

CONNECTIONS

The Big Idea

We live in a world where connections are vital. Interdependence, cohesion and community promote harmony, life and wellbeing on so many different levels. In a post-pandemic world where more people work in isolation and so much communicate is done via a virtual world, what else is lost along with human interaction? In Michelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel, God reaches out to give creative life to Adam, but the fact that the two fingers do not quite touch is telling. The aim of the topic is to explore connection and community and learn about its importance on a personal, local and global level. If, as Chief Seattle's famous speech suggested, 'we are but one thread of a carefully woven web', we should indeed take the time to understand its intricate structure and delicate balance.

As language specialists...

With writing firmly at the heart of our half term, each year group will explore the key components of different genres. From recount and narrative to explanation and reporting, we will box up the tools needed for success and invest time in rehearsing our skills as authors. Each year group will study a graphic novel that will spark imagination and further our experience of authors such as David Weisner, Shaun Tan and Helen Ward. National Poetry week will introduce us to renowned poets with each year group delving into the Big Amazing Poetry Book for inspiration. Grammar techniques and spelling patterns that are outlined in each year group's curriculum will be matched to writing techniques and embedded in learning. We continue to emphasise the importance of speaking and listening and aim to develop focussed vocabulary across subjects. Once again, World Book Day gives us the perfect opportunity to underline the importance of the pleasure that can be found in a good book and promote the connection between healthy reading habits, academic progress and mental wellbeing.

As mathematicians...

Each individual year group will be following their set objectives for the half term ahead, focussing on measurement, fractions, data and statistics, according to the curriculum. The children will be meeting 'Captain Connection' who will be providing weekly challenges and real-life problem-solving scenarios that will test their mathematical knowledge and ensure that the computation skills learnt in the first half of the year are embedded and applied to our weekly learning themes.

Across the curriculum

As expressive artists

We will be exploring the theme of 'connections' through visual art. From Da Vinci's anatomical sketches to Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' there will be life studies and portrait techniques that will enable children of all ages to explore 'self' and find a way of representing human connection.

As musicians

We will be immersed in a whole range of songs, rhymes and body percussions that promote our theme and lift our spirits! Lyrics will teach vocabulary and essential messages about the connection between singing, music, memory and mood.

As theologians and thinkers

RE lessons will help children to explore and understand the different faiths that bring congregations and communities together.

As French speakers

Classes in our Key Stage 2 department will be developing their knowledge of French vocabulary to learn about the human body. Rehearsing simple phrases and written activities will increase both pronunciation and language confidence. Our Language Angels scheme will lead the way.

As fitness and wellbeing experts

We will continue to build on fitness skills and healthy lifestyles through lessons, competitive games, swimming, dance and physical play. Indoor and outdoor lessons, residential activities and visiting rugby coaching will add exciting opportunities to engage all age groups in physical challenges and team building events. The England Girls Football partnership will be leading the way in strengthening equality in sport with a special launch event on March 8th and Mr Clarke and Miss Johnston will continue to involve children of all ages in inter-school events, competitions and clubs.

In Science and Technology...

We will be meeting our Connections theme as we join with the activities planned for this year's National Science Week on March 13th. Our work will take us into anatomy and a simple understanding of the many systems in the human body that enable us to move, grow and function. Inspired by the childhood game 'Operation', we will provide the inspiration for our investigations... From hinge joints, beating hearts, inflating lungs and the brilliant brain, we will be carrying out practical tasks and making models to further our perception and knowledge. Expert medics will also be on hand to answer our questions and guide our thinking and understanding. Connections are also at the heart of construction kits and K'Nex and Lego will be on hand for afternoons of discovery and learning through play in key stage 1. A whole-school creative homework will match circuits and art as children are encouraged to build their own game of Operation!

Ambitious Knowledge of our connection to the World and British Citizenship

Through assemblies and targeted lessons, Willow Brook children will be immersed in a comprehensive study of the fundamental British Values that underpin citizenship in Great Britain today. Through our own school rules and expectations, we will understand more about how shared principles uphold society, promote equality, celebrate diversity and create a thriving community.

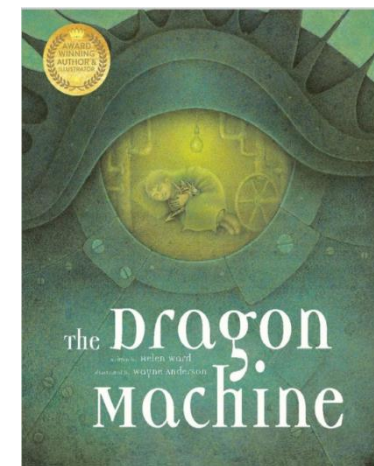
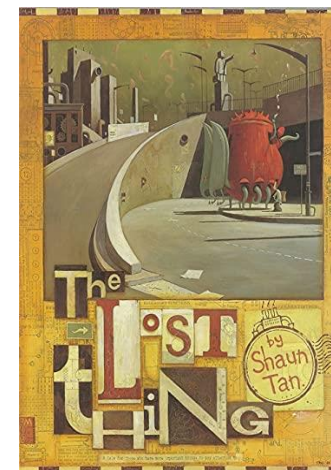
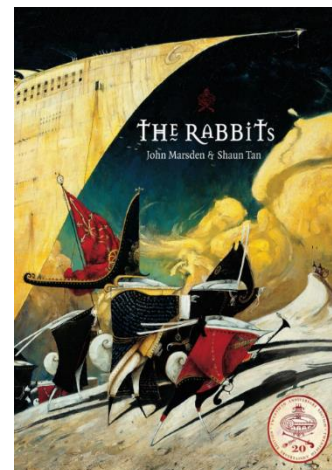
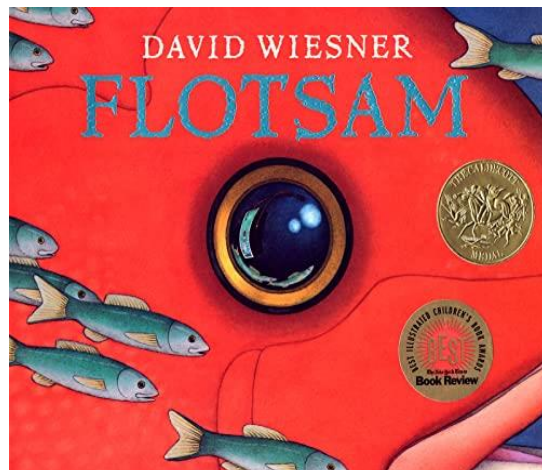
The children will also be contemplating and planning their future lives and careers as we meet some of Willow Brook's inspiring alumni. Understanding a route to success and the connection between determination and destination will hopefully provide some food for future thought.

As geographers and historians

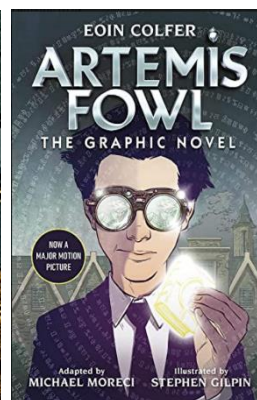
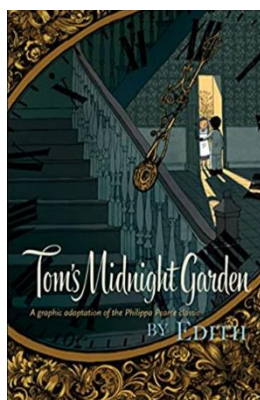
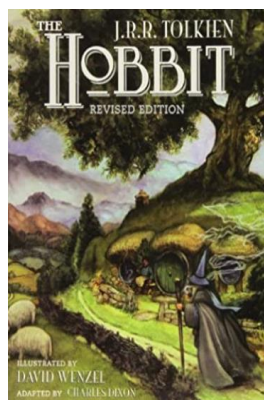
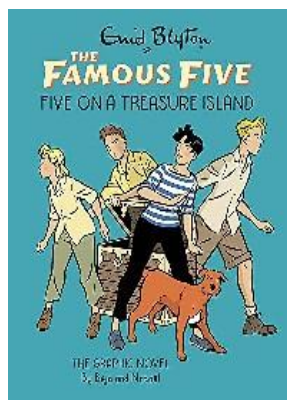
We will be applying the skills we learnt last half term to home in on our locality. From the application of map skills, grid references, street furniture and community landmarks, we will be learning more about physical, human and environmental elements of this subject and how they connect to create a sense of place. In collaborating to create a new school prospectus, we will look back on Willow Brook's history to understand and promote all that makes our place worthy of our words.

Books that we recommend to support our learning this term

This half term, each class are including a study of a graphic novel in their work. Amongst our favourite authors are Shaun Tan, David Wiesner and Helen Ward...and if you have every picked up a book by The Fan Brothers, you will know what a pleasure it is to get lost in a beautiful and inspiring 'read'. Graphic books have become sophisticated over recent years and weave clever and challenging tales that are full of imagination. Your childrne will meet these authors in school this half term and the following are recommendations aof additional books they have created. If you find or can recommend any titles that fit the theme and would be a great addition to our school library, please let us know.



If your child is a reluctant reader, encouraging them to engage with books that will boost their vocabulary and experience is difficult. Older key stage 2 children can often get stuck in the void of finding a manageable book and cling to the familiar. Consequently, they lose touch with stories that suit their age group. The graphic novel has come to the rescue! From Alex Rider and Artemis Fowl to some of the must-read classics, you can find an engaging and accessible way of breathing new life into their reading habits.



The yoto Carnegies

With the prestigious Carnegie Medal shortlist about to be announced for the 2023 children's book awards, a padlet containing last year's titles can be found by scanning the QR code.

If you are looking for a good book to find at school or borrow from the Keyworth library, I would thoroughly recommend the following from the list:

October October by Katya Balen

When the Sky Falls by Phil Earle

Noah's Gold by Frank Cottrell Boyce

The Boy who made Everyone Laugh by Helen Rutter

The Last Bear by Hannah Goldth

Twitch by M.G. Leonard

Voyage of the Sparrowhawk by Natasha Farrant

Windrush Child by Benjamin Zephannah

All of the above are in the library collection in my office. All you have to do is visit, browse and put in a request!

As soon as this year's shortlist has been published, there will be new titles to read and recommend.

The shortlist of picture books for younger children can be found by scanning this QR code. Many of these titles are included in our key stage 1 curriculum.

