



**QUEENS' SCHOOL**  
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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023:**

**WONDERFUL WORLD BOOK DAY**



Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> of March saw everyone at Queens' celebrating World Book Day in style! We had a range of events on the day: a superb book giveaway run by Mrs Gray in the library; a Mad Hatter's Tea Party for avid readers; a range of assemblies and form competitions. As has become traditional, the department also dressed up as famous characters from literature. A great day was had by all!

**MARVELLOUS 'MACBETH':**

Superbly organised by Ms Jacobs, on the 9<sup>th</sup> February, we invited the fantastic organisation Box Clever to Queens' to run two workshop performances of 'Macbeth'. The famous tragedy is taught to Year 11 students as part of their GCSE course, and this was a brilliant way to help them imagine how the play would have been staged as well as to interact with the performers.

It was an invigorating and informative performance with lots of students participating.



**SHAKESPEARE ON THE BIG SCREEN:**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Miss Kinshuck took a group of A-level students to our local cinema to watch a performance of 'Othello' on the big screen. It was an excellent evening giving students the opportunity to experience Shakespeare in technicolour as it would have been performed in the theatre (without the cost or travel). Students study 'Othello' as part of their A-level Literature course and it was both an engaging and informative evening for everyone that really brought the text to life.

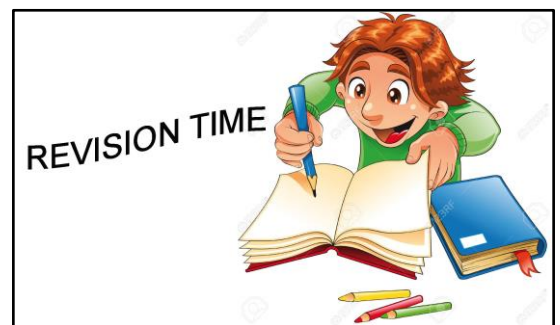


**REVISION SESSIONS:**

This last term has been incredibly busy as we prepare Year 13 and 11 students for their final exams in May. This has included Year 11 undertaking a second mock exam and the department running a range of revision sessions in order to help them with their studies in the South Hall.

If you are interested in accessing more revision materials, please see our website:

<https://sites.google.com/queens.herts.sch.uk/englishrevision/home>



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## WHAT SHALL I READ?

Every month, the English department offer a Key Stage 3 and adult recommended read of the month. You will find our recommendations for January, February and March below. If you would like to find regular recommendations, then follow us on twitter: English@Queens'.

You should also check out the YOTO Carnegie shortlist released this week:

<https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/writing-shortlist-2023/>

You can also find further book recommendations on the Queens' School website:

<https://www.queens.herts.sch.uk/students/lrc/reading-lists/>



## **JANUARY RECOMMENDED READ – YOUNG ADULT**

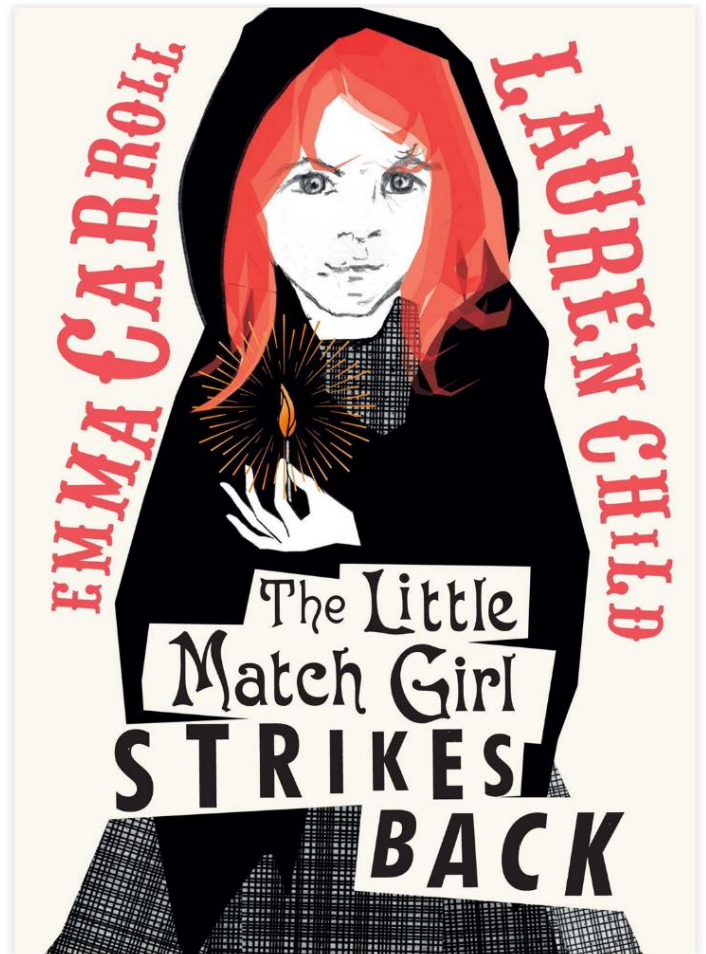
### **'THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL STRIKES BACK'**

**Emma Carroll**

This is a powerful and innovative re-telling of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Little Match Girl' that would be perfect for Year 8s who have just been studying Victorian England.

Bridie Sweeney is a young girl, who scrapes together every penny she can selling matches. Meanwhile, her mother works in the factory in horrendous conditions and suffering, like many other women at the time, from the intoxicating chemicals used to make the matches. Defiant and determined, when Bridie loses all her matches and is stranded on the cold streets of London, she chooses to believe in her own dreams rather than give up. The vision she has is of a better more equal world for those living in poverty and particularly for the match women.

Inspired by what she has seen, she decides she has no choice but to try to change their plight. Inspired by the real match girl strikes of the late Victorian period such as that of Bryant and May, Carroll has created a resilient and hopeful narrative about fighting back against oppression and being optimistic no matter your circumstances. This is both educational in terms of revealing the lives of the poor in Victorian London as well as inspiring through its tenacious heroine. Beautifully illustrated, this is both a more realistic and more uplifting version of the original that Key Stage Three students will love.



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**JANUARY RECOMMENDED READ  
– ADULT**

**‘THE TEN THOUSAND DOORS OF JANUARY’**

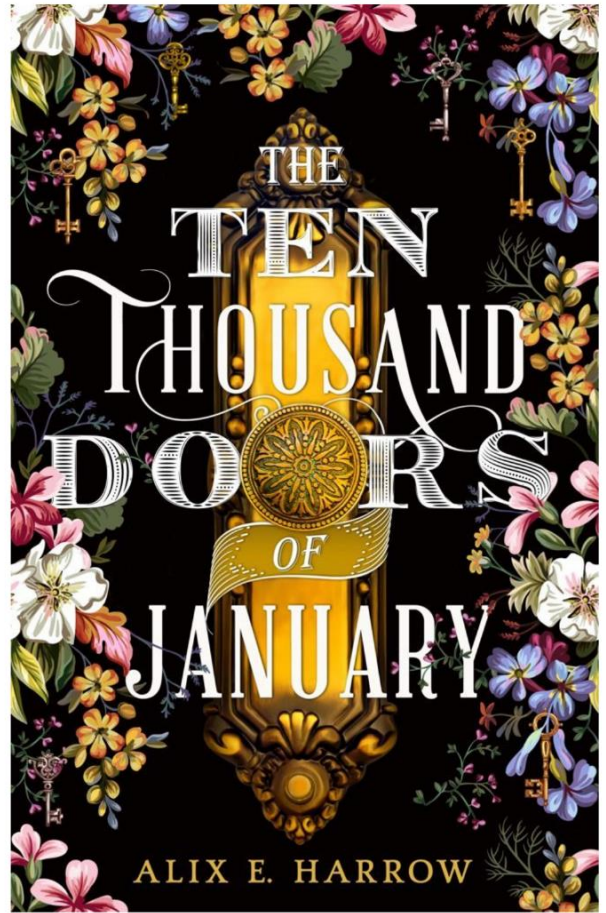
**Alix E Harrow**

This is a beautiful and original (and aptly named) fantasy to start the year. January, named for Janus, the Roman God of doorways, has lived a secluded but privileged existence under the watchful eye of Mr Locke whilst her father hunts for antiquities for his master and his secret society. However, when her father disappears, January knows that there is more to the society than meets the eye and that, if she is ever to see her father again, she is going to need to find a way to escape Locke’s possessive grasp.

Although she has always known that she does not fit in with conventional society, January has never realised that she truly is a child between worlds and that the door she once saw as a child, is the pathway to a magical environment beyond her imagining.

This is a brilliant, fantasy novel that will be loved by young adult readers and adults alike. Clearly the beginning of what will be a compelling series, Harrow has created an entire chain of magical worlds into which she repeatedly propels her reader. Inventive and unique, Harrow generates a wonderful adventure narrative that simultaneously comments on our sense of identity and belonging, the implications of exile and the power of the written word to conjure worlds that can terrify as much as they inspire.

If you are looking for page-turning narrative or are simply a fan of magical realism, this is definitely the novel for you.



**FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ  
– YOUNG ADULT**

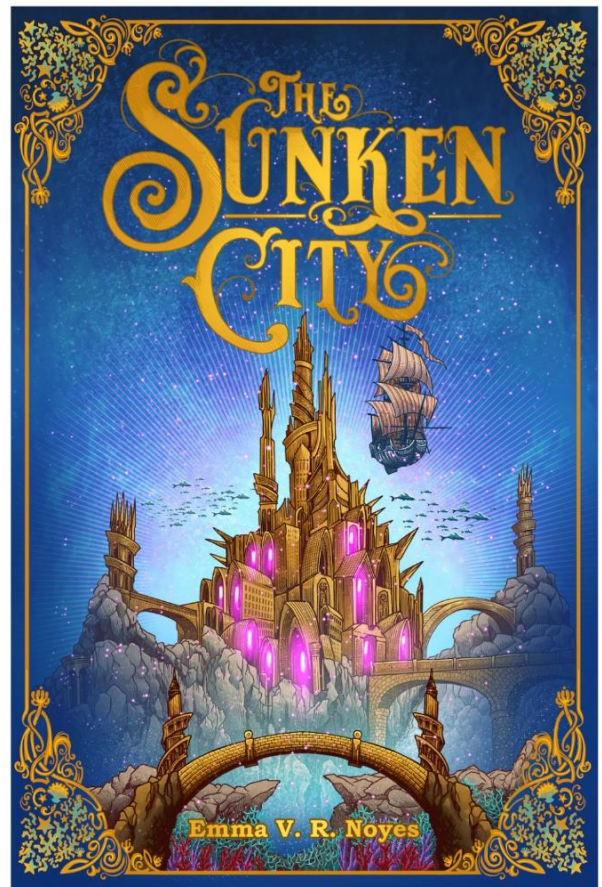
**‘THE SUNKEN CITY’**

**Emma V.R.Noyes**

Brought up on The Moonshadow amongst pirates who search for treasure and live a lawless, tenuous existence on the high seas, Amare’s only desire has been to become a pirate. However, she soon finds that you cannot always have what you want and the stories that you are told, are not always what they seem. Flung to the depths of the ocean, she is taken in by an underwater community and proclaimed the lost princess by her father, the king, whom she had assumed long dead.

However, in a world where magic holds sway and nothing is quite what it appears, it is increasingly unclear who she can trust or which stories she should really believe. Does she trust the ethereal beauty of the sunken city and her regal father and his handsome aid, Lukas, or side with a more familiar world of piracy and his darker older brother, Damon driven by vengeance and pain?

This is the first novel in a superb fantasy trilogy that is available in the Queens’ library. Noyes is a master of world building creating a scintillating underwater landscape that is at once magical and believable. Driven by a vivacious but damaged heroine, this is a brilliant adventure story drawing on marine mythology and traditional stories of piracy and mythical beasts. A compelling read that you will see you grabbing for part two before you know it.



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**FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ  
– ADULT**

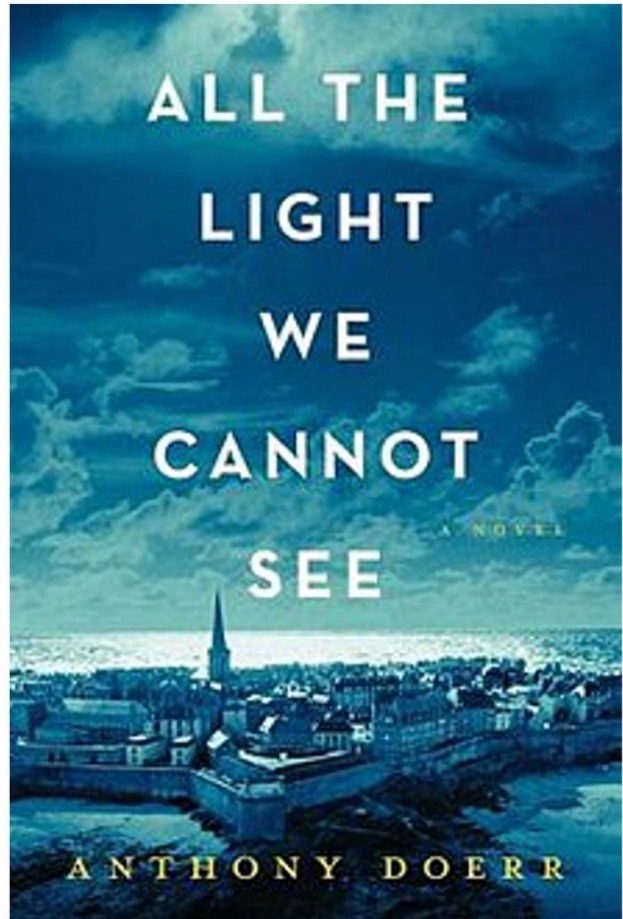
**‘ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE’**

**Anthony Doerr**

‘All the Light We Cannot See’ is a magnificent tour de force set during WWII and following a dual narrative. Compelled to leave her Paris neighbourhood, Marie-Laure, who is blind, and her father seek refuge in the walled city of Saint Malo. However, when her father mysteriously vanishes, Marie-Laure must find new ways to survive with her reclusive uncle. At the same time, the orphaned Werner Pfennig is accepted into military school in Germany as a result of his brilliant engineering skills.

Taking us from the mid-1930s through to the end of WWII, the narratives of these two innocent victims slowly move closer to one another until they finally collide in a moving and explosive finale. A novel rightly acclaimed as a modern classic, Doerr evokes the horrors of WWII in visceral detail not merely for those fighting, but for the civilians caught in the middle. Despite the horrors that befall them, and they witness, the central protagonists retain their resilience, morality and determination to put others before themselves offering both the reader and others in their community hope even the face of unspeakable tragedy.

Doerr atmospherically creates a world of fear and instability that epitomized the terrible years of WWII sensuously describing an environment and characters which, for all their suffering, appear tenacious and noble. A brilliant and moving narrative highly recommended to anyone interested in historical fiction.



**MARCH RECOMMENDED READ –  
YOUNG ADULT**

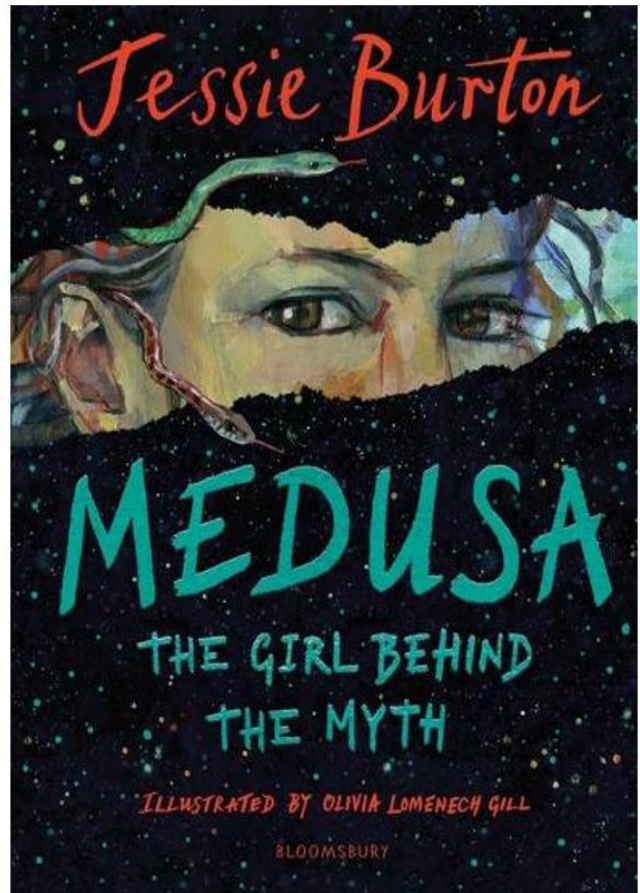
**‘MEDUSA’**

**Jessie Burton**

‘Medusa: The Girl Behind the Myth’ is a wonderful YA, feminist re-telling of one of the most infamous myths from Greek mythology. However, rather than focusing on the narrative of the dashing hero, Perseus, Burton explores the story through the eyes of the youthful Medusa.

Exiled to a lonely island with her sisters, Stheno and Euryale, following her transformation, Medusa is haunted by her past and embroiled in her isolation. As she recalls, her childhood, her love of the sea and her closeness with her sisters, she slowly comes to terms with her metamorphosis. However, her tranquillity is disrupted by the arrival of a handsome young hero; a hero on his own quest who has the help of the gods but no understanding of the monster he will face. As the two become closer, neither has any understanding that they are standing on a precipice that will change their lives and remain divided by a chasm that not even love can breach.

This is an imaginative and sensitive re-telling that is exquisitely illustrated by Olivia Lomenech Gill in a way that brings the world of Medusa and her lonely existence to life. However, what is truly remarkable is the superb twist at the end of the novel that, for once, truly sets the female protagonist free.



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## MARCH RECOMMENDED READ – ADULT

### ‘A TERRIBLE KINDNESS’

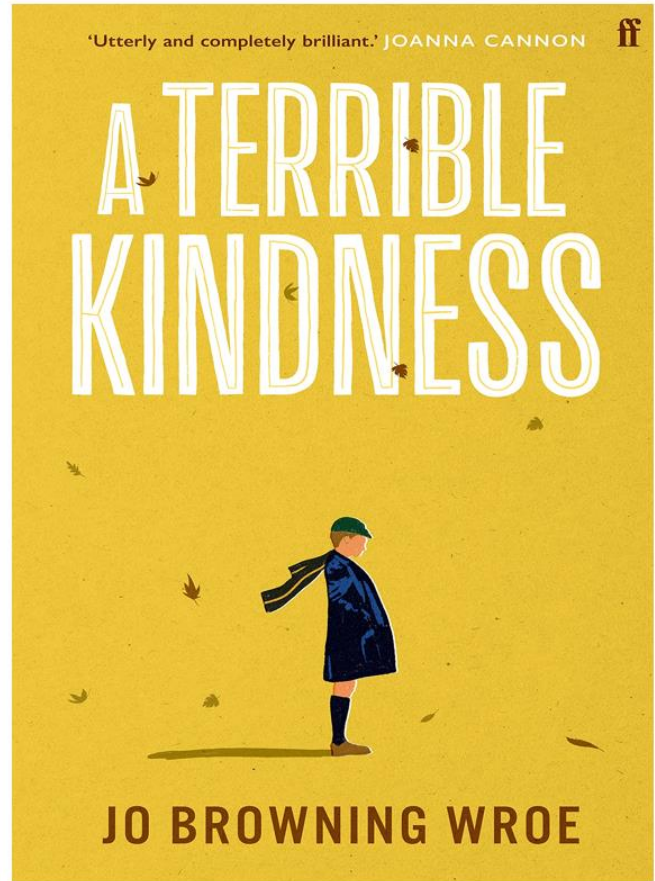
Jo Browning Wroe

‘A Terrible Kindness’ is a moving and emotive narrative that follows the story of William from his unique upbringing with his widowed mother in the 1950s to his adolescent experience as a Cambridge chorister before he finally chooses to enter the family business working as an embalmer.

Whilst the novel begins in the most tragically bleak manner imaginable as William chooses to volunteer to help prepare the bodies of the child victims of the Aberfan disaster, this is not the case for the narrative as a whole. Despite its emotionally distressing opening, this is a novel that is ultimately uplifting exploring themes of tolerance, community and the ability to find light and hope even in the darkest of circumstances. More than anything, it is about the resilience of the human spirit, our ability to forgive and lift one another up whether through the power of music or through simple acts of kindness.

A moving and compelling narrative that follows the painful arc of William’s personal journey both before and after the Aberfan disaster, the story is sensitively and tenderly relayed drawing the reader into William’s insular world as well as the often vivacious and loving characters that surround him.

Nominated last year for the Women’s Prize for Fiction, this debut novel is a lovely and enlightening read built on tragic foundations.



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