

# SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

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Dear Parent

## **Middle School Reading**

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest a close correlation between reading and academic development. To this end, the Sevenoaks School English Department places significant emphasis on the importance of reading for class study, but also as an activity undertaken independently and for enjoyment. The more students read for themselves, and talk to each other about their reading, the more advanced are their skills in imaginative and critical thinking and expression.

As a means to further develop these kinds of skills, the English Department offer a range of wider-reading initiatives through the Middle School years but their successful implementation will depend a good deal on support from home.

### **Year 9 Reading Lesson**

Year 9 should take this opportunity to use this time effectively in order to push their reading on and undertake more challenging texts.

### **Wider Reading**

It is hoped that pupils are encouraged and supported by parents to read at home. This is especially important when pupils have reading homework. The Middle School Reading List is available to help students find interesting books to help them become passionate, habitual and critical readers.

### **The Reading Journal**

As students progress through the years, we expect them to demonstrate an increasingly independent critical response to their reading, both of texts studied in class and chosen on their own. The reading journal is a place for them to record their reactions to these texts, and indeed ideas and experiences that relate to all aspects of the course. The study of English Language and Literature does, of course, require reflection on all manner of personal and social experiences outside the classroom, and the more reflective students are about these experiences, the more mature and intelligent their critical understanding will be.

To these ends, students are invited to use their journals in the following ways:

- 1 Keep a traditional record of their private reading – titles, authors and brief reviews
- 2 Make independent entries that detail their reaction to texts being studied in class and for pleasure – in terms of content as well as language and style. These might include thoughts about character, relationships, setting, action and theme as well as reactions to point of view and voice, structure, symbolism, imagery and so on.
- 3 Document exposure to relevant experience above and beyond the course, including:
  - Reaction to events in the news (perhaps including newspaper clippings)
  - Films, pieces of music and/or art that provoked interesting responses.
  - Experience of travel
4. Experiment with creative/expressive writing

In the early stages, these entries will be very much led by the teacher, but we expect students to take increasing ownership of their journal. Ideally, by the middle of the course and beyond they will be making significant independent use of it, and some teachers will maintain its use right through the school.

The journal is not marked formally as a piece of coursework, though it is taken in and comments are made. Fundamentally, the aim is to create a dialogue between teacher and student as a means to develop independent reaction to the relevance of literature and language issues in the wider world.

**Where are the Reading Lists?**

The Middle School Reading List is available electronically on our Intranet Site and can be accessed from home via the Parent Portal. Pupils are also invited to make a case for a title that is not on these reading lists, which could then be added to one of the categories.

**What can you do to help?**

These reading schemes will of course be helped a great deal by the support you bring to them. Showing an interest in your child's reading by, talking about books with them, accompanying them to bookshops and libraries, and even sharing with them novels that you have particularly enjoyed, will be enormously helpful.

We would also welcome any feedback about these initiatives and if you have suggestions for titles not currently on the list, please feel free to get in touch with either your child's English teacher or myself.

With thanks and best wishes

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