



When Kids are Whiny and Other Questions You're Asking

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

This is the Read Aloud Revival podcast. Today is Q&A day. The last time we did a Q&A was Episode 18. Everybody loved it and my assistant Allison and I had a lot of fun putting it together for you so we're doing it again.

We've pulled the most frequently asked questions from the Read Aloud Revival Facebook group, the membership site and our contact form and we're tackling them here.

Allison's got a good read aloud culture happening in her home so I just love chatting with her about books and reading. First, let me remind you that I send weekly emails every Friday to folks with tips and tricks and my very favorite read aloud book recommendations. I've heard from so many of you that you look forward to that email and I really love sending it. Don't get yours yet. You can sign up by heading to readaloudrevival.com and clicking on Join the Revival. You'll get a weekly email from me and access to the free Jumpstart Challenge, a kick in the pants for your read aloud home. Basically, it's a 100-day read everyday for at least 5 minutes challenge that will help you get a jumpstart on your read aloud habit. Again, that's readaloudrevival.com and click on Join the Revival to get it all for free. I admit the very best part of today's podcast is Posy's outro at the very end. I mean really. Just listen in to the end and you'll see what I mean. Give a three-year old a microphone and well I should have fixed back a bit. Anyway, are you ready for today's Q&A? Awesome! Let's get started.

Sarah: So Allison thank you for coming back on to the show. It's so much fun to have you here.

Allison: Well thanks for having me again. I was excited to join you again.

Sarah: Well we have seen quite a lot of similar type questions on the Read Aloud Revival Facebook group and in our contact form and in the membership site and we thought we could tackle some of those today. Do you want to jump with some of those?

2:20 Cultivating Your Own Appetite for Learning

Allison: I would love to. Some of these are questions that I have myself so I can't wait to hear how you're going to answer them. So question number 1 Sarah, what types of books should moms be reading to cultivate their own appetites? I know that a lot of people are going to want to hear what you have to say. You've written about this a lot in your blog. So kind of give us an idea of, do these need to be books that are kind of stretching your brain and making us do mental exercises? Or are we cultivating our appetites with easier fiction or how do you approach that?

Sarah: Well I think there's a place for all of that. Actually, my favorite place to write about this is not just on my blog but in Flourish which is my bi-monthly e-magazine and we can maybe put a link to that in the show notes. It's free and I send it out by email. And I love to put in there some of my most recent favorite reads or the things that have helped me grow or cultivate my own appetite, my own intellect, and all that. One of the things Brandy Vencel at Afterthoughts has taught me is a Charlotte Mason principle which basically to have three books going all at the same time. And Charlotte Mason called that "mother culture"



and she would say "Have something hard that challenges you." Have something medium that's not like brainless but it takes some thought but it's not like Aristotle or something. And then have something and then have something easy, not necessarily just fluff but something that doesn't take as much brain power. And then you can just pick up whichever book you feel most fit for.

And actually Brandy has a post on that and a post on another take on the same idea which is to have three books going but maybe three books that feed into the different parts of your life. So say, fiction, and then I like to read... because I'm a homeschooling mom. I like to read books on education and so I will try to have one book of fiction, one book relating to education, and then a book relating to my spiritual life. And so I like to kind of divide books that way and then I can pick up whatever feels the most right to read at any given moment. So that's the way I like to do it.

Now, I get my book recommendations from a few places that I think are pretty reliable. Oftentimes on the podcast we recommend Honey For a Child's Heart by Gladys Hunt. She's also written a book called Honey for a Woman's Heart.

Allison: Oh I may have not read that.

Sarah: Okay I have it on my shelf and I haven't dug into it a whole lot. But I am very happy with her other two books, the Honey for a Child's Heart and Honey for a Teen's Heart. So I have a feeling it would be a good reliable place to go for book recommendations. I like to go to Susan Wise Bauer's The Well-Educated Mind for my hard reading. But I'll emphasize that is hard reading. She has you reading all kinds of classics, novels, and biographies and all kinds of things and they're very well-chosen and she even

recommends which version is...Yeah that's really helpful because a version can make a big difference. I remember...

Allison: I was just going to say especially with the classics because I've read some Russian literature before and I think the translation has made all the difference in the world of whether it's beautiful language or it's incomprehensible. So...

Sarah: Exactly. I tried to read Kristin Lavransdatter in a really archaic kind of language. It was really brutal and I kept hearing all these people say they loved it. I thought what is wrong with me and it turns out that I was reading a very much harder translation. Or annotations, those can be really helpful and she's got some good reliable recommendations in there. There's also a book or a website called The Well-Read Mom. They are kind of a book club book where you can use their resources to create your own book club in your area and they have good book recommendations on there as well. And then probably my favorite go-to site to find good books to read is Anne Bogel's Modern Mrs. Darcy. We have slightly different reading taste but for the most part, I can go to her site and find something awesome to read. I mean she just reads like nobody I've ever met. She can recommend things so well because she's so well-read. What I don't do is I don't just go to the library or the bookstore, just grab something off the shelf for the most part mostly because my reading time is limited and so I want to make sure that what I'm reading is something that is going to either nourish my mind or at least give me some relaxation and peace and I just don't want to waste my time on junk. I am the kind of personality that has no problem ditching a book if



I'm not enjoying it but are you like that or do you have to read the whole thing?

6:38 Can you ditch a book if it's not a good fit?

Allison: Oh I don't have to read the whole thing but more than ditching things, I'm a skimmer and so if I, except for fiction, I don't skim fiction. And if I don't love fiction, I'll definitely ditch it but if it's non-fiction, something that's making my brain work really hard, which I would say makes my brain hurt which is a good category, give like anaerobic exercise for my brain, then I can skim it. And I don't need to read it for every single word which is a discussion my husband and I have a 500-paged book on a biography of a person that he's read six biographies about. And I look at him reading the same book night after night and I say, "Babe, why don't you just skim it. You've already have the entire biography of George Washington memorized." While you pass and he has to go page by page and that kind of thing drives me nuts. Just different reading styles but yeah I would totally skim it. But I feel like I have enough acumen in selecting books now in general especially fiction books that I feel like I don't get many duds like I used to so it's not as big of an issue... I just feel like I've grown in that area and I would not be somebody who has any problem about ditching something, no question about that.

Sarah: Yeah I always feel bad for people who say they can't ditch a book because that's so much pressure before you start a book if can't ditch it.

Allison: Yeah, you have to commit to it. I know and then there's such limited time in general.

7:54 The Pull of the Urgent

Sarah: Well speaking of limited time actually, I think the harder thing rather than, even harder than choosing a good book is finding time to read. And that's a question we get a lot which is, how do you find time to read? For me, I know that things that are scheduled are the only things that get done so reading is a priority for me and if I don't make a space for it on my day, it just doesn't happen because there's always other urgent things like dishes and laundry and crying toddlers that have to happen. And so I used to read before bed but six kids later, I've fallen asleep before I go to bed. I love the idea of reading during my kids' quiet reading hour, I will say I'm not that good at actually practicing it. It's something I need to grow in for sure. But I love the idea of us all grabbing our books and going somewhere quiet to read for a little bit instead of them going to their books and me trying to clean up the kitchen and check my email.

Allison: Well you know what, I have just started doing that and I don't know if I've read it on Anne Bogel's website or who it was but I just what we call couch reading time where they have to go with a timer on the couch and kind of do a chapter reading book in the middle of our morning homeschool time and so everybody will be on the couch at different times and I finally realized that their having 20 minutes of delightful chapter reading, why can't I do it? And so I did it a couple of times or a few times over the last couple of weeks. And the child who I happened to land on the couch with, loved it. They were snuggling up and they thought it was just this new magical one on one time I thought if I don't have a grammar lesson or something else going on, I should totally take advantage of it because 20 minutes with a book uninterrupted is a lot of



progress. And I was going to ask you I know some people have recommended that you read fiction at night. It's kind of different you know when your brain is winding down it's not super high intellect time, does that kind of help you stay awake at all? Or is it just you're totally wiped out and the pre-bed reading time has just gotten from your schedule altogether?

Sarah: Well you know what's funny, I think I'm weird though because I don't know if this is standard. But I read fiction at night because it helps me fall asleep. If I start reading non-fiction at night, it ramps my brain up because I think it's because my intellectual wheels start spinning or my planning or whatever it is I'm reading I tend to just ramp up. And so I don't usually let myself read. My husband used to not let me read any homeschooling books at all before bed because he's like "You stay up half the night planning." Or at least think, dreaming and skimming.

10:12 Creating Your Own Booklists

Allison: Okay great! I think that you've given me a lot to think about there. So Question number 2 about creating your own book list. So I know that you and I have said this to each other already and I know other people have the same question of how could you recommend such and such a book. We've read that and we hated it. Or that my children were terrified or everyone was bored, senseless or whatever... that kind of thing comes up. I was hoping you could talk a little bit about why no two families are ever going to have the same book list.

Sarah: It's something that comes up all the time. And we don't all like the same food either so it's kind of funny that we expect ourselves to all love

the same books. Here's the thing. I let my kids read *The Magic Tree House* and *Harry Potter* and a whole host of things that other families might not deem fit for their families. But I think it's really important as parents to choose books based on our own conscience. And so that can be a little tricky and also it's just our tastes are different so what comes to mind, you're the one Allison right whose family really enjoyed *Lemony Snicket*?

Allison: Yes and I was going to bring that up. You and I kind of gotten into a scuffle about that, a very friendly scuffle. Because you were saying that because Andrew Pudewa talks about how he waited with those of [distorted] and you were saying "Oh my family, we totally hated it." And I thought, oh my goodness we are *Lemony Snicket* addicts. I was just totally entranced with all thirteen books so yeah but we have so many other books that we love in common but it's just a family thing obviously.

Sarah: Well it's so funny, Pam Barnhill is one of my very best friends, we probably share a taste in just a million different things. But for a while there we had a Pinterest board going that was called "books Pam hates that Sarah loves" or the opposite. Because we've kept talking about books and we'd find that we had the exact opposite reaction to them so it was kind of funny. I think this is where a few trusted book sources come in handy because I don't know that any of those trusted book sources I've talked about, *Honey for a Child's Heart* or books children love for example, I don't know that I would love every single book that's in there. But I think we train ourselves to be able to choose good books and recognize the elements of good books when we use reliable book sources like that and then we can all deviate just slightly. You know, there'll be a couple books here, a couple books there that



either I love that I can't believe these others didn't put in their book list or that I can't believe they put on their book list. So I think that's just to be expected and you know, one of those important things that we don't want to abdicate our responsibility as parents to provide books to our family that we believe nourish them. One of the things I think could really help is that Adam Andrews created a workshop in the Read Aloud Revival membership on how to build a perfect reading list and his principles and practical helps I think are really helpful and just helping a family figure out the best and right reading list for themselves.

Allison: Okay well that's something to check out in the membership site. Hey, this reminds me, this discussion reminds me... have you read I Capture the Castle?

Sarah: Yes, Dodie Smith right?

Allison: Yes. In one sentence, you loved it or you hated it?

Sarah: I land somewhere in the middle it.

Allison: Ok so I thought this is a perfect example. Anne Bogel recommended it and everyone was just wildly raving about it and it seemed like it was cropping up everywhere. I immediately bought it. I read the first chapter. And I threw it away. I didn't even take it to the recycling, you know the bookstore where you... I thought this is hideous. This is trash. I can't even stand this. And then I thought wow this is so interesting. So talk about ditching. I ditched that thing after I just dropped nine bucks on it and then I threw it in the trash. I thought that it was so terrible. But so many other people who I like and respect read it and liked it. I thought I'm missing something there. But you fall in the middle. Because so many other...

Sarah: I liked it. I didn't love it. I remember picking it up because Melissa Wiley mentioned it. And she's another awesome resource for books for moms too. I don't think she has any (I could be wrong about that) ... I don't think she has any complete list or anything on her site but she'll just drop titles that she's reading. She's a voracious reader so she's a wonderful resource. But she recommended that book years ago and maybe it's because that conversation around that post that she recommended the women were just raving about it so I had kind of high expectations for it. But I enjoyed it. I read the whole thing which means I enjoyed it because I didn't ditch it. But you know it's funny I raved about Alice Ozma's The Reading Promise and I still do. I still think it's the best book I read last year and I know that some of our listeners of the podcast were not... they just didn't know why I raved so much about it. And that happens with every book that I rave about. So I think it's just one of those things that we all have just a little bit different taste and so... it's like kind of a developing thing to just have confidence in your own ability to read a book so I just want to give that caveat when people ask me for book recommendations.

Allison: Right and at the end of the day, it's not a personal attack on somebody else if you don't like their favorite book. So we can all still be friends even if...

Sarah: I still am not quite sure... you threw it in the trash really?

Allison: I threw it in the trash. I thought well I could have offered that up to free but now you know what, I should not recycle it or this book is not worth recycling so I apologize to all the I Capture the Castle fans out there. I'm just not a fan.



15:14 Getting Kids to Sit Still for Read-Alouds

Let's move on to Question number 3. So we have a lot of listeners to the podcast and in the membership site who talk about they're new to this concept of the Read Aloud Revival and they just don't know how to get their young kids to sit still for read aloud time. A lot of moms will say "My kids seem uninterested. They're so fidgety. They keep whining they'd rather wander out of the room, find their Lego's, do something else. So what are some maybe top 2 or 3 tips for brand new read aloud families, people who are trying to make this a priority but they're struggling to get it off the ground.

Sarah: Well I'm not new to reading aloud and my kids fidget and wander out of the room and whine. So I think it depends on their age. It actually depends on a whole host of things. Sometimes I wish I could video tape our read aloud times because I think if everybody saw them they would feel so much better about their own. My friend Mystie, she said this the other day. We were talking about morning time actually. We were talking about reading and memory work in morning time in our homeschools and she said it will be helpful people could see her toddler thrashing around on the floor during morning time so that they could see that that's okay. That's what it looks like in reality.

Allison: I know. Well, yes. Really if that's what it's like in family life in general it's not all roses and rainbows. I mean a family life is beautiful and read aloud is beautiful in concept and in principle it's hard to work it out sometimes. But that doesn't detract from the beauty of it because there's beauty that comes from the struggle. So I agree. I would love to have a video camera in

your livingroom but since we can't have that, what kind of tips can you give to someone who's feeling discouraged by the whining and the Lego's and they don't realize that might just be the part of it.

Sarah: Okay the first thing I would say is absolutely that your kids have stuff in their hands. Let them do something with their hands. We're working on a printed resource in the membership site that lists some ideas of what your kids can do with their hands based on their age from toddlers to teens. What are some things that they can do working on while you are reading? For a lot of kids, maybe... it might be a stretch to say nearly all of them but for a lot of kids, doing stuff with their hands mean that they listen better, not worse. And so it's really helpful if you could have a stash, a cupboard maybe, or shelf, or even just a little box that you can pull out that has everybody's activities so you pull it out during read aloud time and a child who knows how to crochet, crochet. You pull that out for him, there's packets of Play Doh for the pre-schoolers and Lego's for the middle grader kids. I mean whatever your kids like to do. It's good to spend a little bit of time in forethought I think to think ahead of what they could be doing with their hands and then put those in an easy-to-grab spot. We did better with that when I had a shelf dedicated. In our old house, I had a shelf dedicated to read aloud activities. So when it was time to read aloud I'd say, "Go to the shelf and grab your thing." Whatever it is your thing's going to be.

Allison: Oh that's brilliant.

Sarah: And I haven't set that up in this new house. I need to do that.



Allison: I know that you're also using popsicles for your toddlers right? I think you just wrote about that the other day.

Sarah: I did.

Allison: I thought that was brilliant because you've trapped them in their high chair and it takes a good while to suck on a popsicle.

Sarah: It takes a million years for a toddler to eat a popsicle so when I thought of that, I thought I am so brilliant.

Allison: It's the small victories.

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. And I think we all have a different tolerance for how much noise or movement can be happening during read aloud but if you can handle it and you have one or two kids jumping on the trampoline, I mean in my house handstands are allowed, I can handle quite a bit of chaos happening around me but as the read aloud parent I think you just have to kind of decide how much noise or activity you can handle and then build activities around that. So that would be probably my number one, two, and three tip - is just get them something to do.

Allison: So let me ask you a follow up question to that then. So when you said every parent has a different tolerance for amount of activity and noise, that's true. So do you allow chatting? Little side chats of "Hey, hand me such and such" and I'm going to hum this little tune while I'm jumping on the trampoline or whatever or is it our lips shut while they're doing their activity. So how do you... other than the toddlers, obviously the toddlers you can't control and that's really if they're going to talk, but elementary age and up. What's your rule on talking and if it's not a question?

Sarah: I don't really mind it until it bothers me. Isn't that nice and clear and helpful? So if we're

sitting at the table and everyone's coloring say with markers or colored pencils and they're "Hey, can I grab the red?" that doesn't bother me whatsoever. You know, "Can I borrow that one?" That doesn't bother me. If it's like "Get your feet off me. You're kicking me." Because they're on the couch and they're fighting over cushions, that will drive me crazy. So that's a completely unclear answer but you have to be inside my brain to know what my tolerance level is.

Allison: Again, every mom can decide what works for her. I think that would me, personally, I wouldn't. If someone said, "Hey, can I have the red marker?" I mean they would get the stink eye from me big time. I would not even remotely allow that. I just want all silence except for the two-year old she can.... I can't control her little jibber jabbers. But everybody else has to be completely silent unless it's a relevant question but that's because it's very jarring for me to be interrupted. So but other people, like you, have a greater tolerance for that. So that's your top 1, 2 and 3 tips. Let them have something to do?

Sarah: Yup.

Allison: Okay. Excellent. And then the other thing I wrote down is for possibly two things to think about for a newbie read aloud family is explore the whole realm of audio books but somehow it seems like that might be... there's more flexibility in that if the kid has it in their room and then they can be racing around on the floor doing all their stuff. But they're starting to grow in their ability to listen to the longer chapters like you just talked about in your most recent podcast number 24. So audio books are just a very gentle introduction I think and I know we have that whole great interview with Mystie Winckler about that. And then the second thing I thought of was maybe picking a topic they like. So if they're super into



outer space or space ships or the civil war or something like that, maybe start off, try to start if a couple other titles have failed so those are just two added things that they can finally...

Sarah: That's a really good idea. And actually, that Honey for a Child's Heart, she divides books based on fantasy or historical fiction or for kids that love animals, that kind of thing. So that can be a really good place to start if you don't know where to start and you're brand new to reading aloud and you think "I just, I don't even know how to capture their interest." My oldest daughter is really into historical fiction. So she's going to be much more excited about historical fiction book that we've picked up then she will about fantasy. Now we do stretch outside that but when you're just getting started, I would go something that's going to be an easy fit.

Allison: Okay well great advice. Okay. Next question. How do you prioritize reading aloud when you don't homeschool?

22:09 Reading Aloud...Even If You don't Homeschool

Sarah: Yeah that's a great question. That's a question we're getting a ton in the Facebook community which by the way I should just shout out that if you are on Facebook and you're interested, we have a private Facebook community that has really grown into something awesome. I don't really participate in a lot of Facebook groups but that's when I've been checking into all the time because we're having a lot of really good conversations there and man there are a lot of great book recommendations happening there and troubleshooting where people say, hey this is my situation and 13 people

will come in with some different ideas of how to troubleshoot it so it's really awesome.

Allison: Oh great! Yes.

Sarah: So one of the things we hear a lot there is what does this look like in a family that's not homeschooling? And we're going to be doing a whole podcast episode on this in the Fall. Because really, family culture is family culture no matter where you're kids go to school. So I really think you can build your family culture around books no matter what. And we can use some of the similar principles. So one of the principles we talk about here at the Read Aloud Revival is pegging your read aloud times to things that are already happening everyday - mealtimes, reading aloud during lunch, or breakfast, or just doing it at the same time hooked to an activity that's already going to happen. So you know people are going to eat and so if you peg your read aloud time to that then you probably are going to read. And that can happen with a family that goes to school. Just do it at a mealtime that you're all together. Breakfast might be kind of a trick if you're trying to get kids out of the door, that would be hard for me anyway. But dinner or right after dinner, or I would just be really creative. Reading aloud with some kids while you're waiting outside the sport activities of other kids, doing a lot of reading aloud on the weekends, even if you can't fit it in a ton during the week. Or reading aloud shorter periods of time - 10 minutes, not feeling like you have to do some 30-minute read aloud session but just 10 minutes before bed or 10 minutes right when they get home from school or whatever your family life looks like. Fitting it in and making it a priority and the easiest way I know how to do that is to peg it to something that's already happening.



Allison: Well that's a great idea. So you mentioned something that about if you're, for example, stuck outside soccer practice and you've got two kids in the car and two kids on the field and so possibly reading to the two kids in the car, something else. Do you ever do that in terms of not having all children present who are into the story, who are engage in the story? I just know that would be a heresy in my family if one child was off with dad doing something and the rest of the family read the book without them. I can't even imagine how much horror that would be so...

Sarah: I have done that. But I wouldn't do a book that we were all reading together and then I continue to read it without a child present. I would do a different one and probably short stories. Something like, I like to recommend the James Herriot book, Animal Stories or Thornton Burgess or Winnie the Pooh would be a good one because they're kind of an episodic-type story where you can just get one little... you don't have to read it sequentially necessarily. Or my 11 and 9-year old love fantasy and my 13-year old not so much so I could definitely see if she was at youth group or something reading a fantasy to them and her not missing, feeling left out at all. But I wouldn't start let's say The Green Ember with everybody and then read it when one child was gone. Yeah because that would be heresy I think.

Allison: Totally yeah. That's breaking all the family culture rules on the Read Aloud Revival.

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Allison: Am I remembering right that Melissa Wiley talked about that with some of her kids, like after lunch or something, she would kind of go into one kid's bedroom and then...

Sarah: Oh I forgot about that, Yeah, she would go in and that would be her one-on-one time with them.

Allison: Yes, which sounded beautiful and lovely and you could snuggle up on their bed and everything but I thought man, she would have her fingers in a lot of different books but if that's what worked for her, that's what worked for her.

Sarah: Yeah, I could see my kids really loving that... I mean my 13-year old would probably love it if I could sit and read Jane Eyre with her and my other kids are not interested in that yet at all.

Sarah: You know the thing I think I would focus on if I was reading to kids that were in school is just in delighting in books together because the kids would probably already be doing things like book reports and literary analysis of some kind at school and I wouldn't want that to be an extension of school so I would focus on making it a really wonderfully delightful, informative, and nourishing time, picking maybe a childhood favorite or something fun like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory or something and pop some popcorn and read ten minutes a day or something, just really focus on making it fun and delightful.

26:38 Is It Too Late to Start Reading Aloud?

Allison: Okay, question number 5 - what about those people who have older kids so let's say preteen and teens and you have yourself a couple of those who seemed totally bored by the concept of reading aloud.

Sarah: I have some of those?

Allison: You've got preteen... You've got two...

Sarah: Yeah I do. It's scary.



Allison: Yeah, I know. Sorry, welcome to the real world but you do have a teenager now. So who seem bored by the concept of reading aloud and I know of some parents who have said in the Facebook community and elsewhere that I know we should have started this habit earlier. Is it too late essentially to establish this when they're already in their kind of that tweener or the teenage.

Sarah: Well, it's never too late. I mean it's never too late and I think it's always helpful to look forward more than we're looking back when it comes to our parenting. I've just noticed as a mom, I feel that way all the time. With my oldest, there's so many things I feel that way. I could have read them more Bible stories or I could have had...Oh my goodness! I can only imagine it gets stronger as the kids get older that we sort of feel like we missed an important step or an important thing that we really miss the boat on, but really it isn't that helpful.

Allison: Sort of hanging your head all day long. Yeah it's not helpful.

Sarah: It's not helpful. It doesn't help you be a better parent. So it's never too late. I would pick something... if you have let's say, a preteen or teenager and you haven't been reading aloud and you want to start forming your family culture on books and I mean think about you still probably have at least a year, a year is enough really to start really nourishing yourselves with books and talking about them and making it a part of your family culture. So even if you have a 17-year old or an 18-year old who's still at home. It's never really too late.k

But I would pick something wonderful and not at all schoolish. Something like Lord of the Rings or oh my goodness, some of my favorite books for

teens are Regina Doman has a whole series of fairy tales retold. One of them is In the Shadow of the Bear and there's a whole bunch of others. Although I just brought home In the Shadow of the Bear from a homeschool conference for my daughter. But I read it a couple of years ago. I read her whole series voraciously It's wonderfully done. And something like that would just be enjoyable. Hunger Games? I mean something just completely that will not feel like "Oh my mom is trying to improve me with this literary kind of thing." I would focus on the relationship aspect of it and Julie Bogart in episode 23, when she was talking about sharing reading with teens, it looks different than I expected it to. She focused more on sharing the same books like maybe the same books as your teen and then talking about it. Rather than always reading it aloud together, which is an important distinction. And I also think another thing you could do with teens or preteens who haven't been read to much is audio books just like you've mentioned before because honestly, it doesn't matter how old you are. Cherry Jones' narration of the Little House books, they're going to captivate everybody in the car or everybody in the room. You know put on Farmer Boy and just see what happens.

Allison: Yes. Well, another thing that Julie said from episode 23 was that sometimes it's better to encounter some of these great books when you're older and I thought that was so fascinating because she talked about some people who get burned out on Jane Austen and the way that their highschool teacher made them do literary analysis or in college or whatever, but didn't she talk about how she encountered a lot of Jane Austen in her late 20's or early 30's or something?



Sarah: Yeah I think it was in her early 30's because I'm 33 and I was thinking I really haven't fallen down the Jane Austen rabbit hole yet and I thought maybe I'm 33, maybe it's time.

Allison: You are way past due my dear. But yes, once you get down that rabbit hole, you never need to come out again. It's so wonderful so I thought "Oh that's something to file away that you don't have to fit in every single classic once you hit those teen years." And then the other thing just to encourage parents who have teens. I just heard the interview of a college professor earlier this week, talking about something totally unrelated but he talked about when I had I think 3 or 4 teens in the house. They realized that they hadn't made kind of family devotional kind of priority for them. So starting when they had all these teens in the house, they had never done this through the whole childhood experience, they started. He and the wife got up early single morning to make big breakfast like pancakes, waffles, bacon, eggs, whatever. And then they read aloud together and they do a little family devotional and he said, one of the kids in the house... they only did it one year, some of them, but they were able to do it two or three years before they graduated from highschool. So he and his wife really regretted not starting that when they were young. They're kind of prioritizing that time before they went out of school. But he said now his kids are in their 20's and 30's and that marked their family culture.

So he was just so grateful that even though the started it so late in the game and some of their kids only experienced it for a year, that's what they remember as one of the key features of their family life. And I thought, oh that's so encouraging. It's never too late.

Sarah: Yeah, that's beautiful.

31:40 Keeping Track of All the Books

Allison: Okay, so let's get to the more practical question here. How do you keep track of all these book lists and the recommendations? You get so many on the Read Aloud Revival. You've got some... you meet friends. You've got your books. You've got your Honey for the Child's Heart. You're at conferences. You're hearing books. Is it one massive Word document? Is it on your phone? Are they random scraps of sticky notes which would horrify me if that was the case. How do you categorize them either in your brain or on paper.

Sarah: Oh it's so much worse than random scraps of sticky notes. I am the wrong person to ask about documenting or organizing anything.

Allison: Okay, I don't want to know.

Sarah: Well, I'll tell you and then we'll ask you because you'll have a better answer than I have. Well I'm sure of it. I keep book lists in my kids' spiral notebooks that we use for their school assignments. I keep them on my phone in an app. I keep random notes in Evernote. I mean it is horrible. I have a terrible system. We are going to be making some Read Aloud logs for the membership site and we hope to get those up this summer where we could log them on paper. I have heard really good things from more organized folks than I about goodreads, using goodreads to document. It's probably the best idea I've heard of them all. I just haven't gotten around to doing it but what do you do? You're the person we should be asking this question, not me.

Allison: Well, I have... my system has changed. And so something that's just super simple is that



when I for example, listen to a podcast of yours and I think, oh those are three books that I want to get but it's not on the budget this month. So it's just a simple thing as I'd save things on my Amazon cart. This is just so basic. I'm sure everybody has it and so I could have 150 things that's in there and then as things pop up as money becomes available, I say okay I'm going to pick three things and then add it and then I buy it that week or that month. And do that's just one very practical one. But I also have a one little system that triggers my brain is if I fall in love with a particular author, but I know I can't buy every single book that they've written right now even though I would love to in a particular series. If I buy one, so for example like Ralph Moody, I want to get all the Little Britches ones, we only have one right now. And I know eventually, I want my husband to read aloud all of those. But right now we only have one and that's a trigger for me on my bookshelf. Okay, eventually I'm going to buy number 2, 3, 4, and 5 and 6 or whatever in that series. So that helps me just as a visual without "I don't have to track it anywhere." I just know that's a key author, we want more of him. So he's going to be coming down the pike. But other than that, I do have a massive Word document, which is not everybody's cup of tea. And I've just gotten them, I mean I'll have good friends who I'll just say hey give me your book list. And then I'll cut and paste it in there and then I'll see, okay, I'll delete her. I'll delete that one because we already have that one or I know that's not our cup of tea. So there's probably thousands of titles in there and I don't reference it super often but I know that it's there. And if it makes its way into that list, at least I don't lose it someday. So it's not a super great system but that's the best I'm doing right now.

Sarah: Okay, well that kind of reminds me, a few years ago, I did do one thing that's going to blow you away because since you know me so well. You can be like, where on earth did you come from when you did that project. So we'd like to read stories of the saints or other stories that go along with The Church Year. And so I went through all of our books that had collections of stories of the saints or Bible stories or any other kind of liturgical-based reading and I went through and made a document so I have I think maybe, I mean I don't have a ton of them but maybe five main anthologies of saints books and then some biographies. So for example, I would go through them and... October 1st is the feast of a St. Theresa Little Flower. So I would go through all of her books and see which ones had stories of her. And then whatever ones did on my document under October 1 actually, I would write down all the different places we had stories on our shelf about that particular saint and we have all of our... I cataloged all of our liturgical reading. And that was goal was that when we're doing morning time or other homeschooling kind of reading, I could look at the date. And if it was an important date, I could just see what we already had on our shelf that I could read about. So it was a brilliant idea. It's a beautiful document. We could link it in the show notes for any Catholics who might be interested in it. But I don't use it very often because it's a little more organized than my brain.

Allison: Yeah, I'm having an out-of-the-body experience. I can't even believe that you had such a thing. That's so amazing! I'm so proud of you.

Sarah: It's a shame that I don't use it more.

Allison: But that's okay. So you're... we're kind of making a distinction here between books that we



currently own and books that we'd like to own, right?

Sarah: Yes, so that was the one thing I did on that document. I color-coded them. So that was a book that I knew I wanted for say, Christmas or Easter, I would highlight it in red and all the other ones were just black text and then I would know if it's black, it means I own it on my shelf. If it's red, it means when we have some extra funds, I should go back and purchase it. In theory, it's a great idea. I'm just not necessarily that organized regularly so I don't think I'm used to having such a thing work for me.

36:37 Is Reading Aloud Just for Fiction?

Allison: Great. Okay. Well, this is the FAQ I've had and I thought all those popping in here because you mentioned like the liturgical calendar. Do you distinguish between... because when we think of reading aloud, I think in general, and this actually leads into my last question is just read aloud time have to be only fiction. I think a lot of us have that vision of The Chronicles of Narnia, Lord of the Rings being read aloud but what about non fiction? What about devotional, catechism, liturgical, whatever the culture is in your family. Would you put that under the same umbrella as reading aloud?

Sarah: I would. So we read a lot of non fiction aloud. History books like Story of the World or The D'Aulaires Biographies. We read our science texts aloud. We actually listen to that on audio. So what I'd do is each term, I plan my read alouds kind of underneath those categories like something with a good historical influence. I don't always work it as science influence although sometimes I try to do that, always something

related to our faith and then we're almost always, in addition to our non fiction school reading, we're always reading some kind of fiction. It's not always a classic. Sometimes it's just fun. But we're always reading something fiction alongside it. But I do in my head, I would count reading aloud our history book is our read aloud time that day if I needed to. What about you?

Allison: Well, I've wrestled for that for a long time. I'm such a category person. I think mentally I have to have everything that's on in its proper column in my brain. And for a long time I thought...

Sarah: I don't even think I have columns in my brain.

Allison: I have color-coded columns in my brain. So you have your mind map, I have my columns. It's barely different. And yours are not color-coded.

For a long time I thought oh no we didn't do read aloud. But I thought well wait a minute, if we were reading Shakespeare or if I was reading aloud a two-page fable for the grammar project for two with the girls today, that totally counts as reading aloud. But it took me a couple of years to realize that reading aloud is actually reading aloud. It is a verb. So I thought I didn't want to get legalistic about this and say oh no we failed today. And because there comes along that sense of guilt because there's all different kinds of reading aloud especially as my kids who are younger, they are 10 and under, as we move forward into that junior high school time coming down the pike, when we have more non fiction they're going to be have to doing for their school work, I thought okay if we're reading aloud more history at that time, it will totally be included in our aggregate read aloud family time. But I think



some people need to get over that hump of thinking it's not all. It doesn't always have to be that this great fiction adventure, which is beautiful and I hope that there's a lot of that. But don't discount all the other types of reading you're doing aloud whether it's a family devotional or that took 5 minutes during Lent or something like that. That still counts.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that we kind of latch on to that idea of fiction because it's that narrative element that really brings up the beautiful language that we want our kids to take in auditorily. That's important but it's not the only thing. And it's not the only thing that helps us build our family culture. That's a good distinction.

Allison: Yeah, well you know what Sarah, you've got through them all. And you've shocked me a few times so I think this was fun.

Sarah: That was super fun. It was super fun.

Allison: Well, thanks for having me.

Sarah: Yeah, thanks so much 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.

"Hello! I am Joanna. I'm 4. I like the story of Fallen Men."

"Hello! My name is Juliana from Colorado and I'm 7. I like the book Green Ember. My mom just finished reading it. I loved it and it encouraged me to be brave and having adventures. Goodbye!"

"Hi! My name is Jackson. I'm 14 and I'm from Colorado. My favorite read aloud that my family has recently read was Boundless by Kenneth

Oppel. I like the action-packed mystery that kept me waiting for the next chapter."

"Hello! My name is Aznelle. I live in Bosnia. (What's your favorite book?) Milly-Molly-Mandy. (What do you like about the book?) The big cottage with the thatched roof. (Yes, and what's Milly-Molly-Mandy's full name?) Amazia Amargaret Amanda."

"My name is Elijah Herbie and I'm 7 years old and I live in Sarajevo, Bosnia and my favorite book is Harry Potter. What I like about it is I can't put it down."

Very good. Thank you so much kids for calling in remember that your kids can call in and leave a message for me if you head to readaloudrevival.com and scroll to the bottom of the page, you'll see how. Remember that all of the notes for today's podcast, all those books and links and articles we mentioned during the show, they can be found on the show notes. So head to readaloudrevival.com. Look for episode 25. Alright Posy, take it away my dear.

Posy: Thanks for tuning in. This has been Sarah Mackenzie and me.

Sarah: What do you like to say on the microphone.

Posy: Butt.

Sarah: Butt?

Posy: Poop.

Sarah: Seriously?

Posy: That was a lot of jobs.

Sarah: That was a lot of jobs. Do I need to pay you for podcasting?

Posy: Yes.



Sarah: Pay you with kisses?

Posy: That was a lot of kisses.