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Sarah: That was Greta Eskridge on how reading children's fiction makes her a better mother. You're going to love this conversation and it's episode 42 of the Read Aloud Revival podcast.

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

You are listening to the Read Aloud Revival podcast episode 42. This is the podcast that helps you build your family culture around books. I'm Sarah Mackenzie. It's March! Can you believe it? March is a crazy busy month for me. I'll be traveling all over the country this month speaking at homeschooling conferences and hopefully, meeting some of you. If you're a Read Aloud Revival member, check Inside Membership because I'm hosting Read Aloud Revival member meetups in four different cities this year - Greenville, South Carolina, Fort Worth, Texas, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Ontario, California. I just love to meet you and have a cup of coffee and talk about our kids and books and that will be so much fun.

*1:30 Where you can meet Sarah in person

I'm speaking at several homeschooling conferences all spring and summer so even if you aren't a member, you can connect with me at one of those and I'll put a link in today's show notes to where I'm speaking so you can find out if I'll be in your area. The show notes will be at ReadAloudRevival.com. Just look for episode 42. While you're there, you can sign up to get our brand new, free, completely awesome book list. The Read Aloud Revival book list has been a long

time in the making. I'm just absolutely sure you're going to love it. You'll see where to sign up to get it free at readaloudrevival.com. Or right in the episode show notes for episode 42. It's a free book list of our most highly recommended read aloud's broken down into helpful and some slightly unusual categories. So I think you'll love it. Check it out!

Okay, on today's show, we're going to do what we do best. That is, sling around book titles like ninjas but don't worry if you can't keep up. You can find the complete list of every book and link that we talk about during the show in the show notes at readaloudrevival.com. You're going to love this interview. I had so much fun chatting with our guest that I didn't want to hang up the phone. So let's get right to it.

To say that books have influenced today's guest would be quite the understatement. Her first job was at the local library in the fourth grade. Of course, she was able to start working early because that was the year she began being homeschooled. She continued to homeschool until she graduated at the age of sixteen and now she homeschools her own four kids.

I'm talking about the wonderful Greta Eskridge. You might know her better as Ma and Pa Modern. She writes at maandpamodern.com. She also speaks at homeschooling events like the Wild & Free Conference, another one coming up on the west coast in May. We'll get to that later. To really get to know Greta though, you have to check out her enchanting Instagram account. It's just [@maandpamodern](https://www.instagram.com/maandpamodern) and you'll find beautiful images of her everyday life full of learning and ice cream and of course lots of books. Greta will tell you that books have helped make her into the mama she is today. They shaped her as a child and she loves sharing good books with her kids. That's what we're going to talk about today. I'm so excited to hear what she has to share with



us so Greta, welcome and thank you so much for joining me.

Greta: Thank you for having me. I'm super excited to be here.

Sarah: Okay, so let's start by digging into your family a little bit. Tell me. You're married to an artist, right? And you homeschool your four kids. Tell me about that.

*4:00 More about Greta and her family

Greta: Yes, I am married to Aaron and he is a creative director by day and at night, usually in the middle of the night, which is the only time he has to create outside of work and being a dad and a husband. He lives in his studio painting and I'm usually in the living room looking out to the backyard at him painting while I'm inside writing. And we're up in the middle of the night creating and he just loves color. Our house is really colorful. He loves to paint and he's just a really creative person and just brings creativity into every part of our life and he has passed that on to our kids. We have four kids. And they're ages 11, 9, 7, and 4. Three boys and one girl.

Sarah: Oh I didn't realize you had more boys. Okay.

Greta: Yes. We're boy-heavy. My daughter would love a sister and prays for it. I told her I can't make any guarantees because right now the odds are stacked against her. I would love to have a sister for her...

Sarah: I don't know the odds are stacked against my little guy too and then he got a double whammy of brothers so...

Greta: That would make her so happy. However, we live in a house with one bathroom so six people in one bathroom is tight. Adding two more seems a little...

Sarah: That is tight. Yeah. That could be interesting. It's doable I'm sure.

*5:40 Art, nature, and reading aloud

Greta: It is. It's doable but... so our kids are creative like my husband and they love drawing and they pretty much draw a good portion of everyday in fact, often when I'm reading aloud to them. They're drawing while I'm reading to them. So making art and books are huge part of their life and our family's life. And we live in Southern California and we love being outside. We love the beach. We love hiking. We love going to... so that's the other I would say the other big part of our family's passion is to just spend as much time out in nature as we can.

Sarah: Yeah, nature, art, and books. That definitely seems like when I've been watching you online I can see that. That's your family's passion.

Greta: It is. For sure.

Sarah: Okay, so you're a long time book lover. Do you remember falling in love with reading or what are your kind of earlier memories of that?

*6:30 Greta's mom

Greta: Yes, I have loved books for as long as I can remember. My mom is a huge reader and she passed it on to each one of my siblings. All four of us are all big readers and I think that's just something we owe to her. She passed onto each one of us. There's a quote that I really love that says children are made readers on the laps of their parents and that is the story of my mom and her kids. She just gave us that love of reading and it's one of the greatest gifts that she passed on to us. I really can recall certain books that we read together that she would be sitting on the couch and her reading books aloud to us. I remember that we cry with books together. We laugh with books together. And so for as long as I can remember, I have loved books. That's just been strong current through my whole life.



Sarah: Okay, and then you pulled out of school and started homeschooling in fourth grade, right?

Greta: Yes, yes.

Sarah: Do you remember any change in like the amount you were able to... I would always think in my head that my kids have less time to read if we were homeschooling but I wonder if that's true or not. Do you have any memories of that?

*7:40 More time to read

Greta: Yes, for sure. I remember being in school and I remember getting in trouble for reading too much. And I had really, my school experience, my traditional school experience was great. I went to a small private school and we were encouraged when we finish our schoolwork, we were encouraged to go sit in the back where the library was and to read. Because it was such a small school, there were multiple grades in each classroom so we had to work independently while the teacher would teach the other grades. But I still can remember like specially one moment, I was sitting in the back in the beanbag and reading and Mr. Walker, y teacher came up and he said, "Greta, I can't believe I have to say this but you need to put your book away." And he's like, "Because I know you didn't finish your math homework." And he was right. I always would choose books over math. And I didn't have as much time to read in school because there were lots of subjects to do and being in school all day took a lot of time.

So when we started homeschooling, that was one of my favorite parts was that I had so much more time to read. And I think one of the greatest gifts my mom gave me really as in my educational journey was that she allowed me to read all the time. And sometimes even at the expense of my other schoolwork and I'd think that she recognized the passion I had for it and then I was still learning so much through my

reading that if I wasn't reading my history textbook, I was reading a book about history or a historical event. And so I was getting something great out of it anyways. So having more time to read as a homeschooler or like you mentioned, being able to work in the library when I was in fourth grade, that was one of my favorites, it was one of the best parts about being homeschooled was getting to do, get up in the morning, make breakfast, take it back to my room, lay in bed, eat my breakfast, and read a book. And then do it at my school as fast as I could so that I could read more.

Sarah: Yeah, that's kind of how my kids are. Like how fast can we possibly get this math assignment so we could read more books?

Greta: Exactly.

Sarah: Okay, you have to tell me more about working at the library as a fourth grader because I'm way to curious to move on from that.

*10:00 Shelving books in 4th grade

Greta: All I really did was shelve books at that age but I loved it because I loved being in a library. It was my favorite place to be. There was our local library. We live in a small town where there is just one library and there is a house that was right next to the library and I dreamed of living in that house because then all I would have to do is open up my back door and walk across the sidewalk and be at the library. That's how much I love books and the library. So I was friends with all the librarians and I shelved books and it was just like being around all those books. I would read cookbooks because I just loved them so much. Yes, it's fun.

*10:40 Sarah's quest to read all the books in the library

Sarah: That's funny. You know, one of my earlier memories of the library is that I would go there after school and I remember gazing at the



shelves, wondering if maybe I could possibly read every single book. But I was really concerned about like if they ordered new books and they put them in and then I would lose my place. Like if I just started at one shelf and moved on and people checked them out or brought them back, I might miss them. I had this whole thing in my head about how do I possibly read every single book that's in this library without getting mixed up.

Greta: Yeah, the amount of books can be overwhelming for sure.

Sarah: So did you always plan to homeschool your own kids?

Greta: I did. I loved homeschooling so much and it was such a positive experience for me that I definitely wanted to homeschool my kids. In fact, when I started dating my husband, he was my first boyfriend and I told him very early on that if he was not okay with homeschooling then we probably shouldn't date because I was going to homeschool my kids.

Sarah: That's the way to turn it up. Take everything up a level.

Greta: I don't know why he stuck around. He wasn't scared off by that but he did. And so we always planned on homeschooling. Or I always did and he just came along for the ride.

Sarah: How did your love of books play a part in that decision? Was it okay this is the kind of thing that I want to give my kids, this kind of childhood that I had.

*12:00 Sharing the love of books with her children

Greta: Yes, before we had kids, I was a high school teacher and I was a high school English teacher and I taught for five years. And I loved teaching but what I found was that there were some things that were frustrating for me because I was an English teacher obviously and

wanted to share all these great books with my students but there was just such a limited time because there was a set curriculum and it was very full and there was not a lot of space for anything extra. So I knew that there would be so many books my kids would miss out on if they were learning under that traditional curriculum and I also saw that there was just not a lot of space for learning like history or science through books because it's a textbook-heavy curriculum. That was just the traditional model and I thought I would really like to provide something different than that for my kids.

I also saw that as much as I tried to foster like a real love of reading and create that culture in my classroom, there were a lot of my students who didn't have that. They haven't grown up with books. They weren't interested in reading. And I really wanted my kids to be in a culture where books were just a huge part of daily life that they were celebrated and if I introduced that to them from the time they were babies and fostered it all through their school years, that would be the culture, the book culture that they grew up in. And so having had this positive experience of being homeschooled myself and then being in a classroom where I saw things that were lacking just simply because of the restrictions of time and set curriculum, I thought I could provide this amazing literary environment for my kids to grow up in and I love teaching so if I get to be their teacher, it just seemed like Shangri-La. It's not always Shangri-La because the reality is we have to do other subjects and I'm not always the best at those. And also homeschooling is hard.

Sarah: And they're all humans and all that.

Greta: Exactly. But it still is pretty much a dream come true.

Sarah: Very cool. Okay, so you said that books have really influenced your mothering. They've



really modeled good parenting for you and kind of helped you become the kind of mother that you are and that you want to be. So let's talk about that. Expand on that for me.

*14:30 How books have helped Greta become a better mother

Greta: Let's see. I don't think as I was growing up, reading books that I knew I would identify a character and think oh that's the kind of parent I want to be. I think subconsciously, I was definitely drawn to certain characters, the parents of certain books and I admire them and I appreciated them but I didn't literally sit down and think oh I want to be like this person when I grow up. What I really noticed is once I became a parent myself, a mother, and then I started reading these books especially books that I have read as a child, and now is reading with my own kids, I appreciated them in a totally different way. And I really then began to identify these character traits in these parents and think wow this is the kind of mom I want to be. This is the kind of parenting I want to do. And I really opened up my eyes to that and my heart and sort of began absorbing these ideas that I found in these characters of these books and so much to the point that I feel sometimes I would rather read a novel with an inspiring parent figure than a traditional parenting book. When I'm feeling like I'm struggling with my parenting, rather than pick up a how-to parenting book, sometimes I would just rather pick up *The Yearling* and look at Penny Baxter and say, okay now I feel refreshed. Now I feel encouraged. Now I feel motivated. I'm going to move on.

Sarah: Okay, I just absolutely love that. So you've got to tell me your favorites. Which books have the most impact on you or maybe give me some examples about how different characters of books have and had that impact on you?

*16:05 Inspiring parents from literature

Greta: Well I mentioned *The Yearling* and I would say that that's one of my all-time favorite books anyways and has been since childhood and Penny Baxter, the dad in the book. He's just... I love him. And if I could parent like him and be the kind of parent he is then I would feel like I'm doing a good job. He is so compassionate and understanding. He loves to be with his son Jody and he really takes the time to understand Jody and who he is and his needs and what drives him. He doesn't dismiss his needs as just simply childish but he puts himself in Jody's shoes. And really makes an effort to help him grow and become a man that he needs to be but never dismissing him as a child. And I just think that's a really powerful tool as a parent. I remember also when I read *Little Women* for the first time as a mom. And I've felt so inadequate comparing myself as a mother to Marmee because she's like this mother and goddess. She's perfect. And then...

Sarah: Exactly. I feel usually completely inadequate.

Greta: Exactly, right. I mean Marmee, she's just this epitome of the perfect mother but then I read there was this part and I don't know if I just missed it when I was reading it as a child or a young girl but Jo is really angry. It's the part where Jo and Amy have the big fight over the book that Amy destroys and Jo is just so hot-tempered and Marmee explains to Jo that she understands how Jo feels and she says, I struggled with anger nearly everyday of my life. And Jo is just blown away by that but she's also so encouraged by her mom's honesty and I was so encouraged because I thought well first of all, Marmee is not perfect. There is no perfect mom. If Marmee's not perfect then none of us are perfect.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

*18:00 Being real with our kids



Greta: And that was really encouraging. But also, I just thought to be able to be humble and honest with my kids to let them know that I struggled with the same things they do to be on their side so that they know they're not alone, that is a really important gift I think to be real with our kids. We talk all the time on social media about being real and I wonder if we're often real enough with our own kids. And let them know like, "Hey, I understand exactly what you're going through. I felt that same way when I was a kid." Or "I feel that way right now." And I love that part of Little Women because I felt like that's what Marmee does and I want to do that for my kids. I want them to know that I'm approachable. I want them to know that I'm weak and vulnerable like they are but then I'm still growing and that they can still grow too. So those are just two examples of many books.

Sarah: Oh my gosh! I love that so much. Because so often we feel like we have to show them how they're supposed to feel or how they're supposed to move forward instead of kind of bearing ourselves and showing like I'm a human just like you and I know exactly what you feel like in this moment.

19:30 The genius of Ramona

Greta: Right, right. And I would say another book that actually sort of does the flip side, it puts me in their shoes and reminds me of what it's like to be a child is the Ramona Quimby books.

Sarah: Yes.

Greta: Those books are so hilarious. I love listening to them. We actually listen to those books on audio because there's a series that narrated by Stockard Channing and she's an amazing narrator. You can get it on Audible.

Sarah: We'll make sure we put a link to that in the show notes.

Greta: Yeah, she does it so well. We laugh. We've listened to the whole series multiple times because she's such a great reader. But every time we listen to it, I'm reminded of what the child's brain is like and I think that's another thing that we as parents we forget because we dismiss things and we think, why are you being so childish?

Sarah: My husband will say that to the two-year old. It's almost like you're acting like a two-year old.

Greta: Right. But it's valuable to remember that they are children and so these thing that seem so simple and so silly to us are a huge deal for them and so if we can put ourselves in their shoes and we can help them of course navigate it and grow but at the same time not diminish their feelings and act as if it's nothing. Like to find that balance is really a hard thing to do but I think that's one of the greatest gifts we can give to our kids.

Sarah: Oh that's beautiful.

Sarah: Okay, so The Yearling and then Ramona books helped you see life through the eyes of a child which I've noticed too. In fact, I was reading an interview recently where Beverly Cleary talked about how she, someone asked what's your favorite children's literature and she was like, "I don't read children's literature. I just write books like I was a child again like remembering what it felt like to be a child." And I thought, oh my word. It's a gift to be able to remember what exactly what it feels like to be a child and if we could do that as parents.

Greta: Yeah, I try to pull from that a lot actually. Like not just when they're struggling or having a hard time but even just remembering like the things that I loved as a kid and things that I wanted to be able to do. Just to be able to say yes to things that seem silly but I remember as a kid, them seem important and to recognize that



things that seem like they're not a big deal to me or a big deal to them. And yeah, pulling from childhood and there are not a lot of great writers or there are not a lot of writers that do it really well and I think Beverly Cleary is just amazing at it.

Sarah: Yeah, I do too. Okay so what book-mama would you say you're most like?

22:00 The book-parents Greta wants to be like

Greta: Well actually ironically, a lot of the parents that I identify with the most and want to be like, I don't know if I have achieved being like them but I want to be like them. For sure, a lot of them are actually fathers and I don't know why that is. But I think about like I mentioned Penny Baxter from *The Yearling*. I love Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I mean who doesn't want to be a parent like Atticus? He's amazing. But I also love, I don't know if you've read *Danny, The Champion of the World* by Roald Dahl.

Sarah: Okay, that is one of the Roald Dahl books that I have not read.

Greta: It's actually my favorite of all of his books and it was my favorite from the time I was a child till I think I clearly admired the dad in this book from the time I was a kid. He reminds me a lot of my own father so that's a big part of it. I have a really close relationship with my dad and my mom for totally different reasons. But in this book, *Danny's dad*, he is so tender with his son. His mom, *Danny's mom* passed away when he was a baby so it's just he and his dad. And his dad is just tender and he holds *Danny's hand*. He calls him *darling* and I just love that tenderness and I aspire to be a tender mama with my own kids especially with my sons. And I love that there's that element in this book but he's also really fun and he just loves to have fun with

Danny. The book is actually about poaching and he takes his son poaching which you'd think wow what kind of good dad is that? But you know, Roald Dahl, he is able to spin on things that you're okay with it and there's this quote at the end of the book. I actually just put it on my Instagram account that is one of my favorite quotes about parenting and he says at the end of the book, Roald Dahl is addressing the kids reading the book. And he says, he wants them to remember something when they grow up and he says, "A stodgy parent is no fun at all. What every child wants and deserves is a parent who is sparky."

Sarah: Oh that's so good.

Greta: Isn't that the greatest quote?

Sarah: Okay, we're going to have to put that in the show notes. Yeah.

24:10 The drudgery of the day to day

Greta: It's so easy to get lost in the day-to-day, sometimes it feels a little bit like drudgery of parenting like we've got to get things done. We've got this checklist. There are chores. And we've got to get through school and I think sometimes we are little stodgy and how important it is for our kids to see us being playful with them. And a lot of the parents I admire in literature, there is just this element of playfulness that I think is really important because kids love to play and that's one of their languages. That's how they learn. And that's how they connect with each other and if we can connect with them that way, that's such a gift. I think *Pa* in the *Little House* series.

Sarah: Yeah, I was going to bring him up.

Greta: I love him. He plays with *Laura* and *Mary* and I can even recall that illustration from the *Garth Williams* books where he's got his hair all



wild and he's chasing after them pretending to be like a wild dog or something. They're running and jumping over the wood box because he's so scary but it's so much fun. So I definitely love that and then one another character, I'm sorry, I could go on forever.

Sarah: Oh keep going yeah. This is so much fun. Yeah.

Greta: Another father figure that I really love is the dad in Caddie Woodlawn.

Sarah: Oh my goodness! Yes.

Greta: I love how he lets Caddie be herself. He lets her run free and be outside. He doesn't make her be cooped up in the house with her sisters because he really knows who she is and he understands her and he understands her needs. And there's this speech he gives her towards the end of the book when she's had an argument with her mom and I think her mom doesn't really understand who Caddie is but she just sees who she wants Caddie to be rather than who Caddie needs to be.

Sarah: Oh gosh!

26:10 Nurturing who our children need to become

Greta: I think that is such a common problem we all face in parenting, right? We have this idea of what we want our kids to be and it's so hard for us when they clearly are someone else. And Caddie's dad gets that. But he also really understands who Caddie needs to become and he understands her fears. So he's talking to her and he says, he's encouraging her to embrace her femininity and her womanhood which is what Caddie is struggling with because she thinks "If I'm a woman, I just have to stay in the kitchen and sew and I want to run outside with my brothers and ride the horses and I want to have fun." And he encourages her to understand that

women, that she shouldn't be afraid to be a woman because women are just as strong, if not stronger than men. And I remember as a teenage like a young probably pre-teen girl like having that internal struggle of wanting to be feminine but wanting to be outside chasing the baseball with my brother. And I really identified with Caddie so this speech her dad gave to her, I really took it in as a young girl.

But then when I read it as a mom, I was literally crying reading it to my kids. I was like sobbing. Like they're used to it. They don't think it's weird at all because I'd cry reading books all the time. But it was like I remembered myself as this little girl reading that and I remember how much of an impact it had and then I thought wow I get to read this with my kids and my boys get to hear this and hear just about what a real woman is and my daughter gets to hear it. How amazing that I'm sharing this and how amazing her dad was to be able to recognize Caddie's needs and her fears, acknowledged them but still helped her move forward and grow into who she needed to become and I just think that stories have such an impact on me that I think that moment I had such a great understanding about what kind of parent I wanted to be. That's why I love to read books, novels about parents that are a great example of parenting because I think often I get more from them than I would from a how-to parenting book.

Sarah: Well it makes so much sense that, you know, we know that those lessons that our children or I guess when they're inspired to courage or they're inspired to heroic virtue in their own life through a story, it's so much more powerful than if we were to sit down and dogmatically give them a lesson on what it means to be noble or courageous or have integrity.

Greta: Exactly. Right.



Sarah: Yeah, and one of the books that totally comes to mind for me is Understood Betsy. Have you read that?

Greta: Oh yes, yes. That was on my list.

Sarah: Oh yes. Awesome. Yeah, the Putney family. I mean you just can't help but think, I want to raise a child, I want to see my child the way the Putney's see Betsy.

Greta: Exactly. Yeah, I cried in that book as well.

29:00 Children are born persons

Sarah: Well it's really clear when you read that story about how some of the practices and things we do routinely just, as adults, the way we treat kids, sort of devalues them as humans with their own thoughts and dreams and plans and the way the Putney's respect the child is a beautiful just representation of what I think Charlotte Mason meant when she said that children are born persons and what Maria Montessori meant when she was talking about respecting who the child is and making normal lives in them. So anyway, I love that book.

Greta: You and I speak the same language.

29:50 Eskridge family favorites

Sarah: I knew we would. Okay, so what have been your family's favorite read aloud's? Okay, besides all the ones that I already mentioned, we love the Little Britches series.

Sarah: Oh we're reading that right now.

Greta: We've read every single one, either listened to them on audiobook or read them. Actually, some of them more than once. My kids love books that are a series. And so that one's great because there are so many of them. The Chronicles of Narnia for sure, we actually have parts of those books memorized because we've read them so many times.

Sarah: Oh my goodness!

Greta: I love reading books multiple times so I've never been afraid to let my kids do that. I think books, they're like friends. So you spend time with them more and more, you just love them more. So same with The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings trilogy. They've memorized parts of those as well. Those books have been really great to listen to on audio because they're like... we found one that is a great narrator and I'm blanking on his name right now. I think it's Robert Ingals.

Sarah: Oh Inglis.

Greta: Inglis, thank you. And his narration of those are so much better than I could do myself especially because he sings a lot of the songs that are in the book. So it just has made those books come alive in a way that if I were to read them aloud, I think I just wouldn't do them the same kind of justice. So those books they sing the songs from the stories and those have been a huge favorite.

Sarah: I have a post somewhere and we could probably link to it in the show notes where I admitted that I was having a really hard time reading The Hobbit aloud and I ended up getting the audiobook.

Greta: I listened to that one.

Sarah: Yes. And we ended up getting the audiobook narrated by Rob Inglis and as soon as we started playing it, I thought why was I even trying because I wasn't even doing remotely as good of a job as this. And so yeah.

Greta: Yeah, sometimes it's good to say, "Hey, someone does this way better than I do so I'm going to pass the torch."



32:00 Nurturing yourself through audiobooks

Sarah: And you know what, one of the things and I haven't done it yet, I'm going to do it, it's in my Amazon cart already, I've got these adult coloring books in my Amazon cart. And what I really want to start trying to do is instead of always, when I'm turning on audiobooks for the kids and trying to do more laundry or come in tidying a room, sometimes that takes me in and out of the story and I don't feel as invested as my kids do. But I think oh my goodness, if I sat down with an adult coloring book, it would be so nurturing for me. And so yeah, some of those books I haven't read but I actually have not, I shouldn't even say this on the podcast, I mean at least half of you all, I've not read The Lord of the Rings trilogy and so I should listen to them. I could probably do that if Rob Inglis read them to me.

Greta: Yes, I actually read them and then not till I was an adult though. I didn't read them as a kid and I read them as an adult and I loved them and then I'm going to lose a bunch of your listeners now because I'm going to confess that then I was so excited to watch the movies that everyone raved about and I started to watch the movies and I was so disappointed because they were very different than the books and I was passionately in love with the books and then I watched the movie and I'm like, "This is not in the book. What is wrong with you?" And so I didn't watch the movies. I just kept my vision of the book the way I thought. But then when I listened to the books again, being narrated, I actually loved them better than when I read them by myself, when I read them to myself.

Sarah: Oh that's what I feel about Harry Potter. When the Harry Potter read by Jim Dale. I think the audiobooks are even better than reading it on your own.

Greta: Yes, I think audiobooks are great and I love what you said about to do a coloring book while you listen to books because I'm the same as you like I'm doing the dishes or I'm working out or whatever. I'm doing something else because I feel like I don't have a moment to waste and so I always want to multitask.

Sarah: Yes, exactly.

33:40 Doing something while you listen

Greta: Whereas my kids, they listen to books whether I'm reading aloud or audiobooks and they're always drawing or playing Lego's. They're doing something while they listen but they're not doing something necessarily task-oriented. It's just something that they enjoy and that is relaxing to them and I think I can learn from that. You have a great idea there.

Sarah: Something you just said just like, okay, so you just said you feel like you don't have time to waste and I'm just thinking yeah me too. That's exactly how I feel but then I thought okay, what does that model for my kid if I'm like it's a waste of time to sit and listen to the story.

Greta: So convicting.

Sarah: Oh man. Okay so we will dig up some really awesome adult coloring books and we'll put show notes or links in the show notes for all of you who are listening so if we want to have a Read Aloud Revival adult coloring revolution, we can do it.

Greta: That's amazing.

Sarah: Okay, so you have so many good resources on your site maandpamodern.com and one is about starting a book club for kids so do you want to talk about that, why you started it and what it looks like and that kind of thing?



34:30 Greta's book club

Greta: Yes. Our book club is really fun. I tried to start a book club in fifth grade with my kids and because I thought that sounded like the most amazing thing and my friends were not that into it.

Sarah: Oh sad.

Greta: They were more interested in just hanging out and talking. I remember one of the girls said I was too bossy for trying to make everybody talk about books.

Sarah: I can imagine.

Greta: And she was probably right I'm sure. I was like, "C'mon let's talk about the book. Why are we here?" But I have loved to have a book club for ages and so to do it now with my kids, once again, this is another dream come true. Our homeschool group, we started it probably, it's been at least three years now. And we just thought it would be really great to create the culture of talking about books and loving books with the kids in our group. They all love to read from the littlest to the oldest. Our group is made up, our oldest kids are turning 12 this year and then the youngest are babies. So we have the full spectrum of ages and all of them love books and we thought wow if we could get them to just have this culture where they learn to talk about books together, what a gift we're giving them. So we decided to have a book club four times a year and we'd read one book a season. So fall, winter, spring, summer. And each family takes turns choosing a book and there are ten families in our group so it takes a long time before it's your turn again. My kids are dying for their turn again. They keep saying, "when is it our turn again?" I'm like "oh we've got a-ways to go" but that's how much they love it. It's a big deal.

Sarah: Oh cool.

Greta: So whenever whatever family chooses the book, they plan the celebration where we all get together and talk about the book so we have generally about three months to well by the time we picked the book and get started it's always less than three months. A couple of months to read the book and then we have this meeting where celebrate the book and we all pitch in and help. It's not one mom planning this huge party for, I don't know how many kids are in the group, a lot. We all pitch in. So we bring food and we plan activities. The kids dress up in costumes.

Sarah: Oh fun!

Greta: That is not us pushing in on them. That's something that they want to do because they just, they're homeschoolers.

Sarah: Nothing further needed.

Greta: And they're not embarrassed to be dressed up like when we read *The Swiss Family Robinson*, we met at an arboretum and the kids were dressed up like in everything from Swiss dresses like from Switzerland to buckskin caps and coonskin caps and like ragged pants like they just got off of a shipwreck. And they were completely, it was like totally normal that they were out in public dressed like this running around the arboretum just having a great time.

For that book, the club meeting, I actually planned a botanical scout scavenger hunt where while we read the book, the kids and I kept track of all the different plants and animals that were mentioned in the book and so I always to incorporate science or history or geography into the books we read and so the *Swiss Family Robinson* is perfect for the science aspect. And so, I took the list of plants and then I looked at the arboretum's website and found the list of plants that were there at the arboretum and found like ten of the plants that were in the book that we had read and the kids had to run around in teams and find those plants.



Sarah: Oh that's so much fun.

Greta: It's kind of dorky but it was fun and there were some that they thought, "Oh that's not what I thought it would look like at all." So those are just, we do activities like that when we read *My Side of the Mountain* for one of our book clubs. They drank stinging nettle tea and they built shelters. We met at the place that's kind of wooded and where there's lots of sticks and branches and leaves that are on the ground and they built forts like in *My Side of the Mountain*. So they're very active and fun. It's not where we're sitting around with fancy teacups or pancakes in the air and trying to make them be someone they're not. Because we have 4 year olds in this book club and 12 year olds and we want it to be really joyful. We want them to see that reading books is just so much fun. And so that's what we attempt to bring to the occasion.

39:40 Book Club Kits to enjoy together

Sarah: I just saw this. You know what I love most about what you just said is you want it to be fun and delightful for everybody in the family regardless of what their age is. Actually, by the time this podcast airs, we'll probably have already released it in membership, our first whole family book club kit and our first one's based on *Boxes for Katje* by Candace Fleming. It's a picture book. Have you read that one?

Greta: Yes.

Sarah: Okay, so it's just a beautiful story and our hope with those book club kits is that we can create some discussion starters and ideas for things like you're talking about that just helped your whole family enjoy a book together no matter what their age is. So I love that. I love the idea of everybody celebrating it together rather than kind of sectioning off, you know the sixth and seventh and eighth graders are reading

this and high schoolers are reading this and the other kids. Of course, there is that happening too in any reading life.

Greta: Right.

Sarah: But I just love that intentional forming of like a whole family memories together and hand a book especially with friends. That's so much fun.

Greta: Yeah, and I think too that the discussion part of the book club because that was our original intent. It grew into this sort of big, much bigger thing than we ever anticipated. Originally, we just thought oh we're going to get together and talk about the book and we'll have food but the kids have just taken it and wanted to run with it and make it more and more, which is great. We love that they have ownership and we dream that at one point, they'll be taking over and be in charge of it entirely. But the discussion part, they love to talk about the book. I mean it's almost to the point where sometimes we have to say, "Okay we have to stop talking now" because they all have so much to share and they want to tell their favorite parts and they want to answer questions. And occasionally, there have been a couple of times where we have separated for the discussion like the littler kids will have a discussion and the bigger kids will simply because there might have been some themes in the book that we thought the little kids might not have gotten. But we don't do that for the whole book club and we just do it for one section of the discussion but for the most part, they're all together and the big kids are learning graciousness as they listen to the little kids giving the answer that maybe is a little bit of a tangent and maybe it's a little bit off track. But they learn how to bring the conversation back and those are all just such great skills. And they think what great modeling for the little kids to see that books aren't just for when you are little. Books are exciting for you when you're a kid and



for the grownups because the moms, we love the books just as much as the kids do.

Sarah: Exactly. It's like an incarnation of that C.S. Lewis quote about a book being only the children's story if it's enjoyed by everybody.. the children.

Greta: Right. Yes, that is one of the quotes that I love. I agree wholeheartedly.

42:30 Wild + Free California

Sarah: Okay, well we are both speaking in May at the Wild & Free Conference. I'm so excited to see you there.

Greta: Me too.

Sarah: Now, if you are listening and you have not seen this Wild & Free Homeschool Conferences, they are, I went to my first one this last Fall in Williamsburg. It was amazing. I called my best friend Pam and I told her this is the best homeschooling conference I have ever been to. This is amazing. Wild & Free has a conference on the east coast on the Fall usually, right?

Greta: Yes.

Sarah: Okay, so this Spring conference in Long Beach, California is sold out but keep your eyes open for announcements. Go to bewildandfree.org to get on their email list and that way you can find out when they're conference is happening in the Fall. It's totally worth traveling to. Greta, have you been to all the Wild & Free Conferences?

Greta: I've been to three. The first one, I didn't go to. I had just discovered them and so I saw it happening and I thought wow! I want to be a part of that. And so I then was able to go to the second one which was in Portland last Spring and I was a speaker there and I talked about books a lot of course and then I was a speaker again at the Williamsburg one and talked about books

again. I talked about books that inspire a love of nature actually. It's one of my favorite subjects because it combines nature and books. And then I'm super excited to be able to be speaking again at this one in Long Beach. It's an incredible experience just to be around women who love educating their kids at home and they're so creative and so inspiring and so willing to sort of force their old path and to be in that kind of environment for a few days is just incredibly encouraging and uplifting and you come away feeling like I am not doing this alone. I'm surrounded by other women who get me. And that's really fun, really empowering.

Sarah: Oh yeah. I came home last time filled up for months. I mean it was transformational especially as far as soul nourishing and making me feel so much more inspired to do this well with my own kids. So very good. Well, for all of our listeners, if you want to connect with Greta, head to maandpamodern.com or check her out on Instagram. She's @maandpamodern. Is there anywhere else they should go to connect with you Greta?

Greta: No. I try to update my blog as often as I can which isn't that often because I do need to sleep sometimes. But you can get a lot on my Instagram posts because I definitely fill that limit when I'm writing on my Instagram post. Those are like my mini-blog posts and then when I want to write something more.

Sarah: Wait, wait, wait. There's a text limit in Instagram? I have never even written one so long that I did not even know that.

Greta: Well that's embarrassing that I know it very well. I think a lot of people, they look at my post and they say, "Wow! okay how many times do I have to scroll to finish what she has to say?"

Sarah: Oh but so good. It's so good. It's such a micro blog. It's just beautiful.



Greta: You have to be committed, right? So if I want to write more and really take up a lot of your time then I'd write a blog post. But that's where I can reference a lot more and I definitely try to do that but maybe once a week if I can. So those are the two places, Instagram and my blog and I love to talk about books and parenting and mothering and homeschooling, adventures, and I love connecting with other moms who are passionate about the same things.

Sarah: Awesome. Thank you so much for coming on the show. This was so much fun.

Greta: Oh me too I had a great time. Thanks for having me Sarah.

46:05 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.

Mia: Hello! My name's Mia and I live in Marietta, Georgia. I'm 4 years old and I like Mr. Popper's Penguin because he doesn't know where the penguin gets off them and doesn't know where she's going. And my other book is The Seven Silly Eaters. They don't know what to do and their mom doesn't know what they're trying to do so she creeps in bed and everybody comes downstairs to make something.

Magdalena: Hi! My name is Magdalena. I'm 7 years old and I live in Minnesota. My favorite book is Long Winter by Laura Ingalls Wilder. I like it because in Minnesota, we have long winters too.

Child 3: Hello! I live in Oregon and I'm 5. My favorite book is Madeline and the Gypsies. My favorite part is when Miss Clavel found Madeline.

Lucas: Hi! My name is Lucas. I live in Oregon. I'm 7 years old. My favorite book is The Twenty-One

Balloons. My favorite part is when Professor Sherman almost got eaten by a shark.

Shaina: Hi! My name is Shaina. I live in Oregon and I'm 9. One of my favorite books is Homer Price and the Doughnuts. My favorite part was when Homer couldn't stop the dodge.

Sarah: Thank you so much kids. I just love hearing your book recommendations and you named a few of my favorites today as well. Okay, show notes for today's episode is at readaloudrevival.com. Click on episode 42. While you're there, sign up for our new completely awesome book list. I think you'll be glad you did. you'll never be short of ideas on what to read aloud next with your kids based on what they're interested in and their ages and we've got those books broken down into all kinds of creative ways for you to choose a great read aloud next. I am so glad you joined me today. I appreciate every single one of you and I hope you have a wonderful, wonderful March. Until next time, go build your family culture around books.