



## QUEENS' SCHOOL *Dare to Write*

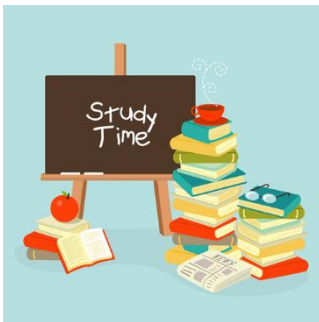
### ENGLISH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025:

#### ASTOUNDING 'OEDIPUS':

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, Year 12 and 13 Classics students went to see Remi Malek and Indira Varma star in a new adaptation of 'Oedipus' at the Old Vic. It was an amazing and brilliantly original version of the Greek tragedy that gave students a real insight into what it might have been like to be part of an ancient Greek theatre audience. However, the true star of the show was the chorus, superbly choreographed by Hofesh Shechter. Their rhythmic performances accompanied by heart-thumping music perfectly epitomised the role of the original Chorus – setting the mood of the production and insightfully commenting on the stage action. Students had a fantastic time, and it will undoubtedly help with their understanding of this set text. A thank you to Ms Kinshuck for organising the event as part of the new Classics and Literary Society.



#### 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 the Year 11 English Revision Google classroom. 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 7AE for being our top performing form so far (closely followed by 7FX)!**



**Daring to be Great by pursuing our values of Scholarship, Tenacity, Altruism and Respect**



## HOMEWORK CLUBS

If any students are struggling with home learning, they can join us at homework club in room 7 every week.

Key Stage 3: Wednesday 3pm-3.45pm

Key Stage 4: Thursday 3pm-3.45pm

## COMING UP:

We have a lot happening still in the final week of this half-term including a performance and workshop by Box Clever Theatre Company on 'Macbeth' for Year 11 students on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February and a trip to see Aristophanes' 'Frogs' performed by UCL students at the Bloomsbury Theatre on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February. There is also a great deal happening next half-term from revision sessions to exciting trips to the British Museum and productions of 'Richard II' and 'Death of a Salesman' as well as further plans for film showings. However, your big date for the diary is

**THURSDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH – WORLD BOOK DAY!**

## WHAT SHALL I READ?

Every month, the English department offer a Young Adult 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 X: English@Queens'. You will also find our Root Word of the Week here and, if you follow us at Classics@Queens', you can discover our artefact of the week!

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**

### **'NUSH AND THE STOLEN EMERALD' JASBINDER BILAN**

Anushka is a princess of a beautiful and affluent Indian kingdom. However, the kingdom is being endangered by the British East India Company who not only threaten their land but have also stolen their sacred emerald. Her father, the Maharaja, decides he must travel to England and approach Queen Victoria herself to save his people and kingdom. Although he initially decides to take his eldest son, Nush knows that she will do a better job than her nervous twin and so cleverly switches places with him.

Determined and courageous, Nush will do anything to ensure the survival of her father's kingdom and find the precious emerald that has now been gifted to Queen Victoria. However, once she arrives in England, it is quickly clear that all is not as it should be and not everyone can be trusted.

This is a great historical, adventure narrative. The central protagonist, Nush, is a brave, vivacious and intelligent detective figure. Bilan transports us from the vibrant city of Jaipur to the cold, grey landscape of Victorian London where secret tunnels, hidden passages and clandestine plots abound. Bilan addresses ideas about colonialism and issues of ownership surrounding historical artefacts in an innovative and compulsive story that draws the reader into the dark underbelly of Victorian espionage beautifully. This is a super read for anyone from Year 7 upwards.



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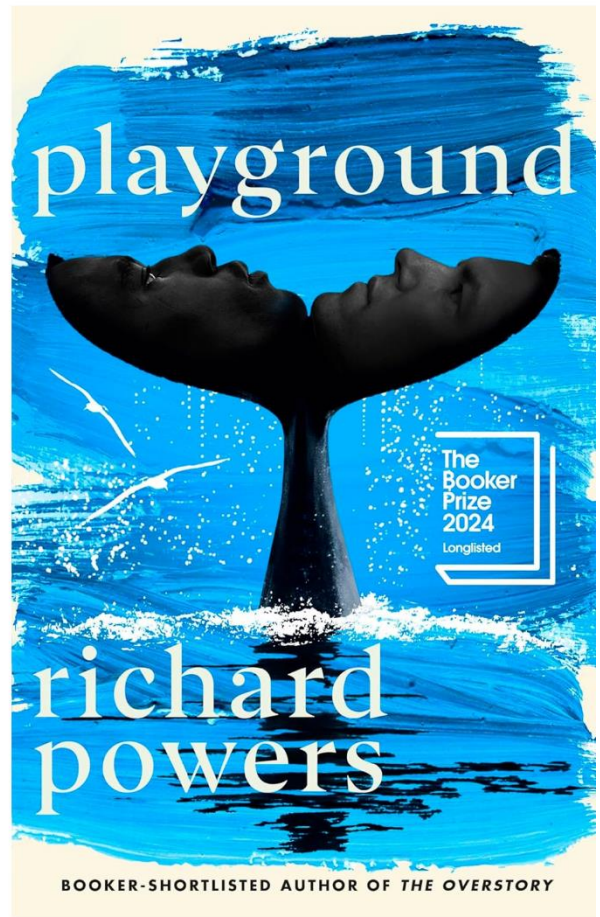
**JANUARY RECOMMENDED READ**  
**– ADULT**

**'PLAYGROUND'**  
**RICHARD POWERS**

This is a simply exceptional novel from the brilliant Richard Powers. Told in retrospect, the primary narrative follows the story of the estranged friends, Todd Jeane and Rafi Young – two brilliant, competitive and fascinating characters from entirely different worlds whose lives assuming painfully convergent trajectories. We simultaneously follow the story of Evie Beaulieu whose love for the ocean has driven her to become one of the foremost female divers and through whose eyes we are shown the true beauty of the seas and the ever-encroaching danger that humanity poses to this spectacular environment.

These narratives fuse together on the isolated island of Makatea in French Polynesia already scarred by colonialism and the invasive mining of phosphorus. Here, Rafi has seemingly found solace with his small family. However, the island must now face another terrible choice – remain a limited and depleting idyll or accept the offer of an unknown multi-billion-pound technology company who want to use the island once again to create a series of islands for sea steading. The choice is theirs, but the consequences will rebound for generations.

In this superlative novel, Powers does for the ocean what he did for trees in the equally exceptional 'Overstory'. He manages not only to address complex and sensitive issues from the impact of AI to global warming but create a compelling and deeply moving narrative. Meticulously researched, Powers evokes the beauty of the underground world with amazing vividness. This is a cleverly constructed, provocative novel that raises prescient questions whilst drawing the reader into his unique world. And the ending...well I have no words!



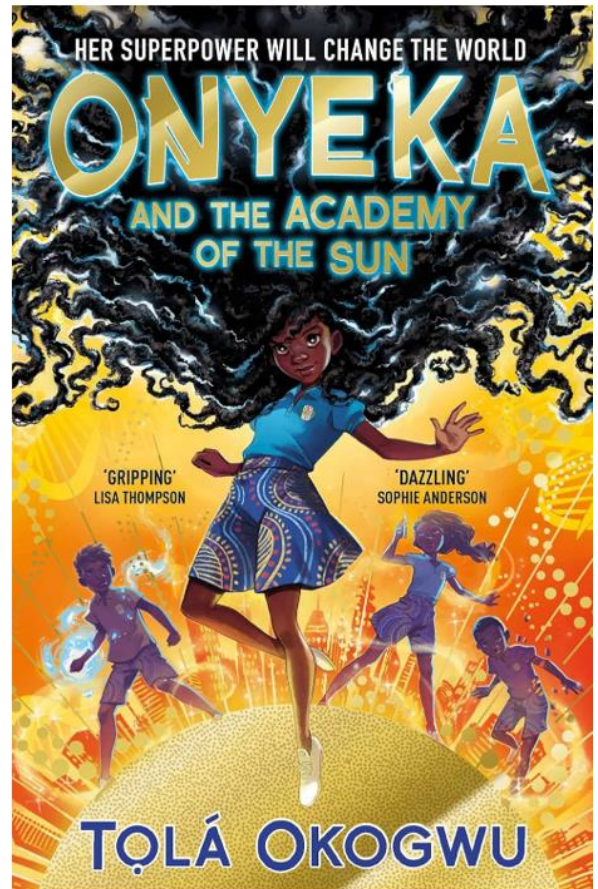
**FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ**  
**– YOUNG ADULT**

**'ONYEKA AND THE ACADEMY OF THE SUN'**  
**TOLA OKOGWU**

With her untameably vibrant, curly hair and sense that she is different, Onyeka has never felt like she fit in. The only one to ever have her back at school is her best friend, Cheyenne. However, her life changes when her fiercely protective mother finally allows her to go swimming with Cheyenne. When Cheyenne nearly drowns, Onyeka's psycho-kinetic powers come into their own and she uses her amazing hair to save her best friend.

Terrified by the emergence of her powers, Onyeka's mother whisks her away to the Academy of the Sun, a school in Nigeria, where Solari, a secret group of young people with superpowers, are trained. Desperately hoping that Onyeka will be safe under the guidance of headteacher Dr Dòyinbó, her mother sets out to find Onyeka's father who went missing many years before whilst trying to find a cure for the Ike, or superpowers, that were plaguing Nigeria's youth.

This is a fabulous, dynamic story with a resilient and vivacious black heroine at its centre. The first in an exciting trilogy, Okogwu explores issues of identity, the struggle to fit in and the importance of friendship. It is an original futuristic fantasy where X-men meets Harry Potter in a great fusion of genres that also has an incredibly positive message and a truly compelling narrative.



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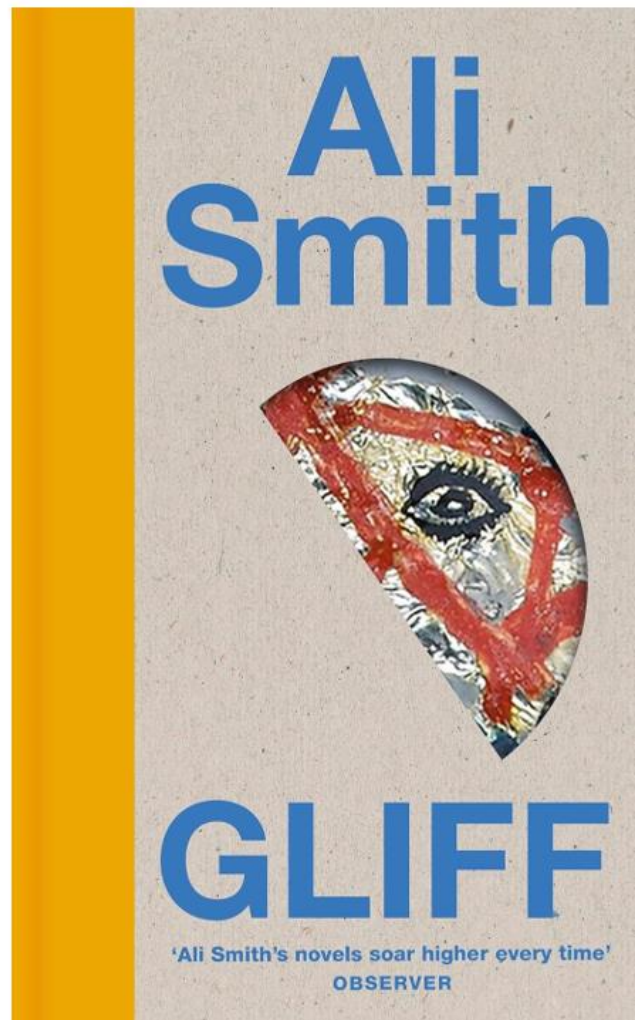
**FEBRUARY RECOMMENDED READ**  
**– ADULT**

**'GLIFF'**  
**ALI SMITH**

Set in a near-dystopian future, 'Gliff' is perhaps the natural follow on from Smith's superlative seasonal quartet. Separated from their mother, Bri and her sister, Rose, are part of a subclass known as 'Unverifiables' – individuals who refuse to be tagged, tracked and monitored by the increasingly totalitarian and sinister forces that are now controlling the Britain of the future through technology and surveillance. When caught, the homes of Unverifiables are circled with red paint and then bulldozed to remove any subversive elements from society. Once caught, they will be re-educated and compelled to become part of the system that seeks to efface individuality through conformity and reification.

In this technocracy, it is almost impossible to escape detection. However, for a time the sisters achieve just this, finding joy in the natural world and a horse, Gliff, that they attempt to rescue from slaughter.

Smith's writing is both sparse and beautiful creating a multiplicity of narrative gaps that leave the reader wondering. She depicts a starkly brutal world of the future where humanity, reliant on labels, mechanisation and conformity, has forgotten what it means to be human. An intrepid and meaningful novel, even in the title itself with its homophonic echoes of the 'glyph' (the title of her next novel interestingly), Smith invites us to examine the polysemic nature of language and labels. She simultaneously offers us a stark vision of what a world where everyone is forced to adhere to rules and where oppression abounds would truly look like. Rich in symbolism and cleverly constructed, this is a short novel that will leave you with much to think about.



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