

## Home Learning Summer Project



**Yardleys  
School**  
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE

At Yardleys, we strongly believe that the Summer Holidays should be a time of rest and relaxation but we also acknowledge the importance of students nurturing their curiosity and seeking out opportunities to deepen their understanding of the world around them outside as well as inside school.

The Education Endowment Foundation estimates that, on average, students lose a month's worth of learning over the summer break and that the best way to combat this is to ensure children are continually challenged when away from school, this might be through educational visits, reading widely and regularly discussing with others their changing views and opinions about world-wide events.

In order to further help stop this 'summer slide' and support you in supporting your children with their learning over the holidays, we suggest students:

### 1. **READ widely and regularly**

Children should be reading independently or aloud to others 30 minutes every day. This might also include listening to an audiobook since this will model grammar for writing and expressive reading. Why not plan a visit to your local library, many including The Library of Birmingham have a range of summer reading challenges to take part in!



### 2. **Practice TIMES TABLES ROCK STARS**

It's important to keep this core knowledge fresh; students can access a link to this via the 'Homework Hub' link on the VLE.

### 3. **Get ACTIVE**

Moving your body every day is really important. Go for a run or walk with friends or family and enjoy the warmer weather. Physical activity will not only keep you healthy but is a great way to reduce anxiety too.



### 4. **Complete the SUMMER PROJECT**

In this booklet you will find two short stories and some accompanying thinking questions. Both stories link to the conceptual frameworks of identify (Year 7) and power (Year 8). Read them with your child or ask them to read them independently and then discuss their thoughts with you.

There are also two optional tasks - one reading and one writing- encourage your child to attempt these (without using the internet or AI to help them) to get them thinking more deeply about key concepts and applying their understanding to writing their own texts. In the Autumn Term, students who have completed these tasks should show them to Ms Austin (Head of Communications Faculty) and will be entered into a prize draw.



## The Jacket

By Gary Soto

My clothes have failed me. I remember the green coat that I wore in fifth and sixth grades when you either danced like a champ or pressed yourself against a greasy wall, bitter as a penny toward the happy couples.

When I needed a new jacket and my mother asked what kind I wanted, I described something like bikers wear: black leather and silver studs with enough belts to hold down a small town. We were in the kitchen, steam on the windows from her cooking. She listened so long while stirring dinner that I thought she understood for sure the kind I wanted. The next day when I got home from school, I discovered draped on my bedpost a jacket the colour of day-old guacamole. I threw my books on the bed and approached the jacket slowly, as if it were a stranger whose hand I had to shake. I touched the vinyl sleeve, the collar, and peeked at the mustard-coloured lining.

From the kitchen mother yelled that my jacket was in the closet. I closed the door to her voice and pulled at the rack of clothes in the closet, hoping the jacket on the bedpost wasn't for me but my mean brother. No luck. I gave up. From my bed, I stared at the jacket. I wanted to cry because it was so ugly and so big that I knew I'd have to wear it a long time. I was a small kid, thin as a young tree, and it would be years before I'd have a new one. I stared at the jacket, like an enemy, thinking bad things before I took off my old jacket whose sleeves climbed halfway to my elbow.

I put the big jacket on. I zipped it up and down several times, and rolled the cuffs up so they didn't cover my hands. I put my hands in the pockets and flapped the jacket like a bird's wings. I stood in front of the mirror, full face, then profile, and then looked over my shoulder as if someone had called me. I sat on the bed, stood against the bed, and combed my hair to see what I would look like doing something natural. I looked ugly. I threw it on my brother's bed and looked at it for a long time before I slipped it on and went out to the backyard, smiling a "thank you" to my mom as I passed her in the kitchen. With my hands in my pockets, I kicked a ball against the fence, and then climbed it to sit looking into the alley. I hurled orange peels at the mouth of an open garbage can and when the peels were gong, I watched the white puffs of my breath thin to nothing.

I jumped down, hands in my pockets, and in the backyard on my knees I teased my dog, Brownie, by swooping my arms while making birdcalls. He jumped at me and missed. He jumped again and again, until a tooth stuck deep, ripping an L-shaped tear on my left sleeve. I pushed Brownie away to study the tear as I would a cut on my arm. There was no blood, only a few loose pieces of fuzz. Damn dog, I thought, and pushed him away hard when he tried to bite again. I got up from my knees and went to my bedroom to sit with my jacket on my lap, with the lights out.

That was the first afternoon with my new jacket. The next day I wore it to sixth grade and got a D on a math quiz. During the morning recess Frankie T., the playground terrorist, pushed me to the ground and told me to stay there until recess was over. My best friend, Steve Negrete, ate an apple while looking at me, and the girls turned away to whisper on the monkey bars. The teachers were no help: they looked my way and talked about how foolish I looked in my new jacket. I saw their heads bob with laughter, their hands half-covering their mouths.

Even though it was cold, I took off the jacket during lunch and played kickball in a thin shirt, my arms feeling like Braille from goose bumps. But when I returned to class, I slipped the jacket on and shivered until I was warm. I sat on my hands, heating them up, while my teeth chattered like a cup of crooked dice. Finally warm, I slid out of the jacket but a few minutes later put it back on when the fire bell rang. We paraded out into the yard where we, the fifth graders, walked past all the other grades to stand against the back fence. Everybody saw me. Although they didn't say out loud, "Man, that's ugly," I heard the buzz-buzz of gossip and even laughter that I knew was meant for me.

And so I went, in my guacamole jacket. So embarrassed, so hurt, I wouldn't even do my homework. I received Cs on quizzes, and forgot the state capitols and the rivers of South America, our friendly neighbour. Even the girls who had been friendly blew away like loose flowers to follow the boys in neat jackets.

I wore that thing for three years until the sleeves grew short and my forearms stuck out like the necks of turtles. All during that time no love came to me- no little dark girl in a Sunday dress she wore on Monday. At lunchtime I stayed with the ugly boys who leaned against the chain link fence and looked around with propellers of grass spinning in our mouths. We saw the girls walk by alone, saw couples, hand in hand, their heads like bookends pressing air together. We saw them and spun our propellers so fast our faces were blurs.

I blame that jacket for those bad years. I blame my mother for her bad taste and her cheap ways. It was a sad time for the heart. With a friend I spent my sixth-grade year in a tree in the ally, waiting for something good to happen to me in that jacket that became my ugly brother who tagged along wherever I went. And it was about that time I began to grow. My chest puffed up with muscle and, strangely, a few more ribs. Even my hands, those fleshy hammers, showed bravery through the cuffs, the fingers already hardening for the coming fights. But the L- shaped rip on the left sleeve got bigger, bits of stuffing coughed out from its wound after a hard day at play. I finally scotch-taped it close, but in rain or cold weather the tape peeled off like a scab and more stuffing fell out until that sleeve shrivelled into a palsied arm. That winter the elbows began to crack and whole chunks of green began to fall off. I showed the cracks to my mother, who always seemed to be at the stove with steamed up glasses, and she said there were children in Mexico who would love that jacket. I told her that this was America and yelled that Debbie, my sister, didn't have a jacket like mine. I ran outside, ready to cry, and climb the tree by the alley to think bad thought and breath puff white and disappear.

But whole pieces still casually flew off my jacket when I played hard, read quietly, or took vicious spelling test at school. When it became so spotted that my brother began to call me "camouflage," I flung it over the fence into the alley. Later. However, I swiped the jacket off the ground and went inside to drape it across my lap and mope.

I was called to dinner: steam shrivelled my mother's glasses as she said grace; my brother and sister with their heads bowed made ugly faces at their glasses of powdered milk. I gagged too, but eagerly ate rips of buttered tortilla that held scooped up beans. Finished, I went outside with my jacket across my arm. It was a cold sky. The faces of clouds were piled up, hurting. I climb the fence, jumping down with a grunt. I started up the alley and soon slipped into my jacket, that green ugly brother who breathed over my shoulder that day and ever since.

### **The Jacket: Reading Comprehension Check**

Having read the short story 'The Jacket', check your understanding by answering the questions below; you may want to write these down or simply discuss them with someone at home.

1. What does the author mean when he says (in the first line) 'My clothes have failed me'?
2. Initially, how does the protagonist feel about the jacket?
3. How do the protagonist's feelings towards the jacket change as the story develops? Why do you think this might be?
4. To what extent does the narrator feel their identity is defined by the jacket?
5. To what extent might the jacket be interpreted as a metaphor for the speaker themselves?

### **On the Sidewalk Bleeding**

By Evan Hunter

The boy lay bleeding in the rain. He was sixteen years old. He wore a bright purple silk jacket. Across the back were the words, THE ROYALS. The boy's name was Andy. The name was written with thin black thread in the front of the jacket. It was just over the heart, Andy.

He had been stabbed ten minutes ago. The knife had entered just below his ribs. It had torn a wide gap in his flesh. He lay on the sidewalk. The March rain washed away the blood from his open wound. He had known pain when the knife had torn across his body. Then a little relief came when the blade was pulled away.

He had heard a voice saying, "That's for you Royall!" He heard footsteps hurry away in the rain. Then he had fallen to the sidewalk. Holding his stomach, he had tried to stop the blood.

He tried to yell for help, but he had no voice. It was raining harder. There was an open hole in his body and his life ran red. It was 11:30 PM, but he did not know the time.

There was another thing he did not know. He did not know he was dying. He lay on the sidewalk and he thought only: THAT WAS A FIERCE RUMBLE. THEY GOT ME GOOD THAT TIME. But he did not know he was dying. He would be frightened had he known. He wished he could call for help. But there was only a bubble of blood when he opened his mouth to speak. He lay and waited, waited for someone to find him.

He could hear the sound of car tires far away. He wondered if Laura would be angry.

He had left to get a pack of cigarettes. He had told her he would be back in a few minutes. He had gone. He knew that Alfredo's on the next block would be open. He had started through the alley. Then they had jumped him. He could hear the faint sound of music now. He wondered if Laura was dancing, wondering if she missed him. Maybe she thought he wasn't coming back. Maybe she had left and gone home. He thought of her face, the brown eyes, the black hair. Thinking of her he forgot his pain a little. He forgot that the blood was rushing from his body.

Someday he would marry Laura. They would get out of this neighbourhood. They would move to a clean place and have kids.

He heard footsteps at the other end of the alley. He lifted his cheek from the sidewalk and tried to call out.

The man came down the alley. He had not seen Andy yet. He walked, leaned against the building, and then walked again. He saw Andy and came toward him. He stood over him, watching him and not speaking.

Then he said, "What's the matter, buddy?"

Andy could not speak. He could barely move. He lifted his face a little. Then he smelled alcohol and knew the man was drunk. Then man was smiling. "Did you fall down, Buddy?" he asked. "you mus' be as drunk as I am" He grinned. It was 11:40. The man studied Andy. "You gonna catch cold here," he said. "What's the matter? You like layin' in the wet?" What time of day is it? Could the drunk tell the difference between the blood and rain puddles? Andy could not answer.

The man tried to focus his eyes on Andy's face. The man squatted beside Andy. "You like a drink?" Andy shook his head. "Nevermind," the man said. "You're too young to be drinkin' anyway. Should be „shamed of yourself. Drunk and layin' in a alley, all wet. Shame on you. I gotta good mind calla cop." Andy nodded. Yes, he tried to say. Yes, call a cop. Please call one.

"Oh, you don't like that, huh?" the drunk said. "You don't wanna cop to find you all drunk an' wet in a alley? Okay, buddy. This time you get off easy." He got to his feet. "This time you lucky," he said. He waved at Andy. "S'long buddy," he said.

Wait, Andy thought. Wait, please. I'm bleeding.

"S'long," the drunk said again. "I see you around." Then he went off down the alley.

Andy lay there and thought, Laura, Laura. Are you dancing?

A couple came into the alley. They were running from the rain. The girl had a newspaper over her head. Andy lay and watched them run into the alley laughing. They stood in a doorway, not far from him.

"Man, what rain!" the boy said. "You could drown out there."

"I have to get home," the girl said. "It's late, Freddie. I have to get home." There was a long silence. Then the girl said "Oh." Andy knew she had been kissed. He wondered if he would kiss Laura again. It was then he wondered if he was dying. No, he thought, I can't be dying. Not from a little street rumble. Guys get cut up all the time. I can't be dying.

No, that's stupid. That don't make any sense at all.

"I love you, Angela," the boy said.

"I love you, too, Freddie," the girl said. Andy listened and thought: I love you, Laura. Laura, this is stupid, but I think maybe I'm dying.

He tried not to speak. He tried not to move. Finally, a grunt came from his lips.

"What was that?" the girl said. "Go look, Freddie."

Freddie stepped into the alley. He walked over to where Andy lay on the ground. He stood over him, watching him.

"You all right?" he asked. He knelt beside Andy. "You cut?"

Andy nodded. The boy saw THE ROYALS on the jacket then. He turned to Angela.

"He's a Royal," he said.

"What should we do, Freddie?"

"I don't know. He's a Royal. We help him, and the Guardians will be after us. I don't want to get mixed up in this Angela."

"Is he - is he hurt bad?"

"Yeah, it looks that way."

"We can't leave him here in the rain." Angela waited. "Can we?"

"If we get a cop, the Guardians will find out who," Freddie said. "I don't know, Angela, I don't know."

Angela waited a long time before she spoke. Then she said, "I have to get home, Freddie. My folks will begin to worry."

"Yeah," Freddie said. He looked at Andy again. "You all right?" he asked. Andy lifted his face from the sidewalk. His eyes said, please, please help me. Maybe Freddie read what his eyes were saying. Maybe he didn't.

Behind him, Angela said, "Freddie, let's get out of here! Please!" Her voice was near panic. Freddie stood up. He looked at Andy once more. "I'm sorry," he said. Then he took Angela's arm. Together they ran toward the far end of the alley.

Why, they're afraid of the Guardians, Andy thought with surprise. But why should they be afraid? I wasn't afraid maybe I'm dying. of the Guardians. I went to every rumble with the Guardians. I got hurt, and I'm bleeding.

The rain felt good somehow. It was cold rain. But his body was hot all over. The rain helped to cool him. He had always liked rain. He could remember sitting in Laura's house one time. He looked out the window and watched people run from the rain. That was when he first joined the Royals. He could remember how happy he was that the Royals had taken him. The Royals and the Guardians were two of the biggest. He was a Royal. There had been meaning in the title.

Now in the alley, with the cold rain, he wondered about the meaning. If he died, he was Andy. He was not a Royal. He was simply Andy, and he was dead. Had the Guardian who knifed him ever once known that he was Andy? Had they stabbed him, Andy, or stabbed only the jacket and the title? What good was the title if you were dying?

I'm Andy, he screamed without a sound. I'm Andy.

An old lady stopped at the other end of the alley. The garbage cans were there. The rain made noise as it beat on the cans. The old lady had a shopping bag over one arm. She lifted the lids off the garbage

cans like a queen. She did not hear Andy grunt because she was a little deaf. She had been searching most of the night. She collected newspapers and string. Sometimes she found an old hat. Then she put the lids back. She carried an old broken umbrella. She worked quickly without a sound. Then she lifted her umbrella high and was gone.

The alley looked very long now. He could see people passing at the other end of it. He wondered who it was on the Guardians who had plunged the knife into his body.

"That's for you Royal!" the voice had said. Even in his pain there had been pride in knowing he was a Royal. Now there was no pride at all. The rain was beginning to chill him. The blood was still pouring between his fingers. He knew only that he was dizzy. He could only think: I WANT TO BE ANDY.

It was not very much to ask of the world.

He watched people passing. The world didn't know he was alive. He wanted to say, "Hey, look at me! I'm alive! Don't you know I'm alive?" He felt weak and tired. He felt alone and wet. He knew he was going to die now. It made him sad, but not afraid.

He felt sad that his life was over at 16. He had never done anything, seen anything, been anywhere. Now the rumbles and purple jackets were not important. They seemed like such small things in a world he was missing. I don't want to die, he thought, I haven't lived yet.

It seemed important to him that he take off the jacket. He was close to dying. When they did find him, he didn't want them to say "Oh, he's a Royal."

With great effort he rolled over on his back. He felt the pain tear at him when he moved. It was a pain that he did not think possible. But he wanted to take off the jacket. If he never did another thing, he wanted to take off the jacket. The jacket had only one meaning now. That was a very simple meaning.

If he had not been wearing the jacket, he would not have been stabbed. The knife had not hated Andy. The knife hated only the purple jacket. The jacket was a stupid thing that was robbing him of his life. He wanted the jacket off his back. With great hate for it, he wanted the jacket off his back.

He lay and pulled at the shiny wet cloth. His arms were heavy. The pain ripped fire across his body when he moved. He turned and fought until one arm was free, and then the other. Then he rolled away from the jacket and lay still. He listened to the sound of his own breathing. He thought rain was sweet. I'm Andy.

She found him in the alley a minute past midnight. She left the dance to look for him. When she found him she knelt beside him and said, "Andy, it's me Laura."

He did not answer her. She backed away. Tears came to her eyes. Then she ran from the alley crying and calling. She did not stop running until she found a cop.

Now standing with the cop, she looked at the dead boy on the sidewalk. The cop rose and said, "He's dead." All the crying was out of her now. She stood in the rain and said nothing. She looked at him. She looked at the purple jacket that rested a foot away from his body.

The cop picked up the jacket and turned it over in his hands. "A Royal, hun?" he said.

The rain seemed to beat down even harder now.

She looked at the cop and very quietly, she said, "His name is Andy."

The cop put the jacket over his arm. He took out his black pad. He opened it to a blank page.

"A Royal," he said.

Then he began writing.

### On The Sidewalk Bleeding: Reading Comprehension Check

Having read the short story 'On The Sidewalk Bleeding', check your understanding by answering the questions below; you may want to write these down or simply discuss them with someone at home.

1. What has happened to Andy and why?
2. Who is Laura and why is she important to Andy?
3. What does Andy's jacket symbolise?
4. Why is Andy so desperate to take off the jacket?
5. To what extent is Andy's identity defined by the jacket?

### Comparing 'The Jacket' and 'On The Sidewalk Bleeding'?

1. Which story did you enjoy most, why?
2. Both stories are about the power of clothing, where else in stories you have read inside and outside of school has clothing been important?
3. In each story, does clothing make the protagonists feel powerful or powerless?

Now that you have read both short stories, complete at least one of the following **Summer Project Tasks**. All students who complete a task will receive positives for their efforts and will be entered into a prize draw. Students showing evidence of completing two tasks, will be entered twice.

1. **Read a novel of your choice with a reading age of 13yrs +** (suggestions have been included overleaf), create a presentation/poster/written response exploring either the theme of identity or power (like the short stories above, these could be linked to an important piece of clothing).
2. **Write your own short story** (2-3 pages) about an important item of clothing.





### Suggested Reading List

Find below reading suggesting for novels that further explore ideas of identity and power. Like the two short stories you have read, those in bold often also explore the power of clothing. You may want to read one of these to complete Summer Project Task 1 (previous).

- **The Crossing**, Manjeet Mann
- **King of Nothing**, Nathanael Lessore
- **Giften**, Leyla Suzan
- **The Knife of Never Letting Go**, Patrick Ness
- **Thief**, Malorie Blackman
- **The Giver**, Lois Lowry
- **The Windsinger**, William Nicholson
- **King of Shadows**, Susan Cooper
- **Exodus**, Julie Bertagna
- **Ink**, Alica Broadway
- **Anything But Typical**, Nora Raleigh Baskin
- **The Climbers**, Ketih Gray
- **Pig Heart Boy**, Malorie Blackman
- **The Hunger Games**, Suzanne Collins
- **Roll of Thunder Hear My cry**, Mildred D Taylor
- **The Other Side of Truth**, Beverley Naidoo
- **Wonder** R J Palacio