



## RAR 49 - Rebecca Bellingham

**Sarah:** Hello friends, this is episode 49 of the Read Aloud Revival podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Mackenzie. This is going to be an amazing season on the podcast. We've lined up a set of guests that we hope will inspire and equip you to help your whole family fall in love with books. It's Season 9 of the Read Aloud Revival and you can expect a new episode of the podcast every other Tuesday. If you haven't yet subscribed to it, you're going to want to do that. There are two ways to subscribe, and you probably want to do both. First, you want to be on our email list because we always send the first news through email. So to do that, go to [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com) and pop your email into the page there. We'll send you a very carefully curated list of favorite read alouds and then you'll also get a note from me each Tuesday morning with what's new in the Read Aloud Revival community. You definitely want to get those!

The second way to subscribe is right in iTunes or on Stitcher if you're using an Android phone. That way the new episodes of the podcast, every other Tuesday, will drop right into your podcast app, whenever a new one is ready for you. You can do that through iTunes or Stitcher, just search for Read Aloud Revival and then make sure you hit subscribe.

Alright, Season 9, Episode 49! Let's get into it. Today I have a fantastic interview to share with you. Let's get started.

### 2:40 Introducing Rebecca Bellingham

Whenever I share the TEDx talk called "Why We Should All Be Reading Aloud to Children" on the

Read Aloud Revival Facebook page, the page blows up. And well it should! This is an amazing talk. I've watched it a handful of times myself. And as soon as I saw it, I knew we had to have the speaker, Rebecca Bellingham, on the Read Aloud Revival podcast. Rebecca Bellingham is an instructor in the Literacy Specialist Program at Columbia University Teacher's College. She's studied education and teaching literature extensively, having earned a Master's Degree from the Shady Hills School's Teacher Training Course in partnership with Lesley University, a Master's Degree in Literacy Specialization from Columbia University Teacher's College, and a B.A. from Brown University. She's also got her foot in the theatre world, and we're going to be talking about that today as well. Today, she's joining us to chat about why we should all be reading aloud to children, which is also the name of that terrific TEDx talk I mentioned, and that we'll be linking in the show notes. Rebecca, thank you so much for joining me on the Read Aloud Revival, I'm thrilled to talk to you today.

**Rebecca:** Thank you so much, I'm thrilled to be talking to you. I'm honored, thank you.

**Sarah:** Can you tell us a little bit more about yourself, and your family, before we launch in?

### 4:00 A little more about Rebecca

**Rebecca:** The big news is that we just moved from New York City to San Diego, a big cross-country move with twin four year olds...

**Sarah:** Yes! That's quite the endeavor there.

**Rebecca:** It was a major move. That's just one way of putting it. And we're just settling into life in San Diego and getting our roots figured out here, getting settled here, and I'm making some big changes in my life, too. I was an instructor at



Columbia Teacher's College, and now I'll be working in the San Diego School District and also doing some more theater work here, which is exciting.

**Sarah:** That is exciting! And when you told me you were in theatre, it was easy for me to picture it after watching your TEDx talk because you're just so engaging on stage. You have quite the presence.

**Rebecca:** Thank you.

**Sarah:** So, the first time I watched your TED talk I knew we had to chat with you because you're so joyful. There's just this enthusiasm that's overwhelming that you portray when you're talking about reading with kids. So, tell me a little bit about that. Where does that overwhelming enthusiasm come from?

## 5:00 Overwhelming enthusiasm

**Rebecca:** Well, first of all, I love stories, I love books. And I love the idea that I can share that with kids in this powerful way of reading aloud to them. And I think kids also love books and love stories, and love characters. It's pretty powerful and magical to watch kids be read to. I've read, as I say in the talk, thousands and thousands of pages to kids because I worked with kids for almost 20 years now. When you read aloud to kids it's just this beautiful, magical moment. You see kids- their eyes are wide open and they're hanging on every word and they turn to each other when something big is revealed; they're just swept up in the magic of the story. So it is this joyful experience of sharing a story with children who are so yearning for stories, who crave them, who need them, who love them. So to be a part of that moment with kids, it is joyful and I think that is the word. And I think that children are

inherently joyful, most of the time, they should be, at least. So to be a part of their natural joy is a beautiful thing and storytelling brings that out in them, it really does. And so, I'm passionate about the work and I love doing it.

**Sarah:** I love how in the TED talk you say that "reading aloud gives kids a special kind of access." Tell me more about that. Talk about what you mean by that special kind of access.

## 6:30 A special kind of access

**Rebecca:** I wonder why did I say "special kind of access?" I think part of it is that when you're reading aloud to children or when children are being read aloud to, they're being read aloud to presumably by an adult special who's special to them in their lives, so it's a special thing to have that intimate moment with kids where you are sharing a story together and you're giving them an entry point into the world of story. And kids, like I said, need that, love that, desire that. And so, often for some kids reading is not the easiest thing to do, it's hard work to read. And so you're giving them an opportunity to take part in a story that might be more difficult than they can read on their own independently. So, on the one hand you're having this special intimate experience- you're reading a story with children, and also you're giving them a way into the world of books, and a way into the world of literature. Sometimes you're giving them access to a story or book that if they were to pick up on their own they wouldn't be able to read very easily, or with deep comprehension. And so you are taking care of that by dealing with the print, by reading it out loud, by reading it fluently, by using voices. And suddenly they're swept away into the world of story, and they're having access to what it means to read a book, and they're having access to



what it means to feel engaged with literature. And that's really important, and it is special. So that's why I think I call it that.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I really related to this, because one of my sons struggled with reading for quite a while, and I think because we would read other stories out loud, books that he would not be able to read on his own when he was struggling just through the phonetic journey of figuring out actually how to decode the words on the page, it gave him that motivation "I want to be a reader because then I can uncover the experience myself." And if we hadn't been reading those aloud, I'm not sure he would have seen reading as anything other than just something that we have to do for school.

**Rebecca:** Right. And it would be a struggle. And as you know, we kind of struggled to get onto to Skype to have this conversation, and it makes me say, "Oh I hate technology, Oh I hate this," or "I don't want to engage in this world of technology, because it's hard." So when you have experiences that are, like we talked about before, joyful and engaging and takes away the struggle, it makes kids want to engage in book reading. It makes them want to be interested in stories and books. It makes it not a struggle, it makes it fun. And that's what's at the heart of reading. Reading should be fun. Reading should be joyful. Reading should be a feeling of being swept away and not a struggle. And so, you can read aloud to kids books that would otherwise might be a little too tricky or a little difficult that are beautiful and exciting and full of rich information and a rich storyline that may be a struggle to read on their own.

## 10:00 Reading for pleasure

**Sarah:** I recently read, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* by Alan Jacobs. Have you read that by any chance?

**Rebecca:** I haven't, but now I will.

**Sarah:** It is just delightful. It is wonderful. I was recovering from surgery so I read it in a day and a half because I was lounging in bed, you know. One of the things he mentions is that reading is supposed to be exactly like you said. It's supposed to bring us pleasure and delight, and that when you're a small child, all small children love books. They all love to be read to. It's only when, exactly like you said, reading gets hard, because when they're trying to do it on their own that they start to form this feeling or this understanding of reading is something they don't want to do. So I think we can trump those feelings by giving them really beautiful, warm, rich experiences of being swept away in stories. Exactly like in your TEDx talk when you start sweeping us away in *Charlotte's Web* and you show us exactly what it feels like as a child to get swept away in a story.

**Rebecca:** Yeah. And that's special. A special kind of access to the world of story that otherwise might be unavailable to kids if they can't read it on their own.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and like you said, it's the adults then doing the hard work of decoding and reading with the right kind of intonation, and the cadence that's in all of that. So good.

**Rebecca:** You do a lot of things at once when you're reading. It's a very complicated cognitive process. You bring a lot of things in, and you take away the decoding piece and that print piece and you just let kids listen, and their listening



comprehension, it tends to be a lot higher than what they can read on their own when they're dealing with the print. So, again, it gives them access to these, sometimes, sophisticated, rich books that they might not have access to.

**Sarah:** Exactly! From your standpoint as a literacy instructor, tell me about the role that reading aloud plays there, and why it's important from that point of view.

## 11:30 The role of reading aloud in developing literacy

**Rebecca:** Well, it's important because it does so many things all at once. Like we talked about, it gives them an immediate entry point into stories, and kids need stories. They crave them and delight in them. And they also need them because it gives them guideposts to navigating the world around them. Reading aloud fuels interests and engages them in reading, which is essential for fostering kids' love of literature with an interest in books. And so that engagement and interest both lead to real, true literacy engagement. So there's that. And just simply reading aloud to kids gives kids a sense of how it feels and how it sounds to read a book fluently. So even if you just read the book without ever stopping, just reading it in that way when you have, like you said, the cadence of the different character voices, and you read it with expression and you get your voice that kind of speeds up when it gets exciting and it slows down when something powerful, or important, or a turning point's happening, just doing that gives kids a sense of what it feels like to be swept away. There was one child I read to that said it is "to be inhaled by a book" ...

**Sarah:** Oh my gosh, that's beautiful.

**Rebecca:** Isn't that a beautiful way of putting it? So just giving him that feel of being inhaled by a book, that's powerful, that's meaningful, that's valuable. But then when you add this interactive piece, you're also able to explicitly teach and model what powerful readers do, which is essentially to think. And create pictures in your mind as you read, and so when powerful readers read, they're thinking, they're feeling, they're wondering, they're asking questions. So you can have interactive experience with read aloud where you kind of pause, and you model some of your own thinking. And then you also invite kids in to talk about what they're thinking and feeling and wondering. And again, it affects the internal conversation that they're having in their mind. So by doing that, by having those moments where you pause, you're showing them, you're modeling for them that real readers think as they read and they wonder and they ask questions and they connect things back with what they read before. It's also inviting them into conversation about the book which, you know, is helping them when they go back to reading their own book, they have little conversations in their mind: "oh I wonder why the character did that?" or "I'm getting this idea about this character, hmm, that fits with what we read before," and so that's them having an internal conversation, it also gets them excited to want to talk about the book because reading is also a social activity. When we read a book, we want to talk about it with people. So it really does all those things all at once. But I do want to say that just reading aloud, on its own, is valuable and beautiful and important, and we don't want to talk to death the experience of reading a story.

**Sarah:** Right.

**Rebecca:** But reading aloud is also deeply instructional and tends to be instructional



especially when you add that interactive piece of thinking aloud and also inviting kids into conversation.

## 14:30 The theater of reading aloud

**Sarah:** Well, while you were talking, one of the memories that just kind of popped into my mind was that I have read, as an adult, Alexander McCall Smith's series, *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*. Are you familiar with these?

**Rebecca:** I'm familiar with them, but I haven't read them all, of course I'm familiar with them.

**Sarah:** I read the first one, and I thought, 'I liked it' but it wasn't like "this is amazing!" or anything, I just liked it. Then I stumbled across the second one as an audio book and I listened to it. This was back when I worked at the library, and I would listen to audio books on my commute. And I listened to it and I fell in love with the story. And I think it's because of the way the narrator, her accent was beautiful first of all, but it also helped me pronounce the words and the names. A really good narrator who's reading aloud a story does that, exactly like you said, does the work for you that helps you fall into the story so you don't have to work so hard at it, even as an adult. So I can see how being read aloud a story makes it easier for our kids to fall and get inhaled by a book, like you said, than reading on their own even because they get swept up in that, kind of the theatre of reading aloud really.

**Rebecca:** And the narrator makes all the difference, it really makes a big difference who's telling, who's reading the story to you.

**Sarah:** Yes, definitely.

**Rebecca:** It really does have an impact.

**Sarah:** Actually that reminds me, so for our listeners, if you want a good list of audio books for kids, we have a collection at the Read Aloud Revival, all you need to do is go to [RARbooklist.com](http://RARbooklist.com) and we'll send that to you for free. It's a whole booklist. One of the categories is Best Audio Books, and we have separated those into audio books you can find at [audible.com](http://audible.com) and also audio books that are free to listen to at [librivox.org](http://librivox.org). Now, [librivox.org](http://librivox.org) has free audio stories that are fantastic to listen to, but some of the narrators are markedly better than others. And so what we've done is collected a list of the free books that we think are read aloud by the best Librivox narrators. You can get that whole list by going to [RARbooklist.com](http://RARbooklist.com).

## 16:30 Reading aloud to older children

So, let's talk about reading aloud to older kids. Kids who can already read to themselves. So once they're fluent and they've mastered the decoding, what's the benefit of reading aloud at that point?

**Rebecca:** It's the same thing. Just because kids are reading aloud and are fluent, doesn't mean there's not a whole range of books that are still a little beyond their reach, they're still pretty sophisticated and complicated for kids. Even kids who are 9, 10, and 11, there are books that they probably are dying to read or would love to read but that still would be a struggle, a little bit beyond their independent reading level and a book that would be a little bit tricky for them to read. So, young adult literature, children's literature is so beautiful and wonderful, and so many great options. Like you're saying, there's all these options you're talking about for audio books, and so just because they're older and



reading on their own does not mean that they're able to read some of these books at this higher ... I think of them as, I use the Five Reading Levels by Fountas & Pinnell, but at these higher levels of text. Text can be very complicated and difficult so you are still giving them, again, access to more complicated stories, more complicated books. That's one thing. And also the benefit is that kids in those older grades are dying to talk about some pretty big social issues, and some pretty important emotional things they're going through, and they sometimes don't know how to navigate some big choices they have to make. And stories can be a way to talk about those big things, like friendship and parenting relationships, relationships with their parents or sibling relationships, or even simply just the world at large- things that are going on in the world that may be scary or overwhelming or sensitive. And so a story being read by an adult that cares about you is a way to think about those issues and talk about them with your peers in a safe way, and in a meaningful way. So, again, you're creating a community around a story, you're creative a conversation around a story. So it's about the reading and the comprehension and about the access, but it's also about the community you're creating around story, it's about the conversations you're having around story, and the conversations you're having around big issues that kids are going through when they're 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and that they want to talk about and want to think about. And it's a safe and meaningful way to do that.

## 19:00 Having difficult conversations around books

**Sarah:** When you're talking about this, one of the books that comes to mind immediately is *Wonder*, of course, by RJ Palacio.

**Rebecca:** Oh yeah.

**Sarah:** Yes, and I think what a better way... if you were just to try to have sort of a didactic or cold conversation with your child about what it's like for their peers who feel different than everybody else, it would..

**Rebecca:** It's hard to feel different at some point. I mean growing up is hard work. And most kids in the world feel, most people, most humans, feel like they're outside sometimes. Certainly, not many of us have the experience of being, what it's like to be Auggie, but to feel different, to feel disconnected or somehow other. I think a lot of kids relate to that whether or not they have Auggie's experience.

**Sarah:** Exactly! And reading the book together then gives them the vocabulary and this, kind of, experience outside of themselves that they can talk about from a safe place and make some connections with each other and with the adults they're talking to. So good!

**Rebecca:** Yeah, certainly from your own credible experience, but imagine reading that book in the company of peers or the company of friends and in the company of a trusted adult who is reading it with you and talking to you about it, and inviting you into conversation about it. That's a really life-changing, powerful experience for kids.

**Sarah:** I agree. One of the books I'm reading with my kids right now is, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry...



**Rebecca:** Oh, one of my favorites.

**Sarah:** Oh, I know, it's such a powerful book, such a beautiful book. My girls have read it on their own, but my son, he's really interested in World War II but I wasn't 100% sure he was ready for the content and the actual real history, especially without dialogue. He's quite capable of reading the book on his own but I didn't really want him to because I wanted to be able to have this shared conversation where we could then talk out the things that I know are going to come up as a result of reading this book.

**Rebecca:** Right!

**Sarah:** So, reading aloud gives us that opportunity.

**Rebecca:** Yes, it's filling in some of the content they're missing or fill in some of the information that they're not yet aware of, and to help ... and some of these books, like *Number the Stars* are taking place in really intense, scary times, and you want to help navigate and facilitate that experience and fill in the background information, and help them make sense of what the context is around the story.

**Sarah:** Yeah, exactly! Can you share a little bit about how you've combined your love of theatre with reading over the years? I know you've said teaching and acting are actually kind of similar, right?

## 21:00 The connection between reading aloud and theater

**Rebecca:** They can be, that's true! You know, the overlap for me, as a literacy instructor, I'm really in the world of story. It's about teaching children, now teachers in how to teach children, how to read and write stories, and how to become swept

away by stories, and how to write them hopefully on their own, how to read them on their own, how to think about them. So, literature is really about the world of story and the theatre is about stories, it's about telling stories. The overlap is so clear and so connected. I love stories, I love reading them, I love telling them, I love performing in them, I love seeing them on stage, all those things feel very connected that in both teaching and performing they, sort of, need to be authentic and to really be truthful on stage and also in the classroom. And I think when you read aloud and you really step inside the world of the story, and read it in truthful ways and really read it with intention and with your whole self, with your whole heart, it feels similar to me as being on stage, and being a part of the story experience in the play, and really being in it and being connected to it. And I think the kids notice the difference. I think when kids are in a room with you and you're reading a story and you're so connected to the words, and you're really telling the story in this truthful way, they are more engaged in it, and that feels very similar to being on stage and really being connected to your fellow actors, connected to the story you're telling. So there just feels there clean in both worlds to me. Something that feels really important to me is that all teachers, all adults who are reading aloud to their kids, in their classrooms or even at home, and especially in the classrooms, is that we can almost bring the magic of the stage to kids, to our classrooms, by the way that we read aloud. And that we can almost really transform the spaces of our classrooms into places of magic, like the stage is. We can read it in ways that kids feel like suddenly they're in the city of Baltese, which is from Kate DiCamillo's book, *The Magician's Elephant*. The way that we read it brings kids to another time



and place, and makes them feel like they're almost inside the lives of these other characters, which is kind of how we feel with theatre. And so we can create that kind of magic for kids in the way that we read aloud. And I think that's sort of the human journey, to be a part of moments like that, to be part of artistic moments, beautiful moments of human connection, of story telling. I think that's why we go to the theatre, that's why we go to the movies, it's why kids love being read to. I think there's a lot of overlap between the two worlds.

**Sarah:** So then, do you have any actor tips, basically, on how we can be better at reading aloud? I think I hear what you're saying which is that a book read aloud is wonderful but a book read aloud well is like, really incredibly wonderful. So help us with that- what would you tell somebody who says, "I'm not very good at it."

## 25:00 Rebecca's tips

**Rebecca:** I think actually when an adult closes the door on their classroom, I think they have the capacity to be amazing at it. I think doing it in front of other adults, I think can feel ... that's where they might feel... I think a lot of adults when they get their kids in front of them they really turn into actors. I think I can give you some tips. Let yourself go there, let yourself feel, let yourself be inside of it, and live inside of it, and take the time to really feel those moments that are the turning points. Feel the points that are full of emotion. And kind of live inside of it. But more practically, a really good tip is spend a little time with the first chapter to try to find the voice of the character, or the voices of the different characters. And, you don't have to read the whole book and play around throughout the entire book, but if you read that first chapter, kind

of play around with 'how does this character sound?' 'How does this character kind of move?' And just think about a little physicality, a little way of embodying the character. I love the book, *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate.

**Sarah:** Yes!

**Rebecca:** Do you know that one?

**Sarah:** I do, yes!

**Rebecca:** So, I embody the different animals. There's Ivan, the gorilla. I don't do anything crazy or anything that would feel to actor-y, but I just kind of sit kind of heavy when I read Ivan. But when I read Stella, who's the elephant, I just kind of tip my head a little bit and I put my arm out as the trunk, just as I'm reading. It just kind of differentiates between them, Ivan and Stella. And then when I read Bob, who's a little dog, who's kind of a character, I use a different voice, and I kind of cock my head when I read him. And I just kind of found it in that first chapter, and then it carried its way through the book. And, I think the other big piece is to almost make it visible to your kids. When a character reaches for something, reach for it. When a character, you know, touches his heart, touch your heart. Do the little things that they're doing. Again, little physical gestures that help kids see it just a bit more. And then my final tip would be, as you're reading, to really look at the kids while you're reading it. Bring them in to the experience of the book, by really looking at them when something really important happens. Make eye contact with them. Look at them. I know, almost, have that exchange of feeling. And find moments, too, where you slow down, where you say it more quiet, or when you speed up when things are exciting. So modulate your voice.



**Sarah:** The speed, and also volume, actually do a lot. So people who are feeling uncomfortable... actually, my friend, Pam, has a post I'll link to this in the show notes. She does not like to use character voices when she's reading, but she's found that when using speed and volume has done a lot to helping her tell the story better, even if she doesn't do as dramatic voices as I do, maybe.

**Rebecca:** Right. It doesn't have to be big. Just little alterations, you know. But I absolutely agree, speed and volume make a huge difference. Bringing your voice down, being quiet pulls kids in. And then finding some times when your volume goes up or it changes, also changes the feeling in the room.

**Sarah:** I was re-reading Jim Trelease's *Read Aloud Handbook* just a few weeks ago and one of the things he says in there is that the biggest mistake he sees adults making when they're reading aloud to kids is just reading too fast, and so they don't give the kids long enough to paint those pictures in their mind. But I even find that it's easier for me to read aloud if I slow down because it gives me a chance to start reading dialogue as you don't know who said it yet. If you slow down you give yourself enough time to figure out what your cue should be as far as talking.

**Rebecca:** You as the reader are able to picture... live inside the story, and if you go too fast, you're not allowing yourself to really feel the different moments. I think slowing down is really important. And also it gives you a chance to take a breath. We need to take a breath sometimes in the middle of reading aloud, because we need to go, 'huh! That was really important what I just read and just got something big and I just need a moment to, kind of, think about it. Or to get that

picture up and going in my brain or to get that picture even just to see it or pause on it, to linger on it for a minute. Yeah, and so, if you slow down you can sort of pause and take a breath, have a minute to think and have a question pop into your mind and see the picture really vividly in your brain. Or even talk to a partner quickly about thinking, or what you're wondering. I do think you need those for coming up with air to solidify some of the thinking, because if you read it all the way through, kids need a break to go, 'oh my gosh, wait, I want to talk about that' or "oh my gosh, I had an idea there that I want to think about in my own brain or to talk with a partner about." I also think that I do a lot, every now and then I go, 'oh my gosh, I think I want to read that again, because that was either so important I want to read it again and think about it more,' or 'I want to read it again because there was so much information inside that little part I want to make sure my brain got it all. So I want to read that again because I don't want to miss some of that important information.' Sometimes pause for air, re-read something that's most particularly important or full of details or full of information so kids can linger, they can lock it into their brains and think more about it.

## 30:30 Rebecca's best picks for reading aloud

**Sarah:** So good! Tell me some of your favorite books to read with kids?

**Rebecca:** Oh gosh.

**Sarah:** Feels like opening a huge can of worms, doesn't it?

**Rebecca:** There are SO many wonderful books! The first one I have to say is, I just love reading *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo. I really



do love her work so much, and I just love that book so much. And it just never fails. I mean, it's just such a great story. And what kid doesn't love a dog, that's so endearing like Winn-Dixie? So I just love that book. And I love Opal but that's another whole story of all the characters I love in the world, but I love Winn-Dixie. That's always my go to. Again, I thought of Kate DiCamillo, I love *The Magician's Elephant*, and I think that book is really quite sophisticated and has all these different, overlapping strands and threads to how the different characters are connected, and I think it can be a tricky book for kids, but it's so magical because it takes place in this fictional city over a century ago and it's full of magic and it's full of fantasy but so sweet and the relationships are so beautiful, so I love that one.

**Sarah:** Yeah, Kate DiCamillo is a masterful storyteller.

**Rebecca:** She really is. I just think she's so brilliant, and I've seen her give speeches. I think she seems like the most lovely person. So I also love reading, like you said before, *Number the Stars*. I've never read aloud *Wonder* but I think I would if I was back in the classroom with kids, like we were talking about having a way in to those big conversations about kindness and about being different and about bullying and what it means to go through life when you feel so on the outside or so different. I think *Home of the Brave* is another one I like to read aloud.

**Sarah:** I don't think I've read that one. Who's that by?

**Rebecca:** That's by Katherine Applegate. And it's told in that verse, it's told in verse. It's sort of like, each chapter is sort of like a poem. I like that too because it's a way to also read a book that has some real lyricism to it and some really beautiful

imagery, and so some book you can do around the poetry is also really nice. There's so many. I do love reading *The One and Only Ivan* and all those great animal characters. There's so many! There's so many great books out there.

**Sarah:** There really is no shortage.

**Rebecca:** There's a new one every year!

**Sarah:** I know it, I know it.

**Rebecca:** There's just no shortage.

**Sarah:** Yes. And so if you're listening and wondering which books to start with, we have a booklist that has 12 different categories for you on the best books to read aloud or not just the best books to read aloud, but just great books to read aloud, because of course, like we're saying, there's no shortage of really wonderful books to share with kids. And you can get that at [RARbooklist.com](http://RARbooklist.com).

Well, Rebecca, this has been just a delight as I knew it would be. I am wondering where our listeners can go to connect with you online?

**Rebecca:** Well, I'm working on it. So, I'm working on developing my twitter handle – is that what you say?

**Sarah:** Yes, that's what it's called, yes.

**Rebecca:** Is that what it's called? So I am, that's a commitment I'm going to make now that I'm starting this new life in San Diego. I'm also going to start a new life of being a social media, of doing things ... this thing called Twitter, building more of a presence on social media and developing that. I do have a twitter handle and so I will start doing some of that, and I'm trying to do some website work under my name. Maybe there'll be a book some day, I don't know. I hope there'll be ways they can connect with the work



I'm doing, or they can just find me on Facebook. I live in San Diego.

**Sarah:** Fantastic! We'll make sure we'll link to your TED talk as well in the show notes and then your Twitter handle. By the way, since you're now in San Diego, somebody that you need to connect with there is one of my favorite people, Melissa Wiley. Are you familiar with *The Prairie Thief*? It's a middle grade novel.

**Rebecca:** I have heard of it. I don't know it well, but I have definitely heard of it.

**Sarah:** So Melissa is amazing. She's a children's book writer who ... she was commissioned to write the Little House, they're Martha Books. They're about Laura's grandmother or great-grandmother, I can't remember which. So she wrote those and then she wrote *The Prairie Thief* and she's written some early readers like *Inch and Roly Make a Wish*, gosh, I'm trying to think of some other ones, *Fox and Crow Are Not Friends*, and then the *Inch and Roly Series*. You can find her website at [MelissaWiley.com](http://MelissaWiley.com), but she's on Twitter and she's in San Diego. I had dinner with her last time I was in San Diego and she is just the most delightful person, and so she's totally someone you should connect with while you're there.

**Rebecca:** I will definitely look her up. And I forgot to mention one book that I also love that I read aloud actually last year. And that I wanted to mention to you which is good, was the Newbery award winning book by Kwame Alexander, *The Crossover*. That book, also, I think cries to be read aloud because it's told in this, again, in the verses and poetry. It just sings when you read it aloud.

**Sarah:** Awesome, we'll make sure we have all the links that Rebecca just mentioned in the show

notes as well. So, if you're trying to scramble and write those all down, don't worry about it- we've got you covered! Head to [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com) and look for Episode 49. Rebecca, thank you so much for joining us. This has been a treat.

**Rebecca:** Thank you SO much, it was really fun talking to you. Thank you so much for having me.

## 36:00 Let the kids speak

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.

**Child1:** Hi, my name is Brooklyn, I'm 10 years old and I live in California. My favorite read aloud book is *Little House on the Prairie's These Happy Golden Years*. I like this book because it's all about how Laura falls in love with Almanzo Wilder, and I just love the romance in it, it's so sweet.

**Child2:** I am Megan [**\*\*inaudible\*\***] . I am seven years old, I'm almost eight. I live in Luanda, Angola. My favorite book is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I like the part when Lucy first goes through the wardrobe.

**Child3:** Hi, I'm Abbie. I'm six years old and I live in Virginia. My favorite book is *Oz*, the whole series. The first book you might know, it's called *The Wizard of Oz*, but it goes way beyond the first book. And some of those characters that are in the other books are Jack Pumpkinhead, and the Gnome King, and the Saw-Horse and the Hungry Tiger who's very hungry but then doesn't want to hurt anyone or hurt anything, and there's adventures like, stuck in a big elevator that's underground, and then there's these rocks that are rubber and they just bounce you back, and



water that isn't wet, you can just walk through it and your clothes would just be totally dry!

**Child4:** My name is Molly, I'm eight years old. I live in Tennessee. The book I read is *Just So Stories* by Kipling and my favorite character is Taffy and one of the stories is how that first letter was written and I like Taffy in it.

**Child5:** My name is Madeline and I'm three years old, and I live in Tennessee. My favorite kind was *the S* that's because he was made out of a snake. [Mom: What book is it?] It's called *How the Elephant is Made* and I like that. [What's your favorite character?] My favorite character is Taffy's Dad.

**Child6:** Hello, my name is Maia. And I'm six years old. And I live in Houston, Ontario, Canada, and my favorite book is the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* because Eustace was bad but then he became good.

**Child7:** Hi, my name is Ellie. I'm from Kingston, Ontario in Canada. And I'm five. My favorite book is *Betsy Tacy* because they help each other a lot, and Betsy is real nice.

**Child8:** Hi, my name is Silas, and I'm from Kingston, Ontario and my favorite book is *My Father's Dragon*. [Mom: you like *My Father's Dragon*?] Yeah. [Mom: what do you like about it?] He keeps messing up things.

**Child9:** Hi, my name is **[\*\*inaudible\*\*]** and I'm nine years old and live in Minnesota. I'm reading *Harry Potter's, The Sorcerer's Stone*. I am in the middle of the book where they are finding out about this wizard but he just met Dumbledore and I'm just about to find out about Nicholas Flamel.

**Child10:** Hello, my name is Dane. I live in Minnesota I am almost eight but right now I am seven. [Mom: what book are you reading?] *Joey*

*Fly, Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime* [Mom: why do you like it?] Because there's a spy and there's this scorpion boy, and I like it, because it's funny, FUNNY, FUN-NY!

**Child11:** Hi, my name is Aubrey. And I'm six year's old, and I come from Virginia and my favorite book is *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. I like it because Edward, who's a china rabbit, he learned to love and he went to different places all around the world, at the end he went back to his owner, Abilene.

**Child12:** Hi, my name is Simon, and I'm four years old, and I'm from Virginia and my favorite book is *My Father's Dragon*. I like it because Omer, a brave boy of nine rescued a baby dragon of Wild Island and couldn't get back to school and this is why I like *My Father's Dragon*.

**Child13:** Hello, my name is Will, I'm five years old. I come from Texas, and my favorite book is *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. I like the part whenever he goes to Boggis's chicken house number 1.

**Sarah:** Thank you kids. I love hearing what books you're enjoying most. If your child would like to leave a message to be aired on the Read Aloud Revival podcast, head to [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com). You'll find out how easy it is to leave us a message, and they get to be heard by tens of thousands of listeners, which is, of course, super fun.

Remember, show notes for this episode are at [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com). Just look for Episode 49. And you definitely want to get yourself on the email list. Episode 50 will be ready for you in two weeks, and we're going to be chatting about reading books with preschoolers and the very simple projects and play that can be sparked



from books even if you're not one of those moms who likes to hang out on Pinterest and do all kinds of, you know, complicated and thematic projects. That's not me! So, I'm going to be talking to Jennifer Pepito all about the simple play and projects that can be sparked from books with the smallest people in your family. That will be ready for you in two Tuesdays. Until then, go build your family culture around books.