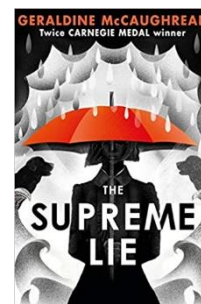


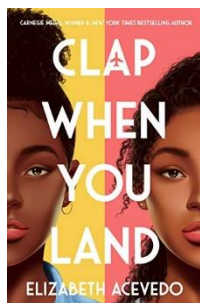
Weekly Recommended Reads for Y9-Y11

***The Supreme Lie* by Geraldine McCaughrean** The country of Afalia has been hit by relentless rain leading to dangerous flooding. Gloria is a 15 year old maid to Madame Suprema, the secretive and dictatorial ruler of Afalia. When Madame Suprema runs away from the crisis, her world-weary husband Timor has to cover up her disappearance – and asks Gloria to pretend to be Madame Suprema. Much hilarity is the result, but with dark undercurrents of corruption, desperation, and most of all lies – which are supported and encouraged by the newspaper ‘The Voice’. Meanwhile in the countryside, Heinz is a dog trying to find his Boy Clem, who has been flooded out of his home and is heading south as a refugee. Heinz is desperate to avoid ‘Hound Death’ who because of the flooding is busy collecting souls of humans and animals. These two narratives eventually weave together in this imaginative book. Gloria is a worthy heroine struggling to make the right decisions in her new position of power; Heinz is everything a dog should be and more. A thought-provoking and compelling read.



***Kick the Moon* by Muhammed Khan.** Ilyas hopes to be a comic book artist – but he is under huge pressure from his school (about to sit GCSEs), his friends (who engage in some gang activity and toxic masculinity) and from his parents (who expect him to ‘be a man’ and to join the family business). He meets Kelly in detention, and they develop a strong friendship – but Imran, a member of the gang, has made a bet that he can seduce Kelly. Ilyas’s worst fears are confirmed when Kelly becomes the victim of social media bullying. He needs to be like the superheroes he draws and ‘kick the moon’. I loved this British-Asian teenager, and the illustrations interspersed throughout are brilliant. Also – the author, Muhammed Khan, is a secondary school Maths teacher and speaks eloquently on why he started writing fiction and on themes in his books: <https://www.hayfestival.com/p-16726-muhammad-khan.aspx?skinid=16>; <https://www.worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses/walk-in-someone-elses-shoes/>

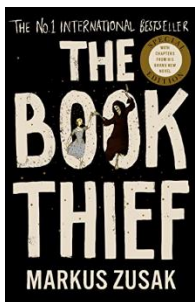
***Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo.** In this extraordinary dual narrative novel told in accessible (and beautiful) verse, Camino in the Dominican Republic and Yahaira in New York City each learn that their father has been killed in plane crash. They have lived completely different lives – Camino is a swimmer and an assistant midwife to her aunt, while Yahaira is a chess champion and has a girlfriend. They had never heard of each other. As they try to cope with their grief, they begin to learn about the double-life Papi had led, experiencing confusion, anger and a sense of betrayal – but also a burgeoning sense of the possibility of new relationships. Acevedo has written several brilliant young adult verse novels, and is also well-known for her Afro-Latina slam poetry. <http://www.acevedowrites.com/poetics>



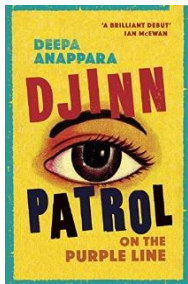
The Bunker Diary by Kevin Brooks. In this Carnegie-medal-winning novel, sixteen-year-old Linus has been kidnapped and wakes up in a windowless bunker; he has no further direct contact with his captor, though at every moment he is being manipulated. Linus begins a journal. Then the lift, which is the only way out or in, opens, and a 9-year-old girl steps out, later followed by other prisoners: a junkie, a wealthy woman, a businessman and a dying philosopher. They are utterly dependent on the abductor, who seems to be watching their every movement. This is a disturbing and powerful thriller – I have seen students who haven't voluntarily picked up a book in years be gripped by this novel.



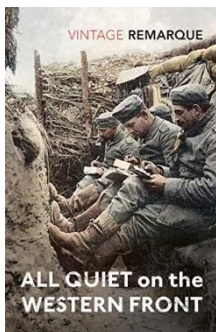
The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak. This novel, narrated by Death and set in Nazi Germany, is one of the best young adult novels I have ever read; I read it a decade ago and still remember where I was during key moments of the plot. Liesel is nine years old. Her parents have been sent to a concentration camp and her brother is dead; she arrives distraught to Himmel Street where she is fostered by an accordionist and his wife. She learns to read – and begins to steal books from Nazis. And when her family hides a Jewish fist-fighter, things get even more complex. This is a heartbreaking book set in desperate times but somehow it feels hopeful. Highly recommended.



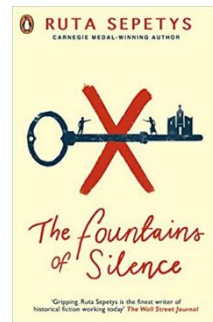
Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line by Deepa Anappara. Children are disappearing in a 'basti', a slum near the railway line in India. After his friend Bahudar goes missing, nine-year-old Jai is on the case, together with smart Pari and hard-working Faiz. Have the children been kidnapped, or have they been stolen by a djinn? The corrupt police and the 'hi-fi' rich people don't care, but crime-show obsessed Jai and his mates are investigating. This sometimes funny, sometimes heart-breaking mystery told from the 'naïve' perspective of nine-year-old detective was one of my best listens/reads of 2020. It portrays poverty without romanticising or judging, and the rich details and imagery create a vivid sense of place.



All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque. I've had a chance to re-read this World War I classic recently, and it remains as powerful and poignant as the first time I read it. First published in 1929 in German and based on the author's wartime experiences, it tells the story of Paul Baumer, who signed up with his classmates on the encouragement of his patriotic teacher. The novel's realistic and gritty depictions of trench warfare, gas attacks, hospitals, comradeship and pointless fighting and dying show that the war consumed everything and everyone. It is disturbing, engrossing, and incredibly informative. There is a shortened 'Real Reads' version of the book with illustrations that is perfect for young people interested in war but intimidated by long books.



The Fountains of Silence by Ruta Sepetys. Spain in 1957 is firmly under the dictatorial control of Franco with fear and secrets ruling and ruining people's lives. Daniel Matheson is an 18 years old Texan visiting Spain with his oil tycoon father. Daniel is a talented photographer and wants to study photo journalism in university, against his father's wishes; he also wants to understand the real Madrid, not just the version shown to American tourists. Ana is the hotel maid in charge of looking after the Matheson family at their posh Madrid hotel. She and her siblings had a traumatic youth because of the continuing Fascist persecution of Republicans; she lives with her brother Rafa, who works in a slaughterhouse and a graveyard, and her sister Julia and her family. Together they try to eke out an existence. But there are secrets which the family needs to keep hidden. This is well-researched historical fiction, and it is mesmerising with several twists – I read it in one sitting. It is out in paperback on March 18th!



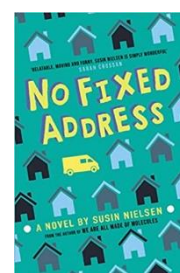
Ink by Alice Broadway. In Leora's world, every significant moment of a person's life is inked onto their skin. After death, the skin is flayed, and if a life has been well-lived, a 'skin book' is created for relatives and friends to remember their loved ones by; the 'unworthy' people's skin is burnt. Leora wants to become an inker – a professional tattoo artist – but when her father dies, she discovers that a mark has been removed from his skin. Why? And do the 'Blanks' – those without tattoos who have been banished from society – have anything to do with her father? This is the first book in the gripping dystopian 'Skin' trilogy.



Scythe by Neal Shusterman. In this thriller, it is impossible to die from disease, accidents, suicide or violence – 'deadish' people are brought back to life with the help of the Thunderhead, an Artificial Intelligence being. The only way to die is to be killed by a 'Scythe' who are supposed to kill ('glean') individuals in a humane way in order to keep population growth under control. Scythes are trained in the art of killing but are not supposed to take joy in the process – some Scythes, especially those who use mass gleaning – seem to disregard this rule. Teenagers Citra and Rowan have been recruited as potential apprentices because they are compassionate and strong – but only one will be selected. This is a corker of a read and the first in an addictive trilogy about an imagined future world.



No Fixed Address by Susin Nielsen. Felix has an amazing mind for trivia and loves the TV game show *Who, What, Where, When*. But his mum Astrid can't keep a job and they are evicted from their most recent (rubbish) apartment. They move into a van, and Astrid makes Felix promise not to tell. This is a painful story of hidden homelessness, and an inspirational story of the difference a community can make -- it will make you laugh and cry. *No Fixed Address* won the UKLA prize for the best book



written for young people in 2020; I was on the longlist judging panel for this prize, and it was my absolute favourite!

***Run, Rebel* by Majeed Mann.** Amber is the daughter of immigrant parents who don't speak English and are illiterate. The subject is tough -- domestic abuse and bullying - - but this is an inspirational story focussing on Amber's developing strength of character and her passion for running. It is a 'verse novel', meaning that it packs an emotional punch and is a very quick read; this type of novel is especially popular with KA's students who have previously been less enthusiastic about reading.



***Rose, Interrupted* by Patrice Lawrence.** Siblings Rose and Rudder have been raised in a strict religious cult but are now learning how to live in the 'Worldly World' in London. They are naive about the teen 'online world' and much more -- and they are traumatised by their life-experiences. Should they go back to the cult? This is a heart-wrenching and powerful story of family and strength of character.

