Reading at Sirius Academy North

What is reading and why is it so important?

Reading is fundamental to literacy. Being able to read well affects almost every aspect of a person's life, not least their education (Breadmore et al., 2019; McArthur & Castles, 2017).

Reading is a process which utilises a range of knowledge and skills. There are many components that pupils need to learn in order to become expert readers, all of which are in some way connected to the language that they speak.

Reading involves recognising words as well as building meaning from those words. Skilled reading relies on two competencies: word recognition (accurate identification of words) and language comprehension (building meaning from those words) (Education Endowment Foundation [EEF], 2017).

A pupil's ability to read has a significant impact on their ability to access the curriculum in each academic subject (Ricketts et al., 2014).

Here at Sirius Academy North, we understand the importance of this research and have therefore included challenging texts in all of our Key Stage 3 lessons. The students are taught reading skills, using these texts, that they can then apply in any other subject area.

Our Curriculum

All students in years 7 and 8, receive a standalone lesson of reading a week. In these lessons students are taught key skills:

- Vocabulary – understanding the meaning of words they have not come across before; linking this to etymology (where the word came from) and morphology (what the word links to).
- Reading and re-reading texts for meaning
- Understanding the text in order to speak and write about it.

All students across Key stage 3 and 4, study a wide range of texts in English. The texts are chosen to develop the students' reading skills whilst also being relatable; challenging and most importantly enjoyable. We really want our

children to read for pleasure at Sirius and know this is a driving factor to improving their motivation and reading abilities.

GCSE English

At GCSE level, your child will need to know how to read both fiction and non-fiction extracts in timed conditions. They will have to understand what they have read in order to answer set questions on them.

The GCSE is designed to test your child's knowledge of the text and their ability to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding;
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing;
- Acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

Our Key Stage 3 and 4, English Curriculum is designed taking all of this into consideration; creating confident, resilient readers. We want your child to succeed and make progress, not just in the English, but across the curriculum and into the wider world as well. Successful reading supports your child in order to access every part of the world around them from reading a medicine bottle to passing their driving test. Reading is a skill that enables your child to open doors to the world that they want to achieve in.

English Curriculum

The English Curriculum is now taught through a booklet approach, to support learners with the English Subject. Each of these booklets has: mark schemes; glossaries of key words; examples of what good practice looks like and extracts that can be annotated and referenced. The booklets help our students to see the sequenced development of our curriculum and support their attainment of the reading skills required. xamples of what good practice looks like and extracts that can be annotated and referenced. The booklets help our students to see the sequenced development of our curriculum and support their attainment of the reading skills required.

Year Group	Books studied
7	• Private Peaceful Michael Morpurgo • Dracula Bram Stoker (play version)
8	• My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece - Annabel Pitcher • Romeo and Juliet - William Shakespeare
9	• Blood Brothers – Willy Russell • Much Ado About Nothing – William Shakespeare • Orange Boy – Patrice Lawrence
10 and 11	• An Inspector Calls - J.B. Priestley • Macbeth - William Shakespeare • A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens

Lesson 1 Reading

Reading is also a part of our Lesson 1 curriculum for Yr7-10. We felt that this was another important step in raising the profile of reading across our academy. We also felt it was a great way for Lesson 1 teachers to build up relationships and discuss topical events with our students. The lesson 1 texts have been well thought out and carefully chosen to challenge our students and are linked to events that make them question and learn about the wider world; building on their cultural capital.

Year 7 Year 7	
Title of book	**Key Themes**
You are a Champion	-football -overcoming adversity -self-confidence -anxiety -setting goals -well-being
October October	-friendship

Year 9	
Title of book	**Key Themes**
The Hate You Give	-identity -racism -police brutality -poverty -loss -human rights -truth -justice -forgiveness -equality -consequences -responsibilities -poverty -young carers -family -secrets -bullying
While the Storm Rages	-WW2 -friendship -determination
The Boy at the Back of the Class	-hunger -empathy -fear -regrets -quality -power, fate, family and community
Lam Malala	
Brock	
Salt to the Sea	
Pike	

Year 8	
Title of book	**Key Themes**
Stormzy - Rise Up	-faith -self belief -support -racism
Beyond the Bright Sea	-prejudice -community -self discove
Boys Don't Cry	-courage -identity -gender -masculinity
Rook	-growing up -hardship -bullying -first love
Lark	-love -poverty -bullying -cruelty
Running Wild	-environmen -grief -bereavemen

Year 10	
Title of book	**Key Themes**
To Kill a Mocking Bird	-good/evil -human dignity -courage
On the Come Up	-freedom of speech -identity -individuality -racism
The Sun is Also a Star	-fate -evolution -existence

Reading Routes

Our reading routes programme allows students to follow pathways and read for pleasure based upon their interests. Reading routes include horror, adventure, classics, comedy and sport.

Reading Routes is a reading initiative designed to foster a love of reading for pleasure, whilst widening the cultural experiences of our students, and

ultimately broadening their learning beyond the curriculum. Reading Routes offers our students the chance to select and read books of different genres for all abilities and interests. Students are then provided with opportunities to discuss and read the texts in school to promote independent reading. Each Route comprises of five books, and a different Route is promoted in school each half term. Students choose their books from the featured Route, or 'hop off' and try a different genre on another Route. Students can earn book tokens for our Book Vending Machine for completion of routes.

Link to Reading Routes online: Reading Routes – Sirius Academy North

Reading Withdrawal

Following assessment through Sparx Reading Tests, we provide targeted and bespoke literacy support based on individual need. This may include Read, Write Inc, Fresh Start Phonics, small-group reading intervention or being allocated a Reading Buddy. Student progress is reviewed regularly to ensure that support remains appropriate and effective.

Sparx Reader

At Sirius Academy North, we use Sparx Reader to support students in developing strong reading habits and improving reading comprehension. Sparx Reader is an online reading platform that encourages students to read regularly by combining high-quality texts with carefully designed comprehension questions. The programme adapts to each student's reading level, ensuring that texts are appropriately challenging whilst remaining accessible and engaging.

How Sparx Reader Helps Students:

- Develops reading fluency through regular independent reading.
- Improves comprehension by requiring students to answer questions about what they have read.
- Encourages reading stamina and concentration.

- Supports vocabulary development by exposing students to a wide range of texts and language.
- Builds confidence by providing personalised reading experiences.
- Promotes positive reading habits both in school and at home.

How Parents Can Support

Parents can support their child by:

- Encouraging them to complete their weekly Sparx Reader assignment.
- Asking questions about what they are reading.
- Discussing interesting characters, events or ideas from the text.
- Helping to establish a regular reading routine at home.

Regular use of Sparx Reader, alongside reading books for pleasure, can significantly contribute to a student's progress across all areas of the curriculum. Strong reading skills help students access new knowledge, understand complex ideas and achieve success in every subject.

Reading Plus

Check out this website for helpful information about how you can support your child with their reading: Struggling readers - Oxford Owl

How to help a struggling reader | Oxford Owl - YouTube

Examples of how to read with your child

Fiction

When reading fiction, it is important to look closely at the setting, characters and plot. Asking questions using Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Are a great way to start discussions about the text.

We have included some extracts and some questions to support you with reading.

Read the following extract adapted from Charles Dickens' Great Expectations. Great Expectations was written in 1861 and tells the story of a boy called Pip and how he comes of age in Victorian society. This extract focuses on a character that Pip encounters – Miss Havisham. As you read the extract, think about what the author is trying to show and tell you about her.

She was dressed in rich materials - satins, and lace, and silks - all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on - the other was on the table near her hand - her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass. I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone.

- What does Miss Havisham seem to be dressed for?
- How do you know?
- She was wearing 'rich materials' and 'jewels', what does this tell us about Miss Havisham?
- Why do you think Miss Havisham is sat in a 'faded, yellow' bridal dress?
- How has the author created a sense of sadness?

Non-Fiction

Read the following extract taken from *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written in 1845 by Frederick Engels.

> The want and filth surpass description. The walls are crumbling, windows broken, broken doors hang open, or there are no doors at all, because no doors are needed, there being nothing to steal. Garbage rots everywhere, and foul liquids emptied before the doors gather in stinking pools. Here live the poorest of the poor, the worst paid workers, with thieves – unwanted, unnoticed, despairing. Those who have not yet drowned in the whirlpool of moral ruin which surrounds them, sink daily deeper, losing daily more and more of their power to resist the demoralizing influence of want, filth and evil.

- Who is this article about?
- What were the poor peoples' houses like?
- Why was there no need for a door?
- How would living like this be?
- Why are the people living in these conditions?
- Based solely on this extract, what can you infer about living conditions of the working class in England during this time?

Read the following nonfiction text adapted from an article in The Times by Jerome Starkey. As you read the text, make a note of what is being articulated in each paragraph at the side of the page:

Speared elephants saved from death

In a highly risky procedure, vets in southern Kenya have removed a 6-inch metal spear tip embedded in an elephant's temple that could have resulted in him bleeding to death.

The injured bull was one of two male elephants seriously wounded on the edge of the country's most popular game park. He survived an attack with traditional weapons, and while the spear was not deep enough to damage his brain, he was cutting his trunk every time he tried to pull the protruding metal out of the side of his head.

It was not clear whether the bulls were victims of would-be poachers or an attack by local farmers annoyed by the elephants breaking down fences and feasting on their vegetables. Such raids can lead to farmers shooting, spearing, or sometimes poisoning the elephants. The area where the pair were hurt, however, on the northern edge of the Mara reserve, was close to where local herdsmen had been grazing cattle at night, which might have provided cover for potential poachers.

The younger of the two elephants, thought to be around 20 years old, was injured in the leg. His older companion, about 30 and with much larger tusks, had been struck on the right side of his head. The wooden shaft of the spear had broken off but the sharp metal tip was lodged in his skull, and part of the blade was protruding.

Vets from the Kenya Wildlife Service flew into a nearby tourist camp and knocked out the older of the two animals with an anaesthetic dart. The second animal was also anaesthetised and vet Dominic Mijele cleaned the wounds and packed them with green clay, a natural antibiotic. Both patients were then given the reversal antidote and in no time, they rose to their feet and together ambled off across the plains.

- What is the genre of this text?
- What had happened to the elephants?
- How had the injuries happened?
- Why would farmers want to hurt elephants?
- How old were the elephants?
- Who helped the elephants?
- How did the vets help the elephants?

These extracts show you some of the ways that you can support your children with their reading at home. They offer a starting point to talk about texts with your child. Your child does not necessarily have to read to you, but discussing the text is a great way to check their understanding and to develop their reading skills.

Fiction Questions

Here are some questions that, you can use, to stimulate further discussions:

- Where does the story take place?
- When did the story take place?
- Who are the key characters in the book?
- What happened in the chapter?
- Can you summarise the events in the chapter in ___ words or less?
- Who would you like to meet most in the story? Why?
- Predict what you think is going to happen next. Why do you think this?
- What is the main event of the story? Why do you think this?
- How has the text been organised?
- Why do you think authors use short sentences?
- Which part of the story best describes the setting?
- Can you find examples of powerful adjectives? What do they tell you about a character or setting?
- Can you think of another story that has a similar theme eg good over evil, weak over strong, wise over foolish?
- Why did the author choose this setting?
- Do you know another story, which deals with the same issues eg social, cultural, moral issues?

- Have you ever been in a similar situation to a character in the book? What happened?

Non-Fiction Questions

- What is the text about? What is the title of the text? Who is the author of the text?
- What kind of things would you expect to see in this book?
- Can you find examples of different features of this text type?
- Which parts of the book could help you find the information you need?
- When would you use the contents page in the book?
- What sort of person do you think would use this book?
- What are the subheadings for?
- How does the layout help the reader?
- Why does this book contain technical vocabulary?
- Find an example of a technical word. Read the sentence it's in. What do you think it means based on how it's used in the sentence?
- Why has the writer written this text?
- Have you found any of the illustrations, diagrams or pictures useful? Why/why not? Try to explain fully.
- How does the author's message relate to you?
- Has anything changed historically, socially or culturally because of this book?

What Texts Would Suit Your Child's Reading Age?

Year Group	Age-Appropriate Text
7	Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan Artichoke Hearts by Sita Brahmachari Kick by Mitch Johnson Stone Cold by Robert Swindells The Goldfish Boy by Lisa Thompson The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins The Dark is Rising by Susan Cooper

8	Be Resilient by Nicola Morgan The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams Small Steps by Louis Sachar Lord of the Flies by William Golding The Tulip Touch by Anne Fine The Giver by Lois Lowry I am David by Anne Holm
9	Monsters of Men by Patrick Ness Lionheart Girl by Yaba Badoe The Twilight Saga by Stephenie Meyer Catch-22 by Joseph Heller Thief by Malorie Blackman The Ecology Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained DK The Book Thief Marcus Zusak
10	Grow by Luke Palmer The Knife of Never Letting Go Patrick Ness Dracula Bram Stoker Gone Michael Grant Schindler's Ark by Thomas Keneally Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift This Book is Cruelty Free by Linda Newbery
11	Looking for Alaska by John Green Felix Ever After by Kacen Callender The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini War of the Worlds by H.G Wells They Did It First. 50 Scientists, Artists and Mathematicians Who Changed the World Julie Leung Dune by Frank Herbert The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold