



# Library Times

TODAY  
is a good day  
to read



Masthead picture sources: Magnific.com (was Freepik)

Compiled by Mrs Giles & Mrs Guthrie

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autumn term 2026, issue 31

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## WHSG Library socials



@whsglibrary



**2026 is the National Year of Reading**  
Are you ready to Go All In?

Make 2026 the year to dive into reading and start the journey of a lifetime!

## Featuring...

# WELCOME

A new year means new groups of students to welcome!



### Author Day 2026 with Laura Dockrill

A blend of fun and creative writing with Author-in-Residence Laura Dockrill.

### Library End-of-Year Awards 2026

An annual celebration of our students' reading during the 2025–2026 academic year. Congratulations!

## National Poetry Day 2026

The first competition of the new school year, giving all students the opportunity to express their ideas on this year's theme: Wonder.



# 6th Form

## Biochemistry and Pharmacology

Focusing on careers in Biochemistry, Pharmacology and the range of jobs available with a biochemistry degree. Now is the time to start reading to support future applications.

'Time stands still when you find yourself lost in a good book.'

# From the Librarian's desk

**Welcome** to the 31st issue of *Library Times*!

Another school year begins and we bid welcome to our new Year 7s and the new cohort of Year 12s, a mixture of WHSG students and those coming from schools across Essex to start their new Sixth Form journey here in Westcliff. To help you settle in, we have written two welcome pages specific to each year group to help you understand how the Library will be an important part of your time here, whether for reading or for study. Please take a moment to familiarise yourselves to gain full benefit from what we have to offer.

## Author Day with Laura Dockrill

Back for her 15th visit to WHSG, the ever-popular Laura Dockrill weaved her magic to entertain the Year 7s and 12s with her anecdotes, inspirations behind her writing (including first crushes!) and some fun facts, along with two creative writing workshops giving an opportunity for attendees to learn from a professional. A triumphal finale to the 2025–2026 academic year!

## Competition winner gifts books for the Library

See if you can spot the new National Book Token in shops designed by WHSG student, Liliana, who generously gifted £350 in book tokens to our Library. We will reveal the list of books she chose for us to buy in the next issue of *Library Times*.



## Waterstones chooses new Children's Laureate

On 7th July, Waterstones announced Patrice Lawrence as their 14th Children's Laureate for a two-year tenure until 2028, taking over from Frank Cottrell-Boyce.

## Library end-of-year awards 2026

As we continue to celebrate the National Year of Reading, it is particularly important to reward those in the school community who cherish reading, (whether for pleasure or as part of their studies) and borrow books from the Library. The annual end-of-year reading awards recognise their dedication to reading with a range of awards, among which is the Lis Harris Library Reading Award given to the top form each year. Well done to everyone browsing and reading books to expand their knowledge or understand more clearly their own tastes and preferences in books.

## Anali's adventure in Malawi helping to build a library in a refugee camp

Year 11 Anali has spent her summer working as part of the NGO Fraternity Without Borders to help build the first library in a refugee camp in Malawi, taking with her 10 boxes of old reading books and textbooks we had weeded out in response to their call for books in English.

### Update on books bound for new library

Sadly, Anali sent us an email on 21st July to say someone broke into her family's car in the night stealing 230kg of donations, including our book donation. It was reported to the police, but she was heartbroken by the loss.



We love Zia's fun facts and her thirst for understanding more about the world around us (although we are still traumatised by the number of teeth a common garden snail has!). If you love Ripley's *Believe it or Not!*, this is the page for you!

## National Poetry Day 2026

The first competition of the Library's year, we invite students to compose a poem around this year's theme: **Wonder**. Good luck!



## Careers – focusing on Biochemistry and Pharmacology

We take a look at the wide range of careers you can access with a degree in Biochemistry.

## And finally...

Thank you to those students who gave us gifts at the end of the last school year. Your thoughts, kind words and generosity mean a lot. This picture from the very talented Liliana takes pride of place on the board above Mrs Giles' desk – *carpe librum!*



Librarian, because book wizard is not an official job title

*Mrs Giles*



# WELCOME Year 7



**Congratulations on achieving your place at WHSG and welcome to your Library! We hope it will always be your safe place, your haven, somewhere to read, study or just take a moment to settle your mind if you need to. All are welcome!**

## What you can expect from the Library

**Books! Of course.** You will probably have forgotten most of what you were told on Induction Day back in July, but please do not worry as you will have a proper Library induction session as part of your initial English lessons. You will soon settle into the routine of your new school and we are always here to help you.

### Monthly new books

Every month we put out a new selection of nine fiction books. Most are suitable for all years (we will always add the recommended reading age on the title page), and we choose one as our recommendation for Year 9+.

### Books on display

These might be new, part of a display about a chosen topic, raising awareness or highlighting a notable date. **Books on display are there for you to borrow**, not just to look attractive – please do pick them up and borrow them!

### Daily newspaper and magazines

You will have access to a daily copy of *The iPaper* which we drop into the Library's Google Classroom (**7cuglcm3**). Keeping abreast of national and world events will help with vocabulary, current affairs and even quizzes. Even if you dip into it for 10 minutes every day, you will be expanding your reading experience.

We also subscribe to various magazines, so why not give them a try too? You might surprise yourself and discover something new which you really enjoy!



**7cuglcm3**

## Computers

We have eight computers. You are welcome to use them, for school-related work only though. Computer games are not allowed. Printer credits are issued to students every half term.

## Environment and ambience

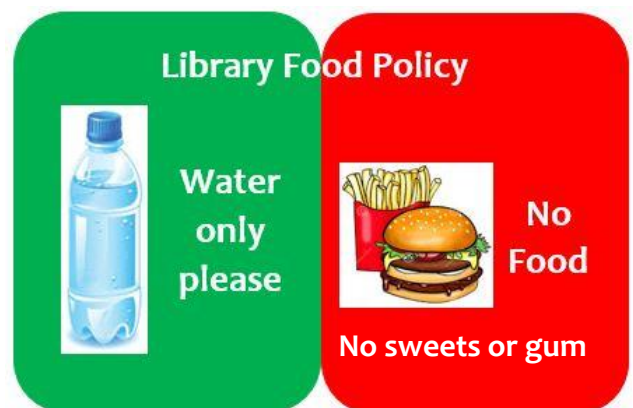
The Library is a calm and welcoming space. Most of you will have noticed its 'Wow!' factor when you first saw it. It is always quiet to allow students to read or study and therefore is not a social space for conversation. We sit 'in the eye of the storm' so to speak, amid the hustle and bustle of the school, and as such we strive to maintain a room for peace and quiet, where minds can settle and focus, ready for immersion into a favourite book or to concentrate on learning. **Namaste!**



## A few rules

**Phones:** in line with government policy, phones should be switched off at all times in school and kept in your bag or locker.

**Food and drink:** it is this simple!



**Wood and books are the only things you should be able to smell in the Library**

# Author Day 2026 with Laura Dockrill



Laura always manages to encourage, entertain and inspire the Year 7s with her journey to being an author.



Our final event of the last academic year was the ever-popular visit in July by award-winning author, Laura Dockrill, for Author Day 2026 and our students were certainly in for a treat!

The year group talks with Year 7 were energetic, fun, imaginative and insightful, as Laura talked to students about her journey to becoming a published author. She spoke honestly about her school life, leaving with few GCSEs, being poor at grammar and spelling, and with a huge fear of the teacher's 'red pen', **but** she loved to dream and invent stories and was constantly writing down her thoughts and doodling. This was her passion. A girl of the modern age however, she wrote her first book completely on her mobile phone, which she shared at open mic nights and festivals such as Latitude and Glastonbury, landing her very first book deal from HarperCollins at just 19 years old!

Sprinkling a swathe of fun facts about herself – her first crush was the Coco Pops monkey, then Ricky in Year 5, followed by Bandit from Bluey after her son Jet was born – her talk was highly entertaining, included an improvised cookie bake (!) and gave students the opportunity to ask their own questions. The Year 7s were left breathless when she recounted her own story of teenage angst with first love Hugo, grateful for the happy ending!

Her energy and ability to draw from her life experiences to create stories which are fun but also contain pathos and life affirmation are indomitable as is her passion for anyone to become a writer.

Her visit certainly inspired a new generation of Year 7s to think about writing their own stories. Watch this space!

(Left) Laura was delighted to have her book featured as part of the wall art outside the Library when we re-branded the Library entrance in November 2021. (Right) Some photos of Laura's visits to WHSG over the years, dating back to her first time in 2010.





## Author Day 2026 Creative Writing Workshops

The creative writing workshops are an important part of Laura's visit. With a degree in creative writing, she understands the need for passion and imagination as the fuel for her writing, but also the mechanics of how to build a well-constructed story. Her workshops are designed to pass some of her writing process onto students, giving them the opportunity to put it into practice.

Both workshops followed the same format as the process Laura uses is applicable to all ages. Starting the sessions with an overview of her experience and her books, including her post-partum experience, her love story with Hugo and her latest book *Two Sisters*, she used a short meditative activity to centre the group and focus their imagination before writing.

Using single-word prompts she engaged the groups in a relay-writing activity, asking them to fold their paper after each bout of writing, passing it to the next student, building collaborative pieces of work. The results as you would expect were eclectic, offering a broad range of ideas and genres, from actual places to zombie brides, knights, and a penguin with pink fur (!), lines such as 'Throw me that taco from the tree please!', 'Do you want to build a sandcastle?' and 'an enchanted library that is semi-sentient but friendly, like its own librarian', finishing with endings such as 'Maybe she wasn't—after all...?' This might seem random, but what it demonstrated to students is the ability to create stories from small sparks, single words or ideas, a photograph, a memory or the world of imagination where anything is possible.

Both groups found the sessions fun and inspirational with feedback including:

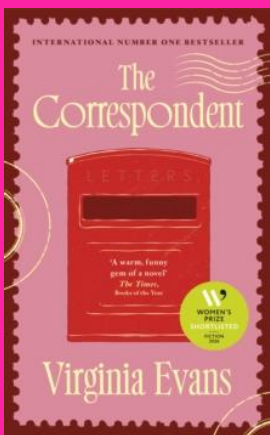
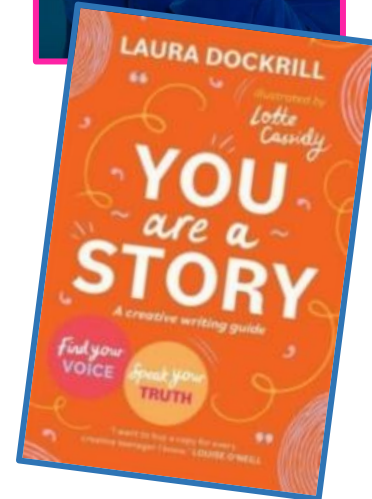
*'I enjoyed the freedom to be expressive and create without limits... 10/10 – would do again!!!'*

### With love from the Library...

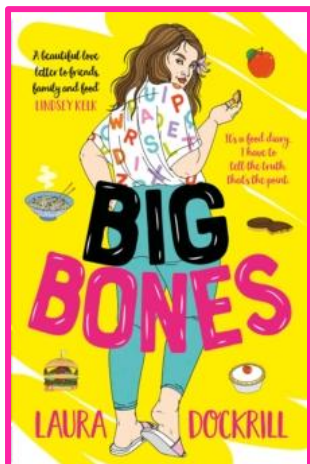
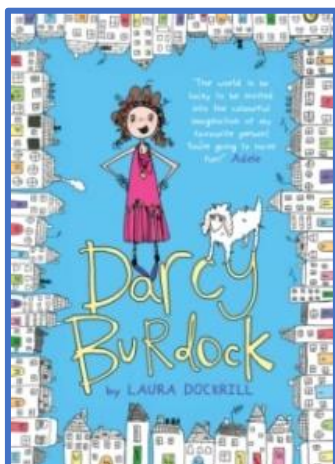
As a memory of their creative writing workshop experience, Year 7s were gifted a signed copy of Laura's book *You are a Story* with the Year 12's receiving a signed copy of her book for older readers *I Love You, I Love You, I Love You*.

*'I learnt to really trust my imagination and let it run free.'*

*'Bring her back before we leave next year!!!!'*



Laura's reading choice at the time of her visit was this year's winner of the Women's Prize – *The Correspondent*.



Laura's message to students in a nutshell: anyone can be a writer; all you need is your imagination and a pen (oh, and some paper!).

## Year 9 Liliana wins World Book Day's National Book Tokens design competition

When we heard Liliana (then Year 9) had won this year's World Book Day competition to design a National Book Token, we were absolutely thrilled for her as she has always been a Library regular and a big fan of the graphic style, particularly manga, reflected in her drawing of the young girl.

Her drawing style is mature beyond her years and a worthy peer of Thomas Taylor's famous artwork for the first issue of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

We also love the immersive quality of her artwork which is the very epitome of this year's World Book Day slogan: 'Go All In...' It also dovetails very nicely with our own slogan: 'Time stands still when you find yourself lost in a good book' which also references the immersive quality of books.

### Surprise! Surprise!

In late June, Mrs Vinten advised me Liliana wanted to gift the £350 prize money to the Library for new books, which was very exciting! A conversation about the cost of books and the discounts I can access ensued and being the generous soul she is, she also mentioned she would like to give other students in her year group the opportunity to make suggestions. We have a very strong group of dedicated Year 9 (now Year 10) readers who would most definitely be willing to take up that challenge, so we are looking forward to the list they produce. I am sure there will be a fair number of manga, graphic novels and fantasy romance ('romantasy') with a sprinkling of crime fiction and perhaps a few surprises which I will be excited to add to the shelves.

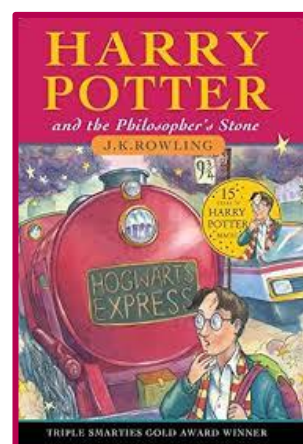
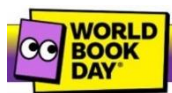
### Giving legacy to donations

As with any book gifted to us, we create a special bookplate to go inside each book, so students know who to be grateful to with the same message being added to the online Library catalogue listing for the book which remains for perpetuity. Thank you, Liliana!



*At just 23 years old Thomas Taylor's first professional commission launched the now iconic Harry Potter series and secured the 1st edition's place as a collector's item. In*

*2024 Sotheby's sold the original watercolour for an eye-watering £1.5 million! Can you see the similarity between Liliana's girl and the original Harry Potter? She could easily be sitting in the library at Hogwarts reading up on her spells!!*



**Fun facts Zia gifts the Library £50 from her Jack Petchey win – thank you!**

Also in late June, Miss Hooks advised me Zia of 9.1 (now also Year 10) had won a Jack Petchey Achievement Award and wanted to give £50 of her prize money to the Library.

Once again, Zia will be given the opportunity to express what she would like me to buy for the Library, which looking at her loan history is open to absolutely anything, from the classics to books like Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* and anything in between!

Although buying books is my passion, giving ownership of the purchasing booklist to students goes a long way towards inclusivity and diversity as students are keen to ensure the books are suitable and appealing to everyone, not just those in their year group which is heartwarming.

❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖ Thank you! ❖

## Introducing the new Waterstones Children's Laureate



Patrice Lawrence

The Waterstones Children's Laureate was first launched in 1999, the result of discussions between Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate at the time, and highly esteemed children's author Michael Morpurgo. This accolade is not bestowed by publishers or industry gurus, but decided by a panel of librarians, critics, writers, literature developers and booksellers – 'the boots on the ground' as it were. Waterstones believes:

*'... the laureateship is a vital spearhead, advocating for children's fundamental rights to read, write and access books through bookshops and libraries.'*

Taking on the mantle from Frank Cottrell-Boyce will make Patrice the 14th Children's Laureate, following in the footsteps of many esteemed authors and advocates for children's fiction. Her tenure will last two years until 2028.

### Who is Patrice Lawrence?

Born in Brighton, she was raised in an Italian-Trinidadian family in Sussex and now lives in Hastings.

Her debut YA novel, *Orangeboy*, published in 2016, won the Bookseller YA Book Prize and the

Waterstones Prize for Older Children's Fiction and was also shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award. Since then she has frequently made the shortlists of many a book award. Her book *Needle* was shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal for Writing in 2023 and won the Little Rebels Award. In 2025 her most recent book *People Like Stars* was shortlisted for the Nero Book Awards.

As part of her plans for her laureateship, she said:

*'I believe that we, as humans, are changed by stories. They connect us to different worlds, and they connect us to each other. People who feel this connection – who feel heard and believe in each other's humanity – are the foundation of strong, safer and more inclusive communities.'*

She went to say:

*'During my tenure as Waterstones Children's Laureate, I will champion the power of books to make us feel like we belong, and shared stories as a tool for bringing people together. We are living in a divided world where many people feel isolated, we need this now, more than ever.'*



# Name that book!



Use the pictures to find the names of the 14 book titles, and if you can, list the authors. **Good Luck!**

1.



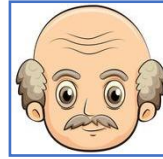
2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



13.



14.



Answers on p.10

# Library End-of-Year Awards 2026

As we enter the final term of the National Year of Reading, we reflect on the sustained importance of reading throughout your child's school journey at WHSG and celebrate the success of students who have been awarded this year's reading awards.

Discussions in school library forums recently have centred on the value of removing all non-fiction in favour of fiction; however, we believe there is a case to answer in defence of non-fiction for those students who prefer factual books as opposed to the portal into stories.

In our school library, we firmly believe in the value of fiction and non-fiction; indeed, they can complement each other, helping students to understand facts when presented in a fictionalised version, adding context or social history, fleshing out bare facts which might otherwise appear daunting or even dull.

Articles in previous issues of *Library Times* reference the rise in popularity of graphic novels, especially since Covid. For their part publishers very quickly realised this format could also be applied to every subject on the curriculum to help increase engagement and interest – and it is proving to be a success here at WHSG!

We recognise students need to be able to access information from a variety of sources, but reading for information can also be pleasurable and the two are not mutually exclusive. With this in mind, we introduced access to *The iPaper* in January and have a raft of magazines available which students can either read cover to cover or dip into if they prefer.

Whether a student reads a short snippet from a magazine or a complete book, everything they borrow is logged against their reading history and counts towards the End-of-Year Awards. Here are this year's winners.



**Year 7 Top Reader: Layan, 7.1 with an impressive 143 books**

**Year 8 Top Reader: Amelia, 8.6 with 116 books**

**Year 9 Top Reader: Ebun, 9.5 with 184 books**

**Year 10 Top Reader: Ananya, 10.2 with 40 books**

**Year 12 Top Reader: Anna, 12.8 with 14 books**

**Staff Top Reader: Mrs Guthrie, Library Assistant with 35 books**



Students were awarded a book appropriate to their age, with a bookplate to mark the occasion, along with a certificate and the WHSG staple of chocolates or jelly sweets as a treat.

Mrs Guthrie, once again was the top reader for staff and awarded her own certificate and some indulgent dark chocolate.

## **Lis Harries Library Reading Award**

This year's winner was 7.3 (Miss Provins' form) with an outstanding **587 Library books** read in the 2025–2026 school year! Well done 7.3!

The form is given the trophy to display for next year, a poster for their room and some sweets to celebrate.

Finally, in June, the National Literacy Trust reported a welcome uplift in children's reading for the first time in five years, now standing at 36.1% of children reading for pleasure, increasing from 32.7% in 2025.



The Lis Harries Library  
Reading Award

Awarded to the Form with the greatest  
number of books read from  
the Lis Harries Library this year



*'Time stands still when you find yourself lost in a good book.'*

## Anali's adventure of a lifetime – helping to build a community library for a refugee camp in Dzaleka, Malawi

When Anali (then in Year 11) asked if the Library would be able to donate books to help build a library for refugees in Malawi, we were keen to help. She was particularly keen to secure any textbooks, no matter how old, as the new library is keen to follow the British national curriculum. Thanks to Mr MacNamara, we were able to help with textbooks for Business and Economics and will be setting aside any future textbooks from other departments as they become available. Books left over from book sales and Green Week as well as those periodically weeded from the Library's shelves will also be offered for future flights to Malawi, in addition to boxes being sent to our Trust schools. A passion for books and learning is everything to us – the ability to pay that forward is beyond measure.

Read a report from Anali about her aspirations while volunteering at the camp this summer.

'This summer, other young people and I will have the privilege of volunteering in a Malawian Refugee camp: Dzaleka. We will spend 20 days striving to build the camp's first community library with the help of the



A model of the planned library for the refugee camp in Dzaleka.

local community! Over the past few weeks of school, I have had the privilege of receiving more than 10 boxes of book donations to fill the library shelves with incredible stories, bringing hope and happiness to each individual who will one day enter it. Alongside this, funds raised in the African Drumming event in school will help us purchase all materials necessary to build the library.

Thank you so much to each individual who took part in making the project become a reality. All your efforts will greatly contribute positively to the lives of many in Dzaleka! If you would like to follow the project and learn more about the refugee camp, please see the website I have written and will continue to update daily with information during my time there!'

<https://analialemmar.wixsite.com/15-days-in-malawi>

### Catch Me Reading Winner

Congratulations to our  
summer 2026  
prize draw winner

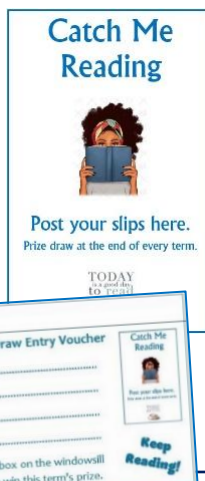
**Mary in 9.5**

who won a signed copy of  
*Songs About  
a Girl*, by Chris Russell



Catch Me Reading is a literacy initiative to reward students who love to read. If they are 'caught' reading outside of lessons during break or lunchtime, they are given a voucher to drop into the Catch Me Reading postbox in the Library which is then entered into the termly prize draw.

The next winner will be drawn at the end of the autumn term.



Good Luck! Bonne Chance! ¡Buena suerte! Bocca al lupo!

1. *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
2. *A Horse for Angel*, by Sarah Lean
3. *Clockwork Orange*, by Anthony Burgess
4. *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Ernest Hemingway
5. *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell
6. *Murder on the Orient Express*, by Agatha Christie
7. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams
8. *The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini
9. *Life of Pi*, by Yann Mantel
10. *Stop the Train*, by Geraldine McCaughrean
11. *Girl on the Train*, by Paula Hawkins
12. *Flamingo Boy*, by Michael Morpurgo
13. *Angel Cake*, by Cathy Cassidy
14. *Boy, Snow, Bird*, by Helen Oyeyemi

Here are the answers.

**Name that book!**



# Zia's fun facts!



Now in Year 10, Zia has been inspiring us with her fun facts for the last two years and we hope she will still find time to continue with her page this year. Her thirst for 'the weird and wonderful' is incredible and definitely indicative of someone whose ambition is to be a veterinary surgeon. In Year 8, her first fun fact was that honeybees beat their wings 190 times per second, which is faster than a hummingbird, beating at 'only' 75 times per second! Amazing! Here is a selection of Zia's fun facts from the autumn term! Surprising, aren't they?

1. Whilst the ancient Egyptians were building the pyramids, Woolly Mammoths were still walking the Earth!



That's 1,000 years of co-existence!



2. Space: The Earth's rotation is slowing down each century – the length of a day increases by roughly 1.8 seconds every century!



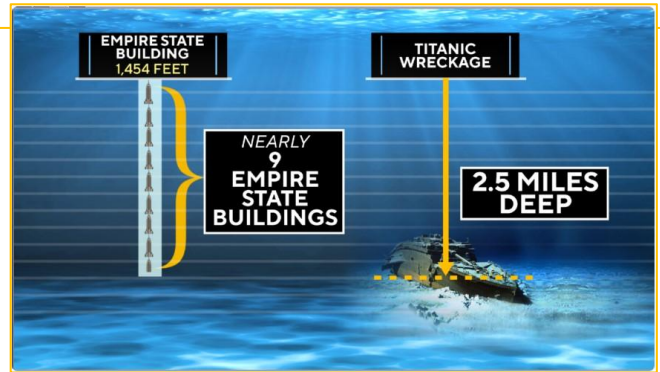
3. The Moon spirals away from Earth at about 3.8cm per year.



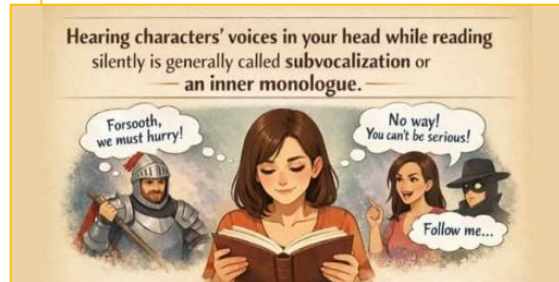
4. Hippos cannot swim – instead they just walk along the base of the riverbed!

Did you know?  
The collective noun for a group of hippos is called a bloat?

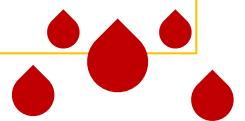
5. The Titanic sank to approximately 3,840m (12,500ft or 2.4 miles)!



6. Whenever you read silently, your tongue and vocal cords make microscopic movements – a process called subvocalisation!



7. It rains red in some parts of the world! Red rain (also known as blood rain) occurs when high concentrations of coloured dust or particles carried from deserts are mixed with rain altering its hue. This phenomenon visits the UK a few times a year, but occurs most commonly in France and Spain, which are much closer to the Sahara Desert.



cincinnati zoo • Follow  
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden



cincinnati zoo To the moon, Fritz!! 🐼 🐼 DYK: Hippos can't actually float or swim. They push off the bottom and propel themselves to the surface for air.

131w

Picture sources: Magnific.com (was Freepik), Instagram (Cincinnati Zoo), CBS News <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/titanic-sub-debris-near-titan-ocean-depth-pressure-of-deep-sea/> [accessed 21.07.26], Facebook

The Library's tv screen is an invaluable promotional tool and is updated frequently with eye-catching slides to keep students informed about new books, displays and events. It is also a trustworthy timepiece. Here are a few of the promotional slides we used last term.



Follow the Library on Instagram and Threads @whsglibrary to keep up to date with our news and events.



## Bernard Cornwell – a ‘peculiar’ Essex boy

**With a body of work standing at over 60 novels and counting, and his characters well-known household favourites, it might surprise you to learn Bernard Cornwell spent his early years in Thundersley as the adopted son of a family who were members of The Peculiar People, a non-conformist Christian movement founded by a Rochford farm labourer called James Banyard in 1838, whose strict religious beliefs included the abstention from alcohol, and concentration on prayer and devotion. The cruelty he endured at the hands of his adopted family would prove formative and become a prevailing theme in his books.**

On Desert Island Discs in 2004, Cornwell described his childhood memories as ‘very ugly’, in a home without television, cinema, comics, books (other than religious ones) or music, and the constant fear of eternal damnation held over his head. Once, in Rayleigh High Street, his adoptive father revealed he also expected to be martyred one day after seeing the Protestant Martyrs Memorial!

Fuelled by a dislike of the constraints of his upbringing and armed with a background in journalism and research, he developed a fascination of military history and wanted to write about the adventures of a British soldier in the Napoleonic wars, which would become the *Richard Sharpe* series. Praise for Cornwell’s attention to detail and accuracy of military history confirmed Sharpe’s place as a heavyweight in historical fiction.

But fate was by no means finished with Bernard Cornwell, as when he was tracing his family history, he found his father, a Canadian airman called William Oughtred – sound familiar? – and discovered his family tree traced back to Uhtred the Bold, Lord of Bebbanburg! What a gift indeed to a writer of historical fiction!

Cornwell’s Uhtred is a fictional character set approximately 100 years later than the actual figure, long after the death of King Alfred, but he wanted to recreate the battles of the Danes and the formation

of the four kingdoms into the country we now call England.

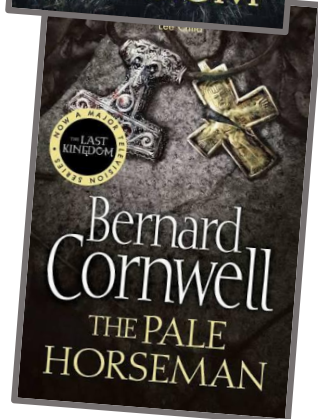
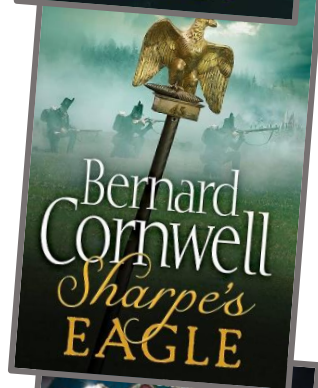
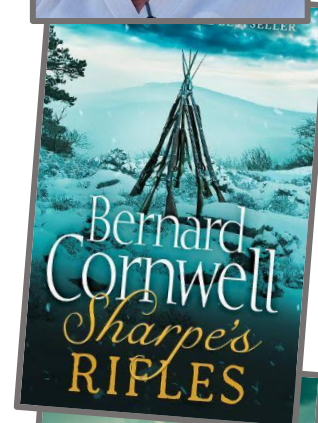
As with the *Sharpe* series, plenty of his characters are rooted in real life or composites of several people woven into the fabric of his stories. It is easy to believe someone like the Richard Sharpe could have existed in Wellington’s army, who famously wrote in 1813 ‘we have in the service the scum of the Earth as common soldiers’.

Sharpe was the son of a prostitute, an enlisted private in Wellington’s army, who was flogged, injured multiple times, and suffered the slights of his superiors, but through bravery, determination and military strategy rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel by the Battle of Waterloo. He was the underdog and perhaps Cornwell could identify with that.

Similarly, Uhtred, a Saxon son taken and raised by Danes, also found himself caught between two places. Born a Christian, raised as a pagan, he often found himself as the mercy of both. Enslaved, beaten, injured, frequently in battle, often the underdog, Uhtred’s story follows a similar pattern.

Bernard Cornwell’s fate as an acclaimed author can be summed up with the famous words spoken by Uhtred: ‘Destiny is all.’

**Note: These books are written for an adult audience and not suitable for our students.**



Sources: Interview with Bernard Cornwell, 15th October 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/15/bernard-cornwell-history-uhtrd-sharpe-war-lord> [accessed 14.07.26]; Peculiar People, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peculiar\\_People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peculiar_People) [accessed 14.07.26]

# National Poetry Day 2026



Thursday 1st October

Theme: Wonder

**National Poetry Day is the first event in the Library calendar and is always popular with students and well represented by all year groups. This year's theme is**

## Wonder

**which seeks to ask young people to consider climate science and the future of the world they live in with creativity and hope to help allay their fears about climate change.**

National Poetry Day is also a competition, which is judged by the English department and there are prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, with certificates for everyone who takes part. Achievements points are also issued, so it is a perfect opening gambit for the School house points competition.

## What do I need to do next?

Embracing the theme of **Wonder**, you can write a poem in a form of your choosing – even a Haiku, a Limerick or a rap if you wish.

Your poetry can be any length, and we would love to hear you read it out at the recital as the starting point of your oracy journey at WHSG.

We know this might be daunting for some people, so involve a friend for support, rehearse it together and read it out with confidence in the safety of numbers.

### Nature Bites Back, by Vanessa Kisuule

From the dull grey concrete  
they punch up -  
the gorgeous orchids  
and whispering willows,  
the buzzing brambles  
busy with gossip. And look!

From the uninspired asphalt  
a warbling chorus rises -  
the nightingales, back  
from the brink of extinction,  
singing their victory song.

Where the gravel once reigned,  
wild grass dances in the breeze.  
The savvy wasps and slithering  
adders add to the orchestra,  
and bees burrow their bums  
in the patient reeds.

Nature always knows what  
it needs to make its way back.  
What can you do to  
help it back on track?



## Recital: Save the date!

Thursday 1st October 2026

12.20-1.10pm

Venue: Library

### What to bring?

Nothing, we will give you a printed copy of your poem.

All you need is enthusiasm and a big voice!

Submit your poem by email  
to Mrs Giles:

[st-sue.giles@whsg.info](mailto:st-sue.giles@whsg.info)

by the closing date  
Friday 25th September 2026



If you would like some guidance on how to read out your poetry with confidence, watch Vanessa recite her poetry for inspiration. Just follow the link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzxNzdpzwqc>

# Looking back at Andrea Levy's work in the year she should have turned 70

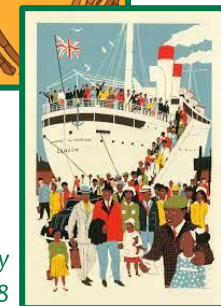
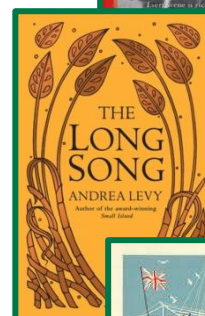
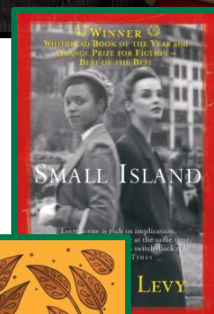
The history of the *SS Empire Windrush* and its passengers are part of Essex history, which we celebrate every year on 22nd June to recognise the contribution of the Caribbean people who answered the call to help rebuild Britain in the post-war years and form an invaluable part of post-war British society. Andrea Levy's parents were part of that Windrush Generation, so she grew up listening to stories of Jamaica and her mixed-race heritage, which co-existed alongside her lived experience of being a Black-British girl. She longed for stories about young women like her, stories which reflected the experience of Black Britons, which shone a light on Britain and its changing demographic and explored the traumatic shared history of Britain and the Caribbean.

Differing from other Windrush authors, she wanted to focus her attention on the personal experience of families with children, particularly those with daughters; children who saw themselves as middle-class and British first, with racial difference being secondary.

Her two most famous books explore this longstanding shared history extremely well and both have been adapted for television to much acclaim.

British comedian Lenny Henry, who played Godfrey in the adaptation of *The Long Song* said, 'She tells hard stories with humour and compassion.' Of herself, Andrea Levy said in a 2015 interview, 'All my books look at what it is to be Black and British, trying to make the invisible visible, and to put back into the history the people who got left out – people like my Dad.' Just 62, Levy died of breast cancer in 2019.

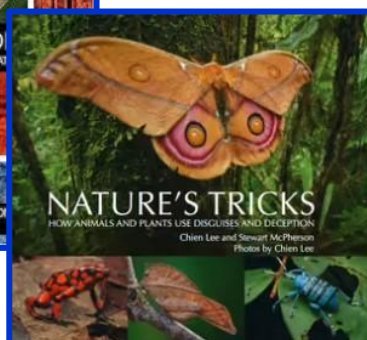
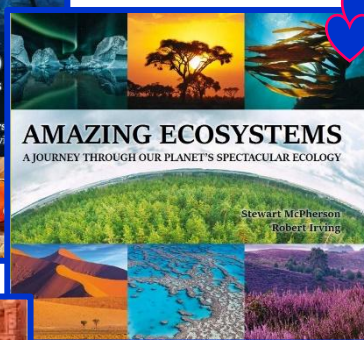
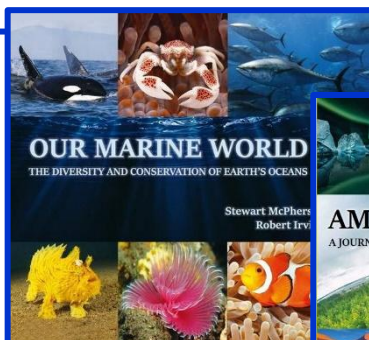
*SS Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury on 22nd June 1948*



thankyou

We have been very privileged to receive another set of these beautiful books from The Don Hanson Charitable Foundation which supports educational and community initiatives to inspire young people through learning, discovery and exploration.

Filled with stunning photography, they will inspire anyone with an interest in science and the natural world, as well as all budding photographers.



Every donation received is found a good home, either here at WHSG, one of our Trust schools or other secondary/grammar schools within the local area. We sometimes also sell off old stock or books we cannot find a home for, so we are always recycling and reusing to help save our planet and support our school's Green values. Any money raised in a book sale is ploughed back into supporting the WHSG Library.

thankyou

# When animals go viral and inspire books

A life-long animal lover, my first encounter with the 'viral' nature of our love for animals was in 2017 when Cincinnati Zoo posted on Instagram about a premature baby hippo named Fiona, born at a record low weight of just 29 pounds (the smallest hippo ever to survive!) which keepers were hand rearing.

Animals have long inspired writers (think Winnie the Pooh or Paddington), often driving parents to buy children soft toys, but social media has added a new dimension, with zoo and animal sanctuaries posting updates for followers on animals' progress and as a tool to raise awareness and promote merchandising to raise funds. Videos of little Fiona proved so popular that by 2018 the Zoo had already raised nearly \$500k from the sale of books about her!

More recently, social media's heart has been captured by the plight of Punch, the tiny Japanese macaque (or snow monkey) at Ichikawa City Zoo in Japan, which, abandoned by his mother and bullied by his troop, was seen cuddling up to a surrogate mother in the form of a cuddly orangutan. The heartbreaking sight of this tiny monkey's suffering only served to fuel follower fascination and again led to the publication of several books featuring him. The zoo did not benefit directly from the proceeds, but cashing in on his value set up a global donation fund, raising approximately ¥43 million (\$267,700 USD), with a triple increase in visitor sales. It also added merchandising and gained a windfall from the Ichikawa government of ¥70 million for air conditioning and the monkey habitat.



The heartbreaking sight of little Punch with his cuddly orangutan.



How could resist this little face which captured the hearts of millions of followers?

The anthropomorphism of animals is by no means new – Aesop's *Fables*, written in the 6th century BCE, cleverly used animals to demonstrate specific human qualities or virtues to deliver powerful but easily grasped moral lessons.

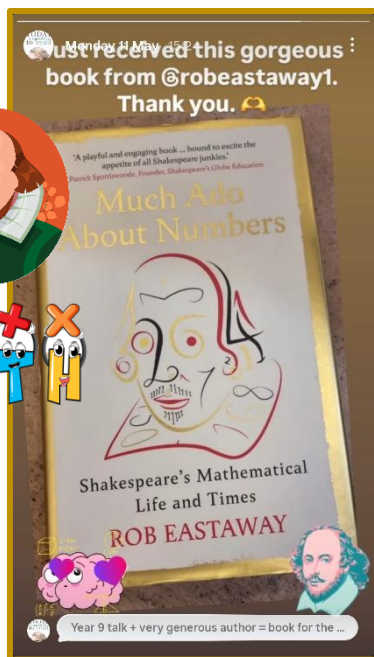
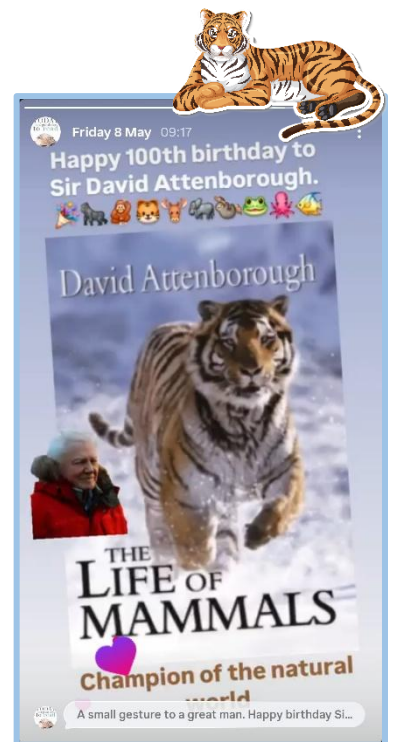
Stories of animals in young children's books help to gently teach about kindness, sharing or other life lessons such as empathy, friendship and even loss, and as has been freshly demonstrated by little Punch, children view cuddly toys as emotional support.

Vendors such as Jellycat and Wrendale appeal to young and old alike, extending far beyond the traditional teddy bear, with sushi bowls, carrots and lobsters now vying for affection. Toys are even recommended for dementia patients to tap into childhood memories and for support.

Whilst zoos do raise questions about ethics, it is undeniable that baby animals can tap into a primal part of the human brain hardwired through evolution to process both threat and affection, particularly for the young. If your favourite plushie is a cuddly lobster, you too could write a story about it!



We were slightly light on posting on our socials in the summer term – always the busiest term of the year. Preparation for Open Evening and Author Day takes weeks of work along with writing this newsletter and lots of behind-the-scenes work to provide new books for students – combined with a heatwave which sapped everyone's energy. Let's hope the autumn term is cooler as we return with renewed vigour!



# Textiles Exhibitions

*The priceless Bayeux Tapestry is back in the UK – art or the forerunner of the graphic novel?*

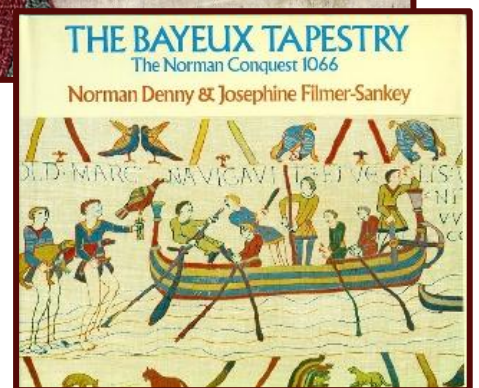
Known in France as *La Tapisserie de la Reine Matilde* (Queen Matilda's Tapestry), the Bayeux Tapestry was secretly returned to the UK in July, in the middle of the night, under police protection. **Merci M. Macron!**

Commissioned by William the Conqueror's half-brother, Bishop Odo, to be hung in Odo's cathedral at Bayeux in Normandy, it is now known to have been sewn by nuns in Canterbury where he had seized lands as earl. Anglo-Saxon embroidery was highly prized at that time, which is possibly why Odo chose England for the Tapestry (strictly speaking an embroidery) to be made.

Sewn in segmented panels, it is considered an early form of strip-cartoon; however, there is also a narrative so could it also be considered a prototype for the world's first graphic novel? Go and see for yourselves!



A small segment of the Bayeux Tapestry showing the intricacy and expertise of the stitchwork involved in the masterpiece.



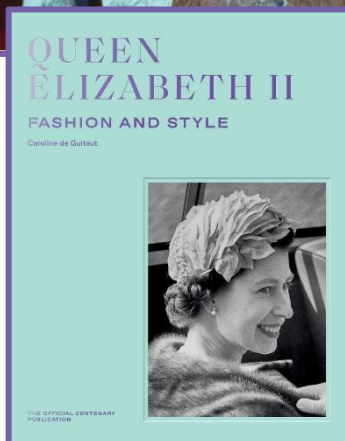
Book your ticket at [britishmuseum.org](https://britishmuseum.org)

## Queen Elizabeth II's life in style exhibition

In the year she would have turned 100 – our longest reigning monarch – The Royal Collection Trust is mounting the largest and most comprehensive collection of Queen Elizabeth II's fashion during her life, featuring over 300 items across 10 decades.

If you are a fashionista, this exhibition offers the chance to view the very best in haute couture, with highlights including the Queen's christening robe, bridesmaid's dress, wedding dress, Coronation dress and the dress shown opposite which she wore for Prince Margaret's wedding. Always stylish, the Queen conferred closely with her couturier and Royal Dressmaker, Sir Norman Hartnell, particularly for State events when she was known to include symbols of countries she was visiting or hosting in her outfit. Famously, breaking from tradition, her Coronation gown not only contained the national flowers of the four nations, but also included floral symbols of each of the Commonwealth countries.

Book your ticket at <https://www.rct.uk/collection/exhibitions/queen-elizabeth-ii-her-life-in-style/the-kings-gallery-buckingham-palace>



Queen Elizabeth II, wearing a blue gown and bolero jacket designed by fashion designer Sir Norman Hartnell, her personal dressmaker.

# WELCOME Year 12

## 6th Form

Whether you are new to WHSG or moving on from Year 11, congratulations on achieving the grades you needed and welcome to your Library! GCSEs are over, you've enjoyed the summer sunshine, and now it is time to raise your game for the challenge of A-Levels and the first steps towards your future careers. Game on!

### What you can expect from the Library

#### A dedicated Sixth Form mezzanine area

The lower years are allowed to come upstairs to look for books, but they must work downstairs, which gives you space upstairs to settle and spread out. Hylands is a great study space, but some students prefer the ambience and calm of the Library during their free periods.

#### Computers

If you don't have your own laptop or tablet, we have a bank of eight computers for school-related work. Computer games, shopping, and social media, etc., however, are not allowed. Printer credits are issued to students every half term. As part of our commitment to looking after the planet, we expect students to consider whether they need to print and could opt for black and white versus colour where possible.

#### Online Library catalogue

All staff and students have their own login to the school's online Library catalogue for browsing and reserving books, available 24/7, 365 days a year.

#### Books!

The books on the mezzanine are devoted to A-Level subjects, EPQ interests and careers. We follow Oxbridge and the Russell Group universities along with a raft of other sources to research recommended reading in support of a wide range of degrees, apprenticeships and the school's seven curriculum pathways. Each book is marked with a 'UCAS' label on the spine for easy shelf retrieval.

UCAS

We are forever expanding our collection to support students' career aspirations – sometimes they might be quite niche – but we are always happy to help if we can, so please ask. If we can find you a book, we will!

#### Daily newspaper and magazines

The Library subscribes to *The iPaper* giving staff and students access to a good quality newspaper, which pledges political impartiality, reporting 'without fear or favour'. Every weekday we drop the pdf version of the day's paper into the Library's Google Classroom ([7cuglcm3](#)). It is good practice to scan the newspaper every day in case there are items of interest or relevance for your studies, or indeed as part of wider reading to broaden your general knowledge – always handy for end-of-term quizzes!

We also subscribe to a range of magazines, some of which are directly relevant to your A-Levels and some are for interest. You might surprise yourself and discover something new which you really enjoy!

#### A few rules

**Phones:** in line with government policy, phones should be switched off at all times in school, kept in your bag or lockers **except when in Hylands**.



**Food and drink:** It is this simple!



Wood and books are the only things you should be able to smell in the Library

# Focusing on...

## Biochemistry and Pharmacology



Biochemistry explores the chemical processes and substances occurring with living organisms, studying the four major groups: proteins, nucleic acids (DNA and RNA), carbohydrates and lipids, and the sub-disciplines: structural biology, enzymology and metabolism. As such it is the foundation of medicine and crucial to drug development and pharmacology.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the importance of biochemistry sharply into focus as part of the work carried out by vaccinologist Professor Sarah Gilbert and her team, with the rapid design and development of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine.

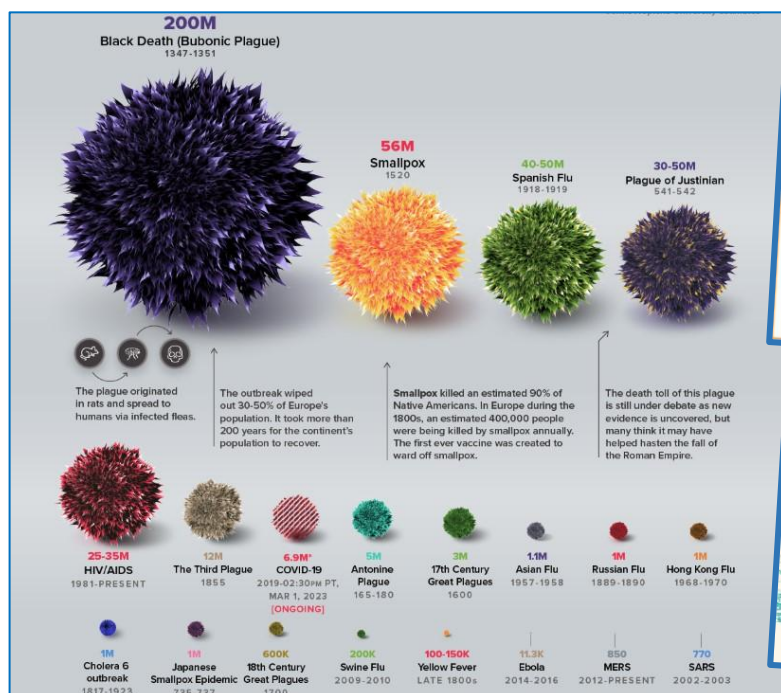
Within just two weeks of the publication of the virus' genetic code, they copied the code of the virus' surface protein into a harmless, weakened cold virus, and swiftly designed the vaccine, which was then distributed to more than 180 countries, with global impact.

The World Health Organization has estimated the true death toll for the Covid-19 pandemic to stand at between 14.9 and 35 million people across the world directly or indirectly due to the virus, although the official death toll is over 7.1 million. Without the contribution of biochemistry, this toll could have been far greater. Take a look at the infographic below for the staggering impact of pandemics before the emergence of biochemistry in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. Food for thought!

### Jobs available with a biochemistry degree\*

- Pharmacology
- Vaccinology
- Biomedical or forensic scientist
- Toxicologist
- Biosecurity and animal health
- Analytical chemist
- Researcher
- Engineer
- Data scientist
- Food, bio- or nano-technologist
- Ecologist
- Scientific Laboratory Technician
- Science journalist/writer
- Government roles in operational sciences, environmental policy and research (e.g. DEFRA, civil service)
- Jobs in energy, environment and health

\*Source: University of Sussex graduate careers website



Rating the history of pandemics in descending order by death toll. The Black Death killed 50% of the European population! (Source: [www.visualcapitalist.com](http://www.visualcapitalist.com))

