

28th March 2023



Dear Year 9 Parent/Carer,

We are sending you this letter to advise you that the by the English department have decided to teach the stage adaptation of Andrea Levy's classic novel *Small Island*, next term. This is a powerfully engaging story about the issues and challenges faced by members of the Windrush generation.

This decision has been made in order to ensure that we provide a more diverse curriculum than we do at present. Due to some of the sensitive subjects that arise in the narrative, we felt it appropriate to email parents and carers to let them know in advance of your son/daughter beginning to study it.

The primary issue surrounds the use of the 'n' word within the play – this is, after all, a play about racism, so it does appear several times, directed as an insult towards several of the non-white characters. As a department, we are very aware of the extremely sensitive and potentially harmful and damaging nature of the use of this word in particular and so we have made the decision that, when the word is uttered in the play, students will instead be directed to say the phrase 'n-word', as opposed to the word itself. Staff will also use the phrase 'n-word' rather than saying it as it is written. We feel that this not only recognises that there is never any place for that kind of language in any circumstance but also doesn't try to shy away from or attempt to hide from the fact that these despicable views did, and still do, exist. As a department, we feel that it is of the utmost importance that we learn from history so as not to repeat it in order to continue to move towards a more tolerant and equal society for all.

All discussions around the topic of racism, bigotry and outdated views will be conducted in a sensitive and informed manner, as they are in all aspect of the wider curriculum. It goes without saying that any objectional views or deliberate uses of the 'n-word' (or any other racial slurs) will be dealt with swiftly as per the academy's culture for learning policy.

If you wish to discuss this issue, please do not hesitate to get in touch, either with myself as curriculum lead, or Rebecca Hawkins, who will be taking over from Phil Spring as Director of Faculty after the Easter Break.

Kind regards,

Harri Brooks
Teacher of English

Acting Heads of School - Dr I Goldberg & Mrs N Robinson

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