Dear College Families,

I would like to introduce you to our Stage 4 Year 7 English course for 2017. It is our hope that you will partner with us as we encourage our students to delight in, critique, reflect on, and compare a wide range of imaginative, factual and critical texts from various cultures and perspectives.

As for all other courses our students study at the College, in English all topics and texts are approached from a Christian perspective. We endeavour to instill in them a Biblical worldview and to equip our students to interact thoughtfully and competently with the world in which they live. We organise our English units around themes with which we feel students will easily engage and that will be beneficial to them as they encounter relevant real-world issues. This may entail, for some of them, dealing with challenging ideas and concepts, however these will be approached under the oversight of our teachers who will engage students in thoughtful, mature and respectful discussions.

As mandated by the BOSTES English syllabus our programs include both fiction and non-fiction texts and explore various textual forms: poetry, novels, drama and film. Students engage with both the ‘big ideas’ of the texts and their details; analysing language, meaning, perspectives, and their own worldview.

In 2017 we are continuing to work closely with the HSIE faculty to align our programs and texts to allow for greater cross-curricula exploration of themes and contextual learning. In Term 1, Year 7 we will begin with a skills component to explicitly embed processes and structures for academic writing in secondary school. We will introduce students to our Wordflyers online literacy program to build skills essential for excellent writing and NAPLAN success.

During the initial phase of coming to know the students in our classes we will engage in a unit on Life Writing. In particular, we will explore some excerpts from Mao’s Last Dancer by Chinese-Australian author Li Cunxin and Chinese Cinderella by Chinese-American physician and author Adeline Yen Mah, describing her experiences growing up in China during the Second World War. Students will compose their own life story and deliver a persuasive speech about themselves.

We will also delve into visual literacy in our unit ‘Deciphering the Truth’ and examine the power of the many realms of media – print, electronic and social media. The manipulation of images and the speed at which information travels in our media savvy world shifts and distorts fact to fiction. We must consider Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” From this passage we understand that as Christian parents and educators, we are to help our young people to engage critically with the world, but to be thoroughly distinctive from it.

In Term Two the English faculty will work to support the History unit on Egypt where we will study a short fantasy novel, The Staff of Serapis by Rick Riordan, which explores the central character’s imaginative quest with Egyptian mythological figures. The rich imagery and creative plot-driven narrative immerses the reader in a fantastic inspired adventure. We will explore narrative structures and the character arc with students composing their own work of short fiction. We will further examine literary techniques employed by composers, beginning with the work of Shaun Tan and his metaphorical picture book The Red Tree. A little girl finds a red seedling, which lights her room, much like Christ lights our life from the core. An anthology of poetry by indigenous and multicultural writers (available to all students electronically on JacPlus) will be explored to assist students to understand how to deconstruct a complex short text and respond critically and creatively to a range of texts.
Throughout Term 3 students will closely engage with texts to develop their empathy. We will examine the cross-cultural text of *Boy Overboard* along with other first person accounts of overcoming adversity, including the story of Malala Yousafzai, who in 2014 became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Students will also examine the film *Inside Out* to explore visual representations in texts whilst growing the disposition of empathy.

As Year 7 transition to become Year 8 students in Term 4, we will launch our *Sustainability* unit across all faculties. In English, we integrate the Australian Curriculum priority of Asian texts via the graphic literacy of Japanese mythology, manga and anime through the film *Ponyo*. The beauty of nature and aesthetics is embedded in the values of Japanese culture, which is core to sustaining our beautiful planet. Students engage in collaborative and individual projects that culminate in a public exhibition at the close of the term.

Assessment tasks will require students to compose a speech based on their own autobiography, review a text, and respond to unseen and unheard materials in a listening/comprehension reflection task. These assessments are designed to provide students with an opportunity to formally demonstrate their skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing, which are mandated in our syllabus. Year 7 students will be required to sit NAPLAN papers in early Term 2. Preparation for these exams is integrated in the skills activities of the classroom, our online Wordflyers program as well as explicit practice papers.

In addition, of course, we are very keen for all our Year Stage 4 students to participate throughout the year in the Premier’s Reading Challenge (PRC). Our LRC is well-stocked with appropriate texts for this and English teachers will aid students in the selection of texts. Students will be issued with their PRC Logon and password early in Term 1 so that they can access the booklists and manage their progress. Students will be required to complete a manual log and submit this to staff for verification in Term 3. Parents are strongly encouraged to engage in the process of selecting novels with their children to partner in the wide reading of culturally enriching, diverse texts. Discussions between parents and their children about the value of reading for pleasure is one of the strongest predictors of student success in English, which transcends all other subjects through high levels of literacy.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Stage 4 English course, please feel free to contact me.

Yours in Christ,

Linda Hogan
Head of Faculty - English