



You're listening to the Read Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that inspires you to build your family culture around books.

This episode is going to be a little different than what we normally do on the podcast. We thought we'd give you a little peak behind the scenes of the Revival. The Read Aloud Revival team has so much fun putting together podcast episodes and master classes and resources for our community, YOU, which is there's so many of you now. It's really, really fun. And we have just a ton of fun working here and we thought we'd give you, you know, pull back the curtain a little bit and show you what happens behind the scenes in order for us to get this podcast into your earbuds. So I brought my partner in crime alongside me today. Hey Kortney, are you there?

g: Hello, hello it's nice to hear your voice Sarah.

s: Yes, it's always nice to hear yours too. I'm so glad that you're here. Now if you have ever written into the Read Aloud Revival podcast with a question or a suggestion for a guest or any kind of comment, you've probably heard back from Kortney. Kortney is the Community Director here at the Read Aloud Revival. She's sort of on the other side of your screen if you're sending us a message and I absolutely adore Kortney. Kortney, how long have you been part of the team here?

## 1:20 How Kortney met Sarah

g: Just over a year. It was in December of 2015 I think that I started working with you.

s: Wow over a year. Okay. That's awesome.

g: It's been a pretty stellar year for me, I think.

s: Well a wild ride anyway I think I kind of gave you a little bit of whiplash now and again. It just comes with the job, sorry.

g: It's good for me.

s: Okay you have to tell the story of how you and I started chatting originally or how we got to know each other originally.

g: Yeah, I mean I had read your blog and listened to the podcast for years and years before I ever started working for you formally and the way that I became sort of more than just a reader and an occasional commenter on your blog was you were pregnant with Clara, your 3-year old and you were talking about nesting and getting ready for having this baby and you were reading breastfeeding books. And I am La Leche League leader and so I just put a little comment in that said, "Hey, if you ever have questions about breastfeeding, send me a line because I'm here to help and I am a trained helper." And you did and so we ended up emailing a couple of different times and then when the twins were born, there were a couple of more conversations and so that was how we got connected.

s: I totally remember that and you know it's so funny because I remember feeling kind of panicky about the situation I was in and thinking I don't even know who I can ask for help. Oh, wait a second. One of my readers said she's a La Leche League leader, she can help me and you totally did.

g: And so now that's kind of what I do on the comment box too. It's the same sort of help.

s: Totally. Okay tell us a little bit about you.



g: I've got three kids, a 9-year old, a 6-year old, and a 3-year old. And they are all out having dinner at Burgerville tonight.

s: Oh happy. Burgerville, is that because you're on the podcast?

g: Yes, so they'd be a little quieter. It would be quieter here.

s: So they're going to start saying, "Mommy what are you doing in the next podcast?" because they're planning it out.

s: Okay and for any of our listeners who don't know. My kids, I have 6 and they're 14, 12, and 10. And then we have a 3-year old and twin 2-year old's who are such a handful. It's ridiculous right now. Actually, the energy and dynamics between the twins and the 3-year old is incredibly intense at the moment. So it's only quiet now because I bribed my big kids to go hang out with the little ones while I'm up here recording.

### 3:45 The difference between the Podcast and Membership

If you've written into the podcast before, you've heard from Kortney and a lot of you have written in the questions or just comments about the way we do things here. We thought it would be really fun to show you behind the scenes what it takes for us to get a podcast into your ears, what it takes for us to get the membership community content out to you. Actually, before we launch into that, I'll just make a quick differentiation if it's one of your first times listening or if you're somewhat new to the podcast.

Our podcast releases every other Tuesday and it's free of course on iTunes. That's what you're listening to right now. And then we also have a

membership community and this is the place where we put master classes. We have a community forum. We give children, the children of our families, access to authors where the author can be live on screen and kids can be asking, interacting with authors. It's just really fun, lots of extra resources for families who really want to build their family culture around books.

So when we talk about the membership community, that's what we mean. And when we talk about the podcast, this is what we mean, this really fun recording that we get to do every couple of weeks and send out into the universe. So Kortney, let's start with one of the questions that we've got.

### 4:50 Sarah glows!

g: Sure. A few weeks ago, you posted a picture of yourself and it was after you had been working on Read Aloud Revival stuff and you were just absolutely luminous. Can you tell me more about what was happening and how you were feeling in that picture?

s: Oh my goodness! I was feeling like I could run a marathon. I think those are the words that I used on Facebook, although that is not at all even close to being doable. Okay, so one of the things that I really figured out the last year or so is that I'm very extroverted and so our listeners probably could tell. But I have found that podcasting and doing this work has really fed my joy to give me a lot of energy. And so when I have podcast conversations or that morning I was having a conversation with one of our new masterclass teachers about a resource we're putting out this Spring about how to introduce your kids to Shakespeare. By the way, that's



going to be awesome. It's Ken Ludwig. Do you remember him Kortney from Episode 5?

g: I do. He's one of my favorites.

s: Right. So the author of *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, we're collaborating on a new masterclass for our members on how to introduce your kids to Shakespeare and so we were chatting how we want it to put that class together and I hung up the phone and felt just like I do after a podcast, just completely filled up, energetic, full of joy and life and it's been just really fun to realize that this is probably exactly what I should be doing so that's how I was feeling that day.

## 6:15 Where Sarah records the podcast

g: That's just wonderful to hear. Where do you record your podcast? Do you have a soundproof booth?

s: If I had a soundproof booth, I would be in there all the time. No, I actually have and I call it my corner office. It's a corner of my bedroom so right now I'm looking at a stack of baby laundry and an unmade bed behind me. I'm trying not to look at the floor or I'll see Lego's and stuff the kids brought in here. It's just a couple of little desks that we put into the corner of our bedroom and that's where I record and that's where I write and it's kind of where I do all my work. I just sort of hole myself up here whenever I get the chance, whenever my husband takes over the crew which is actually quite frequently.

g: So when do you record? Do you have a set schedule? Does everyone leave the house? How does that work?

s: I record mostly in the evenings and weekends. So when my husband's here or sometimes if I'm recording with someone on the East Coast and I'm on the Pacific Coast, I'll record super early in the morning like 5 or 6 am. And that's just because timing issues can become tricky with the time difference. But my husband just takes over the kids downstairs and a couple of things. First of all, my bedroom is far enough away that I don't have to worry too much about noise. But secondly, if you have a good podcasting mic and this would be good for anyone listening who might be interested in starting a podcast to know. If you have a good podcasting mic, it doesn't pick up a lot of the noise around you that's not your voice right directly in front of the microphone. So my kids can actually be out in the hallway behind me as long as they're not screeching, not that my children ever do such thing, if it's just normal noises, for the most part, you can't really hear it on the recording.

## 8:00 The very beginning of the podcast

g: So you mentioned your podcasting mic. Tell me more about what you use. Do you have special equipment?

s: I do. It's a kind of funny story about that is that I launched my podcast at least, booked my first guest and set out to create the whole podcast before I had look up a single thing about how podcasts were made. This is like trademark Sarah move here. I get this idea and thinking we're going to make this happen. And I'll just tell you the story.

So I was thinking to myself for a while, I think I would really enjoy podcasting. When I was little, I always wanted to be a news broadcaster, a radio



news broadcaster actually and as I got into motherhood, I loved listening to podcasts and I just thought I think that would be really fun. I think I'd enjoy that and at the same time I was trying to revive a little series of blog posts I had started on my blog called the Read Aloud or the blog was called Amongst Lovely Things but I had done the series called Read Aloud Revival, kind of the same thing we do on the podcast but I was doing them in this little series of blog posts. And there was a lot of energy behind it originally but I just didn't feel like a blog series was the best mode for what I was trying to do with that.

At the same time, I was thinking it would be fun to podcast and I was thinking gosh what should I do with these blog series that isn't really catching on the way I want it too. I thought I wonder if I could podcast about reading aloud. I mean literally before I'd even thought about what can we talk about besides an episode on why to read aloud, I shot an email off to the Institute for Excellence in Writing because Andrew Pudewa who's the head over there, he was like "the big" inspiration behind why in my family had been so shaped by reading aloud. I had heard him give this talk called Nurturing Competent Communicators where he talks about the most important thing we do with our children to help them become great communicators is teach them to recite beautiful language and to read aloud and hear through their ear a lot of beautiful language. And so I kind of caught fire and doing this in my home and so he was naturally the first person I wanted to talk to about reading aloud. Of course I don't think I'm going to be able to get to him because this is Andrew Pudewa. So I sent this email to his Marketing Director and she instantly writes back, "He'd love to."

g: Oh wow!

s: And I thought oh I guess I need to figure out how to make a podcast. And mind you, in this same month that was happening that I was creating this podcast, we are moving from one house to another and my first book was being launched and so it was kind of this crazy like everything happening at the same time. And I remember thinking, I have officially lost my mind. But it was so much fun. It was fine.

Anyway, I totally got off the rails there. I would look up online to find out what kind of equipment I needed and I ended up grabbing this, the mic, it's called an Audio-Technica and it looks like a microphone like you're singing on stage microphone. It doesn't look like a podcasting mic necessarily, but I have a stand that looks like a big robotic arm kind of thing so it feels like I'm on the radio or something exciting and when I'm using it. I'll take a picture actually, take a picture of my setup.

g: Oh good I want to see.

s: Yeah, I'll put it in the show notes for this episode so people can see it.

g: So you've got a mic and you've got a stand. Is there anything else?

s: I've got a mic and a stand. I use headphones sometimes if I can't find my headphones, I'm going to blame the babies on that because they like to come dink around my desk and steal things and run off with them. Like right now, I'm just using regular earbuds like you'd use with your iPhone or your iPod. And then I record like what we're doing right now. We're having our conversation on Skype and I use a call recorder on my computer and we just record our



conversation and then, for the first, gosh, I don't know how many episodes. I would say maybe 12-15, I did all the editing myself and that was a really steep learning curve. I spent a lot of time for trying to figure out how to edit the podcast. But I had this idea, I had this bar, kind of set high in my mind, because audio poorly recorded or produced audio can be painful to listen to.

g: Yeah, it can.

s: And I just thought I really wanted high quality. I like the idea of having some musical interludes to kind of keep the show engaging. I loved this idea. One of my best friends, Pam, had the idea to have kids call in and tell me their favorite books. I thought, how do I produce this to make it work? And so I've spent a lot of time learning how to use Audacity to edit the podcast and put them altogether, And then right around episode 15 or so, I realized it was just getting to be, even though I knew how to do it at that point and the learning curve wasn't so steep, it was really time-consuming and so we now have an audio editor who helps us put together all the different pieces and make it sound good.

## 12:45 The Eight Minute Rule

g: And it does sound good. I love the music in between. It's always such a neat, sort of like oh, I take a breath and like, Okay tell me what's next. I can refocus. I like it a lot.

s: Yeah, refocus. That's a good word for it. I had heard somewhere that our attention span runs about eight minutes. This is probably really good for us homeschooling moms to remember too. Our attention span runs about eight minutes and so if you don't change something every 8 minutes, you've lost them. And I would listen to

podcasts and realize when I hear their musical interlude that I've been kind of tuning out, and it will kind of help me refocus. So that's kind of helpful. And then the other piece I didn't mention is that when the kids call and leave their messages, we have something called SpeakPipe for that. It's just something we put in our website and that is got to be my favorite part of the podcast is hearing those kids call in and leave their messages about what books they're loving. It's got like a Reading Rainbow-ish kind of feel to it. I love it.

## 13:45 More about Let the Kids Speak

g: I do too. And I was so surprised. I had my kids all record their favorite books and it's so easy to use the interface on, it's at [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com) if you scroll all away to the bottom of the page. It's super straightforward to do and it sounds really good when you do it. It doesn't sound, I don't know. And Sarah always says she can edit out missteps or anything like that so I totally encourage you to do it. I get weepy, sort of, every time I hear the kids.

s: I do too. I totally do. Yeah, we've realized that at the beginning I thought, Why don't more people calling in. This is so much fun and then I realized I would probably feel like I'm going to have to say something that my child's never have to repeat it back to me in order for this to work. So now I try to remind everyone, you can totally do that because we just take those messages and we stick them into our audio editor and then edit out the parents' voice if we need to. Although I have to say Kortney, my favorite message of all time, is with your Joe when you say, your voice is on there, And you say "Where do you live?" You



were going for Portland but he goes, "Huh?" And you say do you live at home?" And he says, "Yeah."

g: The funny thing is he doesn't have very many words. He's just turning three and he's only just now starting to talk a little bit more. And he signed a lot and his receptive language is very high but he couldn't say very many words. So in that recording was really like all the words he had.

s: I love it. We listened to that message like several times because we were just laughing so much. "Where do you live?" "At home."

g: Believe me, Joe listened to it so many times to his own self. He loves it.

s: Oh that's too funny.

g: So your first idea for a guest was Andrew Pudewa, kind of the big guns right off. But where do you get ideas for guests now, 39 episodes on.

### 15:20 Ideas for guests

s: Okay so this is funny because my husband was kind of like "You're going to start a podcast about reading aloud?" And then he's got this joke and he's going to kill me for saying this on air. But he's got his joke that he was like, "What are you going to say? Read aloud. Do it." It's a joke now. We'll just say it like when I'm talking about the Read Aloud Revival, he'll say, Do it. I decided after I had gotten Andrew Pudewa, oh my, I at least need to make, I said it was a podcast when I proposed it to I.E.W. so I at least need to have a few other people on. So I'm sure we could come up with a few things to talk about. So I went to Starbucks. I brought my little journal and I thought I'm going to spend the next hour thinking

of every possible guest or topic that I think we could tackle and hopefully I'll be able to come up with maybe 10 and we'll have a podcast series that's 10 episodes long.

What happened is in about 10 minutes, I had two pages, completely full and I thought, Oh okay there's going to be no shortage of ideas and as time has gone on and our listeners suggest. They'll write in to suggest guests and suggest episodes or topics or questions that they have they want answered. We'd put those all into these giant brainstorming documents and I think we'll have podcasts for a good long time, Don't you think Kort?

g: I think so too. And I'd love to see how the podcast sort of comes up organically from the suggestions that have been offered. Recently, we had Cheryl Swope on who talked about reading with children with learning disabilities and that is a question really that I get maybe once a week and so now I've been saying like well thank you for your suggestion and it's coming and so now I can point people to a really strong resource that gives them concrete ideas and encouragement.

s: Yeah, so if you're listening to this and you think you have an idea of something or a question that you think, man I wish had the answer to that, write us. Email us at [support@readaloudrevival.com](mailto:support@readaloudrevival.com) because we don't just go, "Oh that's nice" and put it away. We really do take your suggestions and put them into a list of ideas and use those when we're creating new podcast episodes. So a lot of our podcast episodes have come straight from the ideas of our listeners.



## 17:30 Booking Authors for Live Events inside Membership

g: So what about the live author events? We've got quite a lineup for 2016. How do you get those guests?

s: Okay, that's a little different. So the live author events, now this is part of our paid membership of course. And when we launched the membership site last year, I had an idea of doing an author event once a quarter where we had a children's author live onscreen, kind of a webinar format where the live author's live onscreen with me and then kids and families can be in the chatbox typing their questions like why did you name your character *Hank for Hank the Cowdog* or like what's your favorite vegetable for Sam Smith, you know, *The Green Ember*, or all kinds of on-topic questions too. Really great questions the kids ask.

Anyway, I thought this would be really fun to do once a quarter and so I reached out to a couple of authors I had had interactions with before like Melissa Wiley, the author of *The Prairie Thief* who I had been interacting with before, years prior on the forum and that kind of thing. And those were so well-received. The families who came to those told us they were really transformational or marked like a shift in the way their kids approached reading after attending those and meeting a real author that I realized, Oh my goodness, we need to do this more often and so we set out to get as many as we could in 2016.

Honestly, I set out to get six. And I just started to write publishers and agents and sometimes authors on their websites although they're notoriously difficult to get a hold of on their websites. They're like always busy writing books

or something so they're not responding to their website contact forms. I don't know.

g: Imagine that.

s: So at first, writing to these authors or trying to get them booked was really, really difficult and then it sort of ended up being kind of a snowball effect. I would send out more requests and more requests until in 2016, we ended up having an author for every single month. Actually, one month in 2016 will have two authors. And so that's been really fun. It does take a lot of work. These authors are so busy and of course I think authors probably have a hard time juggling, balancing their work time between writing and being able to connect with their readers. I could see that being kind of difficult.

So what we have at the Read Aloud Revival is really awesome because if an author was going to come to school event in a different city, of course it takes so much more of their time because they have to do all the traveling and everything, spend days to get there and home and all of that. And then you get to reach this group of kids but what we're able to do on the Read Aloud Revival is let the authors be at home and meet with us virtually which is fantastic. And then of course to meet with literally thousands of families all over the world. So it is really, really awesome. It's not quick. It's not easy to get the authors or to book them or to get details. It's not inexpensive either but it's totally worth it.

## 20:40 The best part of the job for Kortney

g: Yeah, I was just going to say they're so much fun. That is the time in my job when I feel like you did in that picture. After a live author event, I'm



just like Ooooh! The first master class that I ever worked with you was Andrew Pudewa and I came home, I actually went to Starbucks and they should give us some ad money.

s: They should or coffee. I'll take coffee.

g: I was at Starbucks and worked in the chat room for that Andrew Pudewa master class and I came home and I said you guys, I feel like a real grown-up, workin' lady. And I was so excited.

s: That was so much fun. We had a huge attendance at that master class too. I remember that being the biggest event I had ever done live. I was sitting, I did that, record that in my laundry room. I think I might have posted a picture on Instagram afterwards. I can't remember why I said that there but it might have been the lighting or something. I don't remember but I totally was sitting on the floor in the laundry room and I recorded that master class and Andrew Pudewa knocked it out of the park of course.

g: Yeah, he did.

## 21:00 More authors coming in 2016

s: One of the things I love most is when our listeners write in and tell us, "My kids would love to meet this author." Because truly, I took every single one of those suggestions we got over the last year and just doubled over on my efforts to get those authors. We're not always able to get them. I think for every author request we get from our listener, we get Kate DiCamillo like three times and I can't, for the life of me, book Kate DiCamillo but, Kate, if you're ever listening to this podcast, we will love to have you on.

So sometimes we can't get all the authors to our kids but we hear a lot of kids who want J.K. Rowling and I'm not superhuman. But we have been able to book some fantastic authors like gosh who do we have coming on in 2016 that should blow people away - David Macaulay, the writer of *The Way Things Work* and *Castle and Pyramid*, and *Avi* was a favorite in our house, the writer of *Poppy* and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, what else? I think he's written seventy-some books. It's pretty amazing.

g: Oh wow!

s: And then I don't even know if I told you Kortney that I just booked Jennifer Holm, did I tell you that?

g: No. I saw her name come up in a document. I thought she was on the horizon.

s: Yes, so listeners if you're familiar with *Our Only May Amelia*, *Sunny Side Up*, *Turtle in Paradise*, and then probably a lot of you know the *Babymouse* series. That's all created by Jennifer Holm and she's going to be on in July. So really excited about that.

## 23:00 Behind the scenes before the interview with John Erickson

g: Wonderful! So when you're interviewing podcast guests or live author events, how do you get your questions? How did you figure out how to be an interviewer. I mean when we just had a live author event in December with John Erickson, Hank the Cowdog, and you and I were all set to go and then we were waiting for him to show up. And we were worried that the weather was going to be a problem. He was going to be



out at church and he was going to drive an hour back home and there was snow in the forecast.

s: An ice storm I think.

g: An ice storm was coming. And so we were waiting for him to come into the call and the clock is ticking and people are filling up the chat box and the clock is ticking and ticking and you say, "Hey, we'll be ready in just a few minutes." And it's still ticking and then finally, he signed in. And he was having trouble with his password which just happened to me so I totally understand. But you, instead of being like, "Okay go, go, go. We're late. Let's get this thing on the road." You were like, "Hey, how was church? How's the weather? Has the ice storm appeared?" And you just really was super conversational and you really kind of put him at ease and you put me at ease and so I think that's really an art to be able to talk to people like that and to make people feel ready to talk to you. So do you have any tips?

s: Oh my goodness! Thank you. I've never heard your perspective on that day. That was a little stressful, wasn't it? I had just spoken with Mr. Erickson a few days before. And he told me the ice storm and he had to sing a solo at church and he might be kind of late if there was any weather troubles. And I thought, oh my. Because we have a lot of people coming to this event. So I was a little bit worried about that but then when it got past one o'clock and that was when we were supposed to start, I thought, "Okay, how are we going to do this?" But you know Kortney, you left out a very important other detail that was kind of a kink in that day because I had a terrible case of laryngitis and I was just starting to heal from it at that time so you took the reigns on that interview.

g: Yeah, I could have used some interview pointers I think.

s: I don't think so. You rocked it. It was awesome.

## 25:01 Sarah's interview style

s: You know honestly, I just like to have a conversation so I'm not ever comfortable with is peppering somebody with questions nonstop. I definitely go into every interview with questions. I would never just go off in a cuff and just come off with them as I went. However, if I was going out to coffee with a girlfriend and I wanted to ask her about something. I'm trying to think of an example. Maybe like I wanted to ask her about how she does morning time in her homeschool so I could try to figure out how I can do better mornings in my own homeschool, I would probably have a few things I wanted to ask her but I wouldn't go down them like an interrogation. When she started to talk back to me, I would realize oh there was something else I wanted to ask about that. Or I would say, tell me more about that. So I kind of think about podcast interviews in the same way as if I was sitting down having coffee with a girlfriend. It's not always that calm inside. I'm not always as calm inside as I would like to be especially if somebody like when I talked to Ken Ludwig who is the writer of How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare. And I think I'm talking to an award-winning Broadway playwright who has won awards in London and New York and oh my goodness! I try not to fangirl out too much but...

g: I think they probably like it too though.

s: But you know, some of the best questions, I don't actually come up with. So actually, this is a



good time for us to introduce the rest of the team so I can talk about Kara. Kara is our podcast manager and she's my virtual assistant as well. So she does a lot of things like... well, she creates the questions that start me out. So whenever we book a new guest, she comes up with some questions that she thinks our audience would be really interested in hearing. And now, you Kortney and both Kara and you are really active in our member forums, really active on the Read Aloud Revival Facebook page and in the inbox and so, you're always hearing what people in the community are talking about and asking and that gives both of you and Kara, a really good perspective I think on what people would be most interested in hearing. And I have found that when I was writing all of my own questions and trying to create the interviews myself, it's a little bit hard to put yourself in someone else's shoes so I was always... the interviews were always fabulous for me but maybe not as interesting for some of my listeners. So having Kara write out the questions first to come up with her questions first. I'll sometimes look to the questions. She's so good at it too. So she'll send me the questions and I'll think, "Oh that's really good. I never would have thought of that." So we start out with those and then I add some questions on my own and then I always tell my guest when we first start recording, this is totally conversational and it can go off the rails so if you want to take this into a totally different direction, let's do it. And that's happened a few times.

g: Wow!

s: So when we do a podcast, we always have a complete transcript because some of our audience does not really like the audio format. Really likes reading it instead, so we have a

transcript and then we also create these cheat sheets which Kortney writes. Kortney, why don't you talk about the cheat sheets actually for a second.

## 27:50 A little about the Cheat Sheets for every podcast episode

g: So the cheat sheets are just a little introduction and you know a lot of us listen to podcasts sort of on-the-go. But that way, they sort of can sometimes get lost in the shuffle. And so cheat sheets are a way to come back to an idea that maybe caught your attention but that you didn't have time to necessarily follow up on and so there are some choice quotes. There's also a listening guide so that you can fast-forward tight to the spot where you'd like to listen again. There were some reflection questions so you can think through how you can bring these ideas to live at your house.

s: Yeah, I love these actually. So the reason I think this originally came about is because I started getting frustrated listening to podcasts that I listen to. I can't imagine actually sitting and listening to something or not doing anything else. Well sometimes I'm driving. A lot of times, I'm doing laundry or cleaning the kitchen or taking a walk. And I'll hear something, I think, oh I need to write that down so I don't forget especially if it's a book recommendation or something. And I won't be able to because I'm driving the car and it's not really safe. It's kind of frustrating. So I realized it would be so helpful if I went to the show notes that actually had taken notes on their own podcast so that I don't have to listen to the whole thing. And then, if I wanted to listen to a snippet because I thought that was so inspirational or



encouraging or helpful, I would often find myself going through my podcast app hitting 30 seconds forward over and over and over again to try to find the spot. And I thought, this is silly. Why don't we make something that makes... I wonder if people do this with the Read-Aloud Revival. We should make this easy. So we created this format for cheat sheets and Kortney, I just love the way the things you pull out I think are so helpful and a lot of times, I'll go back and look at the cheat sheets and be like, "Oh my gosh I forgot we talked about that. I think I need to go back and listen to what that person said again."

g: Yeah, it's interesting how there's the whole big picture but then there's the little golden nuggets, the golden lines that stick out and something that you can tuck in your pocket and take with you so that the podcast can have a life beyond just the hour that we spent listening together.

s: Yeah, exactly.

## 30:05 Kortney's favorite things

g: My favorite thing is the Reading Parties Guide. That was something that I didn't work on at all. And so we just arrived solely formed and so beautiful and it was just like, I love this. This is so amazing.

s: I wrangled Jessica Lawton, she's a podcast listener- hello Jessica! And I wrangled her because I had heard one of my best friends Pam does these parties with her. They do these book celebrations and when Pam went to talk about the kind of celebrations her group of friends did around books, I thought, oh my gosh! I need to get in on this. And they didn't sound difficult. But I'm not like a Pinterest party kind of themed

birthday party or anything kind of mom. That's probably the understatement of the year. My oldest daughter, I'm sure is listening to this podcast going, "Yeah." And so I thought I could never pull something like this together and Pam would say, "Oh no, no. We pull this together like in a couple of hours. They are so simple." So I thought, we gotta learn how to do this. And so we wrangled her friend Jessica to write that for us and it's this awesome little resource guide that we put in Membership. It's so helpful.

g: Yeah, it's super fun. Super fun. So tell me about, you talked about that one brainstorming session at Starbucks that you had to come up with original ideas but now moving forward, especially for things that are happening inside membership. Tell me about how you come up with ideas for the master classes.

s: For the most part, we listen to what our members tell us. We have a community forum inside membership where our members are talking and telling us the things that they most want to learn or that they're struggling with or that they're doing great with or what they'd like more encouragement for. And so they often suggest master class topics but on the whole, our whole team pays really close attention to just what our community members are saying anywhere. So when we share an episode of the podcast on Facebook and some of our community will make comments in Facebook or in the show notes. They'll comment on the show notes or whatever on the site, we just pay attention to what they're saying that they're struggling with because so many of us are on the same boat. And so it will happen that not just one of our listeners needs help with reading aloud



with their special needs students but literally, thousands of our listeners do.

g: Right, I think sometimes we live inside our own heads so much and our own experiences that we'd think this is a unique thing that we're encountering but really, like you said, what we're finding is for every person who writes in, there are tons and tons and tons of people who have also written in and say, hey, do you have any resources about this.

s: Exactly. And then what we'll do is when we... you and I will collaborate usually since you're on the other side of the inbox, you and I will collaborate and go, we had have a ton of people email and say they would like to help their husbands get on board with reading aloud so what can we do about that. And so we'd go, okay let's figure out who we can have on and talk about that. That kind of thing. So that's really... I would say listening to our audience is the number one way we decide what to do with master classes.

For example, this is a great example. I didn't realize that my oldest kids are 14, 12, and 10 and then I had this big, huge gap and then I've got some toddlers, right? So when I'm creating sort of like the overarching plan for the Read Aloud Revival for 2016, I didn't realize that I had completely missed offering anything for our audience that has kids maybe from the 3 to 8 year old range. They are just kind of getting their feet wet. Just kind of like figuring out this whole read aloud thing in their family culture until we had a million, not that I'm exaggerating or anything, comments from our community saying gosh, I'd really like something that met my needs and this is how my kids are. And so you and I...

and I went, oh my goodness! It's that whole, you kind of get stuck in your own story thing.

g: Yeah, that's right.

s: So we're creating a master class to happen this summer specifically for parents of younger kids and getting started with that read aloud culture and what do you do with the book after you've read it. When you've read a book to a 5-year old, how do you take it to the next level? What do you do next? So we're creating a master class for that. So really, we just listen to what people say and then we go from there.

Another example is that, actually, when we air this podcast, I'll be in the middle of teaching Focus and Align, it's a master class live that we're putting out inside membership and that was born out of realizing that when I'd go speak at conferences, I speak at these homeschool conferences all over the country and I would get asked the same question over and over and that same question will pop up in my inbox and that's, How do you make your homeschool look like that vision in your head? When we all start homeschooling, we have this vision of what our homeschool is going to look like and everyone's going to have lots of time to pursue their own interest and we're going to be patient and the kids are going to be smarter than all the neighbor's kids. It's like wonderful. And then we start and it doesn't look like that at all and the dailiness of it all really wears us down.

And so, I set out to create a master class that would inspire us all to get really clear on what we're trying to accomplish by homeschooling our kids and then use really practical strategies and exercises to make that come to life on Monday morning. So that's totally how we create stuff



here. We just listen to what you all are telling us and then we make something to help you.

g: I'm really looking forward to those master classes. I could have used them. It's not Mondays that kill me. It's Tuesdays. So it was yesterday that I needed that master class.

s: I'll remember that.

g: So I'm looking forward to it. I mean obviously, you get a lot of joy from this work but do you have a favorite part of the process? Or a favorite aspect of the Read Aloud Revival?

s: That's tough. I have to say, at new year's this year, we do this thing I found on Pinterest.

g: Wait! You told me you didn't do things in Pinterest.

s: I don't do Pinterest. I'm totally contradicting myself. Okay, I found this on Pinterest like 5 years ago, and I go back. Literally, I go to Pinterest once a year to go get this thing for the current year. It's a Oh What a Year printable that says right now, my favorite is this. My favorite color is that. It's just this print out and I love reading my kids answers from year to year to year whatever their favorite movies were, the books were, and you ask them what the hardest part of their year. What they learned, the biggest lesson they learned, what they're most excited about for the coming year. I just love doing that with my kids. And so we were doing that for New Year's this year. My husband and I filled one out too and it said, one of the questions was what do you like to do in your free time? Work. And my family's like what on earth is wrong with you? And I'm like anybody who does what I do would say that. Really, truly, it does not feel like work. It's really fun.

My favorite part, not all of it, there are some details parts of it like getting things in order like administrative, things that are not my strength that are very difficult for me. But my very favorite part is anything where I get to connect with the people in our community. I really love Revivaler's. They're honestly the best people on the planet. When I meet them at conferences or run into them which just happened at Red Robin or whatever, I'm like you people are the best people ever. I cannot believe that I get to interact with you all the time and actually call it work. So whether it's talking to them on the podcast or meeting them at a conference or chatting with them during a master class or on our forum or on Facebook, the people in the Read Aloud Revival community are what would fill me up. But I actually am really interested in knowing what your favorite part of the process is.

g: Well, I think that I love. I keep being surprised at how good the forum is. I keep being surprised at how good and loving and open the people are and how much when somebody writes in and is feeling discouraged and needs a pep talk, they're right there. When people write in and ask for recommendations about homeschool curriculum or about the best book for 8-year old girls who love horses but also want to start illustration. Like very specific, the people have really specific books. Like oh I had a daughter like that too.

s: I know it's so awesome.

g: And I'm amazed. I love, even if I don't have the particular, I don't need that particular book, I love reading those because they're so interesting and the people are so big-hearted and so I love hanging out in the forum. But it's the live events. It's master classes and live author events when I get to be in the chat box and just saying hi and



seeing what how people are thinking about things and how they're interacting with books.

s: You know when we did the John Erickson event, that was the first time that you were live on screen and I was in the chat box because I had laryngitis so we swapped places. And I told you, hey, I think you've been having the fun all this time. This chat box is amazing. This is so much fun.

g: Yeah, it's really fun.

s: Yeah, the energy there. You can't really duplicate it. It's just really unique.

g: Yeah, and now we're hearing back from families who have experienced live author events a couple of times and they're saying that they feel the same way, that they feel the same energy that we're experiencing. So that's really fabulous to hear.

s: Yeah, exactly.

g: So we're coming close to the end but I have a couple more questions. Are you up for them?

s: I'm good, yeah.

g: Okay, so how long does it take to make a podcast episode? It takes maybe 45 minutes to listen to one, but it must take more time than that right?

s: Yeah, I knew we were going to talk about this question so I did a little sleuthing to figure out. It's kind of hard to say. We actually have a lot of hands that touch every single episode of the podcast. I think we have six. I'm pretty sure we have six different hands that touch the podcast before it goes out. And I went back into a project management software and I was looking through

for an upcoming podcast all the different tasks that have to be done to put up, say Episode 45, and I added up all the time that it takes to do those tasks and I think it ends up tallying about 15 hours, a little bit more than 15 hours of work that goes into every single episode. It's kind of daunting.

g: Wow!

s: That includes preparing for it. So Kara, our podcast manager had to try and find our guest. Get a hold of them. Book them for the date. Come up with some questions. I prepare ahead of time of course. I'll never just going to go completely off the cuff. Recording it. And that all the production afterwards of editing and slicing and slicing things together and then a lot of that is creating the extras that we put in the membership program. So the transcript, the cheat sheets, printable show notes, and putting those show notes up online and it's a lot. When I look at it that way and kind of look at every single different thing that has to be done and how much time that is I thought, Yeah, okay. But we also have really high standards I think. We want the podcast to be worth our listeners time because our listeners are busy parents who have a lot to do and they don't have a ton of extra time to listen to podcast and definitely do not have time to listen to podcast that are either hard to listen to because the quality is bad or there's just a lot of random small talk that's not helpful. So we really want to make sure that the shows are worth every minute our listeners give to them and so we work really hard to make sure that's what's happening.



g: So do you have other podcast besides this one that you listen to that you like that you could share with us?

s: Yes, I used to listen a little bit more than I do now. But I tell you what. Actually, I'll tell you a little bit about a weakness I had for a while. I was getting a little carried away with my podcast listening. I love podcasts and I love audiobooks too. Audio is definitely my preferred learning mode. So if you're going to teach me something even more than watching you do it, I just want to listen to you tell me about it.

And so I would put all these podcasts onto my phone and then at that time, I would say my twins were probably in their first year or second year so like they were one, one and a half, and we had a two-year old and our house was really loud a lot of the time and so I would go wash the dishes or do some laundry and I'd put my earbuds in and my kids are all around walking around and it was like almost like I was using it to get away from the noise a little bit or escape a little bit of the craziness. And so what was happening though is that my big kids would come tell me that I was really hard to talk to because when they finally got around to coming to me with their idea. There are six kids here so about the time they got their turn to come talk to me about the thing that they wanted to talk to me about, I have my earbuds in. And even if I was not actively listening to something, maybe my podcast has ended and I just haven't taken my earbuds out because I was in the middle of washing dishes, it kind of sent this signal to my kids like, "I can't listen to you. I'm listening to something else." My attention is somewhere else.

And so that became a problem and so I had cut down on my podcast listening a ton and now I really just listen when nobody else is expecting me to listen to them or could possibly expect me to listen to them. Sometimes I volunteer to go grocery, my husband does most of the grocery shopping which I know we should give him a moment of silence, reverence for that because that's so amazing. Sometimes I'll volunteer to go just so I can listen to some podcasts without feeling guilty about it. Then I'm the crazy lady in the grocery store listening to a podcast. I'm okay with that.

Okay, anyway favorites. So my best friend Pam Barnhill has two fantastic podcasts. One is called Your Morning Basket, all about the start of your homeschool day getting just the best parts of your homeschool day packed into the morning in a really delightful way and she also has one called Homeschool Snapshots which is a peek into other homeschoolers' lives and their daily routines and that's really fun. I love that podcast.

g: It's been really fun because they're people that I read their blogs and so I love hearing their voice, matching their voice to their writing voice, I love that one.

s: Have you been on that one yet?

g: Oh no. Uh-huh.

s: Oh, I have connections you know. Another favorite of mine is Fr. John Riccardo. Have you ever listened to his podcast?

g: No.



s: Okay, he's a priest out of a Catholic church in Michigan and they put his homilies up and I think it was a listener who told me, "Hey Sarah, I think you'd like these." And I'll be honest, I was kind of like listening to more homilies because that would be really good.

g: So it's not a podcast? It's not a produced thing. They're homilies from a mass?

s: Yeah, and I should probably describe for my non-Catholic listeners that homily is really a sermon. It's a Catholic sermon. We just use a different word for it. So yeah, his sermon or his homily from church that's been recorded and they put it up on a podcast. And oh my goodness, they are so good! They are absolutely fantastic and so I listen to a lot of those.

He also does a lot of special events at his parish for like example one time he had Dr. Meg Meeker there to talk about raising kids in the modern culture. And that went up on the podcast too. It was phenomenal. In fact, we'll put that one, I'll put a link to that one in the show notes. That one I've listened to at least five times. It is so good.

g: Oh wow!

s: Yeah, so that's a favorite of mine and in fact, he had such a profound impact on me that I quoted him a few times in my book. I had to just send him a book. A couple of weeks ago, I realized he doesn't know who I am. He has no idea who I am but I've quoted him like a bunch of times in my book, I should probably send him one of these and tell him, "Hey, I put you on page 84."

I listen to a lot of the podcasts on the CiRCE Institute. They have a podcast network. One of our guests in fact, Cindy Rollins who did the

episode on reading with boys. She has a podcast there on the CiRCE network called The Mason Jar, all about Charlotte Mason.

g: The Mason Jar, yeah.

s: And we can link to all these in the show notes so people can find them. And another new podcast that I really enjoy is the I.E.W. I think it's called the Arts of Language Podcast. And that's Andrew Pudewa so he was Episode Number 1 here at the Read Aloud Revival. He's a good friend of mine now and they are producing a wonderful podcast on teaching writing and so that's a really good one to listen to. And then Tsh Oxenreider whose another friend now, I had her on the podcast for Episode 3 and that was the first time I had ever chatted with her, I talked with her at all, that's developed into a friendship. And she has a podcast called The Simple Show and it's really wonderful. I listen to that as well.

And then I also listen to a handful of business entrepreneurial type podcasts because that kind of roast me up too. So Anne Bogel actually as I'm recording this, just released her podcast yesterday. Did you see that Kortney?

g: I did. I'm excited.

s: Yeah, it's Called What Should I Read Next? So if you guys are wondering, wait that sounds familiar. Anne Bogel was a very recent podcast episode end of 2015, the last episode. And she's Modern Mrs. Darcy so you know her. You just might not know her name by that. And she just released her own podcast where she's doing a little literary matchmaking each week. So very excited for that.



g: Yeah, she gave us a taste of it on the podcast. So might have already heard her talk about the best fantasy books for young readers.

s: That's right. For me, for read aloud's, yeah so she'll do it on her podcast. It's for grown ups. So they're really fun.

g: That's wonderful. So that's what you listen to. Do you read on top of that?

s: Of course I read. What do you mean?

g: I know you must read aloud. Do you read for yourself? Do you read...

s: Yes, I do. I read to myself. Now, I used to read a lot more than I do now but it's because I have all this work to do here for the Read Aloud Revival, kind of ironically. Right in 2016, I made myself a goal to read more kid-lit because I read them with my kids out loud but you know how it is. When you read a book a lot slower than you read it to yourself and so I was feeling like there was a lot of books out there that I keep saying I want to read now I just haven't done it. So I have a goal in 2016 to read kid-lit books, novels, plus picture books but for the 50. 50 children's novels. And a lot of those that I've got planned for 2016 are books by our authors who are going to be featured on other events. So I want to read all The Growly books by Philip and Erin Ulrich. Have you read those?

g: I haven't but they get rave reviews from our listeners.

s: Yes, and they're going to be on in November. And then I've read a lot of Jennifer Holm but I haven't read all of them. There's a few I want to read that I haven't read yet. And then I do read for myself too separate from kid literature. Right

now, I happen to be reading The Five Love Languages of Children and Every Bitter Thing is Sweet, which Sara Hagerty sent me herself. That was fan mail to get. Or do you read mostly?

g: I read all over the place. I read lots of kid-lit and I had a really bad year in 2015 reading-wise. I started a lot of novels and I started a lot of thick novels and got 200 pages in and said I'm not going to do this. And so I read less than I'd normally do but I'm hoping that 2016 will be good. You mentioned Cindy Rollins and she put up, her goal this year is to read 101 books in the year.

s: Oh my goodness!

g: And I said, Okay.

s: That puts my 50 children's books to shame.

g: I want to read 101 books too so that I can grow up to be Cindy Rollins.

s: Yes, exactly.

g: Yeah, so that's my goal. So I'll be reading lots of kid lit too just because like you said. It comes with the territory but I love reading big, fat novels.

s: Very cool.

g: What about inspiration generally? I mean you give, you've got six kids, you homeschool. you've got work that you do that demands a lot. How do you fill yourself up creatively?

s: Oh yeah, this is really important. I feel it. Boy, do I feel it. When my well-spring kind of starts to dry up. Because I would get cranky with my kids. I get frustrated. I start feeling like irritated like all these people want so much from me. And then I



realize that's mostly me putting all those expectations on myself. And I haven't filled myself up at all. So reading is the biggest way. And I have let that slide a little bit this last year so that's something I need to prioritize is more time for reading and not just reading to meet my goal. I'm reading to have read certain things for other events. But just reading because reading fills me up. And then I'm an extrovert so spending time with my friends and a mom's night out. We're going out to dinner. Spending time with my husband. We've been going out on a lot of dates lately. That's been fun.

And then okay, new thing for me - sketchnoting. I have totally gotten into, Mike Rohde has this book on sketchnoting and for Christmas I got The Sketchnote Workbook and it's basically like how to take notes with images and graphics and art. I'm not like a drawer or an artist. I would not normally describe myself as somebody who draws or somebody who makes art. But I like taking notes on the things I'm listening or of some things I'm reading. Not like outline notes. Oh my goodness! Not like that. But like pulling quotes out like a commonplace book. So sketchnotes are kind of a combination between really simple visual drawings and words. I don't know. It's just making me happy. I'm liking it. So I'm really terrible at it but I don't care. It's really fun.

g: Yeah, I really like Mike Rohde's work. There's another person called The Graphic Recorder and I think it's [graphicrecorder.com](http://graphicrecorder.com). We'll put it in the show notes. But he does a lot of work specifically for education and so how to teach your students how to do this so it would be a great way to do informal narrations with things that you're reading with your kids for them to...

s: Oh, that's totally cool. I don't I've seen that.

g: And like it a lot. So how has this work changed you? It fills you up but how does it change you? How does it influence your family culture?

s: Well, for one thing, it holds me accountable. My kids would tease me when I launched the podcast. Like if we had gone a couple of days without reading aloud. "Oh don't worry mom is just too busy recording the Read Aloud Revival to read aloud to us." That cuts right to your heart so you can't let that go for too long. But aside from that, I think tapping into the community. It's hard to describe when we read these emails and we see these conversations in the forum or on Facebook or the social media, in our comments to our show notes, it gives me this vision for what reading aloud can really do for relationships inside of a family. When we get these stories of...

I'm just remembering one particular story where a listener wrote in and said that she was in the car. I might have said this on the podcast before. That's okay I'm going to say it again. She was in the car with her daughters and they were in stuck in traffic and her kids were maybe 5 and 7 or 7 and 9, something like that. And they were just starting to get kind of cagey and like things are going to start falling apart. It's about dinner time and she had just listened and come to one of our master classes and membership. It was a class all about how to talk to your kids about books and so she thinks okay I'm pretty sure they said that there are free fairy tales on Librivox. So she gets out her phone and she just puts on this seven or eight-minute fairy tale from Librivox. Totally free and streams it for her kids to listen to. And they completely quiet down, listen to the fairy tale.



And then she remembers that in the Read Aloud Revival, we teach five questions that you can ask your kids about any book to have a really great conversation. And you can just apply these really open-ended questions to any book at all from a picture book all the way up to college level reading. And she remembered one of those questions and she asked it right there in the car and she said they had the most amazing conversation and the kids were excited and it was like the highlight of their day.

And then going forward, any time they're in the car and the kids would ask, "Is it going to be 7 minutes at least?" Because if it was, then they wanted to listen to a fairy tale and talk about it after.

g: Oh that's great!

s: So we get stuff like this and I think oh my goodness, those conversations and the bonding that happens there, that's going to be something they carry with them forever. And so, we hear these kinds of stories all the time and it just gives me this visions for what reading aloud can do for the family. It just makes me feel like we're doing them, when we read aloud with our kids, has this eternal importance. So I know my kids, they're really voracious readers, my big kids are. And I really think that coming to all the author events and reading this wide selection of books because we're always getting recommendations from our community. It turns them into even more voracious readers. And it's just been really fun to see them get so inspired and motivated. I know after our very first live author event and that one was with Caroline Starr Rose. My girls spent like three hours after that author event writing in verse.

g: Writing poems?

s: Yes. I thought oh my goodness. My husband would look at me and he said, Do more of that. Whatever you did. Whatever that was.

g: Well, thank you so much for sharing a few minutes with me and answering questions and giving us a peek behind the scenes of the podcast.

s: Oh it's been so much fun for me. Thank you for coming on.

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

child 1: Hi! My name is Susanna. I am 8 years old. I am from Michigan. My favorite book is The Green Ember. It is a adventure story about rabbits. I give it five stars.

child 2: Hi! My name is Boston. I am 10 years old and I'm from Seattle, Washington. One of my favorite books is The Sugar Creek Gang. They solve mysteries, catch robbers, and it's also going on lots and lots and lots of adventures. They live in this place called Sugar Creek. And they all meet up. The main character's name is Bill. His real name is Jasper Collins. But really, he would like to be called Bill. And he's a farmer.

child 3: Hi! My name is Jane. I'm 4 years old and I live in Hamilton which is in Canada. And my favorite book is The Hobbit because there's this wicked dragon. And he gets slain and there's this man and he shoots the dragon and there was all armor over him except for one little part and don't have armor and the arrow goes in there.



mom: What's your name?

child 4: Emmett

mom: And how old are you?

child 4: 2

mom: Where do you live?

child 4: Chula Vista

mom: And what's your favorite book?

child 4: Green Eggs and Ham

mom: by?

child 4: By Dr. Seuss

mom: Why do like Green Eggs and Ham?

child 4: Because I like it so much.

child 5: Hi! My name is Charlotte. I'm 8 years old. I live in Alabama. My favorite read aloud was Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. My favorite part was when Harry fought Voldemort.

s: Thank you, thank you kids. Favorite part of the podcast. I love hearing from you. If your child would like to be featured on the show, just head to [readaloudrevival.com](http://readaloudrevival.com) and scroll all the way to the bottom of the page so they can leave a message. Super easy, just like Kortney said, I hope you enjoyed this episode. It was really fun to make for you and it was really fun to kind of invite you behind the curtain and show you what it takes to get the podcast into your ears and all the joy that we get from building this community of families who are building their culture around books.

To connect with us, make sure you head to [readaloudrevival.com](http://readaloudrevival.com) and pop your email on the page there. That will be the best way for you to get the first news, the first word, whenever we have a new amazing resource or podcast episode or free guide to send your way. So make sure you do that. And you can also connect with us on Facebook. Head to [facebook.com/readaloudrevival](https://facebook.com/readaloudrevival) and like our page there so you can see when we do updates. Also on Instagram, is another great place to connect with us that's just [instagram.com/readaloudrevival](https://instagram.com/readaloudrevival). I have been doing daily book pics on Instagram and I do use #RARbookpics and everyday, I show you another book that our family loves. I'm doing that because we are creating a fantastic resource for you here, a free book list that you're just going to absolutely love. It's going to release in March and gearing up to that, I have just been sharing some of our family favorites on Instagram and so you can connect with us there on [instagram.com/readaloudrevival](https://instagram.com/readaloudrevival). So happy you're a part of our world. We're very, very grateful you've allowed us to be a part of yours. Until next time, go build your family culture around books!