor read once a week and is based on a Faster Reading study by the University of Sussex. This study explored the benefits of listening to a text being read aloud as a way to support reading comprehension and improve reading ages. The chosen books either support, supplement or extend our curriculum provision and are used as a way to encourage students to read for pleasure.



Ways to support your child at home

Reading Comprehension

We have also been working on improving reading comprehension, and students have had assessments every term to track their progress. We have seen some excellent results and some huge improvements. Many of our students have benefited from targeted intervention sessions which have focused on specific areas for development. KS3 reports are going home with personalised strategies for students, aimed at improving their literacy skills.

Reading

- Encourage your child to read every day and talk to them about what they are reading.
- Encourage your child to use the Biddenham bookmark to check their understanding.
- Encourage your child to read out loud to you.
- If your child is unsure of vocabulary, encourage them to look up the word in a dictionary.
- Talk to your child about the purpose of texts and their reading of them.
- Discuss topics that will develop your child's reading around a topic.
- Discuss topics found in our newsletter!

Writing

- Encourage your child to use the correct grammar in their writing. Ask them to spell check their work if using a Chromebook.
- Support written homework with planning, structuring, drafting, writing, proofreading and editing.
- Encourage them to extend their answers and use key vocabulary.

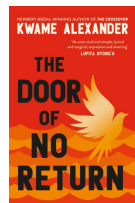
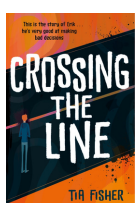
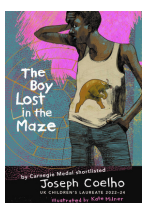
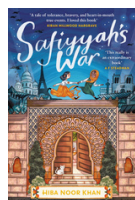
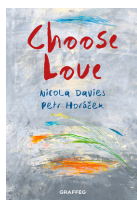
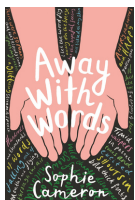
Developing a passion for reading and encouraging reading at home

- Read with your child and encourage them to read to you as much as possible.
- Set aside time to read every day- ideally for at least 20 minutes per day; reading before bed is a great time for this.
- Spend time in the library.
- Use the reading questions on the Biddenham bookmark when you read with your child.
- Let your child see you reading; share the types of texts that you read and what you enjoyed as a child.

Oracy

- Challenge your child to answer in full sentences, avoiding slang or fillers.
- Encourage your child to use the correct grammar when speaking.
- Encourage your child to use new terms they have learnt in school.
- Encourage your child to listen carefully, ask questions and take turns to speak in their discussions (oracy guidelines).
- Remind your child to speak at an appropriate volume, tone and pace.

The Carnegie Awards



These books have been shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie award for writing. We have copies in the library and encourage students to try them! They could even take part in shadowing the award- please ask Mrs Nicholson for further details.

Poetry Competition

Some of our sixth form students entered a poetry competition this term. This was organised by the University of Oxford and was based around the theme of 'mirrors.' Here is a poem from one of our Year 12 students, Alisha Namakula.

Vivid UMBER

A 45 litre mouth bursts with a sea of depressing greys and black long sleeves.

The occasional beige dotted the colourless space
Slave to a ticking tempo as I packed more of my drab and dull into the hollow.

Anxiously, I clamped the jaw shut, and checked the weight. "Too high." With a frustrated yank, I ripped it open. I started again.

I tightly gripped my enclosed piece of a gloomy England.
My energy was low and my patience lower as my dry umber fingers curled around the handle, as I began to lug my black British body round the paler airport.

Incessantly I looked into distorted mirrors with a burning gaze. I could only turn back to the glass panes for reassurance. My anger bubbled over as I jerked my suitcase forward every once in a while.

I hadn't seen myself properly for hours.
I drummed my nails on the handle, my eyes frantic as I scanned over a hundred shades of ivory, only to repeatedly disappoint myself, digging chipped nails into an ashy palm as I forcefully accepted the frustratingly light shades of blige.

Colours began to bleed in the more we trod, my breath shallow as my half lidded eyes hungrily flickered over now differing shades of umber and lighter lined up in grouped dots like ours.

My reflection was scattered in the shards they held, providing me with the faintest rejuvenation.

My gaze was starting to slow. I grew greedy.
I couldn't settle for shards, so searched desperately for a better mirror for my complexion. Ongoing Impatience drained the energy out of my strained muscles.

'Welcome onboard Rwandair.'
I had reached the closest mirrors at their check in, and my gaze shot up again, latching onto a colour I was familiar with. These umber figures subsided the greed and vanity for a while but--
What irked me was the paper-thin glaze the mirrors had on them. My body slumped again - it missed clarity. These were Rwandans. Not Ugandans.

Three times I put my head on the suitcase in both defeat and utter fatigue.
My body had embraced the cold and dull so tightly; a hot and humid hug was starting to feel like hell.

The third time I awoke I jolted at the sound of a murmur, still in a daze.
My eyes were forced open again, relentlessly searching for the right shade,
But only lazily picked up on my Dad telling me that we were escaping the depressing airport that had successfully drowned me in a wearisome humidity.

With weak resolve I hauled my deadweight by the handle in a sluggish, sweaty clutch.
Without warning I found myself furrowing my eyebrows. I was suddenly flooded and greeted by a beaming gold.

A fury of colour stormed in; a sea of brown force-feeding the life back into me as Uganda's fiery heat melted the memory of the British chill.

I felt a wash of warm relief as flashes of light reflected off a thousand mirrors - a thousand umber silhouettes in vividly coloured hijabs and patterned dresses.

My heart banged against its ribcage, wanting out, my gaze sparkling at these new arrays of brown, charged with admiration and excitement.

"Aunty Biru! Aunty Emma!"
I had practically stumbled over in a flash.

I was no longer an unusual umber--
I could make out my reflection in all of them.

Library News



The Biddenham Bookworms have had a busy year so far and are now on their third book. The first book, *Every Word a Lie* by Sue Wallman, is a murder mystery about two friends who prank their friend Holly by pretending to be her crush. The prank has unexpected consequences when Holly ends up dead. The students found that the book was unrealistic and the final reveal of the true killer a disappointing plot twist.



Their second book, *Part Of A Story That Started Before Me*, received a better reception. The book is a collection of poems on Black British History brought together by George The Poet, combined with notes from the poet and historian Dr. Christienna Fryar.

"It made me have a better understanding of the events that took place, how people's lives were and what they faced. My favourite poem was 400 by FULAANI onda 3s because it was extremely beautifully written."



"It made me see what life was like through different eyes. It also had good academic language in descriptions at the ends of the poems. I liked the poem Limbo by Edward Kamau Brathwaite, I liked the way it was written and how it made me feel knowing the context."

The next book they will be reading is *Crossing The Line* by Tia Fisher, a novel in verse about Erik who is sucked into the world of drug dealing after the death of his father.

E-Books

All students have access e-books at: <https://biddenham.eplatform.co/>.

The e-books now have the additional features of text-to-speak and the ability to translate words and books into over 150 languages. If students need a reminder of their username and password please email Mrs Nicholson at library@mybiddenham.com.

Barrington Stoke Young Editors

The publishing company Barrington Stoke have developed a Young Editors programme where students can read manuscripts before they are published and provide comments and feedback on the books which will be taken into consideration before the final book is published. The students can even suggest ideas for what the front cover should look like. Any students who wish to take part should speak to Mrs Nicholson in the library.



Book Fair

The library ran the first book fair in three years, with a wide selection of books, interest was high. Stay tuned for the next one!



Year 7 and 8 Picture This Reading Challenge

During the autumn term Year 7 and 8 students took part in the National Literacy Trust Picture This Reading Challenge. They looked at a selection of picture books and discussed their thoughts and feelings about the books and ultimately answered the question: Are picture books just for young children?

The students really enjoyed the challenge and we received some great responses - with special congratulations going to Heba and Helena in Year 7 and Aymon and Kayla in Year 8.

New Library Books

