



## Year 8 English: Stories that shape us

This term, our Year 8 students have been exploring the power of storytelling through the lens of representation and misrepresentation in historical fiction. Through their study of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *Number the Stars*, students examined how authors use focalisers to shape narratives — and how gaps and silences in these perspectives can influence readers' understanding of historical events. Our unit's analysis highlighted the importance of historical context in interpreting fiction meaningfully.

Building on last year's powerful visit from Holocaust survivor Mr Peter Baruch, students this year, again engaged with the *Courage to Care* program — an educational initiative that uses real stories of Holocaust survivors to inspire students to stand up against prejudice, racism, and bullying. Throughout the workshops, students explored what it means to be an upstander in their own lives and communities.

On Monday, we were honoured to welcome Dr Rochy Miller, daughter of Holocaust survivor Lea Leibowitz, known fondly as Bobba, who shared her mother's extraordinary story of survival. Her memoir, a powerful reflection on trauma, resilience, and identity, has been generously donated to our school library. Students were captivated by her storytelling and the emotional depth of her mother's journey — a story that spans continents and generations.

These experiences have not only deepened students' understanding of historical fiction but also fostered empathy, critical thinking, and a greater appreciation for the voices that history sometimes leaves unheard.

### Student Feedback:

**Elijah:** Rochy, thank you so much for your presentation this morning. I really appreciate your inspiring insight through the story of your mother, as it demonstrated how even in the darkest of times, the power of the human spirit can prevail in the face of adversity. Also, Bobba's bravery that allowed her to escape from every circumstance she found herself in has helped me understand more about this as well as the importance of being an upstander.

**Ella:** I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to listen to speakers from the Courage to Care program. The program allows those to travel around to schools educating people like us about the devastating event of the Holocaust. This experience allowed me to understand the importance of being an upstander and the outstanding privileges we have today. We also had the chance to listen to guest speaker Rocky, where she allowed us to have a deep understanding of her mother's story during the Holocaust. This experience was a remarkable way to expose myself to these heartbreaking experiences.

**Leon:** Today we learned about Rochy Miller's mum, Lea (Bobba) and how she survived the Holocaust. I feel very grateful to have had this experience and to learn the story about (Bobba). This experience made me understand more about how difficult it was for people during the Holocaust. This experience impacted me very much as I learnt about how (Bobba) and many other people wanted to help each to survive.

**Sahana:** I am very grateful to hear Rochy Miller retell her mother's (Bobba's) story as it was very powerful and inspiring. It has allowed me to learn about the importance to help and support people, even when you face hard times yourself. It was inspiring to hear about how Bobba stood up for what she believed in and helped many people. Her story of determination and kindness was moving and emphasised the importance of being an upstander.

# GRAMMAR

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