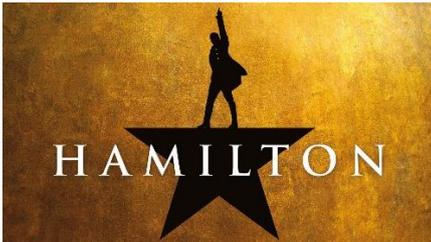




**QUEENS' SCHOOL**  
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**ENGLISH AND CLASSICS**

**THE WONDERFUL WEST END**



On March 26, Year 12 and 13 students went to see the hugely popular and utterly superb musical 'Hamilton'. Historically enlightening, musically scintillating and daringly dramatic, everyone had a fabulous evening. A massive thank you to Ms Kinshuck for organising this great theatre trip and to Mr Millard-Healy for his support.

**REVISION, REVISION, REVISION**

Our Year 11s and 13s have been working incredibly hard in the run up to their final examinations. Please remember that Miss Wood is running a Googlemeet session the night before every exam at 5pm. You can join using the code Englishrevision. We will also be meeting at 8am in room 2 on the morning of each exam for some last minute support.



**SPEAKING AND LISTENING:**

Year 10 students are currently working hard on their GCSE speaking and listening assessments and will be performing just after half-term. It is already looking like there will be some impressive speeches on a whole host of interesting topics, and we have all been so impressed with their hard work and articulacy.

**VOCABULOUS AND TOP READERS**

Next half-term is the last opportunity for students to submit their book reviews and complete work on Vocabulous before we announce this year's winners in June. So, keep reading!



**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 April and May 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/>



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**APRIL RECOMMENDED READ –  
YOUNG ADULT**

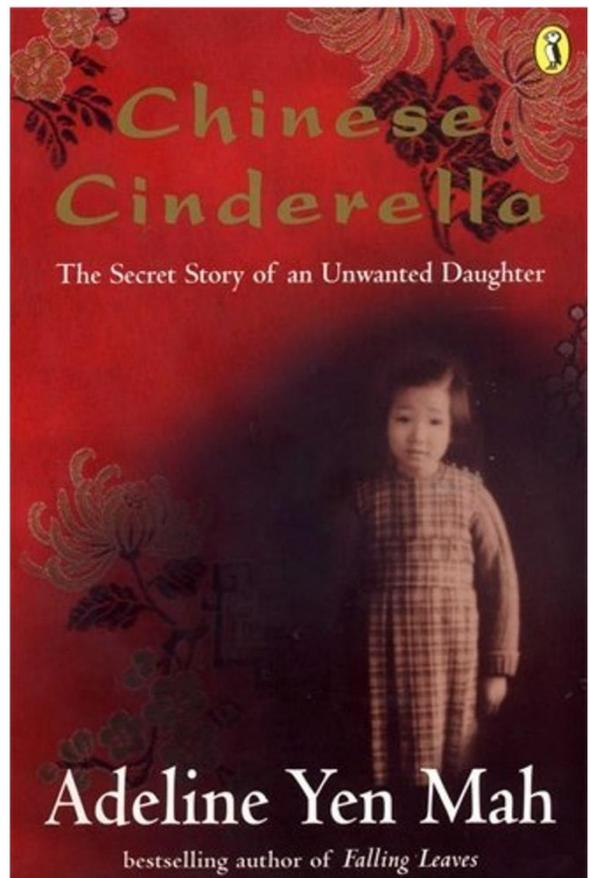
**‘CHINESE CINDERELLA’  
ADELINE YEN MAH**

First published to great acclaim in 1999, this is an enlightening autobiography perfect for Key Stage 3 readers.

When Adeline Yen Mah’s mother dies in childbirth, the entire family except for her aunt, regard her as bad luck. Worse still, when her father remarries, she and her three siblings find themselves cruelly rejected and treated as second-class citizens in their own home whilst her stepsiblings are afforded every luxury. Vindictively cruel, her stepmother makes their lives a misery. However, Adeline finds solace in writing and her academic studies and determines to succeed regardless of her circumstances.

Things change dramatically when the Chinese Civil War reaches its peak, and the Chinese Communist Party take over mainland China forcing the family to flee. Set against the backdrop of war, Yen Mah’s emotive autobiography is rightly considered a classic of young adult fiction. It is an emotive depiction of a childhood damaged by loss and trauma in a mirror of other classic works such as Frances Hodgson Burnett’s ‘A Little Princess’. It is also an effective introduction to this turbulent period in Chinese history for young readers.

Told with insight, sensitivity and compassion, this first-person account of Yen Mah’s childhood experience is a vividly wrought and compulsive read with a wonderful resilient heroine at its heart.



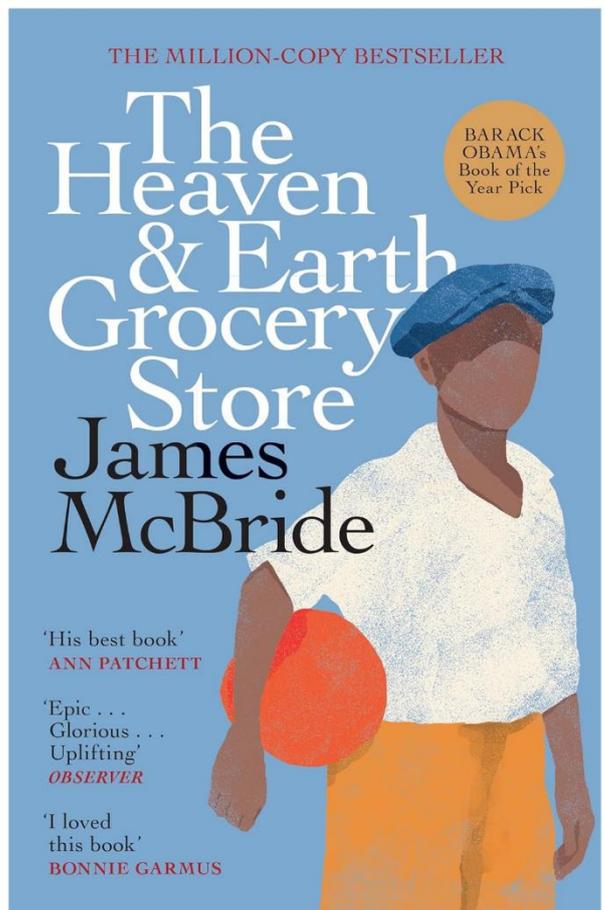
**APRIL RECOMMENDED READ –  
ADULT**

**‘THE HEAVEN AND EARTH GROCERY STORE’  
JAMES MCBRIDE**

Worthy winner of the 2023 Kirkus Prize, McBride’s novel is a superbly moving work of historical fiction that is at once emotionally devastating and uplifting. At a construction site in 1972, a skeleton clutching a mezuzah is discovered and the ghosts of the past are slowly unearthed as a result.

Set in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, McBride explodes the fallacy of the American Dream for so many in marginalised communities during the 1930s and 40s. Focused on the deprived residents of Chicken Hill, The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store run by the fearless protagonist, Chona, is the beating heart of the novel. Meanwhile her husband, Moshe, runs the local theatre where both Jewish and Black performers bring joy and liberty to the otherwise oppressed community. However, there is trouble in the waters that run beneath Chicken Hill both literally and metaphorically. When a deaf black child is institutionalised for his disability the black and Jewish communities of Chicken Hill come together to rescue him in a joyous and daring heist that is as tense as it is brilliant.

Weaving together a multiplicity of back stories, McBride has created a vibrant story full of characters drawn with Dickensian vividness. Moreover, despite the haunting spectre of antisemitism in Europe and the backdrop of a post-slavery America, McBride has created a novel full of optimism; a novel that celebrates family; a novel that reveals the value of solidarity and standing together against bigotry and cruelty. Echoing McBride’s own background, this is a wonderful and important novel that is difficult not to shed a tear over particularly by the redemptive conclusion.



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## MAY RECOMMENDED READ – YOUNG ADULT

### 'MOXIE'

**Jennifer Mathieu**

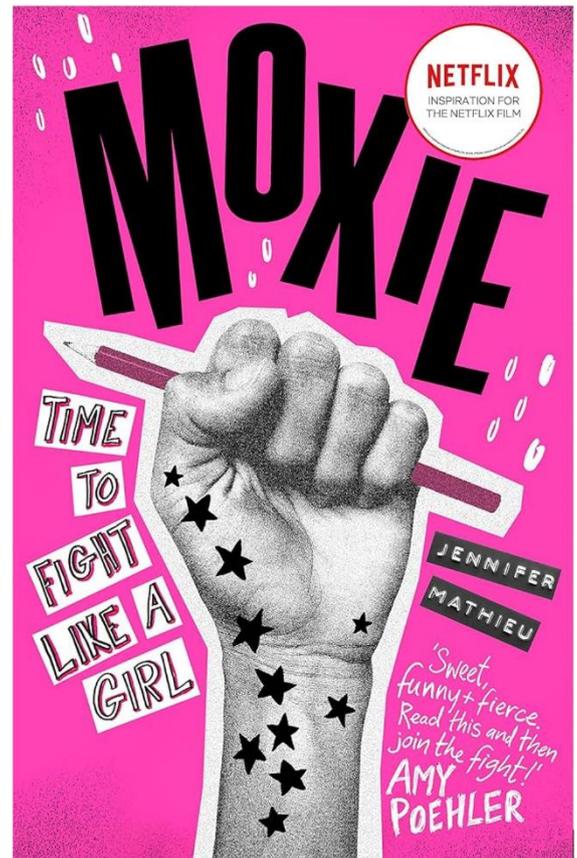
Written in 2017 and adapted by Netflix in 2021, Moxie is a wonderful story about empowerment and finding your voice in the face of injustice.

In a small town in Texas, America, 'obedient' teenager Vivian is beginning to notice that some of the behaviour exhibited by both students and teenagers is not acceptable. The boys' football team can do no wrong, female students are unfairly targeted through the dress code policy and unwarranted comments go unchallenged in class.

Inspired by her mum's past as part of the Riot Grrrl Movement (a punk feminist movement that took place in the 90s), Viv takes matters into her own hands. She creates a feminist zine, called MOXIE, that she distributes anonymously around the school, urging her fellow students to stand together in calling out the inequality they're experiencing.

Previously Vivian was quite an isolated student and she realises that even anonymously, MOXIE allows her to connect and form friendships with the people around her who also feel the same rage.

This book has serious bite; it's a story that allows its audience to relish in the anger of not being treated equally and showing that it is ok to call out when something isn't right. Recommended for Year 9+



## MAY RECOMMENDED READ – ADULT

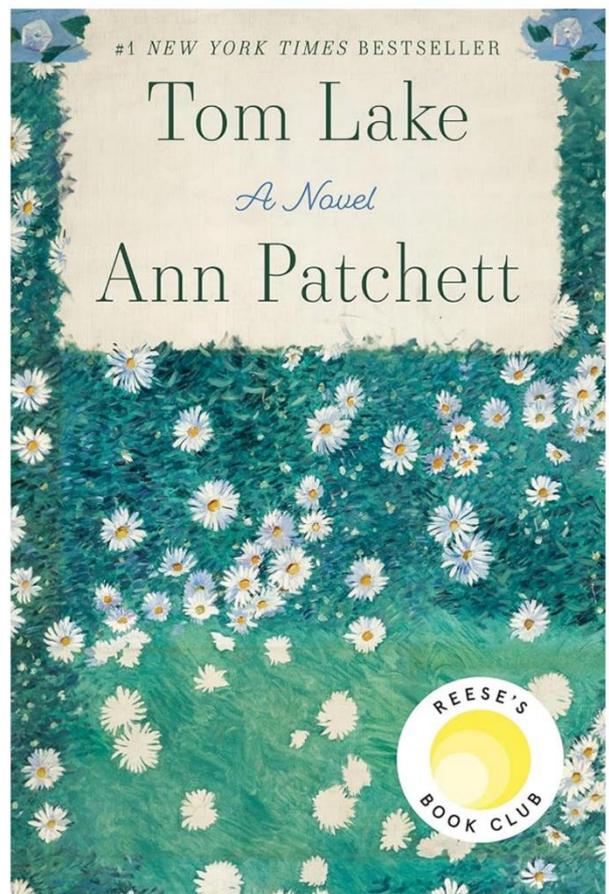
### 'TOM LAKE'

**ANN PATCHETT**

As a result of the lockdown, the three Nelson sisters find themselves at home together with their parents to help with the cherry harvest. As they harvest, they begin to ask their mother, Lara, about her past fascinated by her brief romance with a famous actor, Peter Duke, many years before. It is a subject about which they have always been enthralled, but only now they are adults does their mother feel they are ready to hear her tale and about the world of acting and ambition that she chose to walk away from over a quarter of a century ago that centred around the idyllic setting of Tom Lake.

The narrative that Lara weaves for her children and the reader alike that is interwoven with details of her family's lives and the struggles of running the farm, is full of melancholic beauty and subtle regret. However, as she conveys the slowly unwinding story of a career that seems a million miles from farming and her initial engagements with Duke initially creating a mythological splendour around him, it is clear that there is a greater darkness lying beneath both the story and within Duke himself.

This is a gently nostalgic narrative that explores the power of story telling to bring people together and to reconcile us with the past. It is also an emotional and moving examination of relationships: the easy mistakes we make in youth; the painful and scarring nature of loss and rejection; the healing power of time and family. Told with Patchett's renowned lyrical brilliance, she is able to capture two antithetical worlds in one novel with emotional power and vivid descriptive detail. Told primarily in retrospect, Patchett offers a meditation on the polysemous nature of love whilst evoking some incredibly memorable characters.



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