

RAR 123 – A Family Story for Easter with special guest: Arnold Ytreeide

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. This is episode 123 of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. Glad to have you with me today. I'm very excited to introduce you to the author of some books that I just love. Today's guest is Arnold Itride, and the book that we're going to be talking about is perfect to read-aloud these coming days leading into Easter. Before we get to the episode, though, I'm going to answer a question from one of our Read-Aloud Revival listeners, Jaime.

1:01 Reading above a child's ability

Jaime: I just read The Read-Aloud Revival and was super inspired and immediately started implementing many of your suggestions, but I ran into some questions. One of which is about choosing age-appropriate read-alouds. I have three children ages 5, 2, and 7 months, and one part of your books said that it's OK to read things that are above their reading level because they pick things up anyways, and it's good to read classical literature and things with language that may be above them, but then another part of your book said to really keep in mind age-appropriate read-alouds. So, I wasn't sure how much ahead, if at all, I really should be choosing for read-alouds? Another question would be what do you do if your child says, "Oh, I don't want to read that," and know that part of your premise is

to keep reading fun and to instill a love of reading, so do I read just what they want to read or do I insist on reading things that I've chosen for them?

Sarah: Jaime, I'm so glad you asked this question. OK, so let's talk about reading above a child's ability. A child's listening comprehension is pretty much always above their reading comprehension. What that means is that a child who cannot read *Little House on the Prairie*, for example, is very likely to listen and understand *Little House on the Prairie*, and because so many of the best books for kids are not at a beginning reader's level, you know, the cat sat on the mat, or whatever books your child is using to learn to read, especially before a child is reading fluently on their own, we want to be reading them books that are above their own reading level. This, of course, includes picture books. Picture books are written above a beginner's reading level, but it also includes wonderful novels like, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, or *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and you know, countless other wonderful books. So, an argument for reading above your child's own reading level is that they can understand much that they cannot read on their own yet, and that some of the best books, in fact, probably the best books for kids, are usually written above a beginner reader's level. I might just say always. Always written above a beginner's reader level. Now, you don't necessarily want to read *Little House* to a 2 year old, right? They'll probably enjoy listening to your voice and hearing the beautiful language, but the story is going to be above their listening comprehension ability, so they won't really understand what's happening in the story. So, as you're reading aloud books to your kids just be sure that you're reading books they can follow—

that doesn't mean they need to be able to read them from the page themselves, they just need to be able to understand it as you're reading it aloud. All that to say, I also don't want you to worry about reading books that are beneath your child's reading level. You want to keep reading books aloud if your kids love them, even if your child has surpassed that reading level. So, while it's important to read above your child's reading comprehension when they're just learning how to read—you're reading at their listening comprehension but you're reading books that they would not be able to read on their own but that they can absolutely understand, that beautiful language is secondary to your child falling in love with the story and connecting with you. So they have to be able to understand what's happening in the story for that connection to take place. For the connection with you, and the connection with the ideas in the story to happen, they have to get what's going on. And then, of course, you want to watch out for age-appropriate content. That has nothing to do with reading ability and is all about making sure that the stories you're telling your kids and that you're reading to your children they're ready to hear, because some stories are better suited for older kids that deal with more mature themes and so just because your child can understand a story about the holocaust does not mean that your 8 year old is ready for a story about the holocaust.

4:54 Kids don't want to listen to a book?

Now, the second part of your question was what to do if your kids don't want to listen to a certain book. And, I think it depends on the situation. If most of my kids aren't enjoying a book I'm reading aloud, even if it's a book everybody raves

about or that's on all the best book lists, I ditch it. Really, there are too many wonderful books out there and we want our read-aloud experiences to be infused with love and warmth and happy memories. So, I would say that the first and most important part of reading aloud is connection. So, if you have a child who just detests whatever you're reading, you know, who groans when it's read-aloud time and begs you to quit, you may want to choose something else. We never want read-aloud time to feel like a chore or a school assignment. We actually want the opposite of that. I hope that answers your question, Jaime. Thank you again for leaving it. Hey, if you have a question you'd like me to answer on an upcoming episode of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast, head to ReadAloudRevival.com, scroll to the bottom of the page and look for the button "Got a question for Sarah Mackenzie?" and just leave your voice message there. I'd love to hear your question and possibly answer it on an upcoming episode of the podcast.

6:16 An Easter story

You may have heard me rave about the Christmas series by Arnold Ytreeide including Jotham's Journey, Bartholomew's Passage, Tabitha's Travels, and Ishtar's Odyssey. Those are intertwining adventures. They're set in the world in to which Jesus was born, and today we're going to talk about a book by the same author, Arnold Ytreeide. This one is called Amon's Adventure, and it's Arnold Ytreeide's Easter story. Amon's Adventure is about 13 year old, Amon, who enjoys playing with his friends but he's also ready to join his father in the Temple court where only men are allowed. And he's eager to be considered a man, so Amon struggles to divide his time between his friends and his duties to his



family and his faith, but then his father is accused of a terrible crime and so Amon willingly sacrifices his childhood ways in order to save his father's life. And along the way, he sees the jubilant crowds that gather on Palm Sunday, he outwits the Roman soldiers that plan to kill both his father and Jesus, and he hears the Messiah address the angry crowds. He's present during the daring betrayal of Judas Iscariot and he witnesses the ultimate sacrifice made on Good Friday. This is a powerful adventure story that is going to help your family make Lent and your preparations for Easter very meaningful and transformational. So, before I bring Arnold Ytreeide on, actually, I want to read a little something from the very, very beginning of Amon's Adventure. This is a note to parents and teachers. I think it will orient you toward what these books can do in your family.

7:57 A story of ultimate love

"No matter how you look at it, the Easter story is a tough story for kids. In the final analysis, it is a positive story, of course—a story of ultimate love. In fact, it's the most positive event ever written about. But before we can arrive at that end, we must endure the means God used to get us there: a betrayal, an arrest, a beating ... and the cruelest of deaths.

The resurrection of Jesus is the catharsis to the story—the place where all our pain and grief and anger are firmly resolved into complete victory over all that is unfair and unjust. But the journey to get to that point can be mighty painful. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John make us fall in love with Jesus. And then he's murdered.

It's just a tough story for kids.

But it's a true story, and a story full of truth, so it's a story kids need to understand. When I sat down to write this book, I struggled with how to present the story of Jesus for a wide range of ages, in a way that would inform but not traumatize children. My answer to that dilemma is Amon's Adventure.

Stories are built on drama, though, and drama is based in conflict and sometimes conflict is upsetting to children. While there is no graphic violence "on screen" in this story, the plot does lead us through some very scary territory. So if you have a child who is very young or particularly sensitive, I urge you to pre-read each chapter and leave out any parts you feel would be too frightening to him or her.

Still, Amon's Adventure is a story with meaning at many levels—more, probably, than even I am aware of. It is my prayer that your children—and you—will find a new and deeper understanding of God as you explore together the most obvious demonstration of His love."

9:46 Meet Arnold Ytreeide

OK, so now you know why I'm so eager to bring Arnold Ytreeide onto the podcast. I love this book! In fact, I have loved every one of the Christmas books and this Lent book by Arnold Ytreeide. Today we're going to talk to him about his book set in Jesus time. He's a former youth pastor, police officer, and television producer, and now he spends his time teaching film at a Christian University in Idaho, and writing books (lucky for us), he's got a couple of grown kids, and four granddaughters. He's got a degree in Theology, and he's got a heart for bringing compelling can't-put-it-down adventures into the

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hands of kids. Arnie, welcome to the Read-Aloud Revival. I am delighted that you're here.

Arnold: And I am delighted to be here. Thank you so much. And I should mention here four granddaughters and now a brand new grandson.

Sarah: Oh, congratulations!

Arnold: Thank you.

Sarah: Well, our family loves your books. They are our go-to's every Advent and every Lent. I can't tell you—we have read Jotham's Journey several times. We've read Bartholomew's ... we've read all of them. Some of them more than once. I am constantly amazed when I'm reading how you've managed to write stories that are really compelling, they're page turners, they're page-turning adventure tales, but they're so deep and rich with meaning. Every time I read them I see something new, which I think is really a tell-tale sign of an excellent book.

Arnold: Well, thank you. I have to attribute that to a great God who can take the biggest of fools and make from them something good.

Sarah: Oh! Let's start by talking about where the first seed of these stories came from. Now, Jotham's Journey was the first one you wrote, was that right?

11:17 How Arnie began writing books for children

Arnold: Yes, yes. That was over twenty years ago now, and I was dating a widow who had two young children, and we'd been dating for about a year, and getting pretty serious, and she told me one day in the fall of 1995 that their tradition had always been to do something for Advent but she couldn't find anything in the bookstores that year, and she asked if I'd like to write something

(because she knew I was a writer). And I said, "Sure, I'll just write a little pamphlet, kind of thing, for the kids," and so, I sat down to write something, and there's kind of a long story about how it actually came to be, but I finally started writing, and I started writing Jotham, and he started doing thing, and I just had to follow him around, and pretty soon, I had a chapter and then another chapter and another, and it just kept building. And I wrote one chapter a day for the 27 days (or whatever Advent was that year) until we had a whole story, and each night I'd read the chapter to the kids and, of course, they'd always beg, "Oh please read just a little bit more," and I'd say, "No, no, we have to be patient." And they, of course, didn't know I hadn't written the next chapter yet...

Sarah: I was just going to ask you that.

Arnold: So, I remember one night we were flying to Seattle to see my parents, and I was writing it on the plane so that I could read it when we got there.

Sarah: Oh my goodness.

Arnold: So, it was a story for my kids at that point, even though we weren't formally married, we were a family, very much a family, and they were my kids and Elsie and I were falling in love and I fell in love with them, and so I just wrote this out of love for my kids. No intention of ever having it published or anything, it was just for them.

Sarah: Oh, my goodness. I'm finding that that's a theme among some of my favorite writers. I know S.D. Smith who wrote The Green Ember wrote that story for his children as a bedtime. He just told it to them as a bedtime tale. And I wonder if the seeds to some of those best stories really just



are born out of that love to share story with people and children that you love.

Arnold: I truly believe they are. I'd been writing for years before that and I had some success but nothing really ever just took off, and then when I wrote not to try to sell it, that's when it happened. And I didn't even try to sell it after that. A publisher somehow found out about it and called me and said I heard you have this story... so I sent it to them and they said we want to publish it. So, we were off and running.

Sarah: That's amazing. Now, obviously you didn't know there were going to be sequels?

Arnold: No, I did not.

Sarah: And what I want our listeners to know about the other stories is that they're all standalones. You could read any of the Christmas books, for example, there's four of them, you could read any of them. They all intertwine so you're going to recognize characters and your kids are going to go, 'Oh, that's Tabitha,' or 'That's Bartholomew,' they'll remember that as they're reading along but you can read them in any order. I really like reading them in the order that you published them which is Jotham, Bartholomew, Tabitha, Ishtar. But, of course, you can read them in any order. Now, when did Amon, the Easter story, get written in the mix of the others?

14:21 Amon is born

Arnold: That was fourth, I think. So there was Jotham, Bartholomew, Tabitha—that the publisher asked me to write more after several years and that's when Bartholomew came along, and Tabitha, and then they said they'd really like one for Easter, and I hadn't even thought about that, so I thought wouldn't it be fun if Jotham and

Tabitha got married and had a son and thirty years later he's there for Easter, so that's where Amon came from.

15:33 Pacing reading during Lent

Sarah: Now, we're just about that time of year where we're tip-toeing to Lent in preparation of Easter and this is a story families can read all throughout. I know you have some recommended reading schedules toward the beginning of the book. I know some families read a chapter a night during Lent. I'm never organized enough of a parent to read something every single day to my kids, so for the listener sake, I want you to know this: I tend to read a couple of chapters every few days or even once a week, I'll read a bunch and we'll get caught up—there's no right or wrong way to read this story. It's a really beautiful story to share any time of year, it's just especially poignant to read during Lent. But, could you tell me a little bit, Arnie, about the pacing of Amon's adventure?

Arnold: Well, the Advent books were designed to be read one chapter per night, and of course, sometimes we don't get to that—we have something we have to do, so we catch up the next night, but when it came to Amon and then the Easter story, I realized that in most traditions at Lent is forty days long and to read a chapter a night for forty nights that just seems like a huge task.

Sarah: It's a big commitment, right?

Arnold: Yeah, a huge commitment, but also, seems like it's going to get a bit tedious, and so we (the publisher and I) struggled and struggled with how to format this, and I finally decided well, let's deal with twenty-eight chapters, and let people read them at their own pace. Give them

some breathing room. In some tradition they wouldn't even be allowed to read on, say, a Sunday night, so we thought it doesn't have to be a chapter a night. And so it's really written in short chapters like the Advent books, mostly short chapters where you could read two or three in a night and be just fine, and not have to read every single night.

16:48 The research process

Sarah: Can you tell me about research? What did that look like?

Arnold: Oh, I love research. That's one of my favorite parts of the process is the research. When you write a contemporary, but I write a series of Christian books for preteen boys, and those are all set in the present, so I can just sit down and write those—talking about how to use a cell phone, and all that, but when you start writing anything period, it takes a lot of research because you'd be amazed how many details there are that you have to find out the truth of. What kind of fabric were on the couches? Did they have couches? You know, what kind of animals did they have? How did they interact? And on and on and on and on. And so research is really one of my favorite parts. It actually started back in 1980 when I was a police officer. I was single and I rarely took vacation, so I had a lot of vacation, and my pastor called up and said, "Hey, I'm going to Israel next week, you want to go?" And I said, "Sure." I had the freedom to do that. So, I took a week off work and we went to Israel on a tour group for pastors. And so, I got to be in the Holy Land and walk the places that Jesus had walked and smell the smells that he smelled and taste the taste that he tasted, and it was just an amazing experience. And so that's really where the root of all the research came from—

was me just being in that environment and taking it in and seeing how things work and what things are like there. When it came down to writing these specific books, it just takes a lot of research in what used to be, mostly in libraries when this was written, of course, today we could do some on the internet (usually not quite as in depth), but I bought every book I could find on the life and times of Jesus and what it was like to live in those times. As I was writing I would come up with an idea or I'd say "And Jotham stopped and played a game," or "Amon stopped and did this," and I'd have to go research. Well, what kind of game did they play? Did they play games? So, a tremendous amount of research in it, and that's what I just love, I love finding out how people lived. I think part of me wanted to be an archaeologist, so that's really a fun part of it and an important part, but in that process I also discovered and realized at some point, I think when I was writing Jotham, that all those books and all that knowledge is really not very detailed or in-depth or knowledgeable because we just can't know a lot of it. So, the books are written as a generalization, kind of. So if we were going to write a book what was life in America in 2019, well, you know, kids are like this and adults work at these kinds of jobs, but that's a big generalization. If you look at any individual American that's not who I am. I live a very different life from everybody else. And so there is room there, I realized, to ... a little bit of wiggle room to invent some things and suppose some things. And so my rule became as long as something is plausible I don't care that I have absolute factual information that had happened or was that way, as long as it was plausible. And so that's where I then I think my writing really took off in the details. I could, kind of, place onto the historical other eras, including today. The first

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four books about 10 year olds, and Amon is about a 13 year old, and I really struggled for a long time with what did a 10 year old act like in Bible times, in Jesus' times? And I researched and researched and researched and could not find any kind of answer to that question. How do I know how to write a 10 year old? And then suddenly it dawned on me one day because I've traveled all over the world in my TV work (I've been in many, many different cultures) and it dawned on me one day a 10 year old in Hungary (or Czechoslovakia at that time) acts exactly the same way as a 10 year old in America. Ten year old brains, brains develop in the same way no matter when it is, 10 year old is at a certain stage of development and sees the world in a certain way no matter what culture, and of course, there are cultural overtones to that, but at its foundation a 10 year old brain's a 10 year old brain and they act about the same. So that's when I could really let go and just have some fun and then say this kid's a 10 year old or a 13 year old, and this is how he's thinking, so.

Sarah: I love that because it really makes the characters relatable. I know as I'm reading these books to my kids and they will laugh out loud, so many times, they will just like burst out laughing, and I think it's because they feel that the characters whether it's Jotham or Amon or Bartholomew or Tabitha or Ishtar, they feel like these kids are just like their friends, like their pals, or just like them in a lot of ways. And then I also think what that does for me as a reader, and probably for my kids as well, is it helps me see ... so I guess as someone who's been a lifelong Christian whose parents read Bible stories to her as long as I can remember, sometimes I fall into this terrible habit, that I'm sure a lot of us do of hearing the stories and you just hear them go and

go "Yeah, yeah, yeah." You know, like I've heard this story a million times, and so you kind of lose some of the ... magic's not the right word, but some of the mystical elements of the story or realize this is amazing this whole Jesus turning water into wine bit, is kind of a big deal, but we hear it so often it becomes almost just like a hum in the background. Does that make any sense?

Arnold: Yes.

Sarah: It loses its majesty. So one of the things that I appreciate about your books (the longest way possible for me to say this) but one of the things I appreciate your books is they help me see stories I've heard a million times before totally afresh, like put myself in the story, I'm right there while it's happening, and I see new things about the stories of Christ's birth and of his death and resurrection in a way I've never seen them before.

22:40 The characters take off

Arnold: And that's the excitement of story-writing for me because, for the most part, you know, I don't think about that ahead of time, the characters just start taking off and doing things and seeing things and I'm writing about it, and say, "Oh, wow, that's really cool. I didn't know that."

Sarah: Now, have you always been a writer?

Arnold: Yes. Yes. I wrote my first story, I think when I was 10. I started my first book when I was 12, but after a chapter my mother tore it up and threw it away because it was all about our family. All, ALL, about our family.

Sarah: Right, right.

Arnold: Made my first film when I was 10. And by the time I was in high school, I saw the impact of



Storytelling on people. Instead of writing a report for my history class I made a film and showed the film in class and the lights came on and the teacher was sitting there just bawling and that's not too amazing except that the teacher was also the football coach and one of the meanest guys around.

Sarah: Woah.

Arnold: That's when I realized this is what I want to do for a living. I want to tell stories because they have such power.

23:51 The power of stories to shape faith

Sarah: Well, I want to talk about that actually, that transformative power of story, that power that story has because I think we know instinctively that stories meet us in a place that lessons or didactic, you know, lectures (or whatever) can't, but I'd love to hear from you any thoughts you have on how reading stories like Amon's Adventure or any story really can shape a child's faith.

Arnold: I think it's obvious to most of us that reading is important and reading aloud is just a given in our family. We read aloud to our grandchildren now, every day, every single day, and their parents do. Stories and reading to kids have such a power to lay a foundation for them on what to think, how to think, to a certain degree what to believe but, at least what possibilities of believing are out there, and for us to read a story to a child, or stories over the course of time, builds up that foundation for them. I don't think we can look at it like I'm pouring my beliefs into their head, telling them what to believe, shaping them to believe exactly what I believe, but at least showing them what I believe and what the

possibilities out there, because they're going to be fed possible lots of possibilities from lots of different sources, stories of every kind from every direction. If we don't fill their brains with some of the good stories and then the stories that we think have value, and teach good lessons and ethics and morals, but of course, also religious lessons, if we don't have those in there then they don't have those to draw on when they're faced with other stories, and trying to decide what it is that they're going to believe for their lives. So, it's such an important foundational thing and from day one, we start reading to our kids and now our grandkids, every single day just about (unless it's just not possible). And we, of course, don't just read Christian stories, we read good stories with a good lesson, a good moral to them, but of course a lot of what we read are Christian education as well.

Sarah: Well, that's something I actually really love about just the power of story itself is even if a story is not overtly Christian because God is the author of our story it ends up being, I just feel like all these stories have the power to meet us in this greater story that we're a part of and help us see God in a fresh way.

Arnold: Absolutely. And my wife's favorite movie, favorite Christian movie, is "Seabiscuit" because it takes three very broken lives and they find redemption at the end and she sees it as such a great metaphor for the Christian story.

Sarah: I have never seen it but it is going to the top of my queue.

Arnold: It is one of our favorites and at the end of the story there's such hope in it and such an amazing transformation. And, so I agree with you that that just positive stories are very valuable to



kids and, of course, stories like the ones I wrote for my kids also can help teach a lesson.

25:54 A sense of hope

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. And I think a word that just jumped out at me, that you just said, was hope there because I know I've talked about this before on the podcast that all really good stories for children do leave our children with a sense of hope, and I think that's why now that you say it that way, I'm sort of making a connection in my mind, that stories have this profound effect on our faith life because we are a people of hope, and so if the stories are nurturing that sense of hope then we our faith life grows stronger, although ...

Arnold: And stories can be such good safe examples to kids of people going through very tough situations, very tough times and the hope that can light at the end of that, no matter what the circumstances, there's even some research going on now and some evidence that's that the story structure is built into us and that's how we respond to the world in a story structure fashion, people respond. The example I give to my students is (when I'm trying to explain the power of story to them), the example I give is just think about Sunday morning when you're sitting and listening to the sermon and then all of a sudden the pastor says, "Let me tell you a story," and oh, now I'm going to listen.

Sarah: Yes.

Arnold: Now you have my attention.

Sarah: Yeah.

Arnold: And story is used in advertising, it's used in sports games when we're watching the NFL football, they're telling a story. They're not just

showing a game, they're telling a story because we, as human beings, are built on story. Jesus worked with story all the time in all different fashions. That's how we're built. It's just story is a part of who we are.

Sarah: Yeah, we crave them, right? So much that it's a habit for us to look for a bedtime story. That's why we turn the TV on at night because we're looking for somebody to tell us a story, right? Okay. So, would you be up to reading a little bit from the beginning?

Arnold: Oh, sure.

Sarah: I would love you to read. So, listeners, Arnie's going to read from chapter 1 of Amon's Adventure. Again, this is the Easter tale, so this is the story that would be really wonderful to get your hands on as we tiptoe toward Lent and ever closer to Easter Sunday.

29:06 A reading from 'Amon' ...

Arnold: "A shadow moved across the stone wall of the stable. Amon sucked in his breath and tried to steady his heart. The shadow could mean only one thing. The notorious thief, Benjamin, was just around the corner on the other side of the wall having tracked Amon through the rabble of the marketplace. At 13 Amon had seen many such thieves pass through Jerusalem but none so treacherous as the scoundrel, Benjamin. Amon raised his sword high overhead, sweat trickled down his cheek, and he silently wiped it against the scratchy cloth of his tunic. In moments Benjamin would burst through the archway that separated the stable in which Amon hid from the stall of the cheese cellar on the other side. Amon's eyes darted around the stable, across the piles of hay, up to the sagging rafters, and over to the window. As always it took Amon only



seconds to devise a plan. He slowly lowered his sword. Ignoring the fear that begged him to scurry under the hay and hide, Amon kept one eye on the archway and one hand on his sword. Watching for rats as he moved he silently reached behind him and untied the donkey tethered there. Then he slipped a pomegranate from his tunic and held it under the donkey's nose. The donkey reached for the fruit as his lips stretched back and teeth bared, but Amon denied him the treat. Instead, he tossed the fruit across the stable into the hay on the other side. Obediently the donkey waddled across the hay-covered floor toward his surprise. As he did so he passed through a shaft of light streaming through the high window causing a shadow to fall across the archway. A loud scream filled the stable and Benjamin, the thief, plunged to the doorway, his sword raised high. Benjamin attacked the shadow thinking it to be Amon. Before the thief realized his mistake, Amon let out his own shout. With a mighty swing of his sword, he swatted the bandit across the behind with a smack that almost broke the Juniper branch in half. Benjamin jumped, spun around, screamed, and dropped his own Juniper Branch all at the same time. "Ow," he cried, "that hurt." Amon fell into the hay laughing. Well, that's the point isn't it? Benjamin fell into the hay next to his friend and started laughing as well. "I suppose so," he said, "but you could lose once in a while too, you know." "I can't lose," Amon said in mocked pride. "I am the prince of Jerusalem. I must always win." "Oh, yeah," Benjamin answered, "then how come you win even you're the thief and I'm the Prince?" Amon shrugged and said with a simple sadness, "Sometimes, the thieves really do win." "You boys there," a deep voice roared from the archway, "this is no place to play, this is a place for serious work, now get on home and do your

chores." Amon laughed at the gruff face of the cheese seller, "You know full-well, Josiah, that if you weren't so busy, you'd be playing princes and thieves to yourself." "I would do no such thing," the cheese seller roared, but then he broke into a grin, and added, "I'd be playing King's Ransom of anything." They all laughed, then Josiah went back to his cheese selling, and Amon tied up the donkey. As Amon and Benjamin walked out through their friend's stall, Josiah tossed them each a taste of cheese and waved goodbye. Amon loved living in Jerusalem. His parents had moved here when he was 5 in order to find him the best possible teacher for his Torah lessons. That was eight years ago. Eight years to learn every alley and cistern and tunnel and crooked street in the great City, and they walk toward home ... (I'm going to skip ahead here just a bit) and Amon sees the temple and is called, in his heart, to go there to worship again as he's allowed to now that he's 13 and been declared a man. So, he goes to the court of Israel, which is the inner part where only the men can go. Of course being just a common Jew Amon could go no further; only the priests and Levites could actually enter the temple. Anyone else who tried, anyone who actually saw God inside, would die instantly. But still, to be this close to God and in the company of many other Jewish men who stood around debating the law or praying or offering sacrifices was a thrill that always made his heart sing. On his first visit here, Amon had brought with him the lamb as a sacrifice for his sins. Today, he had only prayers to offer. These he said slowly and deliberately. Once again, asking God for the wisdom of a man, and the knowledge of a priest. It was in the middle of these prayers, and amidst the noise of a thousand other men saying their own, and the clamor of sacrifices being made in the altar's

above that Amon first saw him – a thin man with a crooked nose and big dark eyebrows. Three times during Amon’s prayers when he’d happened to look up at the altars at the top of the stairs, he caught the strange man staring at him. Each time their eyes met a chill went down Amon’s spine. It made him feel like he was a child alone in a dark and scary place. The temple had always been a refuge, a place of safety. But with the eyes of the thin man drilling into him, Amon felt afraid and vulnerable. The man was up to something, Amon could tell. And he was sure it was nothing good.

Sarah: All right. So, if you're listening to that and thinking, ‘Okay, I'm in!’ You want to get your hands on this book, it’s called Amon’s Adventure by Arnold Ytreeide. Now listen, we will have a link to the book and to, actually, several of his books at the Show Notes, which are at ReadAloudRevival.com/123 because this is episode 123. There are also some special features about Amon’s Adventure, including some drawings and photos and something I think is especially helpful, audio pronunciation of some of those tricky names. So, I'm going to have links, not just to the books but also to where you can find those special features on his website, and we'll also have links to anything else we talked about today. Hey, before we wrap up, Arnie, there's one question I forgot to ask you and I was reminded of it while you were reading, which is King's Ransom. I want to know if that's a real game.

34:37 King's Ransom?

Arnold: I have had that question so many times. In fact, I think I got three emails last week from parents asking what are the rules for King's Ransom? There is a game out there called King's

Ransom that was just developed about five years ago. It has nothing whatsoever to do with this. So, it's not that. I honestly can't remember if that's a name I came across in my research or if I just made it up. But either way there is no real game. Although I'm going to make one now because I've had so many questions about it.

Sarah: Definitely make one. That would be so fun.

Arnold: Okay, we'll get to work on that.

Sarah: Arnie. Thank you so much for being with us today. This has been such a treat to talk to you.

35:46 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 Abby and I am 8 years old and I live in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and my favorite book read aloud to me is Little House in the Big Woods and my favorite part was when they had Christmas.

Child2: [Mom: what's your name?] Reid. [Mom: how old are you, Reid?] 3. [Mom: Reid, what's your favorite book?] ****inaudible**** [Mom: why?] Because it's amazing adventures. [Mom: because it's amazing adventures.] Yeah.

Child3: Hi, my name is Grace. I'm 7 years old. I live in Florida, and my favorite book is The Trumpet of the Swan? I like it because it's about a swan who can write and blow a trumpet.

Child4: Hi, my name is Cooper, and my favorite book is My House My School. [Mom: This is My House. This is My School.] This is My House. This

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is My School. [Mom: by? Do you remember who it's by?] No. [Mom: Jonathan Bean.] By Jonathan Bean. [Mom: and, how old are you?] 5 [Mom: 5. And where do you live?] Texas.

Child5: My name is Hayden. I'm 9 years old. I live in Austin, Texas, and my favorite book is Little House on the Prairie.

Child6: Hi, my name is Lydia and I live in California. I'm 12. My favorite book is Bridge to Terabithia because it makes me sad and I cry every time I read it but I'm still super happy at the end of it.

Child7: Hello, I am Evan. I come from Massachusetts and I am 8 years old. My favorite audio book is Harry Potter and my favorite book that my mom has read to me is Little House Big Woods.

Child8: I'm Isaac and I'm 4 years old and I'm from Massachusetts and my favorite book is Winnie the Pooh because I liked it because Winnie the Pooh's so silly.

Child9: My name is Anna and I'm 6 years old and I live in Massachusetts. My favorite book is Peter Rabbit, and I like it because Peter Rabbit is trying to run away from Mr. McGregor.

Child10: My name is Elliot. I am 11 years old and I live in Oklahoma. My favorite book is The Phantom Tollbooth because it is unpredictable and fun. My favorite part is when Milo jumps to conclusions and finds out that it is a real place.

Sarah: Alright, that's it for today. That's episode 123 of the Read-Aloud Revival, and I will be back in two weeks with another episode for you. Next time, we are going to be talking with another author who I can't wait to introduce you to. This is a picture book author, a mother of six, who's writing some of my favorite new picture books,

so I can't wait to introduce you to her. In the meantime, make sure you're on the email list, would you? Make sure you go to ReadAloudRevival.com, grab your free book list, and get on the email list so that you don't miss any of the great resources that we send out in-between episodes because every Tuesday morning we send a little something-something to your email inbox that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books, which is what it's all about. All right, I'll be back next time until then go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.