



Dare to Write

ENGLISH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2024:

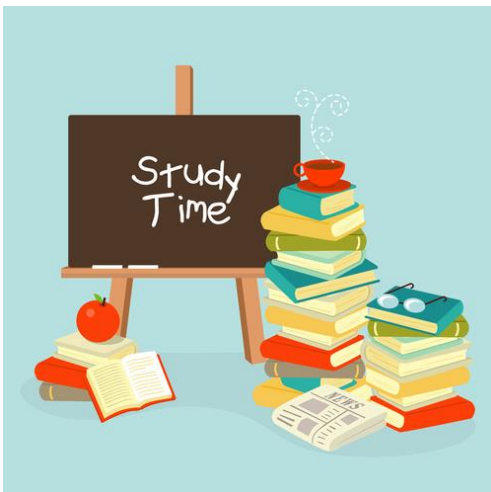
MARVELLOUS 'MACBETH':



On February 5th, we were delighted to welcome the Box Clever Theatre Company back to Queens' to deliver a double workshop to all Year 11 students on their set text 'Macbeth.' It was a fantastic morning with many students throwing themselves into the action and immersing themselves in the murderous medieval world of Macbeth and his cronies. Not only was it an opportunity to revise key elements of the text, but it enabled students to see Shakespeare in all his theatrical glory and recognise the visual impact of many of the central scenes. The theatre company themselves praised the students' lively engagement. We look forward to welcoming them back next year. A huge thank you to Ms Jacobs for running the event yet again.

A GLORIOUS EVENING AT THE GLOBE:

On February 1st, a group of A-levels headed out to see a fantastic, modern production of Shakespeare's 'Othello' in the Sam Wanamaker theatre of The Globe. Cleverly adapted to comment on today's societal issues, this was an innovative and exciting production that really brought the text and characters to life. It was a superb evening ably organised by Ms Kinshuck.



YEAR 11 MOCKS AND REVISION:

We have been working incredibly hard to prepare Year 11s for their GCSE over the last term including providing them with detailed feedback on the mock exams and creating a whole range of accessible Loom videos that are available to watch on all googleclassrooms. Videos cover all the major set texts as well as the different questions on the reading and writing papers. We are also running regular online revision sessions on a Tuesday from 4pm-5pm each focusing on a different element of the exam. Everyone is welcome to join using googlemeet and the code Englishrevision. We look forward to seeing you there.



YEAR 13 MOCKS AND REVISION:

We have also been focusing on assisting Year 13 students prepare for their final exams with a range of resources created for them and detailed feedback on their mock exams including copies of their papers.



VOCABULOUS:

Vocabulous continues to be hugely popular and successful with our Year 7 students. The aim of the programme is to help students recognise root words and understand morphology so they are then able to work out more complex vocabulary based on this essential knowledge independently. Every Year 7 pupil has access to the programme. Well done to 7AB for being our top performing form so far!

HOMEWORK CLUBS

If any students are struggling with home learning, they can join us at homework club in room 10 every week.

Key Stage 3: Wednesday 3pm-3.45pm

Key Stage 4: Thursday 3pm – 3.45pm

NEXT HALF-TERM?

There is a lot happening next half-term from revision sessions to an exciting trip to the British Museum and further plans for film showings. However, your big date for the diary is **THURSDAY 7TH MARCH – WORLD BOOK DAY!**

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 and February below. If you would like to find regular recommendations, then follow us on twitter: English@Queens'. 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 -ADULT

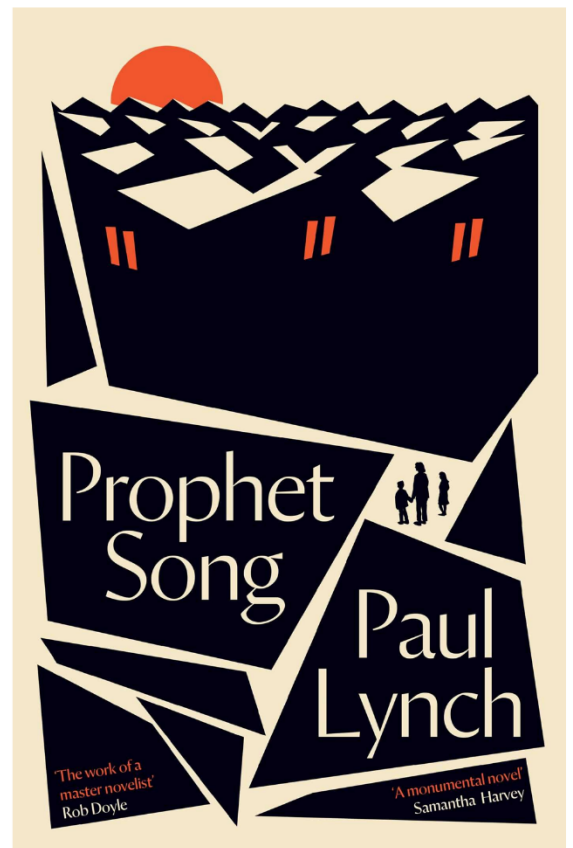
'PROPHET SONG'

Paul Lynch

Worthy winner of the 2023 Booker Prize, Lynch's 'Prophet Song' is an exceptional and haunting narrative. Set in an alternative Ireland where an authoritarian government has taken control and declared Emergency Powers, this is a world that is frighteningly recognisable. The novel begins sedately in its portrayal of familiar domesticity. However, life for the central protagonist, Eilish, a mother of four children changes dramatically when her husband, a teacher trade unionist, is taken in for questioning and simply does not return becoming the first of many who disappear.

As the narrative progresses, the faceless entities in charge becoming increasingly draconian enabling the reader to see the insidious and subtle way in which a once democratic country becomes dominated by fear and violence. The novel follows the Stack family as they are confronted by one tragedy and obstacle after another from the inability to find basic supplies to the terror of cowering beneath mattresses as bombs implode and explode their world. Narrated in lyrical prose from the perspective of Eilish, the novel's relentless pace and building sense of horror is generated by the stream of consciousness style of writing as we share the protagonist's anxiety and impossible nature of the choices, she must make to save her family.

This is an evocatively powerful novel that reflects on an all too possible reality asking big questions: what we would be prepared to sacrifice to survive; how totalitarian powers come in to being and why does no one speak out against them; what our understanding of the immigrant experience is. I won't reveal the ending of this brilliant work, but it took me a long time to get over!



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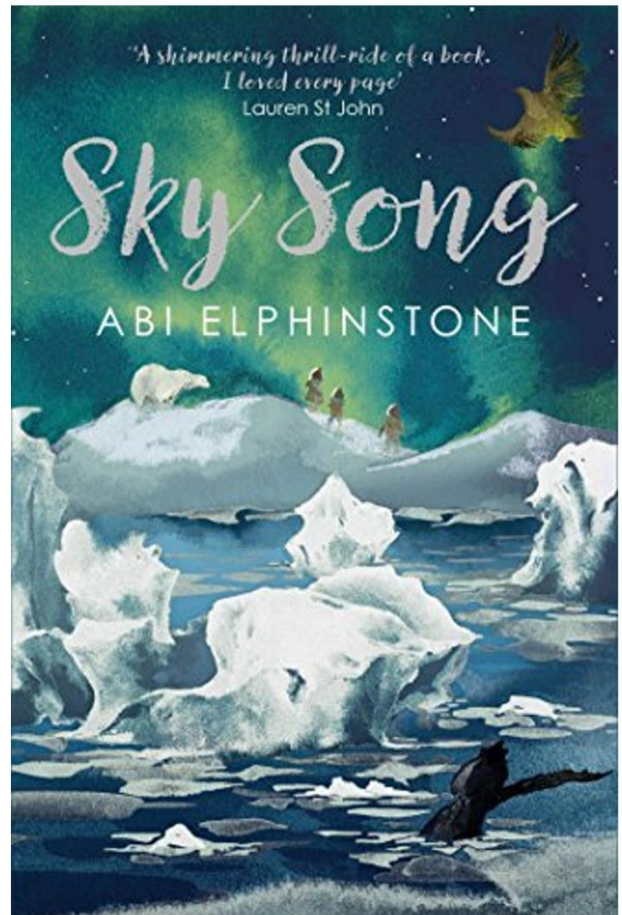
JANUARY RECOMMENDED READ -YOUNG ADULT

'SKY SONG'

Abi Elphinstone

This is a great YA read for winter. The novel is set in the snowy kingdom of Erkenwald that has been taken over by the cruel Ice Queen who has taken all those that go against her prisoner. She is determined to steal the voices of the opposing tribes to make her rule eternal. However, she has only until the rising of the next midnight sun to accomplish her nefarious mission and it seems that only the children who did not fight her in the first battle are left to defend their world. Whilst the Queen has dark magic and the whole of the Tusk Tribe in her thrall, the children are terrified and have ceased to believe in magic. However, when Flint, a boy who continues to believe in the magic of the world joins Eska, a girl who has broken free from the Queen's curse, it suddenly seems they might have a chance.

Their adventure across the most dangerous of landscapes then begins where they find help in the wilderness and the animal kingdom. Drawing on other familiar narratives such as 'The Snow Queen' and even 'Narnia' and Pullman's 'His Dark Materials', this is a great additional to the fantasy genre that will be enjoyed by anyone from Year 7 upwards. It has a propulsive plot as we are led on a thrilling adventure with Eska and Flint. The determined and innovative central characters are appealing and admirable and there is great message to the novel about resilience and the power of the voice to speak out against wrongs as well as the importance of community. Overall, a thoroughly enjoyable and fun adventure narrative.



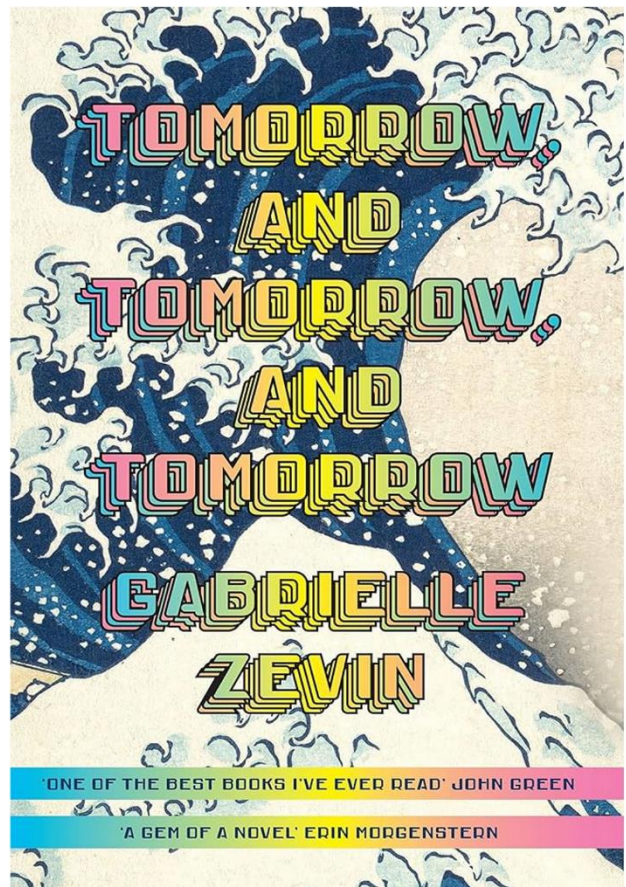
FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ - ADULT

'TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW' Gabrielle Zevin

This is the hugely popular, surprise hit of 2023 now available to read in Queens' School Library. 'Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow' tells the story of two great friends – Sadie Green and Sam Masur. Initially drawn together by childhood trauma, they are reunited at Harvard where they rediscover their mutual passion for designing computer games. The novel follows their undulating friendship through the vagaries of their early adult life as they find both success and failure personally and professionally.

Don't be put off by the seeming focus on the world of gaming – you don't need to know anything about computers. Rather, this is a novel about the power of story telling and images and the way in which they can unite and inspire so many diverse groups of people. It is a story about the power of friendship to overcome even the greatest of tragedies as perhaps hinted at by the Shakespearean title. However, it is also a story about the redemptive power of special relationships that can transcend even the most painful of disagreements and struggles.

Spanning 30 years, Zevin, in many ways, offers the reader a series of poignant snapshots that make up the lives of her unique protagonists as they grow, change, and come slowly to realise what is truly valuable in their lives. She also seems to brilliantly capture a particular moment of innovation and uncertainty in the 1990s and 2000s. Often moving, frequently insightful and consistently interesting, this is definitely a book that would be enjoyed by an adult and young adult audience alike.



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**FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ
– YOUNG ADULT**

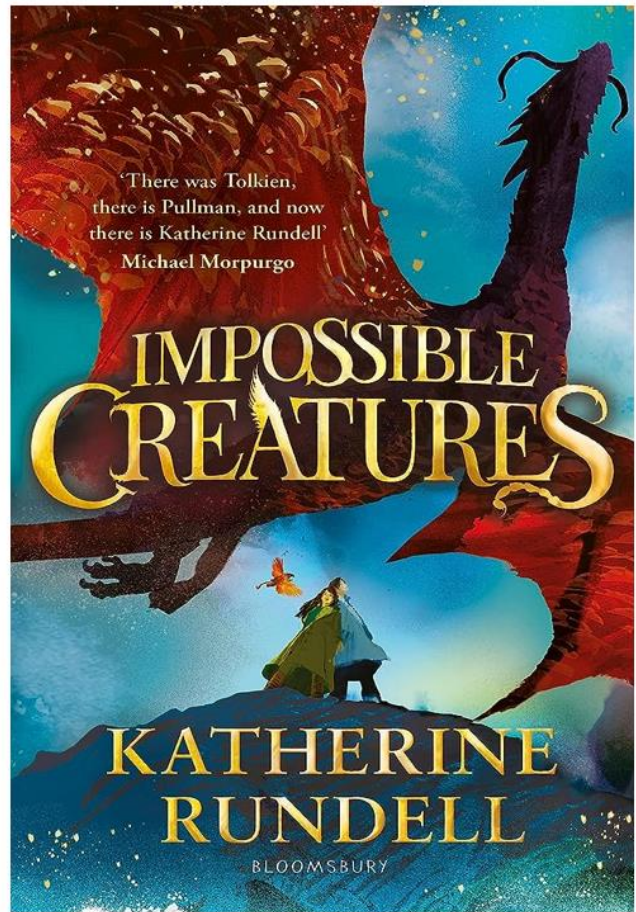
‘IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES’

Katherine Rundell

Rundell (author of ‘Rooftoppers’) is an exceptional young adult author, and this is definitely her best book so far. When Christopher joins his grandfather in a remote part of Scotland, he is given only one instruction – “don’t go to the top of the hill”. However, when mythical creatures come avalanching down the hill, he finds he has no choice and when a broken girl name Mal appears from the loch, he is compelled to join her on the other side – the Archipelago. Here, he discovers an entirely new world where magic still exists and the creatures of legend flourish. It is world filled with colourful characters and scintillating landscapes. However, something is destroying the magic of the land and, if Mal is to prevent every creature like the beautiful Gelifen, the last surviving griffin, from dying, they are going to have to find a way to restore magic to the Archipelago.

Rundell brilliantly combines elements of Greek and Roman legend with the best of modern fantasy including flashes of ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ and ‘His Dark Materials’. Rundell creates a unique imaginary world that is fascinating and absorbing. However, at the heart of her compelling narrative is also an important message about the power of friendship and the importance of preserving and protecting our environment and the creatures that rely on it for their survival.

Utterly original, ‘Impossible Creatures’ is a superb story but, be warned, you are also likely to need a pack of tissues as you read!



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