



**THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AND RESOURCE CENTRE PRESENT THE  
SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2026**

For students entering Year 9 in September 2026

Dear Reader,

We are now launching our Summer Reading Challenge 2026. The Summer Reading Challenge is designed to promote independent reading and exploration of literature from a range of genres.

Independent reading has been identified as the greatest marker of academic success in education. While we often feel as though there is little time for reading, it has incredible benefits, both in terms of our knowledge and skills, but also in terms of our emotional enrichment as well.

All pupils entering Year 9 in September 2026 are required to read at least three of the books that are recommended here. They should be available at local libraries and can perhaps be ordered there. We also know that some students may wish to swap and share titles with each other.

We have compiled this list from various sources, including new titles, recommendations and student voices. Sharing reading with others is also great practice, which is why we are asking you to read several from this list. We hope that you like the range of books on offer this year and look forward to hearing which ones were selected and enjoyed.

Which books do you plan to read?

### RMS VISITING WRITER: SARAH HAGGER-HOLT

We were excited on two fronts to welcome Sarah Hagger-Holt to RMS this year for our Year 8 and 9 groups as she is both an award winning writer and also a member of our RMS community as a parent of two of our pupils. Her books focus on themes of family and real-life issues. Her books also focus upon diverse representation of families throughout her novels.

*Proud of You* is a popular book at RMS, with many students opting to read it. When Sarah came to visit, she also spoke about her new novel, which has now been released. *A Sister Like You* is about Ella and Ari, who become friends after beginning at the same secondary school. Both are adopted and then soon, the girls realise that they aren't just friends, they're actually sisters. But how will this new relationship across families possibly work?



### FROZEN CHARLOTTE – ALEX BELL

By now, this must be an RMS classic, but it remains as popular as ever. In this genuinely chilling Young Adult horror story, teenager Sophie is sent to stay with her cousins after her best friend's sudden death. But after arriving at the house, Sophie realises that there are lots of secrets – and lots of rules. She can never speak about her deceased cousin, nor the collection of creepy Frozen Charlotte dolls that remain stuck in the house. When they decide to try an Ouija board, Sophie realises that they are in terrible danger. But is it already too late?

Already read *Frozen Charlotte*? Try the prequel – *Charlotte Says* – to find out more about what happened before Sophie ever arrived at the house!



### OUR 2026 NEW RELEASE - BETH IS DEAD - KATIE BERNET

Particularly for those of you who enjoyed *Little Women* last year, this is a fanfiction modern interpretation of the tale of the March sisters. This time, it begins with Beth March, discovered murdered in the snow following a house party with friends. So who killed Beth, and why would someone want to kill the kindest and most compassionate of the March sisters? Alongside this, they also have to cope with the fictionalised publication of their lives into the book *Little Women*, written by their father as they struggle to navigate with the way they have been portrayed in the media as intense scrutiny around the case grows.

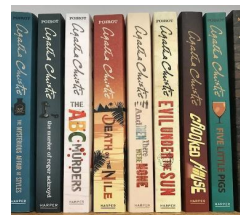
This is an exciting murder mystery, told through the perspectives of the three surviving sisters - Meg, Jo and Amy as they try and work towards their own futures and uncover who took their sister's life.



### OUR CLASSIC LITERATURE CHOICE: AGATHA CHRISTIE

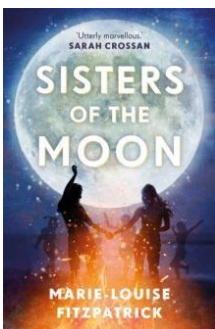
We have maintained the 'Queen of Crime' as our Year 8 classic read for many years now, owing to their enormous popularity. What has been brilliant is to see how many of our students keep coming back for more and more of her texts, even years later. Students' favourites are *And Then There Were None* (a group of individuals invited to a mysterious party, only to find themselves being systematically murdered); *The ABC Murders* (Hercule Poirot tracks a serial killer who murders victims in accordance with the alphabet, beginning with Alice Ascher, killed in Andover); *Murder on the Links* (Poirot is in France, trying to track the killer of a man found murdered on a golf course). Ms Gardner's favourite is *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

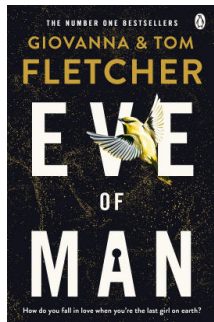
Astonishingly, Agatha Christie's book sales are surpassed only by copies of the Bible and Shakespeare – with more than 2 billion books sold!



### SISTERS OF THE MOON – MARIE-LOUISE FITZPATRICK

Following the death of her mother, Suzy Button is struggling to make friends at a new school and to find purpose. Under the light of a supermoon, she wishes for everything to change- and suddenly it does. Into her life walks the mysterious Rhiannon and life at school and out is transformed- how and why is Rhiannon able to help her so much? This is a book about friendship, and relatable, real-life issues combined with a very subtle hint of magic which creates a beautiful atmosphere and believable story- and keeps you guessing until the very end.





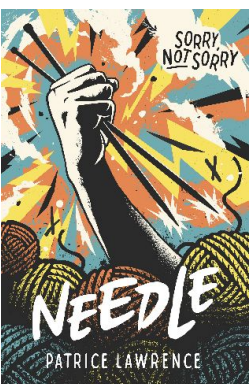
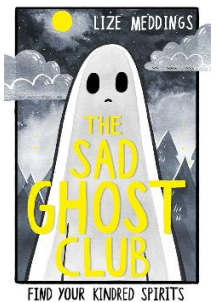
### **EVE OF MAN - GIOVANNI AND TOM FLETCHER**

From the day that she was born, Eve has always been a celebrity. More than that, she is hailed as the saviour of humanity as she is the first female child born in 50 years. She is so special that she has to be protected at all costs and spends her time with an AI holographic companion. She knows that one day she will be married to a suitable man so that she can bear children to save the human race. But what happens when Eve decides that she wants to select her own path? When she meets Bram - the person who runs her hologram friend - her feelings for him begin to change the way that she looks at her life and whether it has to be pre-determined, as she has always been told.

### **OUR GRAPHIC NOVEL CHOICE - THE SAD GHOST CLUB - LIZE MEDDINGS**

Highly recommended by both Mrs Fryer and our RMS book club, *The Sad Ghost Club* is a moving but ultimately uplifting tale. Both SG (Sam) and Socks are two little ghosts who both feel lost and alone in the world. When they meet at a party, they realise that they are not the only young ghosts to feel that way, and so The Sad Ghost Club is born.

This is the first in a series of graphic novels about the group of ghosts who begin by feeling that they don't belong and then find friendship and meaning together. The artwork throughout is beautiful and the gentleness of the book makes it a memorable and lasting novel.



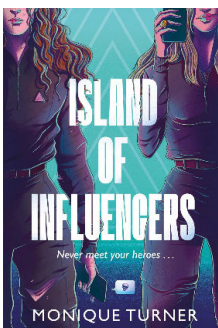
### **SUPPORT WITH READING: NEEDLE - PATRICE LAWRENCE**

This book is recommended for those who require additional support with reading and literacy: it is short, with dyslexia-friendly font and layout. If other students wish to read this text, it should, in that case, be an addition to the other three (or more) texts that they choose.

Charlene loves to knit and create things, and she is excitedly making a new blanket for the little sister she has not seen in years. When it is destroyed by her foster mum's son, Charlene sees red – and stabs him in the hand with her knitting needle. It is a moment of blind rage, but as she is arrested and taken into custody, Charlene realises that that one decision might shape the course of the rest of her life. She is told that if she says sorry, the criminal justice system will go easier on her. But she isn't sorry – and doesn't want to say she is. This book was shortlisted for the YOTO Carnegie Medal because of its powerful themes and fantastic exploration of justice (or not).

### **BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS - THE WILDEST DREAMS BOOKSHOP - GRACIE PAGE**

This is one of our new novels for this year and our summer rom-com story. Anna is super-organised and always knows exactly what to do. But when her boyfriend suddenly dumps her and she is heartbroken, she decides that it is time to do something a little bit different. When her aunt breaks her leg, Anna decides to help out by looking after her bookshop and moving to Cornwall for the summer. As she is battling to run a celebrity launch event, she keeps being distracted by Jacob, a local handyman and devastatingly handsome surfer. At first, Anna can't bear him, but as time goes on, everything starts changing. Maybe this is the start of a new life, for the better...



### **ISLAND OF INFLUENCERS - MONIQUE TURNER**

This is a new text for this year - and highly anticipated for the world of social media. In this book, everyone wants to be one of the really polished influencers. Harper is jealous. She has always wanted to be a famous influencer like her cousin Bellee. And when the most famous influencers are pseudo-kidnapped and sent to an island for a new reality programme where they are watched all the time, she is desperate to join.

When Harper is given the chance to join at the last minute, she is over the moon. This is her chance for her big break. As she lives alongside the others on the island, it is not long before she begins to see the reality that hides under their perfectly polished images - and soon, secrets and cracks begin to show, that could prove deadly.