



St Mary's
Colchester

UPPER KS3/KS4 Recommended Reading

December 2023

The following offers some suggestions for reading for students in year 9 and above, bearing in mind that books at senior level will have been classified as such due to their reading age/interest and/or content. Books below, marked with a * may have a more “contentious” content than some e.g., they might include some bad language, violence, or sexual references. However, they are all good examples of the best books currently available, both old and new (excluding standard classic titles which students should be reading additionally). All are available from the School Library and can be reserved on the library app or via an email to the librarian.

Happy Reading! From the Library and the English department

Manon Stefan Ros*The Blue Book of Nebo*

Dylan was six when The End came in 2018; when the electricity went off for good, and the 'normal' world he knew disappeared. Now he's 14 and he and his mam have survived in their isolated house above the village of Nebo in Wales, learning new skills, and returning to old ways of living. Despite their close understanding, as Dylan takes on more adult responsibilities, the relationship between mother and son changes. And they each have their own secrets, which emerge in turn, as they jot down their memories in a found notebook - the Blue Book of Nebo.

Karen McManus*Nothing More to Tell*

Four years ago, Brynn quit Saint Ambrose School following the shocking murder of her favourite teacher. The case was never solved, but Brynn's sure that the three students who found Mr. Larkin's body know more than they're telling. When Brynn gets the internship of a lifetime working on a popular true-crime show, she decides to investigate what really happened that day in the woods. But the further she dives into the past, the more secrets she uncovers. Four years ago someone got away with murder. But secrets always come out and have consequences...

Jenny Downham*Furious Thing**

Lexi's angry. And it's getting worse. If only she could stop losing her temper and behave herself, her step-father would accept her, her mum would love her like she used to and her step-brother would declare his crushing desire to spend the rest of his life with her. She wants these things so badly she determines to swallow her anger and make her family proud. But pushing fury down doesn't make it disappear. Instead, it simmers below the surface waiting to erupt. There'll be fireworks when it does.

Frances Hardinge*The Lie Tree*

Faith is fascinated by a tree that only bears fruit if you whisper a lie to it. The fruit, when eaten, will deliver a hidden truth to the person who consumes it. The bigger the lie and the more people who believe it, the bigger the truth ultimately revealed. Faith realises 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. But as the tree bears more and more fruit, she discovers that her lies were closer to the truth than she could ever have imagined.

Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

*Ace of Spades**

Welcome to Niveus Private Academy, where money paves the hallways, and the students are never less than perfect. Until now. Because an anonymous texter is revealing the darkest secrets of two students. Talented musician Devon buries himself in rehearsals but can't escape the spotlight when his private photos go public. As for determined head girl Chiamaka, soon everyone will know the price she has paid for power. Someone is out to get them both. Someone who holds all the aces. And they're planning much more than a high-school game.

Emily Lockhart

We Were Liars

Rich, beautiful, privileged – the Sinclair clan seem to have it all. For Cadence and her cousins that means long hot summers on their special holiday island. Days of swimming, picnics and parties. But around them swirl the problems of their parents and the complex issues of their inheritance. When Cadence hits her head in an accident, she can't remember anything to explain how it happened; a whole section of her life is missing. It's not until she goes back to the family island that the truth slowly and painfully becomes clear.

Veronica Roth

*Divergent**

The world changes in a heartbeat for sixteen-year-old Tris, when she is forced to make a terrible choice. Turning her back on her family, Tris ventures out, alone, determined to find out where she truly belongs. Shocked by the brutality of her new life, Tris can trust no one. And yet she is drawn to a boy who seems to both threaten and protect her. The hardest choices may yet lie ahead...

Sabina Khan

The Love and Lives of Rukhsana Ali

Seventeen-year-old Rukhsana is struggling to live up to her Muslim parents' expectations. She saves her crop tops and makeup for parties her parents don't know about longing for the months to pass. She plans to escape to university, where she'll be away from her parents' eyes and can finally be herself. But when she is caught kissing her girlfriend, her devastated parents send Rukhsana to Bangladesh, where she is thrown into a world of tradition and arranged marriages. Can she fight for the life she wants without losing her family in the process?

Robert C O'Brien

Z for Zachariah

Nuclear war has devastated America and sixteen-year-old Ann Burden has been living alone in a secluded fertile valley for over a year until Mr Loomis, a scientist in a radiation-proof suit, arrives. Ann hopes they will be companions but Mr Loomis's behaviour towards her becomes increasingly threatening. First, he attacks her and then cuts off her food supply – he's trying to bring her under his control. Can Ann escape his clutches? And if so, where will either of them go? Is anyone else alive?

Jenny Valentine

*Fire Colour One**

Iris's father, Ernest, is at the end of his life but Iris has never met him. But they are meeting up now and have just weeks to get to know each other. It may sound touching but Iris's mother has another agenda – she means to get her hands on Ernest's priceless art collection. Ernest, however, has other ideas as he and Iris begin to bond. There are things he wants Iris to know before he dies – but some must wait after he's gone. And the truth has more than one way of coming to light – it can be very dramatic.

Keren David

What We're Scared Of

Evie and Lottie are twin sisters, but they couldn't be more different. Evie's sharp, funny and Lottie's a day-dreamer. Evie's the fighter, Lottie's the peace-maker. But what they do have in common is their Jewishness - even though the family isn't religious. When their mother gets a high-profile job and is targeted by antisemitic trolls on social media, the girls brush it off at first - the messages just seem bizarre, but then they start getting uglier, and more threatening...

John Boyne

*Boy at the Top of the Mountain**

When Pierrot is orphaned, he leaves his home in Paris for a new life with his Aunt Beatrix, a servant in a wealthy household at the top of the German mountains. But this is no ordinary time, for it is 1935 and the Second World War is fast approaching; and this is no ordinary house, for this is the Berghof, the home of Adolf Hitler. Pierrot is quickly taken under Hitler's wing and is thrown into an increasingly dangerous new world: a world of terror, secrets and betrayal, from which he may never be able to escape.

Gabrielle Zevin

Elsewhere (a new edition is due in February 2024)

Elsewhere is where fifteen-year-old Liz Hall ends up, after she is killed in a hit-and-run accident. It is a place very like Earth, yet completely different. Here Liz will age backwards from the day of her death until she becomes a baby again and returns to Earth. But Liz wants to turn sixteen, not fourteen again. She wants to get her driving licence. She wants to graduate from high school and go to college. How can Liz let go of the only life she has ever known and embrace a new one?