



RAR 87 – Books to Celebrate Your Adopted Child, Brooke Cooney

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.

Hey, hey, hey, Sarah Mackenzie here. We have episode 87 of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. Thanks so much for listening. Oh, man! We have got a good show for you today and a doozy of a booklist. You are definitely going to want to check out the Show Notes for this episode at ReadAloudRevival.com/87 because this is podcast episode 87. If you haven't peeked at our Show Notes in a while, go do that today. We recently made some changes to how we do Show Notes and they're pretty beefed up. They're pretty awesome, actually. You can see a time stamped listener guide to the episode in case you want to jump around to particular parts of the show. We have complete transcripts for podcast episodes as well. So, if you know someone who would benefit from what we do here at Read-Aloud Revival but isn't much of a podcast listener, you can send them to the website to grab the transcripts now, which is really awesome. And, of course, we've got main points pulled out for you in case you think, 'Oh man, what was that one thing she said?' We may have actually pulled it out for you in our little guide. And, we, of course, have every single book recommended in every episode of the podcast laid all out for you in that episode's Show Notes, so that while you listen you can just enjoy yourself. So, the Show Notes for this episode are at ReadAloudRevival.com/87. We're going to talk about books that celebrate adoption today. And,

it's a great show with a slew of book recommendations. So, let's get right to it.

2:02 Meet Brooke

Brooke Cooney describes herself as an introverted homeschooling mom to four beautiful children. She and her husband have been married for 15 years and they've been foster parents. She writes about the experience beautifully in a post at IBelieve.com (we'll make sure we link to that in the Show Notes). She also has a fantastic website (we'll link to that in the Show Notes as well), ThisTemporaryHome.com. They have an adopted child and Brooke and her family are currently in the process of adopting two more children which will instantly make them a family of six. Today, she's joining to talk about books that celebrate adoption and adopted children. This has been something we've been wanting to talk about some more for a long time so I'm excited to chat with her about that. Brooke, welcome to the Read-Aloud Revival.

Brooke: Thank you so much, Sarah. I am delighted to be joining you today.

Sarah: Well, I've been looking forward to this conversation, too. Do you want to give our listeners a little more background on your family journey and the adoptions, what adoptions look like in your family, and all that good stuff?

Brooke: Yes. So, we have two biological children. Ron, my husband, and I had wanted to adopt even before we got married we talked about that. So, we looked into international adoption after our daughter, our oldest daughter was born, and quickly decided that wasn't the right time, because we pregnant with our oldest son. So, a couple of years later when he was two we started foster care. We knew we wanted to adopt but I



read a couple of books, particularly *Kisses from Katie*, and that made me think, ‘Oh, maybe we should consider foster care as well.’ So we fostered one son for 13 months and when he was reunified with his dad we were excited for their family, we were also very heartbroken because we love with our whole heart any child that comes into our home. And, so we took a two year break and at the end of those two years we said, “You know what, it’s time to adopt.” And, one of our friends from church was fostering a beautiful little boy, she just received him into her home, their home – it’s a family, and we began the adoption process with him. So, that took us over a year and a half just to get him placed in our home. And, during that time when he was placed in our home we got a call that said, “Hey, his mom’s going to have another child and would you consider adopting that child as well?” So, we had quite the surprise and instantly we went from a family of four to a family of five and three months later to a family of six, so, it’s been quite the journey the last two or so years adding to our family through adoption.

Sarah: Yeah, rapid family growth, right?

Brooke: Yes.

Sarah: Katie Davis, I’m glad you mentioned *Kisses from Katie*, Katie Davis Majors – I loved that book. Have you read her newest book, *Daring to Hope*? Have you read that one yet?

Brooke: Not yet. I have it on my to be read pile that’s sitting on a shelf right now and I cannot wait to dive into that one.

Sarah: My 16 year old read it and loved it. She said, “It’s even better than the first one.” So, I’m excited to read it, too. But I haven’t had a chance yet.

Brooke: Oh goodness, yeah, I can’t wait. When I saw that a teenage girl from Tennessee could move to Uganda and foster and adopt girls, some of which were probably half her age, I thought, ‘Oh my goodness, if she can do that then certainly we can foster for just one child, even.’

Sarah: Yes, so inspiring, right?

5:10 Books for the adoption/ fostering journey

OK, so I would love for you to share how books have helped you through the process of adopting and fostering and waiting for your most recent adoption to be finalized.

Brooke: OK, Sarah, books have encouraged me. The first book was *Kisses from Katie* which we already mentioned, another book in the midst of adopting our youngest son that really spurred me on was *Amazing Grace* by Eric Metaxas, and it’s about the life of William Wilberforce. And, he fought for the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies for over 20 years, and just his story of tenacity and endurance really encouraged me at a time when I was thinking this is taking way longer than we expected, there’s more roadblocks than we had anticipated, and his is just a beautiful redeeming story. But, I will say if you decide to read that book that it’s quite lengthy and I was into the audible version and really enjoyed that. Another book that really articulated our thoughts on adoption and our views was one by Russell Moore, and it’s called *Adopted for Life*. There’s a beautiful chapter in that book about Joseph and how he was the adoptive father of Jesus, and so I just thought that was beautifully written and a great point to make, and really, when I’m thinking about all these books for adoptive families and for



adopted children, I want them to feel like, as Linda Sue Park said in episode 53 on the Read-Aloud Revival podcast, that they can see those mirrors and then for children who aren't adopted that they have those windows and doors to look into the life of another child. And, so having a mirror of Jesus also being adopted is pretty incredible.

Sarah: OK, so let me backup just a second and let some of our listeners who may not have heard that podcast episode know a little bit more about mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors you're talking about. We'll put a link in the Show Notes to that conversation with Linda Sue Park (ReadAloudRevival.com/53). Basically, this idea came from Rudine Sims Bishops, she wrote an article about how children need books that are windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. Windows, in that they allow you to peek into the life of someone else that lives very differently than you do, so you meet people who are outside of your normal circles of acquaintance through books. And then also mirrors, in that you need to see your own life reflected back at you. A child feels deep kinship with the character in a book who they can relate with, and they see their lives reflected back at them. And, also sliding glass doors, which is more like the idea of going through fantasy or seeing a whole new world, or seeing things from a completely different paradigm. And, so we can link to that article, too, because it's really beautiful. And another thing I'll link to in the Show Notes is Grace Lin's TEDx Talk because she talks about those windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. So, I love that you mention that because I can totally see how looking for books that are windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors would be really helpful as you're working through an adoption process, and

reading with your kids who are being adopted, and the children in your home that are adjusting to those new adoptions, and lots of dynamics to keep in mind there.

Brooke: Certainly, certainly. And, that's the great thing about books is that whether you're an adopted child yourself or whether you're like our two older children who walk through this whole process, that you can see yourself in those stories, and then you can see yourself as an agent for change, for kids that need it, and kids just like you. Finally, reading the mini chapter books that I compiled on my website has been a constant source of joy; when the non-fiction of my everyday life just needed some happy endings and some stories of triumph, or even to move at a little faster pace than maybe we were moving, the mostly fictional accounts that I blazed through on my own and with our family read-aloud times was really like honey for my soul. And, they provided the happy endings that we were seeking in our own adoption stories as we look to wrap things up in the spring of this year.

8:44 Celebrating Adoption

Sarah: Well, you've written several posts on your site about the celebratory nature of adoption or how to celebrate adoption, which I think, maybe, what you're talking about here is that sort of happy endings and joy and I love that you focus so much on books that celebrate adoption as a beautiful thing all on its own. So, why has that been so important to you to find books that celebrate that particular experience?

Brooke: A couple of things. One, is we have a huge community of friends in our church, in our homeschool community, that have adopted, and



oftentimes, the international adoptions they'll tell us when they're coming back to the States and we'll go meet them at the airport. There'll be a huge crowd there with signs and cheering, and just welcoming this new child into the family and into our faith family and our community. Also, my desire to adopt started in childhood. I can remember re-checking out from the school library the hardback copy, it was a very worn and old copy, of *The Boxcar Children* and just thinking how blueberries and cold milk and fresh bread were the most romantic meal that anybody could eat at the time. Next, I knew I'd never be the same after reading the faithful Anne girl, *Anne with an E*, from *Anne of Green Gables*, or reading that heartbreaking tale of *The Little Matchbox Girl* at Christmastime and knowing that here was a girl in severe poverty that if someone would have just taken a moment to look at her on the street could have had a very different ending for her. So, beginning to make those mental lists of books when I was young carried over into adulthood when I decided, when our family decided, that we wanted to adopt. And, so looking at adoption as a celebration, knowing that adoption is not plan A, that all children really should grow up with their own mom and dad and live in their home with them, but it is a plan B, and it can be a beautiful plan B. And, no matter how old the children are because people are adopted for very different reasons, they could be a very young child like our children or like some of our friends who have adopted teenage children, and at any rate, it's definitely a thing to celebrate. And, so we wanted to start out with that idea, especially in picture books. Those are fun, it's a fun gift to give to someone, too, when they've adopted a child.

11:04 Helping Adopted Children to Feel Understood

Sarah: In episode 52 of the podcast (ReadAloudRevival.com/52) I talked to Trisha Goyer who's adopted several children as well, and I remember she was talking about a couple of her girls who had been through several different foster home situations. When she read the Jenny B. Jones books to them (and we can put these in the Show Notes as well) they were, sort of, shocked and surprised to find themselves reflected in the story. So, I would imagine that that's exactly what happens when a child who's going through something they may be feel especially alone or like nobody understands them and reads about...

Brooke: Yes.

Sarah: ... a character who actually does, they think, 'Oh my gosh, maybe I'm not as alone as I thought I was.'

Brooke: Right, right. And, just for children like myself who had that passion we can fan that flame for them and guide them in that direction from an early age, that they can even be doing things now that change the world by just helping their kids that they know of at church who've been adopted, or they go to school—those at school, befriending them and loving them for who they are not because of their situation but just the person that they are.

Sarah: So, do you have certain criteria that you use when you choose books about adoption?

Brooke: Right, so, primarily I stick with beautiful literature, beautiful books that you would want to read on your own anyway. Each book has either the main character as an orphan or adopted child or the main child's life impacts or is impacted by



an orphan child. There's a few on the list that I have on my website of over 50 books about orphans and adoption. There's two in particular that don't really fall in that criteria but I think, with some creative license, we can kind of make them fit. One would be *Corduroy* by Don Freeman. I could not help but get weepy and teary eyed every time I read that to our foster son, because there at the end, when he's brought into Lisa's bedroom and he looks around and he sees the girl-size room and then he sees the little bed that's just his size and then Lisa goes over and sews his button on and she's like, "Not that there's anything wrong with you without your button, but I think you'll be more comfortable," and then in the end when he tells her that he knows he's always wanted a friend and he's always wanted a home, that's really the cry of all children's hearts; is to be known and loved and to have a home. So, that one I, kind of, took some creative license with. The picture books are more modern because the attitude around adoption's really changed so much in the last few decades. There's a little more of an open and supportive attitude, many more resources for adoptive parents; so those are a little more recent books. But the rest of them are chapter books that are classic literature and many of them are award-winning books that just have lovely language, have strong characters and character development. And, also I wanted the characters to be culturally diverse because children, all around the world, are in need of homes. That's a worldwide issue not ...

Sarah: Yes.

Brooke: ... just something here in the States. So, I wanted the children in the books to be of many different ethnicities as well.

13:51 Brooke's Recommendations

Sarah: Fantastic. OK, let's start talking about some of your favorite recommendations. So, do you want to start with picture books?

Brooke: Sure. So, picture books, there's a lot of picture books that deal with children adopted from Asian cultures and some of the ones that you might have seen would be by Rose Lewis, it's called *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* or *Every Year on Your Birthday*. There's also another one by Grace Lin that's called *The Red Thread: An Adoption Fairy Tale*. I love that one. I think you could use that for any child that's adopted but, have you read that one...

Sarah: I haven't seen ...

Brooke: ... by Grace?

Sarah: No, but I love Grace Lin and we have lots of her books but we don't have that one, so I'll add it to my list.

Brooke: Yes, she says in the back of the book that she had many friends who adopted so she wanted to write a book that celebrated that, and it talks about a king and a queen who wake up with this pain in their heart and they don't really know why they have this pain or what caused it to be there, and they call in all the scientists and the people in the kingdom and doctors, and no one can tell them what's wrong with them until an old peddler shows up and with his glasses he sees that there's a red thread from both of their hearts, strung all throughout the kingdom, and when they put the glasses on they see it too, so they decide to go out on a journey to find where the red thread ends, and the thread ends with a beautiful baby, a beautiful Chinese baby who doesn't have a mom and a dad and they bring



the baby home to be their child in their kingdom. And, so it's a beautiful story of them going to find their child and starting a new family together. Another one is, sometimes, you know, you adopt children and they're going to look more like you but other times they're not, and I love the book, *Don't Have Your Eyes* by Carrie Kitz. Have you read that one?

Sarah: No, I haven't heard of that one.

Brooke: Oh, ok. So, that one's beautiful. It says, "I don't have your hair but I have your way of letting it down. I don't have your voice but I have your way of lifting spirits with a song," it's a beautiful story that really tells you that you don't have to look alike on the outside it's really what's inside our hearts that matter. So, that's a really nice story...

Sarah: OK.

Brooke: ... to share with your children. There's a few more I wanted to mention. One of my very favorite illustrators, and children book authors, is Barbara Cooney, and it's not because we have the same last name, it's just because she's simply amazing.

Sarah: She is. Yes, I agree.

Brooke: Yes, no relation there, but I love her picture book written by Rumer Godden. It's called *The Story of Holly and Ivy*. A friend of mine gave us this book a couple of years ago when we were in the middle of our adoption of our son and it's just a gorgeously illustrated, beautiful story, about a doll named Holly who's wishing for a home and a girl named Ivy who's wishing for a home of her own as well. And, then a woman who is wishing for a child to spend Christmas with, and that is a tale you will want to read every year.

Sarah: I love that one.

Brooke: A few more she's done, one was called *Eleanor* and she both wrote and illustrated this book, and it's about the life of Eleanor Roosevelt who was orphaned at a young age and went on to live with her extended family. It's kind of a sad tale. The other two that she wrote are both kind of sad in that Eleanor's mother really focused on outward appearance and so that was something that's mentioned in the book and you, kind of, feel poorly for her about that but it's incredible because she went on to be the First Lady of the United States as she married F. D. R. and so it's an encouraging tale to read in that sense.

Sarah: We have that one on our shelf as well and I really enjoy it. I actually read *Eleanor Roosevelt's You Learn by Living* earlier this year and really enjoyed that. Have you ever read that?

Brooke: No, I haven't. I read another book about she and her father this year, but I haven't read that one. I'll have to put it on my list, too.

Sarah: It's good.

Brooke: And the last one that I have from Barbara Cooney is called *Only Opal* and it's a diary of a young girl and it's a true account that she went back and did pictures to, and this little girl does go on to live with different families, and it doesn't really have a happy ending which is sad, but the pictures are beautiful and it is just another reminder that everything doesn't always work out but we can seek to be that change agent in children's lives when we see that we can do something.

Sarah: OK, and we'll make sure we put links in the Show Notes, because you have lists of picture books with more recommendations on them as well. So, if you're listening and you're thinking, "Oh, I want more." We will put links to Brooke's website in the Show Notes where you



can find those. You want to go to ReadAloudRevival.com/87 and we'll have links there in episode 87's Show Notes to all of her booklists because these are fantastic recommendations.

18:17 The Read-Aloud Family

We'll get back to today's episode in just a moment. But, I wanted to take a quick minute to make sure you know about *The Read-Aloud Family*. This is a new book I wrote just for you. Here's what I know: you will never, ever regret the time you spend reading to your kids. Connecting deeply with our families can be, kind of, difficult, right, in our really busy and technology-driven world? But reading aloud is one of the best ways to be fully present with our kids even after they can read to themselves. In the new book, *The Read-Aloud Family* you'll find the inspiration you need to start a read-aloud movement in your own home. You'll discover how to prepare your kids for academic success, how to develop their empathy and compassion, all through reading aloud. You're going to learn how to find time to read-aloud in the midst of your really busy day; school, sports, dinner dishes, all those pressures on your time and attention. And, you'll learn how to choose books across a variety of sibling interests and ages. The best part is that you'll discover how to make reading aloud the very best part of your family's day. *The Read-Aloud Family* also offers age-appropriate book lists from infancy all the way through adolescence. So, from a toddler's wonder to your teenager's resistance, you're going to discover practical strategies to make reading aloud a meaningful family ritual. The book releases wherever books are sold, March 27, 2018, but if you order the book before March 27 you're going to get some

extra gifts and I am so excited Zondervan let me do this, because I made you a brand new video Master Class to show you how to choose books for your kids. So, you know that feeling when you walk into a library or a bookstore or maybe you're cruising around online or something, and you don't know if a book is worth your time or attention or your child's time and attention? In this video Master Class you're going to find out exactly which two characteristics make a book worth reading and you'll find out the three question test I use to decide if a book deserves a place on my family's reading stack. So order *The Read-Aloud Family* before March 27, 2018 to get a promo code to access that Master Class for free. I am thrilled Zondervan is letting me do that. Go to TheReadAloudFamily.com to grab your copy. I can't wait to get it in your hands.

20:36 Middle grade and chapter book recommendations

OK, what about middle grade novels and chapter books? What have you got for us there?

Brooke: Right. There's some great selections there. One that I was really surprised by and I had not read before, the author of the Glad books, *Pollyanna* and *Pollyanna Grows Up*, Eleanor H. Porter, those are two fabulous books but she also had one that had been out of print for a long time, it's called *Just David* and you can get a copy of that now, but, it is simply beautiful. If you're looking to give your children books that are full of truth, goodness, and beauty, this is one to start with. It's a little bit of a mystery. The boy shows up and he only knows his first name, that's why the title is *Just David*. But, it has nature woven in, and beautiful music, and a sweet story, so I definitely recommend that one. Some more great books, some that you probably have heard



of, *Little Men* by Louisa May Alcott; I love the relationship between Mrs. Bhaer who is Jo March and a boy that comes to live with them named Dan. Dan is an orphaned boy, has lived in many different places, and she sees his need for both freedom and family and she really just disciplines him and loves him in a way that makes him want to be the little boy she sees in him. So, that's a great story. Another one, Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*, have you read that one?

Sarah: Oh, gosh. I read that when I was in school, but it was one of those books where they assigned all kinds of book reports ...

Brooke: Oh no.

Sarah: I had to have journal entry according to Grace, and all I remember is being glad that one is over, and I think it was just because of the school assignments that went along with it. So, remind me why it's awesome because I think it got schooled out of me.

Brooke: Yeah, right. No, don't write any reports this time. But, it's a great story. *Maniac Magee* it kind of presents it part legend but part true, and it's just wonderful. It has you laughing and crying, and not only do you have the element of a young boy also needing a home but you have some race relations in there as well, and it's great because he lives among both the east side and the west side of town and it just talks about how brings people together. But, you will have tissues and then also some laughs with that one. I love that for boys. I think boys would really like that one.

Sarah: Oh, yeah. Excellent.

Brooke: Another chapter book, one that you've mentioned on your show before, and that's where

I actually found out about it was *Listening for Lions* by Gloria Whelans.

Sarah: I love that book.

Brooke: I loved that book. I made the mistake of reading it when my husband was in Uganda, though, to my kids. Don't read it while Daddy's in Africa.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Brooke: Wait 'til he's home. With any of these books since, if you have children that are adopted and do come from hard places or have things in their past they may be sensitive to, I would say pre-read or at least screen or read with, some of these books with your children because you're going to know what will help them and what might be a trigger for them.

Sarah: That's a very good point. So, being sensitive to the fact that there are some things we might not expect would be a trigger for them but very well could be, just because we don't know what they've been through.

Brooke: Right. A newer book is one called *Ruby Holler* by Sharon Creech, and my daughter actually read this first and was like, "Mom, I think you'll like this book," and it's about two twins, a boy and a girl, Dallas and Florida, and they do come from a rough background. They've grown up in an orphanage and just when they think that they can't take it anymore, an elderly couple comes in and takes them home with them and really just their patience, as a parent it was a great book to read because the patience of parents who had already had grown children in the way that they loved these two kids was really great. Also, it's a mystery. There's a mystery/suspense part there, so that's kind of fun for kids as well.



Sarah: I think some of my kids have read that. But, I haven't read it yet. But I love Sharon Creech.

Brooke: Maybe another one for boys that you might not think of but is a great book is *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare...

Sarah: Oh yeah.

Brooke: ... and Attean is the main Indian character in the book and he also is an orphan because of wartime. And, he befriends Matt who is left at home while his dad goes to retrieve their family as they just came to settle in a new place. So, it's really a man's man kind of book. My son went around the house making bows and arrows after that out of wood, so everyone loved that one.

Sarah: My kids really enjoyed that one, too.

Brooke: Do you want me to keep going?

Sarah: Yeah, go ahead.

Brooke: Let me see if I can find my list again. I'm walking around my house with all these books because I want to make sure I can look at them and talk to you.

Sarah: Oh yeah, yeah.

Brooke: Alright, one that listeners of the Read-Aloud Revival I'm sure have heard about would be *The Green Ember series*.

Sarah: Yay!

Brooke: Yes, those are great books all on their own, but I loved it because Smalls himself was orphaned and is not raised by his family, and also even Heather and Pickett, they don't know what's happened to their families, so their reaction to all these tragedies in their life or all these circumstances, it's fun to watch, and it's action-

packed, and I can't wait to read the newest book by S. D. Smith to see how things turn out.

Sarah: Yes, me either. And that's coming out in March, so when you're listening to this podcast it's February, we're getting very close to the third book in *The Green Ember series* coming out. So there's *Green Ember*, and then *Ember Falls*, and *Ember Rising* releases this spring. So, very exciting.

Brooke: Another fun book that really is going to have everyone laughing is *The BFG* by Roald Dahl. My husband loved this book. He read it out loud, he did all the weird speakings of the BFG, and that's just a fun one. When I'm thinking about these books for kids, I'm thinking about foster care kids as well, not just adopted kids, and so, often you want to bring, as you say, a family culture around books, bringing a new child into your home, getting them to laugh is probably one of the best things you can do in the beginning, even though it may be difficult for some of the kids, especially if they've been in several homes, but I would definitely recommend that one.

Another one, of course, *Anne of Green Gables* we've already mentioned, but *Akin to Anne* is a collection of stories that Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote prior to writing *Anne of Green Gables*, and most of Lucy Maud Montgomery's books are about orphans, so she has the *Anne series* that she wrote and then she thought *Anne* was finished, she wrote six books, thought she was finished, wrote *Emily of New Moon* which is a trilogy about another orphan, and then came back and wrote book seven and eight to the *Anne series*.

Sarah: Oh, I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that order.



Brooke: Yes. And, she too, lost her mother at an early age and went to live with her grandparents and then went to live with her father when he was remarried, for a short amount of time, before returning to her grandparents. So, there might have been a reason behind her love for happy endings for orphan children.

Sarah: I'm wondering, now that I'm looking at that, if my daughter, who's a major *Anne* fan has ever read *Akin to Anne*. I may have found something that she doesn't know exists, so this is very exciting.

Brooke: That's a great one, and it's nice because they all do have happy endings in that book. And it's little short stories, so it's a good one to keep in your purse when you're at the supermarket trying to squeeze in some more reading time...

Sarah: Yeah, nice.

Brooke: ... or in the car.

27:40 Books for Teens

Sarah: Nice. OK, do you have any book recommendations for teens?

Brooke: I sure do. I love Gene Stratton-Porter. She's written several books that have even been turned into movies, but two that specifically deal with orphans are *Freckles* who was an orphaned boy and he didn't know his story. He was left in an orphanage and had one of his hands missing. So, he has a disability, grows up thinking, 'How did this happen to me? Where did I come from?' but it's just a beautiful story with some romance and great, beautiful language, and wonderful nature references in there for all our nature lovers (like myself), and then, *A Girl of the Limberlost* by Gene Stratton-Porter also follows *Freckles* and in that story Eleanor Comstock, who's the main

protagonist, she encounters a little boy named Billy on her way to school and Billy is hungry and he sees her lunch box and she just decides to share her lunch with him every day. And, so from that she learns that he comes from a rough home and eventually, he and his sisters are orphaned and need a place to live, and so that's a strong side story in that one. I just love that book.

Another one that I listened to on Audible was *Echo* by Pam Muñoz Ryan, and ...

Sarah: Oh, my goodness. I think that has to be one of the best audio books I have ever heard in my life. It is so magnificent.

Brooke: Yes. All of the harmonica music that accompanies that and the orchestra—it just makes the story come to life. I would definitely recommend listening to that one. Another one is *Hattie*, *Big Sky* and *Hattie Ever After* by Kirby Larson.

Sarah: I love those books, too.

Brooke: Oh yeah. So fun. And then, for those who did love *Pollyanna*, *Pollyanna Grows Up* by Eleanor H. Porter. When she grows up—so it has a little bit of romance in that one as well. She's still playing the glad game but in a different way, so I loved having the full story on *Pollyanna*. *A Long Walk to Water* which is based on a true story and also written by Linda Sue Park is a fantastic book to read. One of those you'll also want to screen for your children if they have come from hard places, but it's just a great book to encourage us to turn around and help someone else that was like ourselves and to be agents for change in the world.

Sarah: One of the things I think she did so magnificently in that book is she really takes you to some sorrowful places but she leaves you with this amazing sense of hope. So, it's a book that



sort of spans this really broad depth of emotion but she does this thing at the end, I think, where she leaves the reader with this tremendous amount of hope, it's just so inspiring and hope-filled, I think that can be a really difficult thing to do with a book that tackles some serious, hard things like *A Long Walk to Water* does.

Brooke: Yes.

Sarah: She does it really beautifully.

Brooke: Yes, and just one more that can be teens or middle grade reading would be *A Single Shard* by her as well. I loved, loved that story.

Sarah: I did too, yes, I did too. Well, this is fantastic. We have a huge list of books to go off of here and again, we'll have links (you have even more recommendations, I know) so we'll have links to your website in the Show Notes. Again, listeners, that's in episode 87, so that's just ReadAloudRevival.com/87. Brooke, do you have anything you'd love to tell other parents who are in the process of adopting or have adopted children or are thinking about adoption? Do you have any words of encouragement or anything you'd just love to say to them, if they're listening?

31:02 Encouragement for Families

Brooke: Yes, I would say press on. If you have that still small voice whispering in your heart to get started on this, then do the next thing. Do take the next step. Go to a class, or call that adoption agency that you've been thinking about calling. And, for those in the middle of it, just press on. Know that God makes all things beautiful in His time and yes, this takes much longer than we anticipated. In our case, we've had many setbacks, legally, when errors are

made there, it takes months and months, versus let's erase it and just write over whatever we did, so I would say just take courage and press on knowing that you're doing something that makes an eternal difference for yourself, for your adopted child, and for your family. It has been an emotional rollercoaster for us, but our children have been the greatest champions of 'we're doing the right thing, let's keep going.' And, also have a support group. We have had an amazing support group from our homeschool community, in our church family, in our family, just in meeting our needs, especially when we had two kids quickly together, one especially that we weren't planning for, but a beautiful gift. So, press on, take courage, have a good support group, and just keep going. You're doing the right thing.

Sarah: Now, you've actually written a book about your son's adoption, right? Do you want to tell us about that before we go?

Brooke: Yes, I would love to. So, our son's adoption was finalized in May and I knew I'd write a blog post about it but I didn't think much more than that. And, we really wanted to celebrate his adoption, so we had the idea to get a balloon for each month that he had been in foster care which was 30 months and so after the judge declared us a new family we went outside with all our friends and their children, we each held onto a balloon and we just, on the count of three, we lifted up to the skies as a great thank you to God for this new gift, and for seeing us through. And so, after I wrote the post, I was like, you know what, I think this could be a children's story. So, I re-worked it over several months and we have a book that I've written and my daughter's illustrated that's free for you to download from my website, and it's called, *Thirty Balloons, An*



Adoption Tale, and we would love for you to share our story with your family.

Sarah: Oh, that's beautiful. I am excited to read it. And, we'll put a link to that in the Show Notes as well, so that everybody can go grab that if they like. I'm eager to see that. So, Brooke, thank you so much for taking the time to come chat with me. This has been wonderful and I know it's going to be encouraging and helpful to families. We get a lot of requests from families saying we need more book recommendations specifically about adoption so this is a tremendous gift. Thank you so very much.

Brooke: Oh, thank you so much, Sarah. It was my pleasure.

33:45 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: I am Tamar. I am 8 years old. I'm from Canada. My favorite book is the *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl. My favorite part is when Mr. Fox saves all the animals from dying of hunger.

Child2: My name is **[**inaudible**]** and I am 5 years old. I live in Canada, and my favorite author is Kevin Henkes and he wrote *Penny and Her Marble*, and my favorite part is when Penny gets the marble.

Child3: Hello, my name is Leon, and I am 8 years old. I live in Atlanta, Georgia. My favorite book is *Star Wars Omnibus, Volume 3*. I recommend it because it is many Star Wars comics wrapped into one big graphic novel. I recommend this book for the people who like action-packed books. It is very fun to read.

Child4: My name's Charis. I'm 8 years old, and my favorite book is *Swallows and Amazons* because it's awesome. I'm from Spring Lake, Michigan.

Child5: Hello, my name is Christopher and I live in Spring Lake, Michigan, and I can't decide between *The Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Harry Potter*. I like them because they have lots of action and I like the characters. And, I'm 10 years old.

Child6: I am Katherine and I am 6 years old. I am from Spring Lake, Michigan. My favorite book is *The Adventures of Brambly Hedge in Summer*.

Child7: My name is Lilly and I'm 3 years old and I'm from Spring Lake, Michigan. [Mom: my favorite book...] is *Brambly Hedge*. [Mom: *Brambly Hedge*, *The Secret Staircase*.]

Child8: Hi, my name is Lucas. I live in California. I'm 5 years old. My favorite book is *Horton Hears a Who* because the little one sees the whole world. Bye bye.

Child9: My name is Amarie. I'm 5 years old and my favorite book is **[**inaudible**]** because there's a funny part, because a husband says, "Dizzy" and there was a teacher named Mr. Tessman. And, I live in Colorado Springs.

Child10: Hi, my name is Kindy. I'm 9 years old and I live in Colorado. And, my favorite book is *Wrinkle in Time* because it's full of adventure and it's very exciting. And, it has a lot of different planets and imaginary creatures.

Child11: Hi, my name's Carson. I'm 9 years old and I'm from Pennsylvania. My favorite books are *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. My favorite stories are it wasn't quite safe when the boy took matches when his mom told him he wasn't



allowed and he lit a bonfire and it spread across his mom's chicken house and lit it.

Child12: Hi, my name is Cole. I live here in Pennsylvania and I'm 7 years old, and my favorite book is [*Inaudible*] written by Christian [*Inaudible*] and my favorite part about it is when they go rolling down the hill.

Sarah: Thank you, thank you, kids. And that's it for today's show. Hey, don't forget to check out our new and improved Show Notes, the ones that have a time stamp listener guide, complete transcripts, of course, links to all the books recommended. Just go check them out and see what you think. Those are at ReadAloudRevival.com/87 and I'd love to know what you think of that brand new Show Note format. See if that's helpful for you. Hey, if you know somebody who has adopted, is considering adoption, is working through an adoption right now, send them this episode. Send them to ReadAloudRevival.com/87 so they can find books, ways to celebrate the kids in their lives. Thank you so much for listening. Can't wait to meet you back here next week; same place, same time. In the meantime, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.