



Penryn
College

"Achieving through Challenge"

January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer(s)

I am writing regarding our current unit of work in Year 9: 'Outsiders', where we will be exploring the key themes of prejudice and persecution, which are prevalent themes in many of the texts we study through Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

During this forthcoming unit of work, which will run for the duration of the Spring term, we will be studying John Steinbeck's world-renowned classic: 'Of Mice and Men' - one of the most poignant tales of friendship ever written, which many parents/carers will remember studying at school themselves.

During recent years, there has been widespread discussion relating to the treatment of women, Black people, people with learning difficulties, disabled people, and migrant workers, depicted in the novel and the inclusion of racist, prejudiced language used by Steinbeck, to recreate what he perceived to be a reflection of ranch life, in America, in the 1930s.

By studying this classic novel (which appears on the 'TES 100 books every student should read before they leave secondary school' list), we want to make it absolutely clear that we are in no way condoning or accepting this treatment or this language; we are using the text as a vehicle to explore the racism and the prejudice that existed during this period in history. As experienced teachers of Literature, as always, we deal with these issues sensitively and responsibly and feel it is of paramount importance to explore these views and attitudes and discuss their unacceptability, as opposed to ignoring them.

NATE (National Association for the Teaching of English) states that "Race should be addressed head-on in schools and home. Using materials like this can afford teachers an opportunity to have conversations in their classrooms about race. They afford them the opportunity to see things from a different place and time and just how society and culture has changed."

We also feel that it is of paramount importance for all students to have experience of Literature from across the world, and firmly believe that 'Of Mice and Men' offers students an insight into a very different life, time and experience, that enables them to consider life from the perspective of an 'outsider'.

We have put together some slides, that we will share with students prior to reading the text, which outline our aims and expectations for this unit. You can access these slides by [clicking here](#).

Yours faithfully

Emmie Williams
Head of English



Headteacher: Tamsin Schouten
Penryn College, Kernick, Penryn, Cornwall TR10 8PZ
T: 01326 372379 F:01326 373194 e:secretary@penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk www.penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 7654298. An exempt charity