

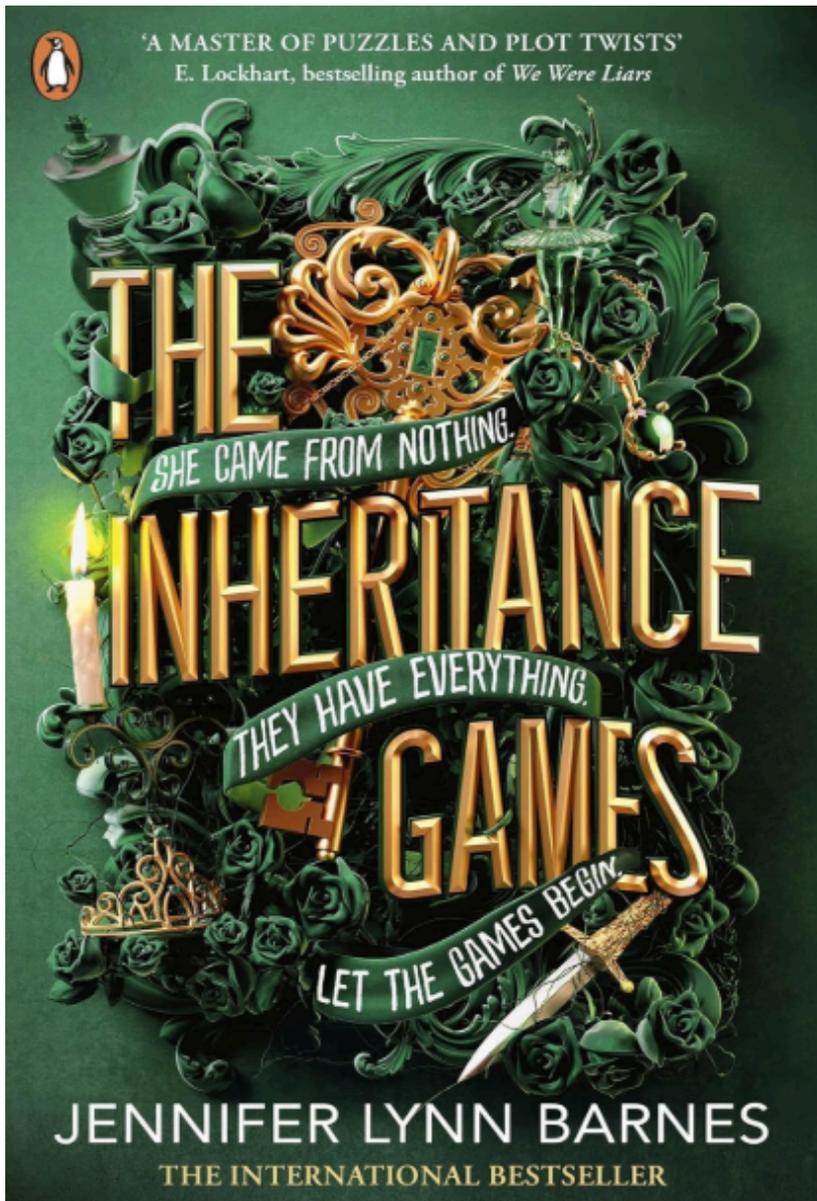
# NEWSLETTER

## SETTLEBECK READS

Issue 4 | 27/03/2026



### Author Spotlight Jennifer Barnes



The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes is an addictive, twist-packed YA mystery that hooks readers from the start. When Avery Grambs unexpectedly inherits a billionaire's fortune, she's thrust into a world of riddles, dangers, and the enigmatic Hawthorne brothers. Barnes crafts a clever, fast-paced story filled with puzzles, shifting alliances, and emotional depth. Avery is a relatable, determined heroine, and the dynamics among the brothers add tension and charm. The narrative balances suspense, character development, and playful intrigue, making every chapter engaging. Perfect for fans of mysteries with heart, this book delivers a thrilling, smart, and highly entertaining read.

Jennifer Lynn Barnes is a #1 New York Times bestselling author celebrated for her gripping, twist-filled young adult fiction. With more than twenty acclaimed novels to her name, Barnes has built a dynamic career that blends sharp storytelling with deep psychological insight. She holds advanced degrees in psychology, psychiatry, and cognitive science, earning her Ph.D. from Yale University in 2012, and has served as a professor of psychology and professional writing at the University of Oklahoma.

Barnes began writing young - she penned her first published novel at nineteen—and has since created multiple popular series. Among her most notable works is The Inheritance Games series, which includes The Inheritance Games, The Hawthorne Legacy, and The Final Gambit. She is also the author of Little White Lies and Deadly Little Scandals from the Debutantes series, The Naturals series, The Lovely and the Lost, and earlier works such as Golden and Tattoo.

Beyond fiction, Barnes is recognised as a leading expert in the psychology of fandom and the cognitive science of stories, bringing a unique lens to her writing. Her books are known for their clever puzzles, emotional depth, and memorable characters—qualities that continue to captivate readers of all ages.

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Today a reader,  
tomorrow a leader.

Margaret Fuller

### World Book Day: Celebrating Our Culture of Reading

At Settlebeck, we are proud to be a reading community - a place where stories matter, curiosity is encouraged, and reading is woven into the fabric of school life. Each year, as part of our ongoing mission to build and nurture this culture of reading, we invite a well-known author into school to lead workshops, inspire students, and share the magic behind the craft of writing.

This year, we were delighted to welcome William Hussey, acclaimed author of *Hideous Beauty*, *The Outrage*, and numerous gripping horror and thriller titles. Known for his meticulous research, atmospheric storytelling, and ability to captivate young readers, William brings a wealth of insight into both writing and the darker corners of history that often influence his books.

#### Year 7 & 8: Witch Trials

For our Year 7 and 8 students, William delivered immersive workshops on the theme of Witch Trials. Students had the chance to re-enact their own dramatic witch trial, stepping into the roles of accuser, defender, and jury. William shared a host of fascinating facts uncovered during his research into real historical witch hunts—details that showed just how strange, unjust, and gripping these episodes of history really were. He emphasised the importance of thorough research when crafting a story, showing students how truth often provides the most surprising ideas.

#### Year 9 & 10: Gothic Horror and Its Origins

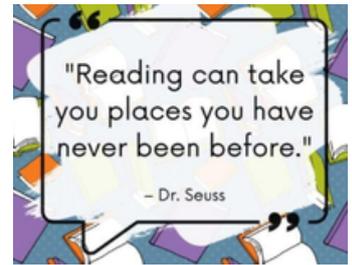
Older students in Years 9 and 10 journeyed into the shadows of Gothic horror, exploring the origins of iconic creations such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. William discussed the historical inspirations behind these legendary characters, from Mary Shelley's groundbreaking imagination to the terrifying real-life figure of Vlad the Impaler, who influenced Bram Stoker's *Count Dracula*. The session ended with a lively quiz, where Vlad the Impaler and Count Dracula went head-to-head in a battle of gothic horror knowledge - a moment that had students thoroughly entertained and engaged.



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### Dr Hunter meets with Student Council

Dr Hunter recently met with the Student Council to discuss why reading remains a key focus at Settlebeck. She shared DfE data showing national concerns around reading in secondary schools and explained our goal for all students to leave Settlebeck reading at or above their chronological age.

Students also raised several ideas about improving DEAL (Drop Everything and Listen), and together they agreed on the following outcomes:



**You Said:** Students wanted to choose the order of the DEAL books rather than follow the current sequence.

**We Did:** We agreed, and from September the books will be arranged in the order you requested.

**You Said:** You wanted the chance to select some of the DEAL books yourselves.

**We Did:** We asked you to create a recommended reading list, which you did brilliantly. We are now reviewing your suggestions and will select one book for Year 7 and one for Year 10 based on your recommendations.

### KS3 Recommended Reads (Available from Mrs Astbury-Smith)

