

**End of Day  
Reflection  
- The  
Importance  
of Reading  
for  
Pleasure**

Dear Parents

As part of our 'subject takeover week', Mrs Andrade has shared the approach of the English department to our current remote learning model.

*In this brave new world of online learning, the English department's approach to remote learning tasks in these two weeks leading up to the Easter break remains resolutely low-tech. All your child needs is their home reading book, a pen, a piece of paper and access to a dictionary. We would prefer it if your child continues to write by hand if this is their normal way of working. To submit work to their teacher, simply take a photo and email it. For all year groups except Year 8, last week's tasks required the children to have read up to the halfway point of their reading book. In order to complete this week's work, the children will need to finish their books. Please do encourage your child to invest the time in finishing their book first and, if you have time, share the story together. The remote learning tasks encourage the children to engage imaginatively with stories, developing empathy for characters' plights and considering how else their book could have ended; to hone their comprehension skills; to extract and summarise key information; and to explore and define unfamiliar vocabulary.*

*Why the emphasis on reading?*

*The benefits of reading for pleasure are well-documented: it has an impact on children's reading attainment and writing ability; improves grammar skills; broadens vocabulary; improves spelling; imbues greater knowledge; gives a better understanding of other cultures; and lends a greater insight into human nature decision-making, among many other benefits. Reading really is a panacea for all English ills. One of the advantages of having an enforced period of self-isolation at home is having the time to read. As parents, it's easy to assume that, once our children can read fluently, our job is done. However, there is much to be gained by continuing to read together. Take it in turns to read a page of your child's book and talk about what you have read. Set aside half an hour a day when everyone in your household reads at the same time. As a family, set yourself the challenge of reading one of the classics together, one chapter per evening. Listen to audio books together - Audible is offering hundreds of children's books for free for the duration of the time that schools are closed. Set up a virtual book club with grandparents. Read books to your children that you yourself enjoyed as a*

*child. Revisit your children's favourite early childhood books together - I'm always amazed how enthusiastically Julia Donaldson's books are received by our Year 5 and 6 pupils during our weekly library story time sessions. Wherever possible, opt for reading 'real' books rather than reading on a device. Neuroscientists have discovered that reading on a screen encourages non-linear reading: our eyes skim and dart around the text. Reading on paper encourages deep reading - the kind we need to immerse ourselves in a story. In a world that can seem very uncertain, physical books can provide reassurance, escapism and a physical link with family.*

*Why the request for handwritten work?*

*Most children think that word-processing their work will mean that they no longer have to worry about their spelling, punctuation and grammar because the computer will fix it for them. Not so! You'd be amazed how often children are 'defiant' rather than 'definite' about the answer to a question when typing. Using spellcheck correctly requires children to be able to correctly identify the correct spelling from a range of options, so being able to spell well is a prerequisite for word-processing. The same is true of grammar and punctuation. People generally find it much harder to read back through their work on a screen to spot and correct errors, too, so having children write by hand remains the English department's preferred option.*

*Research suggests that handwriting allows for more effective memory recall, aids cognitive development and helps children to spell accurately. Some would argue that it also sparks creativity and helps us to relax, although substantiating these claims is perhaps more difficult. The process of editing, rewriting and refining text is shown when writing by hand in a way that it can't be when work is word-processed. As children develop their own, individual handwriting style, this becomes an important part of their identity. For all these reasons, please encourage your child to continue to handwrite their English work where this is their usual way of working.*

*Laura Andrade*

I wish you all a relaxing evening and hopefully some time with a great book.  
Very best wishes,  
Mary Bridges