

A Reading Culture at Gillotts

Reading is the most important skill for life for all students. Learn to read and you will be able to go anywhere and do anything if you are determined enough. Without an ability to read fluently, students will struggle with other school subjects. This is why English is a core subject and why at Gillotts, in line with other schools in the UK, a reading lesson is part of the timetable in Years 7, 8 and 9.

In reading lessons, there is a strong emphasis on silent reading, after finding a suitable book. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about reading a whole book, rather than dipping in and out of a different one every lesson. Year 7 have the benefit of input from our School Librarian as well as their English teacher. There is a programme of study over the year which supplements and enhances the silent reading element of the lesson. These lessons sometimes include creative writing elements as well as enhancing the reading experience. Activities include the following and more:

- What do we read? – an activity which involves looking at the world around us and thinking about the text that we read and absorb in everyday life.
- The Reading Game – a game which involves looking at fiction and non-fiction in different genres, assessing books based on front cover, blurb and openings, and deciding which books look the most enticing. This lesson ends with students borrowing some of the books.
- Speed dating with books – students try to ‘sell’ their favourite books to other students in just a few minutes.
- Book reviewing, using a guide sheet, or in tweet format.
- Creating poetry to celebrate National Poetry Day.
- Using dictionaries and thesauruses, exploring definitions of words, to help with extending vocabulary. This activity is always carried out with books, not devices.
- For World Book Day, we usually do something a little creative such as book crafting, a way of recycling books, or we create stories in jars or boxes.
- Book Trailers – students create trailers in the style of film trailers for their favourite books, to show to the rest of the class.

Reading books in print is a very different skill from reading a screen, but all reading is valid. It is cross-curricular. Fiction and non-fiction, graphic books and poetry, newspapers and magazines are all part of the reading diet. Students use textbooks as well as google and recommended websites for their subject studies. Reading books extends vocabulary, increases knowledge and one’s world view.

Newspapers and magazines are also extremely valuable as reading material. As well as the local newspapers, we have subscriptions to First News and the Chapter Catcher.

We have a large collection of books in the library at Gillotts. Books are shelved alphabetically by author, with many regular special displays on themes. Students who are looking for particular genres of fiction can search on the OLC catalogue. The link is on the Freedom Homepage for students. Of course, they can ask Mrs Seddon at any time if they need help.

At Gillotts we shadow the Carnegie and Greenaway book awards. These are the most prestigious book awards nationally, with books nominated and voted for by professional librarians. The Greenaway award is for outstanding book illustration, whereas the Carnegie award is for a novel. Each year a Year 7 class is selected to shadow the Greenaway award, which includes preparing presentations, reading and discussing the books and creating artwork based on the books, as well as contributing to the [website](#).

Students at Gillotts can also take part in the Children’s Book Award, run by the [Federation of Children’s Book Groups](#). For this award all the books are voted for by young people. The benefit of taking part is that we are rewarded with free copies of the newly published books being nominated; they become part of our library stock on a temporary or sometimes permanent basis.

We also take part in the [Berkshire Book Award](#), as it is one of our neighbouring counties. This is also an award with books nominated entirely by young people.

At Gillotts we make time for reading and can offer lots of support to those who are unsure where to start. It is not a crime to not enjoy every genre of book. "If you don't like to read, you haven't found the right book." (J K Rowling). Mrs Seddon, our school librarian, is able to suggest authors and supply booklists catering for all genres. There are some links on the school website. She can also offer one-to-one clinics/sessions to explore likes and dislikes and create individual reading lists. For reluctant readers, it is worth looking at the website of the children's author [Tom Palmer](#), who has created many resources to encourage boys to read, often through the medium of exciting football and wartime stories. He creates many guides and resources to motivate and assist young people in their reading journey.

Fiction and non-fiction can inspire empathy. See the Empathy Lab [website](#). Anyone who is not convinced that non-fiction can inspire empathy should read 'The Diary of Anne Frank' to be inspired.

The benefits of reading for pleasure are best expressed by [Nicola Morgan](#), a renowned dyslexia expert, who has spent more than 20 years studying the science of reading and read all the evidence, finding connections between neuroscience, psychology and observation, whilst talking to both experts and teenagers. See the link to her website: Look in particular at the sections on the Reading Brain and the Benefits of Reading for Pleasure.

Further useful websites for reading for pleasure are listed below, most of which are free or have an element of free content:

[Audible](#): Free online access to children 's audio books in six different languages. Adults can have free 30-day trial then £7.99 month subscription. Part of Amazon so can also be accessed via TV with Amazon Prime subscription.

[Book Trust Book Finder](#): Great resource on finding books on a wide variety of genres.

[English Media Centre](#): Free Home Learning Pack for Key Stage 3 students.

[Goodreads](#): Free to join, students can write their own reviews of books they have read, find book lists, take part in quizzes and discover new books to read.

Neil Gaiman -Celebrated British Fantasy Adult and Children's author Neil Gaiman has compiled a list of "Cool Stuff " for [adults](#) and [children](#) for free on his website. This consists of short stories, audio books and interviews, essays, and the entire Graveyard Book and Coraline read out loud on video.

[Project Gutenberg](#): Project Gutenberg offers over 50,000 free e-books in various formats.

[Reading Zone](#): Book reviews, competitions and activities for all ages.

[Toppsta](#): Giveaways and hundreds of book reviews and activities for a wide variety of ages.

The [World Book Day](#) website has lots of useful links and resources to use every day of the year. There are book trailers and master classes from authors and illustrators.

Free e-books are available [here](#).

PUBLIC LIBRARIES: Being a member of the public library means that students can get access to a wide range of online resources, including newspapers, dictionaries, Britannica online, e-books and audio books. It is possible to join the library online. Do check with whichever local authority you live in, but services are extensive in Oxfordshire, Wokingham and Windsor and Maidenhead.