



In this issue:

- The benefits of reading
- Parent tips to support reading
- KS3 reading lessons
- Events in school
- Free resources
- Recommended reads
- Literacy calendar
- Teacher talk

Welcome!

Welcome to our first edition of the termly reading newsletter for students, parents and guardians across the school community. In this issue, you'll find lots of information on events and curriculum focusses at UCC, free resources available to you and a specially curated book list from our Y11 Reading Ambassador, Hope Rowlatt.

The Benefits of Reading

At UCC, we strive to nurture a love of reading. We know how important it is to both personal and academic development and ultimately, our whole-school initiative is to continue the legacy from primary school right through to the end of KS4. Research shows that reading has benefits in many areas of education and life. In addition to the obvious benefits on reading comprehension and attainment, it also impacts upon:

- Vocabulary
- Understanding of grammar
- Spelling skill
- Writing attainment
- Attitudes to reading and writing
- Knowledge and understanding of the world and other people
- Achievement in other subjects, including maths
- Empathy and understanding of emotions
- Development of our sense of 'self' and identity



Reading supports achievement in other subjects because it helps students to access the wider curriculum. Even maths attainment has been proven to benefit from reading skill because, in order to use maths skills, students are required to read and understand the questions they are faced with.

Research shows that reading can help to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. Linked to this, we know that research shows the numerous benefits of a good night's sleep, which can be significantly helped by a reduction in screen-time. Therefore, a bedtime routine which includes reading could help with relaxing before bed.

Tips to support reading

- If students struggle to read, then the texts they encounter at secondary school can be off-putting for them and then, understandably, result in low levels of enjoyment and therefore demotivation. This creates a vicious cycle: as they struggle and don't enjoy it, they read less – and because they read less, they don't progress and then find that they struggle to acquire the necessary knowledge in many other subjects too. Wellbeing and behaviour can also be affected as a result of this.
- It is, therefore, vital that we help them not just with their reading skill, but their perception of it as an enjoyable activity. Research suggests that reading for pleasure makes the most difference to students' progress and attainment in reading. This applies to specific skills, as well as overall attainment in reading – for example, comprehension, vocabulary and grammar.

The 'Cycle of Positive Influence'

- National Literacy Trust research into the interrelationships between reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment suggests that the current thinking could be considered as a 'cycle of positive influence'.

1. Students take part in an activity such as reading/ story telling.

4. This then needs to be positively reinforced for the cycle to continue and for the student to remain positive.



2. If this experience was a positive one, then they may be motivated through factors such as enjoyment or connection with the other person involved.

3. Students are then more likely to develop positive attitudes towards reading.

Finding texts to support

If your child struggles with reading, they may find it difficult to access certain texts that would otherwise interest them and which explore issues relevant to their age. This can be a barrier to finding reading enjoyable.

Research by the National Literacy Trust found that students who experienced an increased enjoyment in reading during Covid-19 lockdowns noted an increase in the choice of good-quality reading material as one of the reasons. However, some missed having the guidance of hearing others read and getting suggestions for different books.

It's clear, therefore, that we all need to be able to help guide students towards finding a range of reading material they could be interested in, so that they can see the various options and have a selection to choose from. This could include non-fiction articles from magazines, newspapers or websites, novels, plays, or blog posts etc. It doesn't necessarily matter *what* they read; the important thing is to help them get into reading in whatever form that may take. Emerging research also suggests that audiobooks may be helpful for increasing interest in reading, as well as modelling good reading fluency, so these may also be worth exploring if your child is reluctant to pick up a book.



Where to look:

- School and community libraries not only offer free access to books, but they often also have audio books and e-books that your child could borrow.
- Book shops provide a chance for your child to browse and purchase books with support from staff, if they wish. Some book shops will have review cards with some of their top-picks too.
- Audio books can be purchased from devices such as phones, as well as on CDs or borrowed from a library.

How to choose:

- Remember that it doesn't matter *what* they read: helping them to enjoy reading and find texts they want to read is the important thing. This might mean they find a book, collection of short stories or even a graphic novel, but it also might mean that they find a range of online articles, websites or magazines they enjoy reading.
- You could look at fiction books related to topics they are interested in, or encourage them to read about it online.
- If they've enjoyed a book before, encourage them to read another text by the same author.
- You and your child could spend some time browsing library or book shop shelves, speaking to the staff or reading book reviews online.
- If you are browsing in a shop/library/online, you could read the back of the books (blurbs) and a page from the start to help decide whether this feels like something they'd like to read more of.
- Be mindful about your child's reading level so that they can access the vocabulary the text contains. You may wish to discuss this with your child's teacher or hear them read, in a supportive way, before you start choosing texts. For some students who struggle with reading, books from Barrington Stoke publishers and the OUP Super Readable Rollercoasters may be worth exploring.

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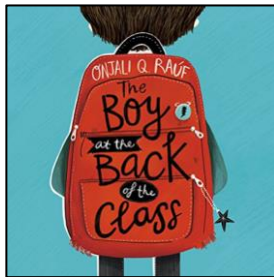


The KS3 Reading Curriculum at UCC

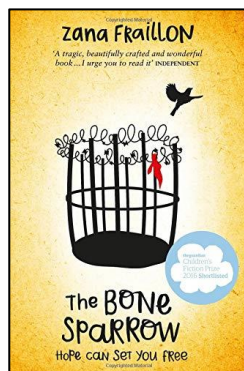
Last year, we launched the hugely popular reading curriculum across KS3. Our focus was to provide dedicated time to promoting reading for pleasure whilst allowing students the opportunity to read and discuss different works separate from their English lessons. This is a whole-school initiative and has been delivered by both English and non-English specialists across the staff community.

Each year, the books will be adapted and refreshed to ensure both current and classic reads are readily available for students. We ensure that feedback from students at the end of the academic year help us craft our chosen texts, so students have the opportunity to share their interests to cultivate a bespoke curriculum with their own interests in mind.

Here's just a small selection of texts that students have been exploring this term:



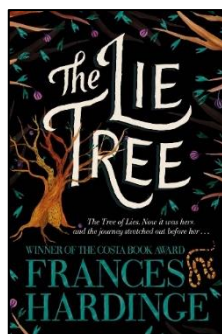
The Boy at the Back of the Class is a child's perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense. There used to be an empty chair at the **back** of my **class**, but now a new **boy** called Ahmet is sitting in it. When the new **boy** joins their **class**, a group of children try to befriend him. They soon learn that Ahmet is a refugee and has been separated from his family. None of the grown-ups seem to be able to help him, so the friends come up with a daring plan, embarking on an extraordinary adventure.



Sometimes, at night, the dirt outside turns into a beautiful ocean. As red as the sun and as deep as the sky. Yet the ocean is something Subhi has never seen and the sky only as wide as the he can see.

Born in a refugee camp, all Subhi knows of the world is that he's at least 19 fence diamonds high, the nice Jackets never stay long, and at night he dreams that the sea finds its way to his tent, bringing with it unusual treasures.

Then, one day it brings him Jimmie. Carrying a notebook that she's unable to read and wearing a sparrow made out of bone around her neck - both talismans of her family's past and the mother she's lost - Jimmie strikes up an unlikely friendship with Subhi beyond the fence. As he reads aloud the tale of how Jimmie's family came to be, both children discover the importance of their own stories in writing their futures.



Faith's father has been found dead under mysterious circumstances, and as she is searching through his belongings for clues she discovers a strange tree. The tree only grows healthy and bears fruit if you whisper a lie to it. The fruit of the tree, when eaten, will deliver a hidden truth to the person who consumes it. The bigger the lie, the more people who believe it, the bigger the truth that is uncovered.

The girl realizes that she is good at lying and that the tree might hold the key to her father's murder, so she begins to spread untruths far and wide across her small island community. But as her tales spiral out of control, she discovers that where lies seduce, truths shatter.

Reading and Writing Events at UCC

We are in the process of launching an exciting reading initiative across Year 7 called BookBuzz. BookBuzz is run by BookTrust, the UK's largest reading charity that transforms lives by getting children reading. Each year, BookTrust reaches 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help deliver a love of reading.

The scheme involves the student choosing one book from a wide range of newly published fiction; these texts have been specially selected by Booktrust and vary in terms of themes and topics. Year 7 have already selected their books and we eagerly await delivery of 185 books that should arrive in time for Christmas!

As a follow up, we will be launching a book review competition so students can share their reading experience. Information and resources will be given to students along with their chosen book.

To find out more, you can visit the National Literacy Trust website [here](https://www.national-literacy-trust.org/).



After the Christmas holidays, Mrs Higton will be launching the Authorfy writing club with students in Y8 and Y9. Authorfy work with their publishing partners to handpick books that have wide appeal and will offer something new and exciting whilst introducing students to a variety of authors, genres and writing styles to help develop their own creativity.

Our KS4 book club has been launched for this academic year with Mrs Smithson and Mr Hayo. Our first read is 'We See Everthing' by William Sutcliffe: a dystopian novel set in London that mirrors the Isreali-Palenstine conflict. We have both new and old members joining us and of course, snacks are in abundance!

Mrs Reynolds will be launching a KS3 book club imminently, so look out for information in the notices to find out further details of this.



'Excellence in almost any academic subject requires strong reading.' Doug Lemov

Free Resources

Our reading team are constantly on the look-out for free resources to help parents aid their child's reading. Here we have handpicked a selection of websites and resources that are free to access.

The UCC E-library



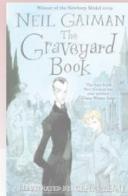



After losing our library in the fire last year, we set out to ensure a quick replacement for students in order for them to still have access to quality reading material. The launch of a e-library has been extremely popular across both KS3 and KS4. The e-library can be accessed from your child's dashboard login with the same details they use across the school platform. On the homepage you'll find our recommended reads which are updated weekly and students hear about this in the AM notices. We are also considering the addition of audiobooks to the collection, so keep an eye out for further information!

Uppingham Community College
Access our eLibrary anywhere, anytime, on multiple devices.

[Start Browsing](#) or get the [ePlatform app](#)

Download on the App Store
GET IT ON Google Play
Get it from Microsoft

Weekly Recommended Reads [view more >](#)

					
One Of Us Is Next: The s... by Karen M. McManus ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)	Birdsong by Sebastian Faulks ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)	The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)	Bone Talk by Candy Gourlay ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)	The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)	The Quiet at the End of L... by Lauren James ★★★★☆ (4.5/5)

BARNES & NOBLE

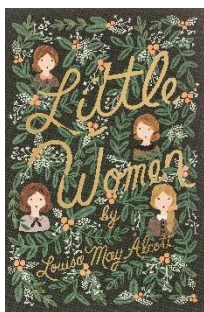
Barnes and Noble offer free teen e-books [here](#).



Discover books from around the world at the International Children's digital library [here](#).

Recommended Reading: Classics

KS3: *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott



Little Women tells the tale of domestic struggles starring avaricious Meg, headstrong Jo, placid Beth and assertive Amy. Taking place during the American Civil War, *Little Women* follows the sisters as they, alongside their mischievous and alluring neighbour Laurie, navigate economical, familial and romantic struggles whilst learning valuable morals along the way, primarily from their mother and closest advisor, Marmee.

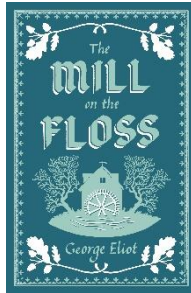
“There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind.”

— Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

Student Review:

“*Little Women* has to be an all-time favourite for me; the writing is not difficult in the stereotypical ‘classical literature’ sense and it just makes you have a greater appreciation for life in general. It definitely got me into reading more classics and reignited my love for literature and reading. I definitely will have read it multiple times by the end of my lifetime – the story is just so accessible and teaches morals valuable to this day and the characters have such a depth that you just want to read it again, even if it’s just to experience their lives and thoughts and feelings again.

KS4: The Mill on the Floss by George Eliot



The Mill on the Floss follows Maggie (a headstrong, independent and inquisitive young girl) and Tom Tulliver, two siblings growing up on Dorlcote Mill. Maggie's often tormented battle to do her duty and belong on the one hand, and to be herself, wild and natural on the other, propels her from one crisis to another. The Tulliver siblings have a very stormy relationship and spend most of their time getting along or arguing. When the family goes bankrupt and Tom befriends Philip Wakem, the child of his father's nemesis, the family's boundaries and bonds are tested to the limit.

"I am not imposed upon by fine words; I can see what actions mean."

— George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*

Student Review:

"The Mill on the Floss had me gripped – you genuinely start to care deeply for the characters, especially Maggie, and are on the edge of your seat multiple times. It's so special and important to see independent female roles in classic literature and Maggie Tulliver encapsulates this and is, in my opinion, a criminally underrated character; you often hear of Jo March, Jane Eyre, Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Cuthbert etc openly being curious, developed, strong female characters but rarely of Maggie. From the fast-paced nature to the tragic ending, this book has become an all-time favourite that I will no doubt be reading again and again."

"Reading is like joy: you can exist without it, but why would you want to?"

MARCUS SEDGWICK

Recommended Reading: Festive Favourites

KS3: The Northern Lights trilogy by Philip Pullman



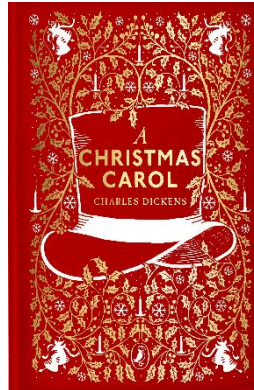
Lyra Belacqua and her animal daemon live half-wild and carefree among the scholars of Jordan College, Oxford. Her destiny will take her to the frozen lands of the Arctic, where witch-clans reign and ice-bears fight. And the extraordinary journey that awaits her will have immeasurable consequences far beyond her own world...

*“You cannot change what you are, only what you do.”
— Philip Pullman*

Student Review:

“Northern Lights has such a cosy, festive feel about it whilst also being action-packed and quite intense. Lyra is yet another inquisitive, independent female role model and you really start to care about her and her daemon and her friend Will (introduced in book 2) and his daemon; I was genuinely in tears during the last book! I can’t wait to reread these in the Christmases to come.”

KS4: A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens



Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly, solitary, greedy old man who shuns those around him and has no regard for the poor. One cold Christmas Eve, three ghosts take him on a jarring journey to show him the error of his nasty ways. By visiting his past, present and future, Scrooge learns to love Christmas and others around him.

“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.”

— Ebenezer Scrooge, A Christmas Carol

Student Review:

“A *Christmas Carol* is a joy to read – not only does it teach valuable life lessons on things such as the value of money, gratitude, privilege and greed, but it gives a comprehensive, bitesize lesson on Victorian history and its capitalist, cruel, utilitarian ways. Just 200-ish pages long, A Christmas Carol is a magical, fantastical, quick read that not only can prepare KS4 students for their English GCSE course but evoke critical, thoughtful ideas on society, character and Christmas. This book is one that will be an essential item in my household and all households I have in the future.”

“Fine old Christmas, with the snowy hair and ruddy face, had done his duty that year in the noblest fashion, and had set off his rich gifts of warmth and colour with all the heightening contrast of frost and snow.”

George Eliot (The Mill on the Floss)

Literacy Calendar

See below a range of reading and writing themed-events taking place throughout November and December: for some of these specialist events, students will have specific lessons/assemblies focussed around them, whilst some can be explored at home.

Created by @SadiePhillips www.literacywithmissp.com

November 2021				
Nov 2021	Blue Peter Book Award – shortlist announced	Since 2000, the enormously popular and influential Blue Peter Book Awards have been recognising and celebrating the best authors, the most creative illustrators and the greatest reads for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out more here. 	@BookTrust
Nov 2021	Costa Book Awards – shortlist announced.	The Costa Book Awards honours books written by authors based in the UK and Ireland. There are five categories: First Novel, Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book, with one of the five winners chosen as Book of the Year. The winner is announced every January.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More information here. For updates check the website 	@Costabookawards
11/11/21	Remembrance Day	Armistice Day is on 11 November and is also known as Remembrance Day. It marks the day World War One ended, at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month, in 1918. A two-minute silence is held at 11am to remember the people who have died in wars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Legion Teaching resources here. 	#Remembrance
15/11/21	Anti-Bullying Week 2021	'One kind word' announced as theme for Anti-Bullying Week 2021. Anti-Bullying Week is coordinated In England by the Anti-Bullying Alliance and takes place from 15 to 19 November 2021. The week will begin with Odd Socks Day supported by CBBC and CBeebies star Andy Day and his band Andy and the Odd Socks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out more here. Odd Socks Day will be held on Monday 15th November – find out more here. 	@ABAonline #AntiBullyingWeek #UnitedAgainstBullying
December 2021				
Early December	Royal Mail Letters to Santa deadline	Each year, Santa's elves at the Royal Mail can help you get a letter from Santa, if children write to him by early December.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage younger children to write to Santa and they will receive a reply! Find out more here. 	@RoyalMail

Teacher Talk

With: Mrs Rodgers (aka The Rodge), History teacher and avid book-club goer.

Current Read:

Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart, winner of Booker Prize 2020.

Set in Glasgow, 1981 and tells the story of Scotland in the early 80s under Thatcher's government.

Favourite Genre:

Mrs Rodgers' favourite genre is (of course) Historical Fiction, with "good, true stories." She prefers books that have some element of fiction but are set in historically accurate periods of time – they teach about life in that period.

Mrs Rodgers also loves the works of the author Matt Haig, as she "loves the mental health side."

"I don't like fantasy at all."

Favourite Book:

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

Mrs Rodgers commented that she thought the book was very well written and made her think.

"It highlights 1930s America, which was before the Civil Rights Movement, and was published in 1960 – it was way beyond its time and is still relevant today."

A Book They'd Always Recommend from Their Childhood:

The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame.

Mrs Rodgers commented that she'd "recommend that every child read it" and that she, "wishes it was real."

She then commented on her particular love for the mole.

**"Because reading is so integrated into every aspect of modern life,
teaching reading really is equipping children for the future."**

James Murphy

