



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

For students entering Year 10 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 10 in September 2026 are required to read at least three of the books that are recommended here. For current Year 9 pupils, RMS has copies to lend before the end of the academic year. Others can be borrowed from local libraries.

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.

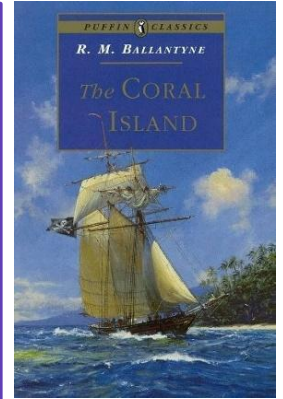
Proud of You is a popular book at RMS, with many students opting to read it. When Sarah came to visit, she also spoke about her new novel, which has now been released. *A Sister Like You* is about Ella and Ari, who become friends after beginning at the same secondary school. Both are adopted and then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



OUR CLASSIC LITERATURE CHOICE: *THE CORAL ISLAND* – R.M. BALLANTYNE

The Coral Island follows Ralph, Jack and... Peterkin – three boys who find themselves on a South Pacific Island the only survivors of a shipwreck and who have to work together in order to survive and thrive while so far away from home. Probably sounds reasonably familiar?

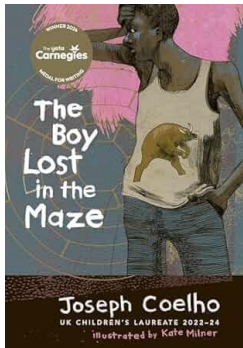
The Coral Island is the book that directly inspired *Lord of the Flies*. In fact, not only did Golding name the two key rivals in his book after Ballantyne's protagonists, there are three times in *Lord of the Flies* where the book *The Coral Island* is specifically mentioned. In Ballantyne's book, the boys work together to face different dangers and enemies – an example of the attitude that the 'civilised' British could always overcome threats to their safety. Golding wrote his response about what really lies at the heart of human nature, creating his horrifyingly chilling novel. Understanding Ballantyne's text will give you a much greater insight into Golding's inspiration, so a read of this classic comes highly recommended.



THE BOY LOST IN THE MAZE – JOSEPH COELHO

We are so excited about this book! *The Boy Lost in the Maze* is a modern-day retelling of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur from the Ancient Greek myth. There are three main characters in this story about manhood and identity. Theo is studying for his A Levels and is writing an essay about Theseus. The Minotaur is also a lost creature, wondering about where he comes from and his father. The whole tale is told in verse, making this a quick but powerful read about one of the greatest stories that the world has ever known.

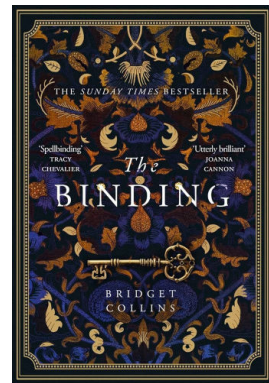
Parent/Guardian advisory: *The Boy Lost in the Maze* contains a few examples of bad language and mild references to sexual behaviour.



BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS - *THE BINDING* - BRIDGET COLLINS

The Binding is a spell-binding, magical Gothic text that will entrance anyone who reads it. It is a gripping read from start to finish, with a heart-wrenching reveal at the end. *The Binding* is a slightly more advanced read, but you will be familiar with elements of it that suit the supernatural Gothic. This is our 'books about books' choice for pupils entering Year 10.

In this world, people can visit book bindings to 'bind' a particular memory into a book and thereby rid themselves of it forever. When people are dealing with pain or torment, the ability to ensure that they never have to think about it again comes as an incredible relief. Emmet takes a job in a binding store, helping to create the books in which people are binding up their secrets, but is not allowed inside the locked section of the shop. Then one day, Emmet comes across a book bearing his name and realises that he has visited this place before... but what is the memory that evades him, and does he really want to find out?



SUPPORT WITH READING: *THE DISCONNECT* – KEREN DAVID

If you could win £1000... would you give up your phone for six weeks? That is the option that a seemingly eccentric billionaire offers a group of teenagers. Esther is tempted by the offer. Her dad lives many miles away and Esther is desperate to get the money to see him – the prize is her only way of being able to afford the flights. But, to do so, she needs to disconnect from everyone for six weeks – and it is much harder than Esther may have originally anticipated.

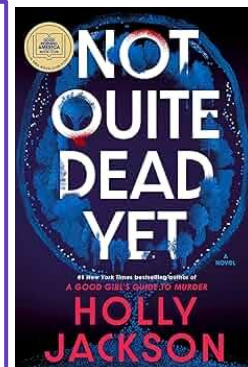
Through this novel, Keren David explores the impact of social media on the lives of young people, considering both its positives and negatives. It is a prescient and compelling comment on our society and the influence of the online world.



OUR 2026 NEW RELEASE - *YOUR MURDER NEXT* – RAVENA GURON

A new and compelling murder mystery by YA writer Ravena Guron. When the school's supposedly most popular girl is found frozen to death inside a walk-in freezer, Myra decides that this cannot be an accident. This is murder. An aspiring investigative journalist, Myra decides that she is going to be the one to uncover the truth.

When Myra meets an unknown boy in the woods who claims to have killed the killer, Myra now has new mysteries to solve. Who is this unknown boy? Whom has he killed - and how does she know whether she can really trust him? Realising that her life - and the lives of others might be in danger - Myra needs to solve the crimes before someone else dies. Written by the author of the very popular *Mondays are Murder*, this is a new release for this year.

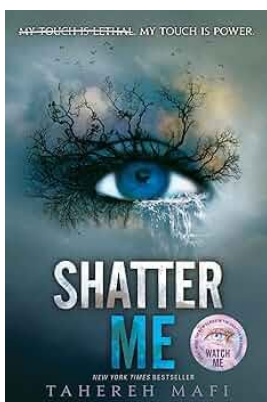


OUR 2026 NEW RELEASE - *NOT QUITE DEAD YET* - HOLLY JACKSON

Another new release for this year - and another murder mystery thriller, is the new book by one of the 21st century Queens of Crime, Holly Jackson, author of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*, amongst other titles. In *Not Quite Dead Yet*, protagonist Jet is someone who has always left everything until later... even dying.

When Jet is attacked in her own home and brutally beaten to death, doctors are amazed that she survives. But because of another medical condition, Jet is told by the doctors that the pressure on her brain will result in her death in approximately one week's time. So she will die later. And in the meantime, Jet is determined. She is going to solve her own murder in the last week of her life. Because someone she knows wanted her dead. Can she find out the truth?

This novel comes with a parental-advisory warning for explicit language in places.



SHATTER ME (SERIES) - TAHEREH MAFI

Recommended by pupils who have fallen in love with the series, *Shatter Me* is the first novel in a series of eleven (six full-length novels and five novellas) about a dystopian fantasy world. Juliette is seventeen and she has not had any human contact for 264 days - the exact number of days since she killed someone. Juliette has a curse that makes contact with her deadly to others, and is captured and imprisoned. She is a traumatised teenager struggling to see how her life will ever be normal again.

Her world is ruled by the dictatorship *The Reestablishment* who are cruel and merciless. When they learn of Juliette's curse, they know that they can use her as a deadly weapon. Juliette has to decide whether she can fight against this destiny.



MORE THAN THIS – PATRICK NESS

More Than This is a coming-of-age novel from acclaimed and multiple award-winning author, Patrick Ness but it is (excuse the pun) also so much more than this. At the opening of the book Seth, a young teenager, drowns. But then suddenly Seth is awake again and seemingly back to life, standing on an empty street and wondering whether this is the afterlife and there is something beyond that undiscovered country after all. Is it the afterlife - or is it something else? In Seth's dreams, he is repeatedly tormented by vivid and disturbing memories that seem to try to hurt him - and then suddenly he wakes again, desperate to find out where he is, what has really happened to him, and whether he can finally answer life's most significant philosophical question - is there really 'more than this'? This is a slightly more advanced read but highly rated by former students with multiple 5* reviews from those that have enjoyed it in the past.



BETTER THAN THE MOVIES – LYNN PAINTER

An entertaining and gripping enemies-to-lovers romance. Liz has lived next door to Wes her whole life, but their relationship has been based on mutual irritation. When Wes befriends her forever crush Michael, Liz decides Wes is the perfect way to manufacture the prom date of her dreams. Along the way, Liz navigates friendship issues, and parent issues- and finally comes to terms with her real-life Happily Ever After. Liz, Wes and Michael (and their other friends) are a believable and balanced cast of characters.

As rom-coms tend to develop, we sort of know the ending from the start, but the story keeps you captivated and invested as we wonder how the text and relationship will develop.