



## Episode 4

### Tips & Tricks for Reading Aloud Guest: Jim Weiss

This is the first of two episodes with Jim Weiss.

Jim has been a storyteller heard all over the world for over 25 years. He and his wife, Randy, formed Greathall Productions and have produced 49 storytelling recordings.

Today, I'm going to be chatting with Jim about how we can become better skilled at the art of reading aloud to our kids. He'll give us some tips for great character voices, engaging stories and tell us why it's so important that we not try to do this thing perfectly.

**Sarah:** Hey Jim! Thanks so much for taking my call. I'm excited to be talking with you today.

**Jim:** Same here Sarah. I'm just delighted that you called. Thanks for asking.

**Sarah:** Well let's get started by having you tell us a little bit about yourself and your family.

**Jim:** I am directly descended from the queen of England—no, I just made that part up.

Anyway, my wife Randy and I live in Charlottesville, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson's town. And we've lived here for about sixteen years. Part of the draw was that it is the area in which Jefferson and Madison and Monroe and Lewis and Clark all lived, and as a history fan that drew us here. But also, it's just a beautiful place. And I have my studio across the driveway from the house where I write and record and edit and master and send the recordings out to be replicated or downloaded. So it's a very self-contained kind of an operation and Randy runs the business side of it.

And we've been doing it as you said for about 25 years now and when we started, the whole explosion in spoken word audio had not yet occurred. So it was really a huge leap of faith on our part. And we weren't sure there was going to be anybody out there who would want to buy any of these recordings which in those days were on cassette. But fortunately, it took off very quickly. And here we are 25 years later and as you say, we have people all

over the world who listen to us now. It's kind of mind-boggling to us.

**Sarah:** Right, in various formats probably, right? CD or downloads or...

**Jim:** That's right. All kinds of things. I've been to New Zealand and toured there. A couple of months ago, we did the tour in Singapore and they have asked us back already to go to Singapore and Hong Kong next year. And who knew that the recordings were going to be picked up by people in Eastern Asia.

**Sarah:** Oh that's so cool. Yeah.

**Jim:** Mind-boggling.

**Sarah:** So what drove you to start telling stories as a profession? Have you always been a storyteller?

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#### **6:40 Jim describes his own family history of storytelling, which began with his grandfather.**

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**Jim:** Well, the profession part of it was the second step. The first part of it was telling stories, just because I love to tell stories. My father and grandfather and mother all loved to share stories with us, with my brother and me, when we were growing up. My mother read aloud to us. My grandfather had a small but potent repertoire of stories that we all got to know so well that there were some sentences in which we would chime in, and he being a great tease would occasionally mess up on one of those phrases on purpose. And we'd all go, "No, grandpa, that's not right." And he would say, "It's not? How is it supposed to go?" which was one of his

instinctive ways of keeping us listening carefully.

My dad was the one who was the greatest influence though. He told us stories as our bedtime stories from classic literature and from history. And he knew instinctively a couple of the rules and there are not very many rules to doing this. Everybody gets to do it in his or her own way but the first rule, the unbreakable rule, was you only tell stories or read stories aloud that you love yourself, because if you try to tell a story that you didn't like, people pick up on that, and it will fall flat. But if you're enthusiastic, they'll pick up on that and chances are, they'll get enthusiastic.

So he told the stories he loved and he usually had the book nearby when possible, so he could say at the end, "I'm so glad you liked this. Wait till you read the book, it's even better." And then as you know, that's what happens at the end of my recordings.

**Sarah:** Yes, absolutely, it is. I was going to ask you about that because sometimes I hear people say we shouldn't read abridged versions or tell children abridged versions. But in my own experience in my family, it seems that when they hear you tell the story or read an abridged version, a lot of times it just stirs them to want to read the original, especially if it's a classic.

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#### **8:22 Should we read or listen to abridged versions of classic stories?**

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**Jim:** That's exactly why it's one of the reasons we started doing this as a professional kind of an enterprise because we

felt there was a generation either not getting classic literature and history or getting it in a version that really didn't stay with the intent of the original story. Our goal was to tell it on a level that kids could handle, the way my father did with us. And then at the end saying, "Now, go to a library or bookstore and get the original." Because a lot of times, the stories are a little complicated or a little intense or the motives of the character may need a little bit of explanation for a young reader or a young listener.

So we stay with the intent of the story. But I tell it in my words with character voices for each character and so on, because I'm trying to act really as a translator. And that's how I think you have to look at this thing when you're telling or reading stories to your own kids. Unless you're reading the gospel, it's not gospel. And you can mess with it a little bit. You can say, "Do you know what that means?" or you can soften violence or you can just stop long enough to explain the motives a little bit or get into a conversation with your child or children about, "Why do you think he's doing this or what else could she do?"

By the way, that whole discussion of the ethical decision-making doubles the impact of the story. And all of the stories we're already sharing with our kids have this element to them and we don't usually talk about it. We usually share classic literature and say, "Okay, I've done my bit. Goodbye." And whereas if you talk about why the characters do what they do, you're not only giving the story to your child, and you not only have the opportunity to go on and talk about the era in which the characters were operating, and getting into that whole discussion, but now you're doubling the

impact or more than doubling it by talking about the choices that the characters make.

So all of this is inherent in the way we make our recordings. But at the end, we don't want to take the place of Dickens or Dumas or Stevenson or whoever it is. We want the listeners to go and find the original or find more books by that author or if it's history, find out more about this group of characters in the era in which the story has taken place.

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**11:40 Listening to stories serves the needs of children with disabilities and/or reading challenges.**

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For us, it's a way of engaging them and then leading them on. Now having said that, I'll just finish this little piece by saying Randy and I have through the years heard from thousands of parents around the world who will say for one reason or another, my child may never be able to read this particular book. He's blind. She's dyslexic. They're this, they're that, they have this challenge or that challenge, but they can now hold an intelligent discussion about the book because of your recording, because it's true enough to the original. And the flip side of that is— and I just had this conversation with a parent at the conference last weekend—"My child's dyslexic but he's now reading at grade level because he has listened to your recordings and he got so turned on, he has insisted on teaching himself to read better so that he could read the original himself."

**Sarah:** Yeah, that's very cool. Well, the very first episode of this podcast, I talked to Andrew Pudewa from the Institute for Excellence in Writing and he was talking

about what a tremendous impact hearing stories has on a child's ability to read later even if they struggle with dyslexia or learning disabilities of any kind.

**Jim:** Andrew and I know each other well and we've had that conversation ourselves more than once. I think and without repeating anything he said, I want to point out that there are a lot of things happening simultaneously.

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**12:59 The facets of storytelling:  
learning the content; an entry  
point to discussing ethics and  
history; and scientific data  
supporting auditory learning.**

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Number one, you're giving the content of the story, obviously. Number two, it's the point of entry to discussing ethics. Number three, it's a point of entry toward discussing the time and the place in which the story happened and possibly the time and the place in which the author lived. And now we're still talking content. But there are a couple of other things going on, too. The brain researchers in the last 12 or 15 years have finally started to explain in scientific terms what the rest of us knew instinctively was true—what happens to you when you're listening to a story or reading it as opposed to somebody giving you a story with a visual image on a screen to accompany it, movie screen, a TV screen, a computer screen.

First of all, there are two entirely different parts of the brain engaged if I give you a story with an image or if I tell you the story or read it aloud to you or you read it yourself and you're using your imagination to fill an image. There are actually two different parts

of the brain, and each of them is used in different kinds of creative thinking later on. So you have to develop both, and in a very, very visual age such as we are living in, it's particularly important that we get listening skills in addition to visual learning skills, for this reason among others. And the other thing that is very fundamental that most people just don't even realize is that you have to learn how to learn. Yes, it's instinctive but let me tell you what I mean.

If I told you a story right now, Sarah, and at the end of the day your child said to you, "What was that story Mr. Weiss told?" You'd stop a second and then you'd be able to say it. You'd say, "Well, it was a story about..." And you'd talk about the main characters and the challenges and where and when the story happened and you kind of follow the main points until you got to the ending and the results. Well you have to learn what are those essential parts of the story.

And what's interesting is as you were learning to delineate between the essential parts of the story and those details that are added in just for some extra color and texture. As you're learning that with story, your brain is also absorbing this on a whole other level. You are learning how to do this on all the other stuff that you're also learning about. Stories not only teach about stories. They're teaching us how to delineate critical information from lesser information in all the things we study.

**Sarah:** Right, so really when you learn how to listen to a story, you're learning how to learn.

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**16:15 Storytelling is an incredibly powerful and beautiful way to bond.**

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**Jim:** Yeah, so much is happening. And one last thing which I knew because I was lucky enough to grow up the way I did, which is, it's an incredibly powerful and beautiful way to bond between people.

If you share a story that you love with somebody, they know you love it. And it means something to them that you've taken the time to do this. And for a parent and children, it's one of the best ways you have available to you to build a relationship and build trust and build love within your family, and so all of these things are happening at the same time while you're sharing the stories that you love to read aloud or tell.

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**17:06 How do amateur storytellers handle character voices when reading aloud?**

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**Sarah:** Very good. Well, let's talk about character voices. A lot of my listeners have told me that they struggle with character voices and one of the things that I know is tricky is keeping the voices straight. One of my readers, Tracy, said that she wants to know when to change voices. If she's reading aloud, she doesn't really realize "I need to change voices" until after she's read the quote or... So how do you tackle character voices?

**Jim:** Well, first of all, I venture to say that the greatest actors and actresses in the world in many cases have, just like you and Tracy and me, at one time or another had a child say "That's not how the characters sounded the other night, Mom."

**Sarah:** [laughing] Exactly.

**Jim:** I don't care who you are. It happens, you know. If I'm doing a recording and it's a story I know really well and the characters are characters I know really well, I don't have to worry about that too much. But when I record, let's say, an unabridged recording of a book—and I've done 50 or 60 of those through the years, too—some of them have 40, 50 characters. My unabridged reading of *Carry On, Mister Bowditch*, I purposely waited until the end to count how many speaking roles there were because I knew it would be too intimidating otherwise. And when I was done I counted it up and there were 58 characters in this book. And I have lived to tell about it.

Now, here's the thing, when I'm doing it, because it's a recording and it has to hang together, if it's a project like that one, I may spend the first day in the studio just recording a sentence in the voice of each of the main characters. Just so I can go back to that if the character disappears for three chapters and comes back, I don't have to say, "Wwhat did he sound like again?"

And it's all right there in one spot I can go to. I don't have that problem very often. For me, having access to the voice comes very organically. Nonetheless, there are times you have to think about it. And here's what I would say to parents. First, the critical part is just the main characters. Don't put any pressure on yourself to get all the minor characters with extraordinarily unique voices because you'd go crazy. Second, when you're thinking about the voice, rather than just snatching a voice out of thin air and saying okay, this is going to be Frodo and this is going to be Sam, think for a moment first

about: What's special about Frodo? What's special about Sam? What's special about Sherlock Holmes? What's special about Queen Elizabeth I? What is it I want my kids to know about this person, and now how do I convey something about that through the voice?

So you're looking for something to delineate one character from another, and have a little contrast in the voices. And the ways that you do that are... and here's a list: You can have one voice that's higher like this one, and one voice that's lower like this one. And you know what, I haven't changed anything except the pitch. And yet I have two very distinctive voices here, and two very distinctive characters here. And chances are if it's a story about Samson or Hercules, that character's going to get the lower voice and somebody else is going to get a higher voice. It's so simple, that one contrast.

You can also do louder and softer. Very excitable characters tend to get loud. If you have a character who's very shy, just get a little softer with that voice. And even if you don't really change the volume much in your other characters, even if they're speaking in an ordinary volume like this, there is still a contrast. And that shy person's voice is going to sound more shy by comparison.

You can do kind of a jumpy conversational thing like this as opposed to someone else who's much more even and a little more extended in his or her speaking because they are maybe more grounded or more thoughtful about the things they say.

**Sarah:** Yeah. That reminds me of the interview I saw you do with Rebecca from HEDUA and she had some videos on that site

which I'll link to in the show notes because they are so fantastic. Her interview with you is just great and you were doing *The Tortoise and the Hare*, I think, and I just was floored. All you did was speed up and slow down your voice and it made such a huge difference.

**Jim:** And in a way, it's an advantage that you are not an actor or actress out on stage with costume changes and scenery and all of that stuff. I mean it's fun, but you don't need that stuff. You just sit there with your kids and do this and you just need one of those contrasts or two of those contrasts between characters and you've got a cast of characters. And as I say, mostly you want to think about that for the main characters.

And if your child says "Well, that's not exactly the same voice," you say, "You know what, you're right! It's been a couple of nights since I did this. What was different about it the other night? I'll try and get close to that as I can get." And your child will say to you, hey, it was louder or it was faster or whatever. And get as close as you can and then say, "You know that may be as close as I can get to it from the other night." And that, by the way, is a teaching moment you have just had with your child.

**Sarah:** Very good. Okay, and I actually don't know that my kids usually remember all the little extra characters' tonality or the little nuances of their voices but definitely the main characters. I think they know it.

**Jim:** The main characters, yes.

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**23:17 A listener asks how to handle accents when reading aloud.**

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**Sarah:** So what about accents? Cindy says that all of her accents sound either English or Russian. And I'm pretty sure all of mine sound English. So how do you learn accents and do you have any tips for that?

**Jim:** Well, again, if you can't do an accent well, you may or may not want to try. It's one thing if the author has written a dialog with an Irish accent or a German accent, you know, and it's a German character and the w's are all v's now. You can see it on the page and at least do something with that. But there are two things to keep in mind, I guess, with accents.

First is that you never want to sound as if you're making fun of somebody's accent.

**Sarah:** Very good point.

**Jim:** Because even if you're telling the story just to your own kids, you don't know know if your kids are going to go out and try to repeat the story to somebody else, and for all you know, they're going to repeat it to somebody who came from that place. This is a country we're living in with lots of people with lots of different backgrounds and lots of different accents, and you don't want to be rude. So it's a good point to tell your kids if you do something with an accent, "By the way, honey, if you go out and tell this story to somebody else, just be aware of that. You don't want to make somebody feel like you're making fun of them."

As to how you do it, again, you only need one or two little things to kind of give a hint at the accent, and I just mentioned one. You know

in some places, the "w" becomes a "v." Or in Irish accents a lot of the times they will leave off the "g" on the "-ing." It won't be "I was watching it." It will be, "I was watchin' it." And it's just one thing.

Now, if you have an ear for accents but you don't know how a particular accent sounds, there are a couple of ways you can go. The great example for me was when years ago I had to do an Egyptian accent. Now I have friends from all over the Middle East. But in those days, I didn't know anybody from Egypt. So I went out and got the middle Indiana Jones movie. So I just sat there with a great Welsh character actor John Rhys-Davies playing Indy's Egyptian sidekick. And I listened to him. You can do that.

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**25:40 Jim suggests looking online to find accurate pronunciations and accents.**

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There are also websites that are pronunciation websites where if you don't know how a word sounds, you can go and look it up. And they'll say it for you out loud. Well, a lot of those websites allow you to choose what accent you want to hear the pronunciation in. Is it an American accent? Is it an English accent? Is it Australian? And a lot of them will also have accents from Italy or Germany or something like that. So find one of those websites and enter in a phrase and let somebody who speaks with a German accent instruct you, in effect, by saying a sentence or two in that accent.

**Sarah:** Oh that's a great idea! Do you have any favorite websites? Or do you just...

**Jim:** Oh there's so many. Let's see. There's one that just says best pronunciation, but I've got a half dozen of them bookmarked in my laptop that I can go to if I need to. Those are also useful obviously for all those times you're reading and you come to a proper name, maybe of some place in another country or some character's name and you say, "How do I say that?"

**Sarah:** Yeah, I've done that before, where I've read an entire book pronouncing someone's name incorrectly and then maybe we watched the movie version of the book or we hear the audiobook of it or something and we realized it was wrong. I mean that's just terrible.

**Jim:** In *The Jungle Book*, there's an ongoing argument whether Kipling wanted it to be /mowg-li/ or /mōg-li/. I went with /mōg-li/ on my recording and if I were doing it today, I'm not sure whether I would do it as /mōg-li/. I'd probably do it as /mowg-li/. Flip side of that was *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*, which most people say /bō-ditch/, but he is using a historical character, and it was /bow-ditch/ and the way I remember that was, he was an ocean navigator, it's the bowel of a ship.

**Sarah:** Right. But yeah, I didn't realize that. I would have thought it was /bō-ditch/ so...

**Jim:** Everyone does. Possibly, including him.

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### **27:50 How do you prevent voice fatigue when storytelling?**

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**Sarah:** Right. How do you keep your voice from going out when you're doing all these different character voices and telling stories for a long time?

**Jim:** My suggestion is this. I always suggest to people who do a lot of speaking in a day, whether it's a homeschooling mom or a courtroom attorney, to go out and find a local voice teacher. And say to that person, "I would like to come and take a couple lessons from you and I'm not interested in learning how to sing... But what I'd like to learn from you is, can you show me a little a bit about breathing, and can you give me some warmup exercises I can do in the morning?"

Now, you do that for a couple of lessons. That's all you're going to need. And that investment is going to pay off for the rest of your life because you warm up for ten minutes in the morning. When I'm on the way to a gig, I'll be singing in the car. I'll be warming up in the car. And by the time I get there, I'm ready to go. I can go into the studio and record for hours. My voice actually gets stronger after about two hours. And keeps going for hours.

I've learned to hear myself well enough that as I feel that it's starting to sound a little more tired, that's when I stop recording for the day and go back and start doing the editing element of what I have just recorded. But for you... Because here's what's happening. You are working very hard just to get the sound out all day, if it's coming from your throat rather than down below from your diaphragm, from your breathing apparatus. And the more you talk, the more stressed your throat becomes, and the more tired, and it gets worse and worse over the course of the day.

So first of all, I would say try and schedule the different subjects in the curriculum in such a way that those that are perhaps the most talk-intensive on your part are not all

back-to-back. And number two, if you can get a few voice lessons and just pick up some breathing, enough to warm up in the morning for ten minutes, you will find at the end of the day not do you still have a voice, but your energy level is better than it is if you don't do this.

**Sarah:** This is so interesting to me because I did actually take voice lessons when I was in high school for several years and so many of my readers and listeners emailed me, asking for me to ask you how to keep your voice from going out. But I've never had that problem, and I sort of talk to myself or my kids all day. And so I thought well, that's interesting, but I wonder how much of those voice lessons are just playing into the way I normally speak and breathe?

**Jim:** Yeah, sure you pick up on it and after a while, it's not something you're thinking about. Now there are a few stories I know take extra work, that are extra stressful on my voice. And that's why not to tell those late in the day if I'm doing a live performance.

**Sarah:** Are those ones where you change character voices a lot? Or they are more extreme character voices?

**Jim:** Sometimes it's the nature of the voice itself. Or maybe a story that's a long story that's very high energy, that's not a quieter thing, it's something that takes a lot of pep for a sustained amount of time, and I've learned to just kind of think about which stories do I tell not only from the point of view of a balanced performance but also that kind of consideration too. It doesn't enter into it very often because I do warm up. But if I've been on the road for three weeks, let's say, and I'm doing a nighttime concert at a

theatre or an opera house, or a community event, I may think about, "Gee, maybe this is not the right story to end with tonight," unless it's the last gig of the tour. So you don't have to worry about too much you know.

**Sarah:** Right. End with a bang and then fall into bed.

**Jim:** Right. There's not a lot of that, it doesn't happen that often, but it happens on occasion and you have to think about that.

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### **32:15 Strategies to address fatigue and sleepiness when reading aloud or storytelling.**

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**Sarah:** Do you ever really get sleepy when you're telling a story or reading something? Because I definitely, especially if it's a before bedtime story, will feel like I could actually talk myself or read myself to sleep. I'll just be battling this incredible... wow, it just makes me lethargic, even if it's a really interesting story. So do you struggle with that at all?

**Jim:** It's because what's happening, because you're setting down the rest of your day. You yourself are getting into the story. It is actually an indication that this is a good story for you in the sense that you care enough about it, you're focusing on that, and your kids. That's when you do one of several things. You either put on a Jim Weiss recording. Or you just say, "Hey you know what, let's finish this chapter." And then stop. Or we'll finish now for the evening, or whatever it is. And that's okay. Because we've also all been busy all day and when that happens, we're suddenly in that place of story, too.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and I definitely think I started using your stories and audio stories in general a lot more commonly or more frequently, I guess, during times in my parenting where I've just been more tired in general, so maybe when I'm expecting, pregnant, or there's a new baby in the house, or we've just been really exhausted, that's a really great gift of audio recordings, I think, is everybody can kind of relax into the story.

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**34:02 Jim mentions two of his recordings specifically designed to help children fall asleep.**

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**Jim:** I have as you know a couple of recordings that are meant to help kids go off to sleep. *Sweet Dreams* and *Good Night* are the titles. And those are intended to do that. And those recordings are not only in homes all over the world, they are in children's surgical wards and war zones and safe houses for victims of abuse, where the kids don't feel safe in their lives because of what they've gone through. And these stories are intended to help you feel safe and go off to sleep.

But the other stories—and I have many people who say, “We'll listen to any of your recordings but this is the one we put on the last to help the kids go off to sleep.” But the others can do that too, because as I say you're suddenly in that magical realm of story and that's when all the caffeine wears off, I guess, in a way, is one way to put it. All the things that kind of kept you jumping are not coming into play and in a way that's a very healthy thing for you as well as for your kids that at the end of the day, you too can kind of go “Aahh!”

Wasn't that great? It gets even better, honestly. I think the second half is even better. But I would have overloaded you if I aired the whole thing in one episode so I'm going to wait to air the second half of our conversation till the next episode, so you're going to have to stick around.

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**35:32 Part 1 of the interview with Jim Weiss concludes. Interview with Pam Barnhill begins.**

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Today, I also invited my friend Pam from Episode 3 back. My kids are totally digging her summer reading adventure *Traveling through the Pages*, which you can find at [edsnapshots.com](http://edsnapshots.com).

**Pam:** Hey Sarah! How are you doing?

**Sarah:** I'm doing awesome. How are you?

**Pam:** I'm doing good today.

**Sarah:** You and I have had some conversations lately about how important it is to own books and you know in the last episode, you and I talked about visiting the library and how important it is to visit the library and some tips for doing that. But we've had some interesting conversations about owning books. So what should we tell our listeners about that?

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**36:20 A British study correlates a young person's reading ability with books in the home.**

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**Pam:** Well, I actually have found some really interesting information, something that kind of totally blew me away. And this was put out by the Literacy Trust in the United Kingdom,

[literacytrust.org](http://literacytrust.org) from the UK, and they did a study where they questioned 17,000 young people.

And what they found out when they questioned these people is that there was a very strong link between a young person's reading ability and their access to books at home. So 80% of the children who read above the expected level for their age actually owned books of their own. But if you look at children who were reading below their expected level for their age, only about 58% of those children either owned or had access to books at home.

**Sarah:** Interesting. So there's some kind of pretty significant correlation between being able to go over to your own shelf and just pick something off the shelf without having to make it an event, without having to go to the library and borrow them. Or maybe it's just the impact that it has on our children if we are willing to spend money on books and then we make that a family priority. What do you think?

**Pam:** Yeah. I really wonder exactly what the correlation is but, yeah, I would think that that has a lot to do with it. If a parent is spending money on books, if there are a large number of books in the home, then the message that it sends to our children about books is that they are pretty important. That it's an important thing to have, it's something of value and of worth.

**Sarah:** Right. So books are expensive. How do we do that? How do we fill ourselves up with them?

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### **38:12 Tips on locating quality used books without breaking the bank.**

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**Pam:** You're right. Books are expensive, especially when you start buying a lot of them. Well there a couple of things we can do to cut back on the cost of books, and one of the best things to do is go thrift store shopping. In every town in America, and I'm sure overseas as well, there are little thrift shops of used goods, things that people have donated for the thrift shop to sell, and they're full of really good books.

**Sarah:** Yup. My favorite bookshop is a good thrift store.

**Pam:** Yeah. So go into that thrift shop and scour the shelves. You're going to find a lot of duds. But you're going to find some really great ones in there as well. And yard sales. Get up early on a Saturday morning and hit a yard sale or an estate sale. And you can pick up books for a dime apiece. Another place that I like to shop for used books is Amazon.com. I know everybody knows about their new books but I have had great experiences there buying their used books for just a few cents apiece.

**Sarah:** Yes. So how do we do that? I do it all the time but I'm trying to remember what it says on the screen. I can pull it up here too.

**Pam:** "There are other buying options" is what it says. So as you're looking at the book there'll be a little box there a little bit to the right of the picture of the book and it will say "buying options," or it will have "used" and you can click on that and see what all of the used buying options are for a book. So Amazon is a great retailer for used books and

Better World Books also is a good retailer for used books.

**Sarah:** Is that online?

**Pam:** Yes that's online. And we'll have to stick up a link in the show notes.

**Sarah:** Okay, and then another good spot for used books is your library book sale. And so if you got to your library's website, they usually have on their event page, or you can just ask the librarian the next time you're there, or give them a call and find out. My library does two a year, and they are really awesome. People donate books to the library and they don't put them in the collection. They just put them in for sale. And then those funds that they raise help support the library.

And the other thing they do is they pluck library books from the shelf that are actually in pretty decent condition but just aren't being circulated enough and they need to make more space on the shelves for other books and so they sell those constantly all the time on a shelf. And those ones are the really good ones, I think. And so I actually make a beeline for that shelf, the discard shelf, first when I go to the library before I even go over to the regular shelves.

So we have gone to a few thrift stores. We've searched Amazon. We've kind of got a load of books. And now we just shove them all on the shelf, then our kids are going to read.

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#### **41:26 Tips on setting up kid-friendly book displays at home.**

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**Pam:** No, you don't. There's actually a bit of an art to this. Once you get the books into your home, it is great to put them on a shelf.

But I would encourage you to spread the books around a little bit. All of my children have books of their own in their rooms. And so there's either a shelf in their room or a basket in their room with a selection of 20 or 30 books that are good for their age and for their reading level and their interests and they're in their room. And so at any given time, if they wake up early in the morning or they're staying up and trying to go to sleep at night, or having a little quiet time, they can always go over and pick up a book and have a chance to read it. And they kind of take ownership of those books. Those are their books, so baskets of books in the kids' rooms. We have a basket in the playroom. And we also have a couple of different baskets in the living room where we've put the books. So spread them around throughout the house.

And then another thing to think about is how you display the books. It's very easy for us as an adult to walk over to a shelf of books where the spine is facing out and to pull out a book, look at it and put it back on the shelf. But it's really not that easy for a child to do that. Usually the books end up in a pile on the floor and the spines are just not that interesting, they don't really catch their attention. So I would encourage you to display children's books with the front of the book facing out.

**Sarah:** Yeah. There are some really creative and inexpensive ways to do that. I've not done this in my home yet but I definitely want to. So I just came up with an idea. Maybe Pam, you and I can start a Pinterest board where we pin some creative ways to display books and we can put that link in the show notes.

**Pam:** Yeah. And actually on our summer reading board, we have probably about 20 different pins.

**Sarah:** Oh you do? Awesome! I'll just link to that board then.

**Pam:** Yeah. Creative ways to display books, everything from... in our house, we do have some of the little IKEA spice rack bookshelves. I know people have used rain gutters, pallets, the old wooden pellets that they've made into book shelves, curtain rods and pieces of fabric to make like a sling shelf. But put the shelves down low at the children's level so that they can stand and peruse, and then take it off the shelf and put it back. And just see the cover, because the cover is so much more engaging than the spine especially with a really thin children's book.

**Sarah:** Okay awesome! So now we know that it's super important to own books and a few places to find some discounted books so we're not paying full price, and some great ways to display those. And I'll make sure I link to your Pinterest board that has some ideas if people want some creative options for displaying books in their home. And then make sure that you visit Pam's site, [edsnapshots.com](http://edsnapshots.com). If you haven't gotten your Reading Passport or any of the other summer reading program materials she's got there, they are awesome! My kids are having a ball filling out their bingo forms and trying out new books that they wouldn't have otherwise chosen just because of the summer reading program she created. So thanks Pam for chatting with me again. That was fun!

Now it's time for my favorite part of the podcast. This is **Let the Kids Speak!** where kids get to tell us about the books that have been read aloud to them.

"My name is Michael...my book is *Charlotte's Web*. Goodbye."

"I'm Samantha. I'm almost 8 years old. And my favorite book that I like to read is *The Mitchells*. I like it because when they have a friendship, they do everything they can to keep it. And what I like to read with my mom is *The Duchess Bakes a Cake*. I like it because it's funny and there's a surprise for everyone. My favorite book to read with my dad is *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I like it because they're very adventurous books and they're very cool and I like to see if there are any more going to be published."

"My name's Jacklyn and I'm 6 years old and my favorite read aloud is *The Trumpet of the Swan*, and my favorite part is where he flew into the store window. Goodbye."

Well, that's just got to be your favorite part of the show too, right? It's not just me. I have links to all the books that our younger guests suggest in the show notes.

Remember that your child can be on the Read Aloud Revival podcast by going to [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com), scrolling to the bottom of the page and leaving me a message there.

Thank you so much for joining me. I'll see you again soon for another episode of the Read Aloud Revival. Until then, go build your family culture around books!