



RAR 68 – Books to Read-Aloud With Your Teen

Sarah: You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

Hello, hello, Sarah Mackenzie here. Happy you're joining me for this mini episode of the podcast. It can be hard to find books to read with your teens, right? It's not that common these days to read-aloud with our teens. But we know that reading-aloud continues to be a primary benefit to our kids' academic, social, and emotional success when we continue to read to them long past the time they're able to read on their own. So in this episode I want to help you read-aloud with your teens. Finding books to read-aloud with teens presents a unique challenge. A lot of books being published today for teens contain content that's, well, not necessarily something we'll have a good time reading with our teens or something we want to hand to our teens at all. Am I right? Have you been to your local bookshop and looked in the teen section lately? In this mini episode I want to share five books that would be great read-alouds for teens. None of these books have objectionable content so that you couldn't read them aloud even if you're younger kids are around but still I'd recommend these primarily as suited for teens. And they'll definitely keep your teens engaged and interested. They're also all new books because you know where to find classics, right? There are a million places online where you can find classics to read with your teens but I wanted to find books published in the last not-too-long decade or so where they would appeal especially to your teens and that you could read-aloud and feel good about and have great conversations and a great experience with your teens. Before we launch in, can I ask you a

favor? Would you take just a minute today to give the podcast a rating or review in iTunes? When you do that it makes our podcast easier to find for other families who want to find great books to read with their kids or maybe they're just dipping their toes in the read-aloud water. If you could search for Read-Aloud Revival in iTunes and then leave a star rating and a review I would love that so much. I read every single review. I really appreciate that and you're doing a lot of good for the Read-Aloud Revival when you take just a second to leave us a rating or review in iTunes. It should only take about two minutes – would so appreciate it.

2:47 Five Picks

OK, ready for my five picks for teens today? Each of my five picks are great selections to read-aloud with your teenagers. I think you'll enjoy them as much as your teens will. Just listen for the one that sounds interesting to you and give it a whirl. You might be surprised at how wonderful an experience reading-aloud with your older kids can be. And don't worry if you're busy while you're listening and you can't jot down notes we've got all these books over in the Show Notes for you. Go to ReadAloudRevival.com, and look for episode 68, you'll find all the books I mention today.

3:20 The Charlatan's Boy

OK, the first pick for teens is *The Charlatan's Boy* by Jonathan Rogers. If you caught last week's Read-Aloud Revival episode you know that Jonathan Rogers is my own favorite living author. Really. And this book is just so good. This is how it starts:



“I only know one man who might be able to tell me where I come from, and that man is a liar and a fraud.” Compelling right? Grady, the main character, tramps through villages in the fictional world of Corenwald with a circus huckster named Floyd. And they, Grady and Floyd, they rely on the people of Corenwald to fall for their feechy act. Feechies, by the way, are this swamp-dwelling folk. You might recognize feechies if you’ve read Jonathan Roger’s *Wilderking Trilogy*. This is not part of the *Wilderking Trilogy* but it happens in the same world of Corenwald. So, they rely on the people of Corenwald to fall for their feechy act but nobody really believes in feechies anymore. And so, Floyd ends up coming with this grand scheme called The Great Feechy Scare and this results in having some surprising results both for the people of Corenwald and for themselves. This is really a book about knowing who you are and knowing who’s you are. I am telling you, I copied so many passages from this one into my own reading journal. I think Jonathan Rogers is a masterful storyteller and I highly recommend this one as a read-aloud to your teens.

4:44 Navigating Early

Book two is *Navigating Early* by Clare Vanderpool. OK, so Clare Vanderpool is the author of Newbery Award winning *Moon Over Manifest* (I have not actually read that one yet, it’s on my ‘to read’ stack, I haven’t had a chance to read it yet) but I have read this one, *Navigating Early*. It’s been described as reminiscent of *Huckleberry Finn*, I quite agree – that’s a good description. What we have here is a boy named Jack who’s sent to live in a boarding school and while he’s there he befriends an odd boy Early Auden. On their school break, both Early and

Jack set out on the Appalachian Trail to find a great black bear that Early is certain they’ll find, and to answer some deeper questions they have as well. But that’s not all they find or what they find out on their quest. This is a really powerful book about friendship, about death, about loneliness. I know that sounds heavy and sad but it’s starkly beautiful, really engaging. I think your teens, both boys and girls, will really enjoy *Navigating Early* by Clare Vanderpool.

5:58 Princess Academy

My third selection is *Princess Academy* by Shannon Hale. I just so wish this book had a different title and I wish it had a different cover as well, actually. It looks, if you look at the cover, it kind of looks like a Disney princess story and that is not even remotely close. Even the word “Princess Academy” does not really accurately describe the richness of this one. It’s not your average princess tale. It’s one that your teens will love especially if you like to give them books with strong female characters, then you don’t want to miss this one. *Princess Academy* is the story of a girl named Miri who is sent to an academy to her village’s mountain, where all the girls have to study in order to learn how to become a princess just in case their selected by the prince. So in this story, wow, Shannon Hale, she weaves these characters together. The depth of the characters in her books, you’re not ready to leave them when the book ends. They’re rich, you feel like you know them, just really powerful. And this is a story of courage and resilience and fortitude. I would categorize this one as an adventure tale more than anything else – there’s lots of actions, there’s a strong plot to keep you turning pages. I think your boys would like it every bit as much as your girls. Like I said, it needs a different title but



Princess Academy by Shannon Hale definitely makes my list of five.

7:15 Brown Girl Dreaming

OK, the fourth one I want to tell you about today is *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson. This is a book written in verse and it has been one of my own favorites to read this past year. It's actually made me want to go find as many other books in verse as I can find. This is Jacqueline Woodson's memoir of sorts. It won a National Book Award as well as a Newbery Honor, both for really good reason. It's a collection of poems that read start-to-finish like a novel. So you could read any of the poems alone but when you read them in order they string together like a novel. That's what a novel in verse is. And this one is all about Jacqueline's experience growing up in the 60s and 70s as an African-American girl during the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. Her writing is very lyrical, very strong, and anyone who struggled to learn how to read but who loves books and reading will enjoy Jacqueline's own journey toward finding her voice through stories and poems. She tells that story all throughout the book. As with other novels written in verse it's usually best if you read-aloud novels in verse while looking at the text together, if possible. Either with your own copies or just sitting next to your teens so you can look at the pages together because the way poems are laid out on a page shed light on their meaning and so Caroline Starr Rose, who's a favorite novelist in verse of mine, she told me that it's important if you're reading-aloud books in verse to see the text as well as to hear it. There is also a gorgeous audio book of *Brown Girl Dreaming* read by Jacqueline Woodson herself that would be a great option and we will link to that in the Show Notes as well.

8:50 The Wednesday Wars

My next pick is *The Wednesday Wars* by Gary Schmidt who's basically a genius when it comes to crafting compelling tales. This one also won a Newbery Honor. It's the story of Holling Hoodhood during the school year in 1967-68 in Long Island, New York. There's a lot happening in the world when the novel is happening – the Vietnam War, for one, and more personal issues to Holling, like the bully who demands he brings him cream puffs, his father's obsession with his architecture business and keeping the perfect house, and his teacher deciding that it's time for Holling to learn some Shakespeare. I know more than one kid who's decided to go ahead and read Shakespeare on their own after reading this book. It really does make you want to get lost in the Bard's work. When I finished reading *The Wednesday Wars* I started thinking, 'I think it's time for me to read *The Tempest*.' Schmidt is a master and in this book he tackles big and important themes in a funny, light-hearted manner. You will be thinking about this one after you've finished putting it down, for a while.

9:55 The Boundless

OK, I'm going to give you one more. I know I said five, I'm going to give you six, because I want to tell you about *The Boundless* by Kenneth Oppel. I read this one earlier this summer and really enjoyed it. It caught me by surprise, several times. It's steam punk fiction – you know, magical realism. It's set during the early days of the Canadian railway, and there are just touches of magic that keep the plot moving. So Will is the main character in the book and he is hungry for adventure – and boy, does he get one, when he finds himself in possession of the key to a train



car that contains some treasures that some of the more unsavory characters in the book desperately want access to. It's action-packed and fast-moving, and this is a book that your teens will probably ask you for one more chapter, almost every day that you read-aloud. I love the way the author wove in history, the concept of social injustice, and then this call to courage and doing what's right along with a fast-paced action. Especially if you have a teen boy who's not really big into reading and hasn't fallen in love with books, try this one, either on audio or as a read-aloud on your own and see if you reading it aloud or putting it on an audio book doesn't engage and interest him. I will put a link to the audio book in the Show Notes for this episode as well.

11:17 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: My name is Silas and I'm 7 years old. And I live in Washington State. My favorite book is *The Chronicles of Narnia*. And I like it because of Aslan.

Child2: [Mom: what is your name?] **[**inaudible**]** [Mom: how old are you?] 2 years old. [Mom: where do you live?] I live in Washington State. [Mom: and what's your favorite book?] My favorite book is *Click Clack Moo* and I like that.

Child3: [Mom: what is your name?] Esther Faith Quand [Mom: Esther Faith Quand. How old are you, Esther?] 3. [Mom: you are 2 years old. Where do you live? Washington State.] Washington State. [Mom: what is your favorite book?] *Click Clack Moo* [Mom: why do you like *Click Clack Moo*?] I like saying clicketty clack

moo. [Mom: because you like saying clicketty clack moo.]

Child4: I am Mariah and I'm 5 years old and I live in Washington State. [Mom: what is your favorite book?] *Cat in the Hat* and I like it because Cat in the Hat plays with Thing 1 and Thing 2.

Child5: My name is Caleb and I am 6 ½ years old. My favorite book is *Poppleton* because I like the part when he says, "**[**inaudible**]** they are going to eat me **[**inaudible**]**."

Child6: My name is **[**inaudible**]** and I'm 5 years old and my favorite book is *Poppleton*. I like **[**inaudible**]**

Child7: [Mom: what's your name?] Abraham Nolans. [Mom: where do you live, Abraham?] Georgia. [Mom: what's your favorite book?] *The Diggers are Coming*. [Mom: *The Diggers are Coming*?] Yeah. [Mom: why do you like that book?] Because. [Mom: because why?] Because it has a lot of diggers in there. [Mom: do you like diggers?] Yeah.

Child8: My name is Judah. [Mom: how old are you, Judah?] I'm 3 years old. [Mom: and where do you live?] Missouri. [Mom: and what's one of your favorite books?] The space one. [Mom: why is it one of your favorites?] Because I like it. Let's find pictures of rockets.

Child9: Hello. My name is Clarkey Johnson and I live in Lynden, Washington, and I'm 7 years old, and my favoritist book is *Peter Pan* because when Peter Pan comes he teaches them how to fly and one of the stars tells him when to leave.

Child10: Hello, my name is Davey Johnson and I live in Lynden, Washington, and I'm 6. And my favorite book is *Cowboys* and my favorite part is when you can see all the horses and cattle and the people riding on horses.



Sarah: Thanks to you for tuning in to this mini episode. Make sure you're subscribed to the Read-Aloud Revival in your favorite podcast app so you don't miss any episodes. Don't forget to take just two minutes to go to iTunes to leave us a star rating and review and then get our emails when you sign up at ReadAloudRevival.com so you don't miss our many free resources, booklists, giveaways, for families who love to share books with their kids. That's at ReadAloudRevival.com. I'll be back in a week with another episode of the Read-Aloud Revival, until then, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.