



RAR#119 Anne Bogel - Delighting in Your Own Reading Life

Anne: Just one book?

Sarah: Well, I mean -ish.

Anne: I am game. I am game.

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.

Ah, happy new year! I couldn't think of a better way to open up a new year than to chat with you here on the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. So here we are. I'm Sarah Mackenzie. I hope this is a year of reading for you, for your kids, and hopefully and most of all, of shared reading aloud together. Here on the podcast we're going to help you every step of the way with another year of tips, resources, book lists, and opportunities to help you connect with your kids through books.

1:04 Read-aloud challenge

Today is the first day of the 2019 31-Day Read-Aloud Challenge. This is our most popular event of the entire year here at Read-Aloud Revival and participants tell us that this simple challenge transforms their kids' relationship with reading. I know, that sounds like an exaggeration but it's kind of amazing how this works. First of all it's free. And there are just two steps for you to join us. First step is to register so we can send you a Challenge Packet right away. So, you do that by going to RAR31days.com—that's where you register for free. Then, the second step is up to your kids because this is a challenge for your kids, not for you. Your kids will read-aloud for at

least ten minutes for as many days as possible in January. They'll keep track of the days they read-aloud on the printable calendar which you get in your Challenge Packet when you register. And, the amazing thing is when your kids read for at least ten minutes on as many days as possible in January you'll watch them make tremendous leaps in both their decoding skills and their comprehension as well as developing new and beautiful connections with those they read to. This is true for kids of all ages—not just those kids who are learning to read. Your teens will benefit a ton as well. The challenge is open to everyone and we even have a pre-reader option for kids who aren't reading fluently on their own yet. So, get everything you need, for free, at RAR31days.com.

2:40 Books for YOU!

We get a lot of requests here at the Read-Aloud Revival for books for you, a list of books. People will ask, "Sarah, what do you read for yourself, not to your kids, not kids books, but adult books you are reading on your own that you just love, just for you?" So, today I have a guest on the Show, the one and only Anne Bogel, and we're going to give you a slew of recommendations in different categories. That way, you can go into 2019 re-invigorating your own reading life, your own delight for reading. Not just with your kids but on your own as well. We name so many books in this Show, in fact, you're going to want to head to the Show Notes to see them all so you don't have to keep track because I'm not even sure how many we talk about—it's a lot. The Show Notes are at ReadAloudRevival.com/119, but before we get to my conversation with Anne, I'm going to answer a listener question.



3:44 Listener Q: Should kids read to me?

Today's question comes from Keri.

Keri: Hi, my name is Keri and I am from Mansfield, Texas. My question is my two oldest boys are 9 and 11, and when they were younger I had them read out loud to them just as part of their reading curriculum to make sure they were pronouncing words correctly and understanding what they were reading. Now that they are older I still have them read out loud to me every day and, of course, I read out loud to them every day, but I guess my question is now that they are older should I turn their reading time into a silent reading time for themselves, and of course, I'm not going to stop reading out loud to them. Is it as beneficial for them to read out loud to me as it is for me to read out loud to them?

Sarah: Keri, it's an excellent question. When kids of any age read out loud they make leaps in their decoding skills—that's their ability to read quickly and to read it accurately. They also improve their comprehension—that is their ability to understand what they read. Reading aloud actually forces the reader, the one reading aloud, to speak every word in order and, in time, when you do that over and over again it develops skills of elocution, of intonation, and pronunciation. They also realize the importance of reading as a service, as something done for the kindness of someone else. If you've ever had to listen to someone read aloud who is not well practiced in reading aloud you know what I mean. It's a gift when someone's good at reading aloud and is reading to you. It also makes it easier to notice when your child needs help understanding something or pronouncing something. You know, we can read words incorrectly for a long time

when we're reading silently to ourselves before we realize that's not how it's said. For example, one of my children (who shall remain nameless), a very good reader who reads just a ton, once called a café, a caff. This is not that long ago. She had read it many, many times but it wasn't until she spoke it aloud that I was able to correct her (kindly, of course). So, here's the practical takeaway. I still prioritize me reading aloud to my kids and having my kids read independently. Those still take priority. But, it's a great idea to have your kids read aloud, too (maybe not as frequently but still on a regular basis). You could have them read aloud to you every other day instead of every day, for example. And, of course, right now we're doing the 31-Day Read-Aloud Challenge so make sure to sign up for that at RAR31days.com. I hope that helps. Thank you so much for your question, Keri. Hey, if you have a question you'd like me to answer on an upcoming episode on the Read-Aloud Revival podcast head to ReadAloudRevival.com, scroll to the bottom of the page and look for "Got a question for Sarah Mackenzie?" You can leave your voice message there. I'd love to hear your question and possibly answer it on an upcoming episode of the podcast.

6:52 Prioritizing your reading life

We spend a lot of time here at the Read-Aloud Revival talking about kids' reading lives; how to help them fall in love with reading, and how to become discerning, voracious, and insightful readers who love to do it for the sheer joy reading brings. Today, I'm talking with Anne Bogel from ModernMrsDarcy.com. She's the host of the "What should I read next?" podcast and the author of a couple of books. The newest is called, *I'd Rather Be Reading*. And she's here to talk



about delighting in your own reading life so you can make 2019 a year where you are reading more just for the sheer joy of it. Yes, your reading life. Jim Trelease, the author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, advises teachers and parents to be seen by their kids reading daily. The reason for that is because for all of the talk about how important it is to help our kids fall in love with reading if they don't actually see the adults in their lives reading for pleasure then why would they believe us when we talk about the refreshment and joy that reading gives or that reading is a worthwhile thing to do just for the joy of it? If you're listening to this podcast I bet that the reason you don't read as much as you might want to isn't because you don't enjoy it I bet it has more to do with that endless to do list. The fact that there are way more things to do than fit into your ordinary day and maybe, even the fact that you feel a little bit guilty when you take time to read for yourself, you know, for fun. I'm not talking about reading books that your kids are reading aloud or otherwise, I'm not talking about parenting books, or books that help you do your life or your work better (which are important to be sure), but today, I want to talk about books that you read just because you love to read them, books you read just for the fun of it.

8:31 Anne Bogel is back!

Well, I can't think of anyone better than Anne Bogel to talk about nurturing our own reading life and so she's here today, Anne, welcome back to the Read-Aloud Revival.

Anne: It's a pleasure to be back.

Sarah: So, for any listeners who aren't familiar with Modern Mrs. Darcy or the What Should I

Read Next? podcast, do you want to tell us a little bit about what you do there?

Anne: Sure. Modern Mrs. Darcy came first. It's a blog that I started in 2011 and that is a Jane Austen reference in the title. And, my favorite way to describe is not my own words (I stole this from a reader) but she described it as a lifestyle blog for nerds. Then, in early 2016 (we're about to have our third anniversary) I started the podcast What Should I Read Next? It was actually born out of a blog series when I was doing literary match-making by email and then putting the information on the blog on the weekends. And I thought this would be so much more fun if we could actually talk back and forth about the books and about that same time I was thinking wouldn't it be fun to start a podcast? And I finally realized those ideas go hand-in-hand. So now every Tuesday on What Should I Read Next? I ask a reader, sometimes it may be somebody that you've heard of, like one of your favorite authors, and sometimes it's somebody who could be your mom, your sister, your neighbor, to tell me three books they love, one book they don't, and what they're reading now. And then I recommend three titles they may enjoy reading next. My job is to help readers articulate what they like about their books; they really do enjoy reading so that they can find more books that deliver that same wonderful reading experience.

Sarah: Well, I know, you and I talk quite a bit, just for fun, and I remember telling you recently I was telling you about a series I'm going to talk about later today that I love. And I told you, "I have no idea why I love them, I don't even like series books that much, and I cannot stop reading these." But I had no idea why I like them, and so, I think it's so true if someone says why do you like that book? We kind of go, actually, I'm not



really sure, and sometimes somebody else looking at our bookshelf... I don't know who was it—there's somebody who said if you look at someone's bookshelf and their grocery cart you pretty much have a good picture of who they are. I think that's probably kind of true.

Anne: That's perfect.

10:24 Pick a winner

Sarah: So, the question I have for you first, Anne, is do you have any tips for choosing books that are likely to be winners because I know if you're tight on time, if you don't feel like you have a lot of spare time to read, but you're thinking, 'I want to get back into reading, I'm going to make some time for this!' And then you pick up a book and it's a total dud that can be really demoralizing or frustrating. So, do you have any tips for choosing books that are likely to be winners?

Anne: I totally know what you're talking about. It's so demoralizing to spend your precious reading time on a book and get to the end and think that was a waste of three hundred pages, and the commensurate number of hours of my life. Something I hear from readers all the time is: can you recommend a great book? But the important thing to remember before you go looking for great books for you is that a great book means different things to different people. So, instead of just looking for what everybody else is talking about or what's highly recommended at the library or at your bookstore, or what you see all over Instagram, it's important to consider who is recommending this and also, what else do they enjoy reading? If you can find someone and that someone can be a certain reviewer, a certain website, it could be, or you, a friend you have coffee with, or your neighbor you

walk the dog with, but someone's who's Venn diagram of reading taste has a very healthy overlap with your own. And if they know you well and can speak to the issues in the book and can tell you, yes, that sounds like you, or eh, you might want to wait on that or spend your reading time elsewhere, you can get a lot more hits and a lot fewer misses.

11:51 It is OK to quit

Sarah: That's so good. Do you ... related to that ... do you quit books when you don't want them?

Anne: Ooh. Yes, and honestly, I think if you were in a reading slump the single best thing you can do is to set aside a book that's not working for you. Now, first the caveat, of course, it's great to read books that aren't immediately hospitable, and of course, there's a reason for pushing through and maybe we just want to cross that classic that we've never read, but always meant to, off the list. (I am looking at you *Wuthering Heights*.) But, if you haven't been reading or you're not excited about what you're reading you're not going to pick up the book and if you don't pick up the book you're not going to read. So, just put it down, find something you're actually excited about, when you're on a roll again you can go back to it if you want to but I feel like we can make this 'I'm not reading right now' thing into a much bigger issue than it needs to be when we get stuck on a book that's not working for us right now.

Sarah: Oh, I think that is such good advice because it's true. I know that if I'm already feeling like I'm stealing time from other parts of my day to read and then I'm reading something I'm not really interested in picking up or I'm just not digging then what happens is I just don't read. All



of a sudden I have to do all those dishes and that laundry and it's a lot harder to carve out time.

12:56 Has Anne ever had a reading slump?

Alright, the question we all have for Anne Bogel is have you ever found yourself in a reading slump?

Anne: Oh, for sure! And, if I never had been I'm not sure if you should be listening to me talk about books and reading.

Sarah: That's a good point.

Anne: I mean, what am going to say? Of course not, what's wrong with you? No, that is not the situation at all. This actually happened to me fairly recently. It's funny, I was on book tour this fall, going to tons of book stores, talking about books with readers and book sellers and professional literary enthusiasts every night. And Sarah, it was so bad for my day-by-day reading life, I really did not see that coming but it was awful. The main problem I realized, eventually, after thinking about this for weeks is that I was totally thrown off routine. And, if I look back over my life I know that whenever I'm thrown off routine I often lose my good habits, like I can go running four days a week for months, and then if I get sick and I don't go running for five days then when I wake up on Thursday morning when I used to run it's not the thing I last did. It's like I've forgotten how to be. Or, as the weather gets cold and the winter, we always have that experience where we go, "I don't remember what we ate when it was cold outside last year" so when I was on book tour I finally realized that I was out talking about books in book stores during the time of the evening when I was usually at home reading my books by myself or with my family, curled up at home, and when that was gone I just

didn't know what to do. And then, I find like so many things, if you are reading a good book you keep reading the good book and if you finish that book you pick up another one, but I just got stuck and I felt so much pressure, 'OK, I finally have time to read, so what am going to read next? Oh, there's so much and I want it to be really good,' and I really worked myself into an over-thinking literary tizzy.

14:48 I want to read, but how?

Sarah: If we have listeners who are thinking, 'I used to read all the time,' or 'As a kid I loved reading but as a mom I've piled up responsibilities, I've got so much to do I feel a little bit guilty ignoring the laundry pile or the dishes in the sink and sitting down to read a book,' what would you say to that mom who's like I want to read, I just don't know how to make this a part of my everyday life?

Anne: OK, if we want to create a hierarchy of everyday life, "shower" probably does actually trump the book but they're definitely on a spectrum of taking care of yourself and taking care of your mind and you talked about Jim Trelease and all the other studies that show parents who read create kids who read. For better or worse you taking time to read by yourself, something you want to read, and not just previewing your kids' book, they have to see you doing this for its own sake, for your own enjoyment. So, I'm sorry that you can't say, yes, this helped me plan my curricula, or yes, this makes me a better mom, except it does make you a better mom because you're reading. And there was just this wonderful study that came out (of course, I think it's wonderful because it reinforces everything I want to be true about the world, basically, that books do wonderful things



for everyone) but there was this study that showed just the amount of reading material in a home has a significant impact on academic outcomes for everyone who lives there but especially the youngsters. And if people read it that's bonus. But, it can't be any reading material it has to be reading material for all ages.

Sarah: Actually, there is a study that I think I quoted it in *The Read-Aloud Family*, so interesting. I'm pretty sure I got the information from Dr. Daniel Willingham who wrote a book called, *Raising Kids Who Read*, and it was so interesting to me because it showed that parents who believe that the primary purpose of reading is entertainment not academic or educational but entertainment, those parents have kids who read more and who are better readers. So it kind of is this twist where we think that if we value reading for the things that it will do for us as far as education or the way we think or helping us become more culturally aware or something those are important parts of reading but actually, parents who believe that the primary reason to read is just for entertainment they actually raise kids who love reading, who do it more, and who do it better, and I think that's really a relief to those of us who really just love reading, we can't explain why, we just do.

Anne: Yes, and so I think the first step here is to really get clear in your mind: this is worth making time for. But, then there is the issue of OK, where is this time going to come from? And something I say all the time is you have more time than you think. Anytime you can pick up your phone to scroll Instagram, if you're reading the right book you could be reading on an app instead. It filled my heart with joy, Sarah, to hear you quote me on an episode of your podcast because I say all the time, "I never leave home without a book or a

snack." And if you have a book—how many times do we bemoan the delay at the doctor's office or the bank or (urgh, I waited so long at the bank the other day because I had to deposit a check that was written in pounds- that was sad)...

Sarah: What?

Anne: ... but, do you know how much reading I got done while I was waiting for them to figure out the paperwork? If I had not had a book with me I would have just been scrolling my phone. If we always have a book with us, if we read in the cracks, and if you can (I know some people, depending on your stage of life, this is really a stretch) but if you have a fifteen minute time some point during the day where you know, unless disaster strikes, this is my reading time, you can really get some momentum going in your reading life. Like, those little five and ten minute intervals turn into real chapters, they turn into actual books, and then you can cross something off your list or add it to your reading journal and feel like hey, I'm doing this thing and that feels really good.

Sarah: Yeah, I think there's a snowball effect because I've noticed if I use those ten or fifteen minute little pockets of time, (even five minutes pockets of time) while I'm waiting for the kettle to boil or waiting for the laundry to be done, or just sitting outside soccer practice waiting for that to finish up, or whatever, then I will pick up my book more often when I have a larger chunk of time. It's sort of like reading begets reading; the more you do it the more you want to do it.

18:51 Two types of readers

Anne: For those who want to read more I'd also like to share this way of looking at your reading life that Laura Vanderkam coined. She's a



productivity writer, her most recent book *Off the Clock* is a favorite of mine (highly recommended) so she shared this idea that there were two types of readers: supply side and demand side. So, I know this is economics and it doesn't sound super interesting but hang with me because it pays off. So, supply side readers have a supply of reading time. These are the people who are going to read no matter what and if there's no good material around then they will read the phone book. If that's you, you're a supply side reader, but demand side readers will only read if they feel like a book is begging for their attention. If there is something great that they want to read they can make the time appear. They will be ... I do this with audio books ... I will keep folding laundry and keep doing dishes and even clean my baseboards and the chandelier if I'm listening to a great audio book and I just want to get a few more minutes in, but if you're a demand side reader, if you know that you will only read if you have something great that you want to read then you need to make sure that your to-be-read stack is full or you're not going to read. And if you can understand I need good books first or I'm not even going to feel the inclination to read (because I think we tend to think about it the other direction), then you know what you need to do to keep that momentum going in your reading life.

20:10 Bookworm problems

Sarah: Oh, that's good. OK, so speaking of having a good list of books you know you want to read, have them handy, right? We're going to give some book recommendations in a minute but before we do I wanted to ask you, because you mentioned your book tour which is for your newest book called *I'd Rather Be Reading* which is a collection of short essays about the delights

and dilemmas of the reading life, and out of those essays was one of them in particular the most fun to write or the most challenging to write, or ?

Anne: Yes, this was a really fun collection to write (not that it didn't make me want to bang my head against the wall sometimes), but it was really fun to write. But, the most fun was probably the chapter on book worm problems, which I have so many accumulated over the years I really felt like it wrote itself. So, book worm problems are like (many of your readers are all too familiar with these) your library holds all come in at the same time but you've reached your limit on library checkouts, or you check out more library books than you can carry, or you take five books to the pool because you can't decide what to read next, or to the carpool like (I've done both), or you pack twelve books for a five-day vacation because running out of reading material is just not an option. So, these are the kinds of things I wanted to talk about is a little snarky but hopefully relatable to a lot of readers and it was really fun to put together.

21:23 Re-reading

Sarah: OK, so speaking of those essays you had one called, "Again, for the First Time" where you talk about re-readings. So, talk to me about re-reading. How often do you re-read? Why do you re-read? And do you ever get the feeling of 'I can't re-read—there are so many other books I haven't read yet?'

Anne: There are a lot of books I haven't read yet and I know that some people categorically do not re-read and say they never will for exactly that reason and I'm sympathetic to that, but there are a couple of reasons I really love to do it. First of all, a great book doesn't show you all its secrets.



The first time you're reading for plot, you're reading to find out what happens, what world am I in, who are these characters, what's going to happen next? But, when you pick it up the second time and you know what happens in the story you can pay attention to the detail and you can also pay attention to how the author unfolds the story. One of my very favorite books is *Crossing to Safety* by Wallace Stegner. I remember, vividly, my second experience of reading it. Now, I've read it six or seven. It used to be four or five but now I'm certain I'm past the half dozen mark, but the first time you open it up you have this group of four people; they're together, they're old, and something is happening, and you're just plunged into the middle of it, and you're really getting your bearings and trying to figure out who are they, why are we here, what's going on? But then in a series of flashbacks you find out who they are and how they ended up there and what they mean to each other and how it came to be that way. So, the second time I read this book I opened it up and I'm balling by page two because I know where we are and I know how we got there and I know what happened before and what it means to what's happening right now. And, it was such a different experience, and it couldn't have been more different. And, also I really appreciated having the outlines of the story in my head going in. I often don't remember a thing about how the author truly unfolded it so it's a different experience, it's really interesting, and you can really – oh, this sounds so nerdy – but you can really observe the craft in a way that is really fun for book nerds. If you don't know what's going to happen then there's no craft to observe you're just listening to a story and that's wonderful, there is nothing wrong with that, but it's a different kind of experience.

Sarah: So, it reminds me of a lot of Alan Jacobs' *The Pleasure of Reading in an Age of Distraction* (just grabbed it off my shelf so I could read the part I knew I had underlined in here) where he says, "Re-reading a book can often be a more significant, dramatic, and yes, new experience, than encountering an unfamiliar work." And, I think it's all those things you just talked about. It's like you see it on a deeper level, you see new things you never would have gotten the first time. I don't remember if he talks about it in this book or if I've read it somewhere else where oftentimes when we're reading a book for the first time our natural default is to read for plot, to answer the question what happens next? And when we read a book the second time we get to ask all these other questions or think about the beautiful language or see something they did with characters or just notice new things we didn't notice when our eyes were so fixed on the plot.

Anne: When we re-read we can also really notice how we've changed in the time between when we've read it before and when we're reading it now. Coming back to some books that I read in my teens or early twenties for the first time it's interesting how I understand things in a different way because I wasn't a parent when I read those things and my parents were much younger, I was much younger. I hadn't had the history with my husband I do now. I hadn't lost friends and I hadn't experienced so many things in life and then to read the book again through the prism of my own experience made it a really different experience, in a really wistful but also satisfying way.

Sarah: Yeah.

OK, let's give listeners some book recommendations. So, I had a fun idea for you. We're going to see if we can do this. I thought I



would name eight different categories, things like, historical fiction or page turner, things like that, and you and I could each name one book that we really enjoyed in that category. That way listeners can go, 'Oh, I really like mysteries.' Or, 'I really like classics.' Or, 'I'm really into non-fiction.' We'll have a couple of book ideas after this episode that they can put into that stack that they can set themselves up for a year of reading having great books on their nightstand and on their to-be-read shelf, and so that they know they always have something handy. Are you game?

Anne: Just one book?

Sarah: Well, I mean ish.

Anne: I am game. I am game.

25:12 Mysteries

Sarah: Let's start with a mystery novel.

Anne: How about *The Wife, the Maid, and the Mistress* by Ariel Lawhon, historical fiction set in New York City, 1930. It's based on the true, unsolved mystery of New York Supreme Court Judge who disappeared without a trace in the middle of the night and this is Ariel Lawhon's imagining of what really happened.

Sarah: Ooh, I've never heard of that one so I'm going to add that to my list. I was going to recommend kind of anything by Kate Morton. I love Kate Morton.

Anne: [laughter]

Sarah: I know. Listeners, can you tell that Anne and I have talked about Kate Morton before?

Anne: Yeah, that's funny because we had different reactions to her most recent book.

Sarah: We did have different reactions which I don't think is completely unusual because sometimes I'll see a book that you love and I think nope, that one just didn't do it for me, but I would recommend *The Lake House* by Kate Morton. I think that's a mystery novel that kept me turning pages and wanting to know how it was going to resolve. I think one of the things I like about her mystery novels (I heard somebody else say this so it's not my own thinking about it, but I thought that is it) but instead of trying to figure out who did it you're always trying to figure out why they did it even if you can kind of figure out who did whatever it was, you're trying to figure out what that motivation was, and that's something she's really good at creating suspense for.

Anne: Yes. And you know, that's one of the reasons I love talking books with you because a conversation that goes, "What did you think?" "I liked it." "I like it, too." That's not fun.

Sarah: Yeah, that's true.

Anne: But talking Kate Morton with you is ... well, the last book, because I do love her and I will read anything she writes going into the future, but we did have different opinions about this last one and that was a fun conversation. I don't think those two things are unrelated.

Sarah: Yeah, I agree. That was a fun one for me especially because I pre-ordered and forgot that I pre-ordered it or didn't notice that I pre-ordered it and forgot when it was being released but I went out to my mailbox and opened it and it was like I had a new Kate Morton novel. That is the best.

Anne: Just for you, from the universe.



27:47 Historical fiction

Sarah: Exactly. OK, let's pick a historical book now, historical fiction.

Anne: So, Susan Meissner is an author who is recommended reading for Kate Morton fans for sure and if some of the themes in Kate Morton feel a little too mature for some readers, Susan Meissner is a great place to go to. And I specifically want to recommend *A Fall of Marigolds*.

Sarah: That is the book I was going to recommend. I am not even kidding. So yes, my readers will love this book. OK.

Anne: And, who told you to read that one, Sarah?

Sarah: You did.

[laughter]

Sarah: OK, so it's another case of an author who we stick tales together (modern and historical stories together) and we read about Clara Wood who she has to sort out her life after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 and then Taryn Michaels, she's in modern day, she's trying to rebuild her life after losing her husband in the attack on the World Trade Center, and then those stories interweave and cross at some point. I loved it, I really loved it.

Anne: For those who love historical fiction, ooh, a fun fact, did you know, Sarah, that avid readers, those who read way more than the American average of like seven books a year tend to read heaps of historical fiction?

Sarah: I didn't know that.

Anne: This is a true thing. OK, for those who love historical fiction (which also means for those who

really love to read a lot, oftentimes), there's a new book out by Sarah McCoy, it came out in the fall of 2018, it's called *Marilla of Green Gables*. So, this is Marilla Cuthbert telling her story before she met Anne.

Sarah: Ooh.

Anne: I was nervous.

Sarah: Yeah!

Anne: I was nervous. And it does kind of go a direction I didn't quite expect but I felt I was in good hands and I really enjoyed it. I read it in two days.

29:25 Page-turners

Sarah: Alright. Let's go with page turners. What's a page turner that you'd recommend?

Anne: Oooh. Well, I feel like a page turner going any genre really. I don't really have a great twisty mystery to recommend. I kind of feel like those are a dime a dozen these days but I did love *I'll Be Your Blue Sky* by Marisa de los Santos. So, here's what I like about this book: it goes down really easy, it keeps you turning the pages. De los Santos is a poet by training and she has this way of using language in a way that is not at all flowery or self-conscious but you just feel she just knows what she's doing and you can settle in and relax and enjoy the story because you're going to like where she takes you. And you could start here. *I'll Be Your Blue Sky* is loosely connected, it has the same characters as her two previous books, *Love Walked In* was the first one and then *Belong to Me* was the second, and then she took a break from her not-quite series and just returned to those characters this spring. And those are just lovely people; you wished they'd



move in next door to you, they're that kind of character.

Sarah: OK, so I'm going to recommend a YA book. I don't know if you've read these, Anne. Have you read *The Ascendance Trilogy* by Jennifer Nielsen?

Anne: I have not.

Sarah: OK, it starts with *The False Prince*, and oh my gosh, I read the entire trilogy in like a week. I basically ignored all my laundry, all but feeding my children. It was the most page turning-ist page turner I have read in a very long time. I can't really talk about it too much without giving things away because it's that kind of book, but I think I recommend this book more often than anything else lately. So, the first one's *The False Prince* (and your teens would like it, too, so, you can read it first and then hand it to your teen).

31:06 Beautiful language

OK, how about – you talked about beautiful language with your last recommendation – so let's do a book recommendation with especially beautiful language.

Anne: I love Wendell Berry.

Sarah: That's what I have on my list, too.

Anne: Are you serious? I'll go with Marilyn Robinson. I really love her, too. It's hard to pick one I'd start with but maybe, I think *Gilead* is the cliché. You could totally start there. Start with *Gilead*. How's that?

Sarah: Can you believe I've never read anything by Marilyn Robinson? I've heard her recommended everywhere by people who talk about beautiful language, in fact, but I have never read any.

Anne: And, I feel like beautiful language can be a phrase that can turn a lot of people off because they think that means effusive or flowery, but what I mean is that her writing is very gentle and she's very careful with her words and she has this gift, and this is what she shares with Wendell Berry, so I totally see why people are recommending her to you all the time because if you love Wendell Berry you should definitely pick up some Marilyn Robinson, but she can write about ordinary events like coming in the door at the end of a long day and infuse them with the significance of the entire universe, and I really admire them.

Sarah: Are they paced the same about as Berry, because I find I enjoy Wendell Berry, I do find his books are generally slower than I prefer for my plots to be so I read them for a different reason. Are they the same pacing, do you think?

Anne: The pacing is gentle.

Sarah: Gentle's a good word for it.

Anne: These are not "I can't go to bed until I find out what happens next" kind of books.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah. When I'm reading Wendell Berry I find myself breathing a little slower, just sort of luxuriating in the language. I don't find myself reading really fast. Sometimes I'll just stay with a sentence and find myself staring out the window or reading it again and again because it's so beautiful, but I recently finished *Jayber Crow*. I have read before *Hannah Coulter*, and my favorite, probably actually, is *Watch with Me*. Those are all three that I've read from Wendell Berry. I haven't read any others. But, what do you think, I'm not really sure where people start with Wendell Berry, where do you think would be a good starting place?



Anne: Well, generally with a series like this I always recommend people start with my favorites which are the ones you've read, *Hannah Coulter* and *Jayber Crow*.

33:04 Fast books

Sarah: What's a short or fast book that you'd recommend?

Anne: If your readers haven't read *The Quotidian Mysteries*. The subtitle is *Laundry, Liturgy, and Women's Work* I think they'll really enjoy it. So, this is really short. It's 88 pages, but what she does is reflects the more mundane tasks that consume our everyday lives, like the cooking and the cleaning and the dishes and the diapering and talks about why they matter so much to the world, to our bodies, to our brains, to our rhythms of being. It's so validating and spiritual in a really refreshing, even empowering way. So good.

Sarah: I just looked it up to see if I recognized it because it kind of sounds familiar but maybe not ...

Anne: Probably because I've talked about it ...

Sarah: OK.

Anne: ... for ten years now.

Sarah: OK, I'm waffling over what to recommend. So, I'm going to recommend both because I can't pick. The one I originally was going to recommend is called *Mitten Strings for God* by Katrina Kenison, it's a collection of essays from *Mothers in a Hurry*. I cannot tell you how much I loved these essays when I first read them, probably a decade ago, maybe a little longer. I still love it. It's one of those books that you can read the whole thing start to finish or you can just pick an essay, read it, and put the book aside for

awhile. I love it because you can read a whole chapter before bed and I feel like I love motherhood and I see the beauty in my everyday kind of life more clearly after I read something from it. So, that's *Mitten Strings for God*, but another book that just popped to my head that I thought that's short and I love to read it and re-read it and re-read it is *Gift from the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, which probably a lot of people have heard of, but it's a book that you can re-read and re-read again and again, is another short book that helps you see the beauty and magic of your everyday existence.

34:41 A series

Let's go to series. What are some series you can't stop reading?

Anne: I love the Louise Penny Mysteries set in Three Pines, the fictional small adorable city that I now desperately want to move to in Quebec. Now, she has something like fourteen books out and I'm sorry to say you really ought to start at the beginning, and book one is slow, it's more Wendell Berry paced. In book two and three (these are murder mysteries) the murders kind of weird, and in book four the series really hits its stride and from there it's just one long adventure in turning the pages. If these are a little much for you I also really, really love the fun page turnery, kind of, YA series *The Luna Chronicles*. These are fairytales with a twist but the cover of the first one is kind of cool but mostly it made me not want to read the book so I needed heaps of readers I trusted saying, no really, get over it, pick this up, we think you're really going to love it, and I did.

Sarah: I'm not a big series person so I, kind of, tend to get a little bored and I definitely can't



binge on a series so even if I like one I'll read them spaced out. The one I want to recommend is *The Number One Ladies Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith. This is the series I said at the beginning of this episode I don't know why I love them so much but I mean, I love them! I read every single one. I like them on audio best because I think Lisette Lecat does a brilliant job narrating. It just adds a different kind of depth. First of all, I wouldn't know how to pronounce a lot of the names if she didn't do it for me. I also have become a dedicated Red Bush tea drinker since starting this series.

Anne: Oh, that's hilarious.

Sarah: And really, they're mysteries but they're slower paced. They're not riveting. There's just a lot of – I love the main character Mma Ramotswe. I love her ponderings on life, her musings on life. I feel like there's a lot I would copy into my reading journal if I was reading them in paper instead of listening to them on audio.

36:32 A classic

OK, let's do a classic that still delights.

Anne: I have to go with *Emma*.

Sarah: I've not read it. Can you believe that? I haven't read it.

Anne: Wait. Hold on, don't we have you on the record with me also confessing to never reading *Pride and Prejudice*? This is a theme. Have me back and I'll keep pouncing new Jane Austen titles on you.

Sarah: I have read *Pride and Prejudice* since then though, but I haven't read *Emma* so that'll be next up, I guess.

Anne: I really like *Emma*.

Sarah: I was going to mention G.K. Chesterton because I'm a little in love with G.K. Chesterton. I loved *Orthodoxy* (that's the one I hear recommended most) or *The Father Brown Mysteries* but my favorite is actually a collection of essays. They're funny essays and the collection is called *Tremendous Trifles* and I just love them.

37:21 Non-fiction

OK, last category, non-fiction.

Anne: There's so much here.

Sarah: I know. That's kind of an unfair category, isn't it?

Anne: OK, in two directions, recently I've been loving Danny Shapiro's work. I love her memoirs best. She has one coming out later this month called *Inheritance* that I devoured. Before that my favorite is called *Hour Glass* and it's about time, memory, and marriage. But on a different take, and recently re-read, Eleanor Roosevelt's terrific book, *You Learn by Living*. I used to think of her as this dry, dusty woman of history but she wrote this in her seventies and she still has spunk and spark and she's so smart and it's really incredible to me how fresh and wise her insight seems today even though she wrote them in the sixties and even though she grew up in a totally different world.

Sarah: Hey, you recommended that book to me and I loved it so much it went into my recommendations for teens in *The Read-Aloud Family* because I agree. I was surprised by how much I loved that book.

Anne: I'm happy to hear it.

Sarah: Another one I was surprised I read recently is *Creativity, Inc.* by Ed Catmull.



Anne: Oh yeah.

Sarah: It tells the story of the creation of the company, Pixar, and the subtitle is called *Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration*. I thought I'd like it but I loved it. And I copied a lot of passages into my reading journal about the creative process and overcoming fear and taking risks in our life and work. I was really surprised at how much I kept talking about that book after I finished reading it.

Anne: You know what I really remember about that book? Is the careful placement of the bathrooms at Pixar and why it mattered.

Sarah: I love it when you just remember something random like that. It's like what sticks in your mind. That is the thing that that book recommends.

Anne: It's not random. It's totally strategic, Sarah.

Sarah: That's true, it's true.

Listeners, if you want to connect with Anne, you can go to the Show Notes at ReadAloudRevival.com/119. You can find all the books we just recommended in a great big list as well as links to Anne's podcast. And you can always go straight to the source to get her book recommendations and all kinds of good reader-ly tips and ideas at ModernMrsDarcy.com. Anne, thanks for coming on the Show.

Anne: Thanks for having me.

39:38 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 Garrett and I am 11 years old. I live in Litchfield, Illinois and my favorite book is *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. I like it because it's a survival story and it's full of adventure.

Child2: Hi, my name is Evelyn. I'm 10 years old. I live in Litchfield, Illinois. My favorite book is *Amy Carmichael: Rescuer of Precious Gems* by Janet Benge. The story has inspired me and I hope to one day follow in her footsteps.

Child3: My name is Audie and I am 8 years old. I live in Litchfield, Illinois. My favorite book that my mom has read to me is *The Boxcar Children* by Gertrude Chandler Warner. I love it because it's full of adventure.

Child4: Hi, my name is Augustus and I am 7 years old. I live in Litchfield, Illinois. My favorite book is that my mom has read to me is *The Penderwicks*. I love the first one and I can't wait to hear the other four.

Child5: My name is Bonnie. I am 5. I live at Illinois. [Mom: and what's your favorite book that I read to you?] *The Monster at the End of the Book*. [Mom: and why is it your favorite?] Because he says, "Don't turn the page," and he says, "There's a monster at the end, don't turn the page." [Mom: but do you turn the page anyway?] Yeah. [Mom: yeah. And then what happens?] At the end of the book he said, "It's just me, no monster."

Child6: [mom: what's your name?] Eleanor. [Mom: and how old are you?] 4. [Mom: and where do you live?] Illinois. [Mom: and what's your favorite book?] *Fancy Nancy and the ...* [Mom: ... *Wedding of the Century*.] *Wedding of the Century*. [Mom: and why is it your favorite?] Because it's a wedding. [Mom: because it's a wedding.]

Child7: Hi, my name is Rachel. I am 5 years old. I live in Virginia. My favorite book is *Christmas in the Big Woods*. What I like about it is all the stuff they make look and sounds yummy.

Child8: My name is Sydney. I am 6. I live in England, in Sheffield. My favorite book is *Five Run Away Together* by Enid Blyton. I like it because it's full of [****inaudible****].

Child9: My name is Sophie. I am 8 years old. I live in Sheffield, England. My favorite book is *Naughtiest Girl Again* by Enid Blyton. I like it because it's full of problems at school and they always find solutions to the problems.

Child10: Hi, my name is Kaman. I'm 6. And I'm from Alabama. And, my favorite book is *Little House on the Prairie*. And my favorite part is when they build a house.

Child11: Hello, my name is Karen. I like *World Moon-Pie* and my favorite part is when the moon said 'fruit flies.' I live in Alabama. My name is Karen and I'm 4. [Mom: and that book is called, *Jimmy Zangwow's Out-of-this-World Moon-Pie Adventure*.]

Sarah: Alright, thanks so much, kids. Hey, your kids can leave a message for the Read-Aloud Revival podcast by going to ReadAloudRevival.com, scrolling to the bottom of the page and leaving a message right there. I'd love to hear from them. We play every message in the order they're received. Don't forget to sign up for our free Read-Aloud Challenge. You can sign up at any point in the month but, of course, you'll get the best results if you sign up today. That's RAR31days.com. So, one thing that's new for 2019 is that instead of putting up new episodes every week and then taking big chunks of time off like we've been doing we're going to start posting every other week around the year

instead. So, if you've been around long you know that we usually do two months on, one month off, two months on where we have a new podcast every week and then a whole month off. But instead, in 2019, you can expect a new episode of the podcast to drop into your ears every other Tuesday all year round instead. So, I'll be back in two weeks and we're going to talk about how to focus on what matters most in your new year. Until then, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.