

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:12](#) You are listening to the Read-Aloud Revival Podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:29](#) Hello, hello. Sarah Mackenzie here. You've got episode 125 of the Read-Aloud Revival Podcast. So glad to have you here with me. I've got something a little extra special for you today. Initially, we were going to title this episode When Your Kids Don't Love Reading, and we were going to talk all about how to invite your children into a love of reading; how to turn your kids, the ones who don't read for pleasure, into kids who read of their own accord. And as I was preparing the episode, I realized that the heart of it is really all about creating a book club culture. That's something that we talk about all the time in Read-Aloud Revival Premium, the importance and the how-to of creating a book club culture.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [01:14](#) Usually when we have kids who don't love reading, it's because a love of stories and books have been schooled out of them. I don't know too many three- or four-year-olds who don't like to be told a bedtime story, but our older kids often start to dislike reading as soon as they associate reading with the kind of reading they do for school. Whether they're homeschooled or they go to traditional school or any kind of hybrid school, a lot of times the way we engage our kids with reading around their education literally ruins reading for them.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [01:47](#) The antidote, I believe, is to create a book club culture at home, so that's what we're going to dive into in this episode and the next one. Now, this is actually a master class I taught inside Read-Aloud Revival Premium, a class called Creating a Book Club Culture at Home. Our master classes are just for our Premium Members, but I really thought the content of this one might be especially helpful to anyone who either has kids who don't love reading and who wants to help them fall in love with books or to those who have kids who do love reading, and you want to nurture and protect that love, which is I think perhaps our most important job as educators.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [02:27](#) Preserving a love of reading is so crucial to launching our kids into their futures. Think of it this way: If you want your child to be a lifelong learner, if you want them to love learning so much that they'll keep doing it even after they're 18, and we do because honestly we have a lot more life to live after 18 than before it, right, then our kids need to love reading because that's how we continue

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

learning. And if our kids can read but don't read, then that changes everything. We have to start fretting about making sure they've learned all the most important things before they're 18 and that they've read the most important books. If we can launch our kids into adulthood loving reading, then they have an entire lifetime of learning ahead of them.

Sarah Mackenzie: [03:11](#)

I've split this master class, which was recorded live with our Read-Aloud Revival Premium Members like we do all of our master classes. We recorded it, and I've split it up into two episodes. Today, we'll get the first bit of class, and in the next episode, episode 126, which will release two weeks after this one, you'll get the rest of the class.

Sarah Mackenzie: [03:32](#)

Now, we feature master classes regularly in Read-Aloud Revival Premium. We cover all kinds of topics like Teaching From Rest, Homeschooling the Early Years, Having Engaging Conversations with your Teens About Books, Loving Your Life as a Homeschooling Mom, teaching history and science through story, harnessing the strengths of your personality type in your homeschool, and like I said, lots of principles from teaching from rest and all about leading your homeschool with the instincts God gave you.

Sarah Mackenzie: [04:00](#)

And we have new master classes every season in Read-Aloud Revival Premium, so if you find this episode and the next one to be especially helpful, then you probably just want to join us when we open up Read-Aloud Revival Premium again in May. Premium is our online community for families who want to make meaningful and lasting connections with their kids through books. We don't just feature these master classes, although we do feature a new master class every season. We also have monthly family book clubs that are based on the very principles we're talking about in this book club culture episode. Not only do you get a family book club that's based on these ideas, but your kids get to meet the author or illustrator of the book we're reading for that book club and a live online event every month.

Sarah Mackenzie: [04:42](#)

There is nothing like it. It's amazing. We are opening for summer registration on May 6th through 10th, and if you want to help your kids fall in love with reading or just have an amazing reading summer and just really deepen your family relationships this summer, you're going to want to join us. We're just open for five days, May 6th through 10th, so if you want to make sure you get an

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

invitation to join us, then go to rarmembership.com and pop your email in there to request an invitation, and as soon as we open doors I will email you and let you know so you can join us.

Sarah Mackenzie: [05:15](#)

Now, before we launch into this first part of the master class, I am going to answer a question from Lisa.

Lisa: [05:33](#)

Hi, my name is Lisa, and I'm from Florida. My nine-year-old daughter enjoys reading, but sometimes about halfway through the novel, she will lose interest and not care about finishing. For me to make her finish whether she wants to or not doesn't feel completely right to me because I don't want to kill her enjoyment of reading by forcing her to read something she's not interested in, but just letting her toss books aside unfinished doesn't feel completely right either. I'm not sure what to do. What's the best way to handle this when it happens?

Sarah Mackenzie: [06:06](#)

Lisa, I can tell you what I think I would do in your situation because I hear your concern that you don't want your daughter to just ditch books and get in the habit of ditching things halfway, but you also don't want to force her to read the rest of the book and turn reading into a chore. And I think that's also really important. This is a great question for today's episode actually because it dovetails so well with what we're going to be talking about.

Sarah Mackenzie: [06:28](#)

This is what I would do: I wouldn't change anything, except I would tell her, "Hey, next time you finish a book, let me know, and we're going to go out for milkshakes to talk about it." So the next time she finishes a book, carve out some time somehow to go out for milkshakes or ice cream or tea or whatever would make her excited and talk about the book. And you can just use some open ended-questions. Ask her, who was the most courageous from the story or who was the most cowardly or who was the most noble or the most wicked? Ask her if there's something that surprised her during the story. Those two questions can get you set for a good conversation.

Sarah Mackenzie: [07:06](#)

And by telling her that you would like to take her out for a treat and a conversation when she finishes a book, that's going to add an element of natural motivation because there's a treat and there's one-on-one time with mom. If you're in a season of life where taking her out is difficult, you could always just do something special at home, have special cocoa and a treat. Tell her to let you

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

know when she's done with the book, and you're going to make up a batch of cookies or you're going to do it together while you talk about it.

Sarah Mackenzie: [07:33](#)

But I wouldn't change anything. I wouldn't assign it to her, and I also wouldn't tell her she can't do that anymore. All I would do is say, "Hey, next time you finish a book, let me know because I want to chat with you about it so you can tell me all about it," and see if she doesn't start finishing books more often. Once she's in the groove of seeing a book all the way through to the end, I think she's going to break that cycle of finishing halfway.

Sarah Mackenzie: [07:54](#)

Hey, if you have a question you'd like me to answer on an upcoming episode of the podcast, leave it at readaloudrevival.com. You just want to scroll to the bottom of that page and click the button, and you can leave a message for me there.

Sarah Mackenzie: [08:17](#)

This class is called Creating a Book Club Culture at Home, and what we're going to do is talk about how to make our homes a haven of reading. I think we all want kids who don't just read because they can but read because they love to, right, who have a burning desire to read. I don't know, I'd be interested in the chat to hear how many of you have the same experience as me. In school when I was assigned books, just I felt like I wanted to get them done, right? I was reading to figure out what the teacher wanted me to give her back, give him back based on each book and that I got them done kind of like checked them off a list. But I never went back to the books that were assigned to me in school and wanted to stay up late under my covers, rereading it or call my best friend on the phone and see if she found the same magical thing in the book or a favorite scene or something that I did.

Sarah Mackenzie: [09:05](#)

And so I think what we want to do is protect our kids from having that experience of having "done a book." Yeah, I see a lot of you are saying you had that same exact experience. Oh, that's super interesting. [Elise 00:09:15] says, "I also don't think I ever read a book that wasn't assigned until after college." Right. Because something happens in our mind where we assign reading to school, and we feel like it's something that you get done for school and not something that you just delight and pleasure in. Right?

Sarah Mackenzie: [09:29](#)

So I think what we want probably, and I bet if you're here tonight, it's because you agree, we want something

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

better for our kids, right? We want them to have the experience of having met a book and maybe a falling in love with it, becoming richer for the encounter that they're having with a book. And I think that's going to take something different than what we got in school. And just like everything with parenting, we sort of default to how we were treated, right, as children or our experience as children unless we decide to do better.

Sarah Mackenzie: [09:57](#)

So what we're going to do tonight is kind of talk about a better option, which is creating a book club culture in our home. This can work for you if you homeschool or if you don't. I know we have both kinds of families here, and so in some ways I think it can be easier if you have the freedom and flexibility to be in charge of your child's literature education, but that definitely doesn't end there. And if your kids go to school, you can still create a beautiful book club culture for them at home that will make a huge impact on the shape and form of their reading life.

Sarah Mackenzie: [10:23](#)

Let's talk about a book club culture, what that is, and why we need one. Let's start there. Actually, before we do that, before we even do that, let me show you, on your PDF you might see something at the very top that says, "Golden Nugget." And I asked on there, what is something I don't want to forget or something from this class I'd like to implement in my home? Here's what I want to say right off the bat: Sometimes we can get overwhelmed in a class like this or any other workshop or session or anything that there's a lot of ideas, and we think we need to just do them all and change everything and fix everything. But what I have found over and over in parenting is that if I can pick one good move, even if it's a really small thing, one small thing to do soon in my home, it can make a good impact on my family and sort of have a domino effect.

Sarah Mackenzie: [11:09](#)

So what I'm going to ask you to do with this class is look for a golden nugget. One golden nugget. One thing from this class tonight that you were like, "I'm going to do this this week with my family to improve the book club culture in our home or to move our book club culture into a more richer environment." And so when you hear something, and you're like, "That's it," you might want to jot it down because I'm going to ask you at the end what it is. But looking just for that one tiny small shift that you can make in your home, that one golden nugget can make it a lot less overwhelming.

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

- Sarah Mackenzie: [11:38](#) And of course, because all of our families are a little different, we have different aged kids, different family dynamics, and all of us are in a different position, then it's not going to be the same for all of us. So finding what one will make the biggest ... or one small impact, not the biggest, just one small, positive impact on our home can make a big difference for us.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [11:55](#) All right. Let's go back. Okay. What is a book club culture, and why do we need one? Mark Twain is accredited with saying, "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read." And there are some astonishing statistics. The ones I found most recently were from the Jenkins Group that say that, get this, 42% of college graduates never read another book after college. 42% never read another book after college. 80% of US families did not buy or read a book last year.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [12:30](#) I know, it is. Yes, I agree. In the comments I see, "Sad, sad." And no, this is not our families because we're at Read-Aloud Revival, so we obviously read, but I think it's worth thinking about why that is and how we can protect our kids from becoming adults who just don't read as they get older and as they leave our home, right, and they're not under our daily influence.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [12:51](#) In The Read-Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease talks about how all small children love stories. They all love stories in books. For every small child, if you pull out a book and invite them onto your lap, that's a warm happy memory for them. But something happens that shifts between the time that they're five or six and the time that they're in high school.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [13:11](#) There is Dr. Daniel Willingham, who's been on the podcast before. He shared some research with me that said the average high schooler reads six minutes a day for pleasure, which actually means that most high schoolers don't read at all for pleasure, and then a few read an absolute ton. So most high schoolers just read for school assignments. So I think we have to figure out why that is. What are we doing, what kind of messages are we sending to our kids where they go from being a five- or six-year-old child who just loves stories and loves books and can't get enough of them to high schoolers who feel like reading is something to be checked off, something to be done?

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

- Sarah Mackenzie: [13:48](#) And I remember this from my own school experience. At some point, reading felt like something you did for school, so I wanted to get it done, so I could get on with the better things in my life. Right? It was like reading was work. It was read this book and write a summary, read this book and take a quiz, read this book and do a book report. We still do this to our kids a lot of times, right? "Read Little House in the Big Woods, and then fill out this comprehension worksheet." And then we sort of wonder why our kids aren't voraciously scrambling to read more. And what we want to do is we want to make sure that reading is not equated with that dry, dull, getting it done checklist stuff. We don't want reading to be the vegetables like, "Eat your vegetables, and you can have dessert." The reading is the dessert, right?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:29](#) I want to read to you this quote from Katherine Paterson, and it's in The Read-Aloud Family because I couldn't stop myself from quoting Katherine Paterson over and over in here. She's the author of the Bridge to Terabithia, Jacob Have I Loved, The Great Gilly Hopkins, and a whole bunch of wonderful books, award-winning books. She says, "Why are we so determined to teach our children to read? So that they can read road signs? Of course. Make out a job application? Of course. Figure out the destination of the bus so that they can get to work? Yes, of course. But don't we want for them far more than the ability to decode? Don't we want for them the life and growth and refreshment that only the full richness of our language can give? What good are straight teeth and trumpet lessons to a person who cannot see the grandeur that the world is charged with?"
- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:19](#) I love that last part, "What good are straight teeth and trumpet lessons to a person who cannot see the grandeur that the world is charged with," because it really highlights our tendency to prioritize going to the orthodontist and music lessons and getting all those daily grind kind of things done, forgetting that what we really want to impart on our children is that love for the grandeur of life, right? And that that richness that language and stories give.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:44](#) So I think we can do something about this. We can create a space for fondness and joy and love of reading and books in our home. And I think we do that by creating what we're going to call a book club culture in our home. I really think, again, I'm just going to repeat that I really think you can do this no matter where your kids go to

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

school, and we'll talk about a few different ways you can do that depending on where your kids are and what your family circumstances look like.

Sarah Mackenzie: [16:11](#)

When we're thinking about our kids' reading lives, whether we're thinking about what we read with them or what they read on their own, I think it's helpful to start by thinking about our goal. Why do we want our kids to be readers? It kind of sounds like an obvious question, but I think it can be really, really helpful to identify this before we move on. So answer in the chat box for me, why do you want your kids to be readers? Just give me your quick gut answer.

Sarah Mackenzie: [16:39](#)

Readers are leaders. I love that. For enjoyment, because I love reading, to develop empathy, to feed their imaginations, to experience the world, because it opens the world, to always continue learning. You guys are typing them in so fast, I can't read them. I love it. To experience a diversity of thought, I want them to live a thousand lives, to learn about others' viewpoints, for the full on joy of it, to find out how they fit in the world, to travel to other places, to use their minds, to be lifelong learners, to see God everywhere, to develop a strong character, to nourish their souls. Because it's flat out fun. I love it. To know good stories, as an alternative to media, to develop the ability to critically think, for utter joy, to retain their sense of wonder. So good. Oh, my goodness, I can read all of these. They're so good. To know God better. I love these.

Sarah Mackenzie: [17:31](#)

Hearing somebody else's gut answer might make you stop and go like, "Wait, that's me too," right? But stopping for a second and thinking, "Wait, why do we want our kids to be readers?" I made a spot on your notes for this because I think it's worth stopping for a second and thinking about that goal because we're going to be talking a little bit later about places we get hung up. And I think if we can remember the goal, it will help us break through those hangups. And we're going to talk about that more specifically later.

Sarah Mackenzie: [17:58](#)

Just last week I was building out my kid's school list for the coming school year. You can all laugh because at the time we're recording this is on August 28 and probably most of you have started, but we're not starting our school year until the middle of September. And I was making our list of what we're going to do this coming year, and one of the things I noticed that I started doing

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

just like habit was I started considering which books I would assign to each of my older kids.

Sarah Mackenzie: [18:26](#)

I have a 16-year-old who's a junior in high school, a 14-year-old who's a freshman in high school, an eighth grader, and then a bunch of little kids. But I'm talking about my big kids for now. I was thinking about assigned reading because I wouldn't assign reading to my younger kids. They don't read it yet, right? I was thinking about assigned reading, and I automatically started thinking about which books to assign to each of my older kids, except when I had ...

Sarah Mackenzie: [18:46](#)

I did it for my junior. She's already got most of her assigned reading through co-op. But then when I started writing a short list of assigned books for my freshman, I kind of stopped myself, and I thought, "Why am I assigning her books? What's the point of assigning reading aside from the fact that I feel like a high school freshmen probably should be assigned some books?" And then I thought like, "Why do I want this one to be assigned books?"

Sarah Mackenzie: [19:08](#)

When I thought about it, I thought, okay, this child, her name's Allison, she reads probably on her own voraciously for about three hours a day. She probably would read for more if I let her shirk her chores. Mostly she reads fantasy, but just in the last few weeks I've seen her reading G. K. Chesterton's *Ballad of the White Horse*, which is not a particularly easy read, mind you, and *Pride and Prejudice* all on her own without my input, without my feedback. And I thought to myself, "Wait a second, why am I assigning her books when she's already reading on her own?"

Sarah Mackenzie: [19:40](#)

This brought me back to a podcast episode, and [Kortney 00:19:43], I don't if you'll remember, it's the one with Mystie Winckler, so you could find that episode. Mystie Winckler came to the podcast, and we talked about assigned versus free reading, and she was saying if your kids are already reading widely and a lot, that's the goal, right? You don't need to assign more books on top of that just for reading curriculum if they're already reading a lot. The goal is to have them read a lot and widely.

Sarah Mackenzie: [20:05](#)

But if we go back to that thing about why do you want your kids to read, this is why it's helpful. Let me pull up my slides because I want to show you something. This is Sarah uses technology. Okay. Okay. When I was thinking

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

about why ... Can you guys see that? I can't tell if you can see that or not. Okay.

Sarah Mackenzie: [20:18](#)

When I was thinking about why I want my kids to read, I came up with a few ideas. I thought just real quick got answers, right? I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about this, but as a source of delight and joy, to encounter big ideas and beautiful terms of language, and to expand their world. Those are the things that came to mind for me right away, why I really want them to read. Oh, I think there might be another one. Yup. To help them think about history and humanity and our purpose in the world and who they ... I mean, I didn't write this all out for you, but who they are in this world that God has created them to be in, right? That's why I want them to read lots of really big ideas.

Sarah Mackenzie: [20:53](#)

In this case with, so going back to Allison and thinking through about assigning her books, I realized assigning books isn't going to actually get her closer to the any of these goals that I've set out than letting her choose what she's reading on her own. Right? So if she's reading widely, which I've noticed that she is, and she's reading quite a bit, then my role ends up turning into, how do I carve out and protect space for her to have lots of time to read? That's my job. Instead of giving her exactly what to read, now my job changes to being protecting that time and space so that she can read on her own because the goal is for her to read a lot and read widely, and she's already doing that.

Sarah Mackenzie: [21:30](#)

So if you have a child that's already reading a lot and reading widely, you might want to reconsider even the idea of having to assign your child all these books. That's step one for a book club culture with a child who's reading a lot, is just protecting that time and space for them to read. Right? We have this funny idea, I do this too, where we sort of feel like putting titles on our syllabus or on our lesson plans magically makes them more valuable. Right? But that's not actually the case. That's not how it works.

Sarah Mackenzie: [21:57](#)

Now, before you just think, "Oh, my gosh, I want my kids to be like that," not all of my children are like this. My 13-year-old son is currently on a manga and graphic novel kick. And that's perfectly fine, but he's not reading widely. So what I did for the upcoming year is I created a list of historical fiction titles. He's interested in learning about World War II, so I picked one novel for him to read

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

every month based in World War II that I think he'll enjoy, but that I don't think he would probably choose on his own. So that is just one example of a way that you can assign books without it feeling the same way it felt to you when you were in school.

Sarah Mackenzie: [22:38](#)

And this is what this is going to look like for this son. I have assigned him a book for each month and a title for each month, so I am actually telling him what he's going to read for this particular assigned reading, but I'm not having him write a book summary for it. I feel like I'm jumping ahead, like I was going to talk about this later, but that's okay, I'm and talk about it now. I'm not having him write a book report on it. I'm not having him do like a diorama or a five-paragraph essay or anything like that.

Sarah Mackenzie: [23:01](#)

What happens is he's going to read the book, and then he's supposed to come to me when he's done with it, and he and I are going to go on a hamburger date. Now, my 13-year-old son's love language is hamburgers, so by telling him that, "When you finish each of these books, come tell me, and then we're going to go on a hamburger date, and we're going to talk about the book," that's a whole different experience than being told, "You're going to read these books, and you're going to write a summary." Right?

Sarah Mackenzie: [23:23](#)

Even the experience of saying, "You're going to read these books, and I want you to log them all," which I do make him write them all down, every book that he reads on his own, but do you see how there's that ... It's not even that slight of a paradigm shift. I mean, for me when I was a kid, I would've thought that was a huge paradigm shift. To be able to go out to lunch with my teacher and talk about a book would have had me all kinds of excited.

Sarah Mackenzie: [23:43](#)

We're not going to be talking tonight that book culture means you can't assign books. We're going to be talking about different ways to make that paradigm shift where you can assign books and read books together as a family, even assigning some when you need to or backing off assigning them when you don't, to preserve that book club culture. And I think the key to that is remembering that delight is so incredibly important. It is not icing on the cake, if our kids love reading. It's the most important thing because if our children leave our homes loving to read, they will continue to read after they leave our homes.

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

- Sarah Mackenzie: [24:12](#) If they have read a lot and read widely, but they hate reading when they leave our homes, then that's where the anxiety of, "I hope we got in all the best books," comes in because now we know our kids aren't going to be reading after they leave our home. If you give your child a joy and desire for reading, and they just see it as a part of their life's greatest delight, then you know they're going to keep reading, and you don't have to worry about getting all the best books in by the time that they graduate. Does that make sense?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [24:37](#) Just because you value delight doesn't mean you can't assign books. It just means we need to be mindful about how we assign books. So an example being me telling [Drew 00:24:48], my 13-year-old, "You're going to read one book a month. These are the books you're going to read each month. When you're done, we're going to go out to hamburgers."
- Sarah Mackenzie: [24:54](#) And another way I've done this in the past, the freshmen, Allison, who I'm not assigning books to it all this year, two years ago she was reading all fantasy, which is fine, but also I wanted her to read widely, right? So I did assign her some books. What I did is I picked, I think, seven books for the year that I wanted her to read, and they were I think half classics and then half historical fiction maybe because I was just trying to widen her ... diversify what she was reading.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [25:17](#) I put them on a shelf. I bought them all instead of getting them from the library, so I could put them on the shelf the beginning of the school year, and I said, "This is the deal. You need to read each of these books, and I don't care if you read them all in one month or if you read one a month all year long. You have to read all these books by the time the school year is done. But when you're done with each book come to me," and we actually didn't ... The babies were smaller, the twins were smaller, and we couldn't manage going on a lunch date every time she finished one. So instead, I just had tea with her at home. We just had tea and some cookies, and we'd sit and talk about the book.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [25:47](#) And so that's another way that you can assign books. In that case, I didn't assign like, "This is the book you have to read in October and November and December." I let her have a lot more freedom, but again, this is one of those things you just have to look at your own kids and see your own particular child's quirks and abilities and

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

will they manage their time, do they need a little more help managing their time by assigning them to specific months? Just kind of looking at each of your kids and deciding what a good fit is.

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:10](#)

There's no one right way to do this, and I don't think we need to come to a book club culture and say, "Well, I can't assign my child to read anything if I have a book club culture." It's just all about that paradigm. It's about making sure that that invitation to read is an invitation. Right? And so that they still feel invited into that reading experience.

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:29](#)

I think what helps when we are thinking about assigning books is knowing that goal. If you think about what you want your child's reading life to do for them, right, widen their world, help them love God, help them love their neighbors, help them find their place in the world, whatever it is, you might find it easier to check that tendency that you probably have to go the traditional literature class route because we tend to default to whatever we were taught, right?

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:53](#)

It's knowing that goal that gives us the confidence. If it's your goal to help your child read widely and a lot so that, and you know why that is, you will feel a lot more confident in saying, "I don't need that literature curriculum. I don't need that comprehension worksheet. My kids can read *The Little House in the Big Woods*, and we don't have to have them fill out comprehension questions because that's not actually helping them get to their goal. That's not what we read in our family." Does that make sense? No, and that's why that goal is so important. It feels like, "Oh, why do I want my child to read?" But it's actually really, really helpful because knowing your why helps you have the confidence to make decisions that are better for your family.

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:27](#)

[Larissa 00:27:27] says, "If your kid hates a book, do you make them finish it?" I think the answer, it depends, but I kind of think it depends. So let me give you a few different answers.

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:36](#)

If I'm reading aloud the book to my kids, and most of us aren't enjoying it, no way. We ditch it for sure because a read aloud takes way too long for us to be reading aloud a book that's not pleasant. When it comes to assigned books, yes, I will ... Let's say I've had my eighth grader ... I have I think seven books for him. I will have him finish

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

all of those books even if he hates it. They're not very long, and I chose books that I'm pretty sure will delight him, so I think the likelihood of him not liking it is pretty low. It's not like I'm assigning them Don Quixote or something that's massive, right?

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:05](#)

If it's an older child, like a high schooler, and it's a classic, let's just say like Don Quixote or The Count of Monte Cristo or something, if they're reading it and they just are a slog, I would feel free to move to another version of it that's easier to read, to watch the movie with them while they're reading it, to let them slip to audio instead of reading it. That's the first thing I would probably do is say, "Let's try this on audio instead of having you read it. Let someone read it to you." Yeah. Okay.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:29](#)

Having that goal written down of why you want your kids to read, that why you want them to read and what for, what you want it to do for them, having that written down somewhere can be helpful because I think most of us in the coming school year will slip into our old modes of doing things. Right? And so it's helpful to have that written down somewhere to remember, "Oh, yeah, that's right. I wasn't just making that decision because I was being lazy, because I was feeling crazy. There's a purpose." That's really, really helpful.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:54](#)

One thing I want to touch on before we move on is the incredible importance of delight in your child's reading life. So consider this. I thought this was so fascinating. When I was doing research for The Read-Aloud Family, this idea that parents who think the primary importance of reading is to be successful in school, their children read less than parents who think that the primary importance of reading is entertainment. Let me say that again because I kind of stumbled, and it's a little confusing. Parents who think that the primary importance of reading is success in school or academic benefits, those children will read less than parents who think that the primary source of reading is entertainment.

Sarah Mackenzie: [29:36](#)

I think especially for a lot of us who care very deeply about our children's academic life, about their reading life, about their soul formation, we have this tendency to really think that the entertainment value of reading is just gravy, but it's actually more than that. It's so important. And if we really think about the adults we know who read voraciously, they enjoy reading, right? They actually see it as entertainment. So for a lot of my

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

friends who I know who read voraciously, they will very happily read a book instead of watching something on TV or go to a movie. To them it's entertainment as well as all the other benefits.

Sarah Mackenzie: [30:12](#)

But I think if we remember that importance of delight, then we will have an easier time setting up a book club culture in our home because we will remember that our children loving reading is not just a benefit or a bonus, it's the heart of the reading life. If your child doesn't love reading, they just won't read. And so helping our child preserve and, well, first of all, take hold of that delight and then preserving it for them is a huge, huge, huge piece of book club culture.

Sarah Mackenzie: [30:36](#)

Yes. I see some questions about literary analysis in the chat, and we're definitely going to get there. Okay.

Sarah Mackenzie: [30:40](#)

If you're interested in learning more about that importance of delight, and I meant to have that out, I wonder if it's ... It is right here. This is the book I would recommend if you're interested in reading more about the importance of delight in reading. This is by Alan Jacobs. It's called *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. It's so good. Short, it's a quick read. Lots of things are underlined in my copy. It's been a while since I've read it. Okay. I'm going to read you what I underlined. I didn't even intend to. "Read what gives you delight, at least most of the time, and do so without shame. And even if you are that rare sort of person who is delighted chiefly by what some people call great books, don't make them your steady intellectual diet any more than you would eat at the most elegant of restaurants every day."

Sarah Mackenzie: [31:24](#)

He makes a metaphor in here about how reading those really beautiful, thick classics are like eating like filet mignon or something. So you wouldn't eat that every day. There needs to be a varied diet. And so I think it gives us a sigh of relief when we think, "Oh, my goodness, my child doesn't have to always be reading something that's high literary value for it to be a useful experience." Anyway, Alan Jacobs is a college professor at somewhere I should know off the top of my head and that I don't. Wheaton. And this book is really fun, so *Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*.

Sarah Mackenzie: [31:55](#)

And I think the best part about prioritizing delight to this degree, making it that important, is that it frees us up to approach literature with this book club delight-centered

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

way. It turns the whole thing into so much more fun. And all of a sudden, I hear it time and time again from families who sort of make this shift, make this approach in their homeschool more central, that all of a sudden their kids are just reading more for fun on their own, and they are, too. Because for a lot of us, we have let the day-to-day stuff we have to get on, we have to do every day, all the responsibilities, suck the life out of our own reading life joy. Our own joy in our reading life is what I mean. So I think it's one of those funny little cycles. The more we prioritize delight in our homeschool, the more our kids read. It just keeps paying back over and over. Less like school, more like book club. That's really what we're going for.

- Sarah Mackenzie: [32:50](#) 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.
- Rose: [33:03](#) Hi. My name is [Rose 00:33:04]. I'm seven years old, and I live in Virginia. My favorite book is Tumtum & Nutmeg. They're mice, and they live in Rose Cottage. I like that they go on adventures with the kids that live in Rose Cottage.
- Rachel: [33:22](#) Hi. My name is [Rachel 00:33:25]. I live in Bend, Oregon. My favorite book is The Three Snow Bears. My favorite part is when Baby Bear says, "Bye bye." And it's writ by Jan Brett.
- Speaker 5: [33:40](#) And how old are you, Rachel?
- Rachel: [33:42](#) [inaudible 00:33:42].
- Eva Davis: [33:43](#) Hello. My name is [Eva Davis 00:33:44]. I'm 10 years old. I live in Indiana, and my favorite book is The Green Ember. I like it when Heather and Picket catch a star.
- Ezra: [33:53](#) Hello. My name is [Ezra 00:33:54], and I am seven years old, and I live in Indiana, and my favorite book is The Green Ember. I like it because it has a whole bunch of adventure.
- Sam: [34:09](#) My name is [Sam 00:34:11], and I'm four years old, and I live in Indiana, and I like Katy and the Big Snow. And I like the part when [inaudible 00:34:23] the snow.
- Mary: [34:27](#) Hi. My name is [Mary 00:34:29]. I'm almost 15 years old, and I live in North Georgia. One of my favorite book

READ-ALLOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

series is Little House in Brookfield. This is the mother Caroline, her stories from when she was a little girl. It's by Maria D. Wilkes, and it's sort of like the Laura Ingalls Wilder books. And I like it because it's all about Caroline and from when she's four until she's married and has Mary, Laura, and Carrie, which is known as the Laura Ingalls Wilder books.

- John: [35:09](#) Hello. My name is [John 00:35:11]. I live in North Georgia, and I'm 10 years old. My favorite book is The Big Snow by [Roberta 00:35:19] and Elmer Hader. I love it because of its character and because of how the animals are getting their food. I love how the two parents come out and they give all the birds and animals and deer lots of food. You'll have to find out the rest.
- Nathan: [35:39](#) Hi. My name is [Nathan 00:35:41]. I am nine years old, and I live in North Georgia. My favorite book is Bear's First Christmas by Robert Kinerk. I like it because it's winter time, and I love the season called winter, and the bears and animals are so cute.
- Matthew: [36:00](#) My name is [Matthew 00:36:02], and I live in Sugar Land, Texas. My favorite book is Billy and Blaze and the Indian Cave. I like it because the Indians do something good.
- Speaker 13: [36:16](#) Hi. My name is [inaudible 00:36:17], and I'm [inaudible 00:36:22] years old. I live in Kansas. And my favorite book is My Little Pony. And my favorite pony is ...
- Speaker 14: [36:29](#) Rainbow Dash?
- Speaker 13: [36:30](#) And Spitfire.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [36:35](#) Thank you, kids. I love your messages. Hey, if your kids would like to leave a message to be featured on the podcast, go to readaloudrevival.com. You just need to scroll to the bottom of the page, and there's actually two recording buttons there. One is for kids to leave a message for Let the Kids Speak, and the other is for you. If you have a question you're hoping I'll answer on an upcoming episode of the podcast, you can leave that question for me there.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [36:59](#) In two weeks, I'll be back with episode 126, and that's the rest of this master class. I hope you join us for it because it's a really good part, and I really think this can be a game changer for so many of us and our kids' future reading lives. Thanks for joining me. Until next time, go

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

Episode 125: Master Class Part 1: Creating a Book Club Culture

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