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

Well, here we are again. Welcome back to the Read Aloud Revival podcast. If this is your first time tuning in, welcome! I think you're going to love what you stumbled on. The Read Aloud Revival is a community of parent who want their kids to fall crazy in love with books, people who want to build up their family culture around reading. That's what we do. We talk about books. We talk about kids. We talk about books and kids and however all of those things play nicely together. Good things are just around the bend here at the Read Aloud Revival. A book list is in the works and it's almost ready to be released. I'll tell you what. This was hard for me to make... it's not remotely hard for me to rattle off book recommendations. Don't get me wrong. It's my favorite thing in the world when somebody asks if I have a book recommendation for one of their kids. But the problem with the book lists is that there can only be a limited number of books on it. It's the choosing of what's not on the book list that is kind of agonizing for me.

But the Read Aloud Revival team has been nudging me because you've all been asking for a book list and so we finally have it just about ready for you. I think you're going to love it. We have some unique categories in our book list like favorite books the whole family can enjoy no matter what their age or favorite series books that just might turn your reluctant reader into

voracious one. We've got middle grade novels, favorite classics, books for boys, books for girls, books for kids, books to inspire heroic virtue, short stories when you're crunched for time. Just tons of categories. And this is the living list so it's one that we're going to 's not some continue to add new categories and new book selections too. It's not some hoity-toity, this is the book list from on high. But it's a living list for listening to our community. We're listening to all of you as you suggest book recommendations on our Read Aloud Revival forum or the Facebook page or elsewhere in the comments of our show notes. We're paying attention. We're checking out the books and we'll be adding them to the book list so it's truly a collection of the best from our entire community.

The unique thing about this book list is that every book has been chosen for its read aloud appeal. You know there's certain qualities that make for a better read aloud than a read alone? And that was definitely considered as we built this list. So anyway, it will be ready for you in March and if you want be one of the first to get free access to it, you want to head to RARbooklist.com. All one word RAR like Read Aloud Revival.

RARbooklist.com. Sign up to get it delivered straight to your inbox when it's ready.

3:10 Introducing Carolyn

I'm really excited to introduce you to today's guest. Although those of you who hang out on the Read Aloud Revival forum probably already know her. Carolyn Leiloglou is a super reviver. She's the kind of book lover that many of us can relate to. Carolyn grew up exploring the worlds of Narnia and Redwall. Her taste in literature expanded in college where she majored in English and graduated from the Torrey Honors



Institute, the Great Books program at Biola University where she read everything from Plato to Dostoevsky. Carolyn lives in Texas with her husband and four kids and when she's not busy homeschooling or wrangling her 3-year old, she's helping behind the scenes with her husband's pediatric practice and music site. Or she can be found blogging about children's books at one of my new favorite sites which is housefulofbookworms.com. We'll have a link for you in the show notes.

Her blog has been featured on the TV show SA Live and she's been a guest contributor on Storywarren, which is another favorite site of mine. If you can't quite place why that sounds familiar, it's created by one of our favorite people around here, S.D. Smith, the writer of The Green Ember. So yeah, Carolyn is definitely one of us and she's here today to talk to us about something I have been dying to ask someone about, which is navigating the fantasy genre. So let's get into it. Hey, Caroline. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Carolyn: Thanks so much for having me Sarah. I'm glad to be here

Sarah: Well I'm glad you're joining me even though I sound all husky with my cold. I did not want to miss this conversation. So I'm really glad that you're here and we're doing it

Carolyn: Yes, me too

Sarah: Okay tell us a little bit about your family before we launch in.

4:40 A little more about Carolyn

Carolyn: Sure. I live in Texas which is obviously a very important thing to say. I've got four kids. My oldest is a 10-year old girl and then I have an 8-

year old boy and then two more girls ages six and three and that three-year old I am wrangling all the time. My husband like you said is a pediatrician and he's also a songwriter and he writes the most beautiful songs and that's part of why I fell in love with him.

He's actually got a music site that's just demetriosleiloglou.com and if you can spell it then you can get there.

Sarah: We'll put a link in the show notes. Your site is just packed full of really good book reviews and I love the way you talk about books. You've mentioned on your site that you've always loved children's books especially. So first, before we even get into anything, I'd love to know what some of your very favorites are.

5:30 A few childhood favorites

Carolyn: Well, I can remember the very first book that turned me onto reading. I don't know if you remember the first book that you first fell in love with but for me it was The Trumpet of the Swan by E.B. White. And I think I read it in 2nd or 3rd grade and then after that, I've just started to love reading.

Sarah: I do remember my book about that age.

Carolyn: And what would you read?

Sarah: It was Matilda by Roald Dahl.

Carolyn: Okay, yes. So after that, I read The Chronicles of Narnia and those books just hooked me on the fantasy genre and nothing else would do at that point. So especially in elementary school, I loved the Redwall books. I read the Archives of Anthropos by John White, the Spirit Flyer Series and just couldn't get enough of fantasy.



6:20 The power of fantasy

Sarah: Okay, this is why I'm so excited to talk to you because out of my three big kids who are 14, 12, and 10 as we're recording this podcast, two of them, the 12 and 10-year old are totally into fantasy and I've never really been a big fantasy reader. I love Narnia of course because everybody loves Narnia... and The Green Ember, oh that's the other one that I absolutely love. But beyond those, I struggle a little bit and I kind of feel like fantasy is one of those genres, or it maybe not just one of those genres, but the genre that can be either the most transformational especially on a spiritual level or the most devastating as far as helping to create your world view. And so it's one of those where I want to make sure I don't put the wrong fantasy into my kids' hands but it's hard to do if I haven't read very much. So I'm really excited to hear more about that but I'm curious to know what books set you up to appreciate fantasy?

Carolyn: Definitely, like I said, The Chronicles of Narnia series. And those books just really, like you said, on a spiritual level, just have so much to communicate and so much that is actually able to be grasped by kids which you'd be surprised how much your kids can really get out of fantasy books like you said on a spiritual way.

Sarah: Yeah, you actually had this really beautiful quote on your site where you say, "I believe what children read is critical not only to their education but also to their emotional and spiritual formation. Children internalize books. They identify with characters. They adjust their world view. What they read is important." So I mean that just sums it up so beautifully. So how do you personally choose good fantasy as a Christian parent, keeping all those things in mind?

8:00 Choosing good fantasy

Carolyn: That's a great question. And it's so true. When you read a book, you are behind that main character's eyes and you see things from their point of view and you experience what they experience. So I like to look for fantasy books whose values fit into my worldview as a Christian. So some of the things I look for are like heroes who choose to be selfless or who make hard decisions and choose what is right. Or choose to be kind and see the best of others. And I'm okay with the character having to grow into those virtues but I want to see that there is evidence in that series of them moving forward and having a desire to grow. I also try to stay away from books where the protagonist is a bad guy. I think that's a huge, huge issue or where the hero has some kind of character flaw that the book actually praises. So for instance, like the main character in The Golden Compass is praised for her natural ability to lie convincingly so obviously I don't want my children to say, Oh yeah that's a great value.

I also really dislike books where the siblings are constantly belittling each other. I feel like sibling relationships are such an important thing in our lives. So it's okay if they have spats as long as they come around to a solid relationship.

Sarah: Right, they're already hard enough on their own. We don't really need to watch that being modeled.

Carolyn: This is very true. Yes. Or for them to think this is the normal, I'd rather them see that a good relationships is the normal. But overall, I think what it comes down to is for you and I as Christian parents to instill Christ-centered worldviews in our children and that way, whatever they are reading, they'll be able to evaluate it



through that lens. So I found this really beautiful quote from Elyse Fitzpatrick from her book, *Give Them Grace*. I actually came across this on another blog but I'd love to share this with you. She says, "We want our children to know and believe the one good story. Every other story is a copy or a shadow of this one. Some copies are quite good and shout the truth. Others speak only the faintest whisper of it or by its absence, remind us of the truth. We want our kids to know the one good story so well that when they see Luke Skywalker, Harry Potter, Frodo, Anne of the Green Gables, Ariel, or Sleeping Beauty, they can recognize the strands of truth and deception in them."

So I just thought that was a beautiful quote and you're right. In every fantasy book, there can be profound spiritual truths and there could be spiritual falsehoods. So a lot of it is the worldview that we've already given our kids and instilled into them to help them discern because a lot of times we'll be reading something and my kids will be like, have a reaction to it and say, "No, that's horrible. Why is that in there?" So I think so much of it is them having that foundation because no book you ever give them is going to be 100% the truth, right?

11:00 The particular power of fantasy

Sarah: One of the other things I know that you've written about it how fantasy can be particularly helpful, like a particularly powerful way of helping our children understand truth that's in there. Can you explain that a little bit? Like why is fantasy more valuable than say, or valuable in a different way even, than something like *Little House on the Prairie* where things are very realistic?

Carolyn: Sure, that's a really great question. What I think is that fantasy has a way of stripping away the things that we're familiar with to reveal more universal truths. And it's able to take on some harder questions in that way and to deal with, a lot of times it deals with, this is what evil looks like and this is what we need to combat it. Those things that are spiritual truths that wouldn't be things that may be you run into your mundane life or wouldn't be something that Laura Ingalls would deal within her life on the prairie. I mean I love those books because they're beautiful books as well but it just has this way of dealing with the spiritual truths. So now I'll give you an example.

12:15 The spiritual power found in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

So when I was a kid reading *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and I'm just going to go ahead and spoil it because I know everyone has probably read this. But Eustace is a dragon and he is trying to claw off that scaly dragon skin and he knows he needs to get rid of it and you just can't. He takes off layer after layer and he can't get rid of it on its own. And then Aslan comes and he... and this is much shorter than the movie. This is my favorite part of the book and they totally ruined it in the movie for me but Aslan whips it off of him. And I understood as third or fourth grader reading this like that's my sin and I can't get rid of it on my own. No one had to explain that to me. And so Narnia is just full of those kind of spiritual truths and those truths of like who Jesus is. Or another example of is, I don't know if you're familiar with the *Spirit Flyer Series*. This was one of my favorites when I was a kid.

Sarah: I'm not familiar. Who wrote those?



Carolyn: It's by, I think he pronounced his name John Bibee. He actually also wrote The Home School Detectives mysteries.

Sarah: I don't know those either.

Carolyn: Which are also rather fun.

Sarah: Okay.

13:30 More than just intellectual knowledge

Carolyn: And I think he's still around so he was writing these when I was in elementary school and there are really kind of a metaphor that this kid finds this magic bicycle and no one had to explain this to me but it's a metaphor for the Holy Spirit and it may not be like the most profoundly well-written story like some of the other ones that I love. But as a kid, they're very engaging stories. The evil is pretty evil but I mean it really is this metaphor that is accessible even to kids. And I feel like at how Jesus taught in parables, there's a reason. It's because stories teach you something in a way that you can know on a level other than just an intellectual.

I mean like intellectual stuff. I like thinking about things that... stories show you things on an emotional level. And so I think even if someone would have explained to me like, "Oh you have this sin and only Jesus can take it away," I wouldn't have understood it on that visceral, emotional level that the story gives you, if that makes sense.

14:30 The Mysteries of Life in Children's Literature

Sarah: Yeah, it does. It reminds me a lot of... have you read The Mysteries of Life in Children's Literature by Mitchell...

Carolyn: No, I've heard someone else say that title so I obviously need to pick that one up.

Sarah: Yes, you know who turned me onto this book is Andrew Pudewa at the Institute for Excellence in Writing and then it was out of print for a while but Neumann Press just brought it back into print. Now it's available. And in it, he really makes this case for how stories are the best way to help your children encounter those really deep mysteries of life way better than having us all sit around and talk didactically about growing in a certain virtue or how to be courageous. That doesn't inspire that virtue in your child like reading Narnia and wanting to live out the heroic virtue in the characters or reading The Green Ember and wondering to yourself if you would be able to be as courageous as Heather. You know, it's not the same as having your child to sit down or your parents to sit down and say, "Let's talk about courage. Let's think about some people who have been courageous. What could we do in our life that would be courageous? It just reaches you on a deeper level. I think someone else who made this really clear to me, the power of stories to really transform and shape our children on such a deeper level than anything else we do is Sarah Clarkson in her book Caught Up in a Story.

15:40 Caught Up In a Story

Carolyn: I love that book.

Sarah: I do too. Really, she does such a beautiful job of explaining really what stories did on a deep and profound level that she wouldn't have gotten anywhere else.

Carolyn: I think part of the reason for that when you're reading a story, it's really like you're experiencing those events and everyone knows



experience is the best teacher. But when you're a kid, you don't have all these opportunities to be brave or do these great things and so reading a story gives you that opportunity to live it through someone else's eyes and really to prepare you for life. And to be brave in whatever situations you encounter to be someone who can be kind or whatever it is, whatever virtue it is, that hero is showing you. You've lived those hard decisions in your imagination and it's really almost as good as experiencing it yourself.

Sarah: Right, see we've already got to practice really. Well I have this passage from Caught Up in a Story. It's from the introduction. She says, "I'm convinced that the storyformed childhood my parents gave me was one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. And this book (the book I'm holding on my hands) has come from my deep commitment to help other parents give that mighty gift to their own children." She goes on to talk about "parents today are often presented with a list of facts and skills they must pound into their children's head. Childhood formation according to many models seems to be about filling mental bucket rather than forming a whole vibrant soul ready to act justly, love beauty, and bring goodness to the world." Then she says, "Stories are the lifeblood of existence. They're the heartbeat that pumps vision into a child's developing imagination and hope into his or her soul. A storyformed child views life as an epic tale in which he or she must live as hero or villain."

Carolyn: Beautiful. I love that.

17:30 The vision of the story formed child

Sarah: It's just beautiful. Makes me get all goosebumpy like, That's the vision!

Carolyn: Yes, exactly. And I think what you were saying about how we have this focused on we want to teach our children and I think even more so today when there's this huge focus on STEM education which is great but I think that it causes us to think oh well those book, especially fantasy, that's just fluff. There's nothing to it. But I would argue that especially in fantasy, it deals with those big ideas and kids really are able to grasp them like I said in my own experience. But I don't know if you saw, there was an article recently in Christianity Today, I think it is this month. And I think it was titled "The Christ Haunted Hindu" and you should put a link to this article. It's just beautiful. This woman, I don't remember her name, but she's actually a children's author herself but she grew up as a Hindu and she read all these books that were influenced by Christianity and they weren't all fantasy of course. They were like *The Secret Garden* and *Little Women* and then the *Narnia* books of course. And she talks about how those books prepared her to later meet Jesus as an adult. She said she didn't realize but He'd been calling to her all along through those books. And I just thought that was just amazing because I just had my own experience to go on before like this is me as a Christian kid. This is what I got from these books. But as being amazed as a Hindu, this was what she got from *Narnia* and from these other books and I just thought that was really amazing and really impactful. And it's so important that we don't leave story out of our children's education and think that it's just fluff.



19:50 How fairy tales shape the moral imagination

Sarah: Right. Yeah, yeah, exactly. Or extra, something they do and they get all their real work done.

Okay, so let's talk a little more just about the fantasy genre in general. Have you heard Andrew Pudewa talk about the four different kinds of stories whole...

Carolyn: Yes, I love that lecture.

Sarah: Okay, so inside Read Aloud Revival membership, Andrew Pudewa taught a master class called How to Shape Your Child's Moral Imagination and he's basically talking about how fairy tales or fantastical tales help to form your child's character as they get older. And he talks about the four different kinds of stories, a whole story, a healing story, broken, or twisted. Gosh! Would you remember it like the descriptions or examples of each one?

Carolyn: Yes.

Sarah: Okay, oh that would be good.

20:20 The four kinds of stories

Carolyn: So a whole story is a story where good is good, bad is bad, and good wins. So an example would be like Cinderella. Healing story is where good is good, bad is bad, but good doesn't win in the way you thought it would but there's redemption in the end. And so like a fairy tale example would be The Little Match Girl. And then a broken story is where good is good, bad is bad, and bad wins. And I think the example I had heard him give was Lord of the Flies which I haven't actually read myself but...

Sarah: Yeah, we'll spare ourselves.

Carolyn: I don't really want to read that bad wins. And then a twisted story is where good is portrayed as evil and evil as good. And he didn't even give an example. I feel like maybe The Golden Compass books might fit into there, right.

Sarah: I haven't read them either. I've read some summaries of them. Have you read them?

21:15 Thoughts on *The Golden Compass*

Carolyn: I've read them. Yes. And I will say Phillip Pullman is a masterful writer and he really set out to write the anti-Narnia as what I've read. And he did. What I've thought about them is that I would maybe read them with my kids in high school and talk about them because talk about how deceptive evil can be and so this is the book where the girl is praised for her lying and if no one wants to know any spoilers, but basically by the third book, the children kill God accidentally by letting him out of his box and he just disintegrates. So pretty intensely non-Christian and that's not even all the problems I have with it but it is amazingly well-written. There's a lot of literary illusions in it so it's really interesting how powerful of a series it is. So you're right. It's so important what the kids read. So that would probably be the end of the twisted stories. So of course with younger kids, you're going to want them to aim for whole stories where good is going to win and that's going to reaffirm their world view and that's what we believe is that good is going to win in the end. But I think to me the most powerful type of story is the healing story because that's the story of the gospel, isn't it? Good wins through a way that you didn't expect that Christ was going to have to die. No one expects this, right? So I think those are the most powerful stories generally. And speaking of



healing stories, I know that you've mentioned that you are reading The Wingfeather Saga books?

Sarah: Yes. It's taking us a long time because I have been a very undisciplined morning time person. But we are reading The Wingfeather Saga. Yes.

Carolyn: Where are you in that series right now?

Sarah: Okay, we're still in the first book but we're almost to the end now. So On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness, yeah.

Carolyn: So that series is somewhere in between whole and healing I would say and it is a very powerful series. I mean if you can get through the first book I promise you will love the rest of the series.

Sarah: It's only my 12-year old's read them all twice. So when I said I'll read them aloud to everyone because my oldest daughter won't touch fantasy unless I read it aloud basically. She just says she just won't ever take it up on her own. It's not that she has a disdain for it. She just will tend toward other things unless I assign it. And so I thought okay I'll read this aloud. My son hasn't read them yet so I'm reading the first one and she is like jumping out of her skin as everything is about to happen. And I had this sort of philosophy that I'll read the first book in the series out loud and then if you want to keep on with it, you'll have to read it on your own. And she's insisting, "Mom, you have to read the rest of them out loud. They only get better."

24:00 Carolyn's favorite family read-aloud

Carolyn: I'm going to insist that you read them all out loud because I'm going to tell you that this is our favorite family read aloud. And I read the

books first and then my husband read them aloud to our kids. Literally, he would finish the book and we had it on Kindle too and the kids would immediately go pick up the Kindle and start reading the book that he had just finished. These books are just immensely powerful and there's so much in them. There's so much beauty and truth in these books and I don't know if you knew that the author Andrew Peterson, he's actually also a songwriter.

Sarah: Yes.

Carolyn: Did you know this? His music is just beautiful and also full of truth and...

Sarah: I've been trying to get him on the podcast so maybe we can all just put peer pressure on him.

Carolyn: Alright, maybe in an author event.

Sarah: That would be even better, wouldn't it? Yeah, yeah. Have you written about The Wingfeather Saga on your blog at all?

Carolyn: I haven't because I hadn't read them real recently when I had started the blog. So I hate to write about stuff that I haven't read real recently. So I bet obviously, it's a goal too. I think I had probably mentioned them but I haven't read them strictly about it, The Wingfeather Saga on its own.

25:00 For parents who haven't read much fantasy

Sarah: Okay, so my struggle as a parent who hasn't read a lot of fantasy and doesn't have the ability to always pre-read before all of my kids especially because they're all voracious readers and they're all reading in different genres. So how would you recommend a parent like me figure out which fantasy books to hand to my fantasy lovers



to make sure that they are whole or healing stories, or mostly whole or healing stories?

Carolyn: Yeah, that's a hard question and I face that as well because I can't pre-read everything either. So I mean the best thing is if you do have trusted sources that you can go to and other blogs that have good lists. I do a lot of previewing with audiobooks while I'm washing dishes or whatever. And I can listen to something on a faster speed and maybe see if that's appropriate but like I said, what I'm looking for is for that hero to be someone who's acting in way that is consistent with my worldview in being a good role model for my kids.

Sarah: Okay, so I want to mention definitely for our listeners, if you head over to housefulofbookworms.com, you can sign up at the top right, there is a place for you to sign up to get Carolyn's book list and you have a lot of fantasy recommendations on there.

Carolyn: I do. It's probably a little bit fantasy-heavy because those are my favorite but I have books of all kinds on that list for every age.

Sarah: Yes. I was really happy it was fantasy-heavy because I thought yes, yes this is a book list I totally need so I was really happy to get it. It's saved on my desktop.

Carolyn: And I do update it every now and then when I find new books that I really love.

Sarah: And then I know in Honey for a Child's Heart by Gladys Hunt, I know she has a chapter, it's a short chapter. There's only probably 15 recommendations or so in there for fantasy recommendations. Do you ever reference these books?

Carolyn: Occasionally I do. Not super often but I should probably do that more.

Sarah: Yeah, I've got her whole series and so I do reference them quite a bit. And then we're creating a book list at the Read Aloud Revival. It won't be ready until next month when you're hearing this. But we are working on a book list and I am just trying to glean the best sources from brilliant people like Carolyn for your fantasy list but I think that's always my favorite but my best advice too. When people say, "I don't know what books to hand my kids." It's like you can't know every book out there and you probably can't pre-read them all. And so finding some really good book list sources is always such a good strategy.

Carolyn: Yes, absolutely. That's part of why I started this blog because I feel like if I'm out there telling other people, Like these are the books and other people are doing the same thing, maybe together we can pre-read enough of those for our kids and be able to give this great recommendations.

Sarah: Exactly. That's actually how I found The Green Ember was I was poking around the Storywarren site, reading their articles and really, just getting excited about this vision they were painting for our we can cultivate our children's imagination through stories, I thought oh I'm just going to check their store and see what they recommend and saw that just, I don't know the month before or something, S.D. Smith had released The Green Ember and I thought oh, it's their book like they're like they're making. I'm going to see if it's any good. And it was that any good. Yeah, that's kind of an understatement.

Carolyn: Oh that's awesome.



28:30 Starter fantasy books for kids of all ages

Sarah: Okay, so let's see, What else did I want to ask you? I know, what about starter fantasy books? So like if we could just give our listeners some really, a quick shot on the arm like maybe if they've got young kids or if they've got middle grade kids or if they've got teens. What fantasy books could you recommend kind of climbing up the age ladder, just throwing out some of your favorites maybe they can go, "My child hasn't listened to that yet. We'll grab that one next."

Carolyn: Yeah, that's my favorite subject. For younger kids, actually we just found this. It's actually a picture book and you may have heard of it because they mentioned it on Storywarren as well but it was a Kickstarter book and it's called Ellen and the Winter Wolves and it's longer than your typical picture book and the artwork is just beautiful. So that would be something I would consider maybe a starter fantasy story. And now, for parents, with any of these fantasy books, I think you need to be aware that for sensitive kids, fantasy may not be the right genre because sometimes fantasy deals with hard questions and real evil and all of these things. Of course, always be aware.

Sarah: That's a good point. I do have to say. I have to say thought, something that surprised me about my 12-year old is that when she was little, really young, she was my most sensitive child. We would watch Winnie the Pooh and she would literally sob when Winnie the Pooh got stuck in the honey tree. This is my most ravenous fantasy reader now. And she can tolerate really scary, like 100 Cupboards by Nate Wilson kind of stuff.

Carolyn: Oh I love him so much.

Sarah: And at first it was just totally... Oh he's somebody else we need to get on. I was just thinking gosh, that doesn't make any sense. This is my most sensitive child until I thought about how getting stuck in a honey tree probably feels like a very real possibility for a three-year old and that's really scary. And maybe that the problems that she's encountering through these, of course she's older now but the problems that the characters are encountering in these fantasy novels are so fantastical that it's a way for her to sort of encounter these big ideas and evil and good and good triumphing over evil without it feeling like something that might happen to her. I don't know if that's, I'm just totally reaching here but...

Carolyn: I thought that makes a lot of sense. And I will say, I was that sensitive child and that Nancy Drew books were too scary for me. When I was reading these fantasy books with real evil and those did not bother me I was reading Redwall and the Magic Bicycle, all these ones, and I could not read Nancy Drew. They gave me nightmares.

Sarah: Yeah, I thought a little bit too close to home like this might actually happen to me and I'm not okay with that.

Carolyn: But in most fantasy books like you know that good is going to triumph in the end and so it's somehow like you can deal with the scariness because you just know that it's going to be okay. And so back to your first question about some fantasy books. So younger kids, I would recommend Ellen and the Winter Wolves. It's a picture book actually. And then for younger kids, I'll go with the classic authors so George MacDonald, you got The Princess and the Goblin, The Light Princess, those kinds of books and then Edith Nesbit, The Book of Dragons is a great



one with short stories. As it sounds like it would be scary, it's not scary. And actually it's kind of interesting. Edith Nesbit was actually one of the influences on C.S. Lewis. She has a short story called The Aunt and Amabel, where the little girl goes through a wardrobe to a magical world and that was actually one of the influences for Narnia.

Sarah: Really? I did not know that.

Carolyn: Yeah. It's a very short little story maybe you can read it in 20-30 minutes but...okay, and then for a little bit older elementary schoolers, I'd probably recommend...

Sarah: And that's the same author as, sorry I'm interrupting. That's the same author as The Five Children and It, right?

Carolyn: Yes, and The Railway Children. She's realistic-fiction and then fantasy-fiction, both. They're both great. I'd recommend probably anything by her.

Sarah: Okay.

Carolyn: So for your elementary schoolers, I'd recommend of course The Chronicles of Narnia. You've got to start with that. Whatever age you are, if you've not read Narnia, you have to read that first. And The Green Ember of course. That's made my list. Where the Mountain Meets the Moon is a really nice, great story. Nothing is really scary in it so it's great for elementary schoolers and it's also got a female protagonist which that never bothered me as a kid but for my daughter, I know that's really important for her to have books with female protagonists.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Carolyn: There's The Wilderking Trilogy by Jonathan Rogers which is...

Sarah: Oh I have that on my shelf. I haven't started it yet.

Carolyn: Yeah, it's a retelling of the life of King David in fantasy swamp setting.

Sarah: Okay, I did not realize that.

Carolyn: The Spirit Fire series like I said I loved when I was a kid and then The Archives of the Anthropos. I don't know if you've heard of these books. I think the first one is The Tower of Geburah and it's a Canadian author and it's kind of a similar idea as The Chronicles of Narnia where the kids start off in the real world and then they go to this other place. So those are great. So maybe for your middle grade readers, these are going to get more intense. I would say The Wingfeather Saga. We've read it to our kids now in elementary school but there's so much in there that I think the ideal age is probably more a middle school age. And that's my number one read aloud recommendation. Then N.D. Wilson's books the 100 Cupboards series and then the Ashton Burial's series. And I just heard he has something new coming out really soon.

Sarah: Oh I haven't heard that yet. Okay.

Carolyn: Yeah, Andrew Peterson posted it on his page so I'm like oh. And then The Redwall books of course. I've also started to really like this author, Jonathan Auxier and he has some really well, very well-written fantasy books. I will say that about N.D Wilson too. His writing is superb that so is this guy Jonathan Auxier. So Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes and The Night Gardener. And so both of those are pretty intense. So probably better for middle school audience. And then for girls, The Land of Elyon series, I think I'm saying that correctly. It's by Patrick Carmen so again, a female protagonist which is really great. And then for your



highschoolers and older, there's the Circle series by Ted Dekker. And then any of Stephen Lawhead's books. He's a really fabulous writer. The Monster Blood Tattoo series. I know that sounds really...

Sarah: That sounds terrible.

Carolyn: It's really not. It's really interesting series, kind of looks at what it means to be a human. It's very well-written and the author, he does a lot of word play. It's very, very interesting. My brother recommended it to me and we both really enjoyed that one. Till We Have Faces by C.S. Lewis is just fabulous and then The Aurelia Thread by Jeffrey Overstreet and maybe The Man Who Was Thursday by G.K. Chesterton.

Sarah: Okay so if you're listening to this list and your mind just exploded. Or you're trying to like stop folding laundry to scratch these titles out, you really can just go to readaloudrevival.com and look for Episode 41 and we'll have all the links to every book that Carolyn just spouted off or either see you don't have to try and remember. And then remember that you can always go to housefulofbookworms.com to get her book list downloaded which would be super helpful. What about moms and dads who would like to their own fantasy reading?

36:00 Fantasy for moms and dads

Carolyn: Hopefully, I have convinced some people that fantasy is worthwhile and maybe if you're starting out, my favorite is Till We Have Faces. Have you read this Sarah?

Sarah: I didn't. I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that here.

Carolyn: I have asked. I remember S.D. Smith has mentioned this as one of his...

Sarah: He did. Yes. And I remember being like, "I'm going to read that then." And I don't think I have.

Carolyn: Okay, put it on your list.

Sarah: Okay, okay.

Carolyn: It's a beautiful, beautiful retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche but C.S. Lewis weaves in this beautiful Christian imagery and it really takes a look at the ugliness of our souls and that redemption. So I highly recommend that book. And then another one that I think other moms and dads might enjoy is The Aurelia Thread. I had just mentioned that for high schoolers as well and it's really about the mystery, light, beauty, and what it means to be human and our longing for heaven. And then the third one I would say is if you haven't read the Narnia books as an adult, you really should.

Sarah: Oh you mean even if you've read them as a child, you need to re-read them?

Carolyn: Even as a child and you have not read them as an adult, you should.

Sarah: Okay. Yes ma'am. That's perfect. Okay, if you had to choose, this is a horrible question to ask someone like you who's just listed all of those books that you love. If you had to choose your three favorite fantasy books of all time. Like I used to ask all the time. But you get to pick three fantasy books to bring with you. What would they be?



37:30 Carolyn's top three fantasy series

Carolyn: I will actually tell you this was not a hard question for me as long as I can count a series as a book.

Sarah: Okay, that's fine. It's only cheating a little bit.

Carolyn: Okay, so I would pick Till We Have Faces, The Wingfeather Saga, and The Chronicles of Narnia.

Sarah: I knew that was going to make it in there. Okay, I just put Till We Have Faces in my Amazon cart and I'm clicking Buy Now on air so you can hold me accountable. I will read this book.

Carolyn: Awesome.

Sarah: That's wonderful. Okay, well thank you so much Carolyn. This has been wonderful. Let's tell everybody where they can connect with you the best places they can find you, maybe about your Facebook page and then a little bit more about what you do on your site.

Carolyn: Well of course you can find me at housefulofbookworms.com and then on Facebook if you just type in House Full of Bookworms. I will be there. You'll find me. And on my site, I do a lot of book reviews. I post one every week and obviously it's a little heavy on the fantasy. But I do post other book reviews and I also review a lot of picture books because I have a 6 and a 3-year old and we're still all reading picture books together and really enjoying those so...

Sarah: Listen guys if you just heard her say that she posts a lot of fantasy reviews. If you're in a position like I am where you need somebody trusted to do a lot of fantasy book reviewing for

you, then you need to be subscribed to her blog because that's what we're going to be looking for, right? So when I realized that she does a lot of fantasy book writing, it was a huge sense of relief for me because I thought, okay, this was going to be so helpful. And then on your Facebook page, you also share other things from around the web that you find interesting about books and authors and kids reading, right?

Carolyn: Absolutely and I know I've shared this podcast multiple times with my readers.

Sarah: Awesome. So you can find that at facebook.com/housefulofbookworms. So perfect! I'm so excited that you came on. I've been so grateful. This has been a conversation I've wanted to have for a long time so I really appreciate you taking the time to be here.

Carolyn: Well thanks so much for having me Sarah.

39:30 Let the kids speak

Sarah: 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.

"My name is Jude. I'm from Texas. And I'm 4."

Dad: And what's your favorite book?

"Fuggington To Go. I just love him because they eat so much cookies and they can't stop."

"Hi! My name is Eva and I'm 3. I live in Warsaw, Poland. My favorite book is Chronicles of Narnia. I have a skirt that is so... and loose. It's the same. Maybe you'd like it."

"My name is Eva and I live in North Carolina. And my favorite book is The Big Snow."



“My name is Grayette and I am 6 years old. I live in Alabama. My favorite book is My Father's Dragon because of the characters and the adventures.”

“Hi! My name is Levi and I am 5. And I live in Warsaw, Poland. And my favorite book is the science book Wild Faces because it has mountains, jungles and deserts. “

Audrey: Thank you kids! Fantastic recommendations today. I'm Audrey, Sarah Mackenzie's 14-year old.

Allison: And I'm Allison, her 12-year old. We're putting much to go from mom's mic.

Audrey: Would you believe that? Our mom's voice went completely out after recording this podcast. So that means she can't record this outro.

Allison: And she can't scold us. Score! So kids we want to tell you, the Let the Kids Speak part of the podcast is everyone's favorite. If you're listening, you have the chance to record your own favorite books yet. Pinch your parents and tell them to help you. It's really easy even if you're not techie and you don't need any special equipment or anything. You can write down what you want to say at first and then read it. You can repeat it after your parents or you can fumble your way through and do it all off the cuff.

Audrey: Yup, go to readaloudrevival.com. Scroll to the bottom of the page and you'll see the button to click to get started.

Allison: Our mom will be back with another episode just in two weeks, if she had her voice back that is.

Audrey: Remember you can find show notes for all the fabulous book recommendations shared on the episode at readaloudrevival.com.

Allison: And don't forget to sign up to our new awesome free book list at rarbooklist.com. We helped her make it so we know it's awesome. Until next time...

Both: Go build your family culture around books!