Staff Reader of the month for February

Chris Bassios
(Teacher of English at SSC for 25 years)

What was the last book you read?

“The Secret Pilgrim”
by John le Carre

“This novel fits very firmly into the spy thriller genre, as do all of Le Carre’s novels. It is also autobiographical in style and is set in the time after the Berlin Wall has fallen. Now that the Cold War has ended, Ned, a loyal agent, assesses his association with British Intelligence over a considerable period of years and finally manages to frame the questions that have haunted him.

As a result of my completion of this novel, I have found myself in the invidious position of having read all of John Le Carre’s novels – about 20 or so! Amongst these novels, I have some firm favourites, namely ‘Tinker Tailor, Soldier, Spy’, which has recently been made into a film. I regard this novel as his masterpiece, as well as ‘The Honourable Schoolboy’ and ‘Smiley’s People’, which make up the set of novels that cover the period of the Cold War, and feature the intense, intellectual struggle between George Smiley of British Intelligence and his counterpart, Karla from Moscow Centre.
Other Le Carre novels that I have found to be real ‘page-turners’ are ‘The Constant Gardener’ which has also been made into a film and features on our Year 11 Literature course; as well, ‘The Mission Song’, which is on our library’s shelves is also one of my favourites.

As well as the Le Carre novel, I also completed reading a book from Russian Literature – ‘Fathers and Sons’, which was written by Turgenev in 1861. It is widely regarded as being his finest work, and features one of the most extraordinary creations in this field of Literature: the character Bazarov, the arch pessimist and relentless critic of Russian society at the time. Turgenev’s use of irony is superb, and the novel is quite fast-paced as Turgenev depicts Bazarov’s interaction and relentless clash with the characters that are unfortunate enough to be on the receiving end of his withering criticism!