

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

- Sarah: [00:08](#) You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Mackenzie, homeschooling momma of six and author of the Read-Aloud Family and Teaching from Rest. As parents, we're overwhelmed with a lot to do. It feels like every child needs something different. The good news is, you are the best person to help your kids learn and grow, and home is the best place to fall in love with books.
- Sarah: [00:33](#) This podcast has been downloaded 7 million times, in over 160 countries. So if you want to nurture warm relationships, while also raising kids who love to read, you're in good company. We'll help your kids fall in love with books and we'll help you fall in love with homeschooling. Let's get started.
- Sarah: [00:59](#) Hello, hello. Welcome back. We had a little break here from the podcast, but I hope you had a wonderful Christmas. I think just about everyone I know is happy to say goodbye to 2020, but I hope you're feeling optimistic about 2021. We are a people of hope after all.
- Sarah: [01:21](#) On today's show. I want to tell you about the best way I know to kick off a new year. It's the way that gives your kids a great academic benefit, helps your kids grow closer to each other, and doing acts of love every day, and also ramps up their love of books. I'm talking of course, about the Read-Aloud Challenge. We do this every January at Read-Aloud Revival and we are ready to launch into it again. Do you know, I have lost track of how many parents have written in to tell us that they weren't totally sure about the challenge, but they signed up anyway, and then their kids made more progress in their reading skills in those 25 days ... Or they went from being a kid who says, "Eh, I don't really like reading," to just loving it. It's not really magic or anything, although it kind of feels like it. It's really super simple.
- Sarah: [02:15](#) I'm going to give you the skinny on it here in a minute. Of course, if you've been around a while, and you know you want to be a part of our Read-Aloud Challenge this year, you can sign up for free by texting the word Challenge to the number 33777 or go to [readaloudrevival.com/challenge](http://readaloudrevival.com/challenge). Okay, so before I get into the nitty gritty about how the challenge works and the best ways to go about it, and some tips for making it successful and all that good

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

stuff, I wanted to take a listener question. So let's do that now.

- Paulet: [02:48](#) Hello Sarah and the Read-Aloud Revival crew. My question is, would my family be lost if joining the premium now? Do the book clubs and the WOW workshops build off one another? Would my family feel lost or behind, because we aren't starting from a beginning point? I'm concerned that we wouldn't have the skills to just jump in on the book clubs and especially the writers workshops. How do you guys organize these events so that even new members can participate?
- Sarah: [03:23](#) Oh, hooray. I'm so glad you asked this question and we would love to have you join us in RAR Premium. So for all our listeners, I'll just let you know right here at the top, that RAR Premium is our online premium community, where we do monthly Family Book Clubs and homeschool development, professional development for homeschooling moms. We have published authors come teach writers on writing workshops. We call them a WOW: Writers on Writing. Workshops that help your kids fall more in love with writing and gain a lot of skill from authors who are really doing it. It's really just my favorite place on the internet. It is where we help your kids fall in love with books, and we help you fall in love with homeschooling.
- Sarah: [04:04](#) So the question about would you be lost in premium is, no. We've organized it in such a way that you can hop in at any time and know exactly what to do next, and participate and jump in to whatever Family Book Club we're doing, and whatever workshop we've got set up next. They don't build on each other in a sequential sense, in that each of our WOW workshops, for example, our writing workshops. Each workshop focuses on one skill in particular, and if you need to draw on any information that we've taught in a previous workshop, we alert you to that before we begin, so that you know where to turn and what to look for. But for the most part, 99% of the time, we're going to give you everything that your kids need to succeed at that workshop, in each workshop itself. So it self-contained.
- Sarah: [04:52](#) We also have Family Book Clubs of course, every month. You can just jump in to whatever we're doing when you join. We do put out our calendar a few months in advance,

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

so you can see what we're doing next. Right now, we are launching into our amazing January lineup. So excited about this. We're going to be focusing on overcoming our mistakes. We've heard from a lot of you that your kids are perfectionists or have some perfectionist tendencies, frustration when drawings or writing or something that they're working on doesn't quite go according to plan. So we've invited Corinna Luyken to RAR Premium.

Sarah: [05:32](#) We're reading her wonderful picture book, *The Book of Mistakes*, which is a fantastic story that also illustrates how the illustrator takes a mistake that she made in the illustration, and turns it into something different, something wonderful, but maybe wouldn't have existed without the mistake in the first place. Then in February, we're reading *Before She Was Harriet*, which is a glorious picture biography about Harriet Tubman, written by Lesa Cline-Ransome, illustrated by James Ransome. So we'll have a Family Book Club guide for that. Of course, our Family Book Club guides - every month are packed with conversation starters, shared experiences. Usually a food kind of situation, like a way to transform your dinner into a Family Book Club, some fun activities that you can do and learning opportunities, they really stretch across the curriculum, and they also stretch across ages.

Sarah: [06:28](#) So our families use these Family Book Club guides with young kids like five and six year olds, and also much older kids like teenagers. I still use them with my own teens. Then we're also going to be reading *Adventures with Waffles*, which is our winter novel. This is, Oh my goodness, one of my very favorite read-alouds. That one is really good to be read aloud to all ages. I read it to all six of my kids, and we all loved it so much.

Sarah: [06:58](#) Now with those Family Book Club guides, of course your kids get to meet the author, illustrator, because we invite them on a live video. And something new we've been doing is our favorite drawing teacher, Ralph Masiello has been creating custom drawing lessons for us, that correlate with each Family Book Club. So for example, for *The Book of Mistakes*, not only do you get your normal Family Book Club guide, but you also get a couple of how to draw videos, that correlate with that book in particular, same with *Before She Was Harriet* and all that good stuff.

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

Just like always, everything in premium is kept in our library.

Sarah: [07:33](#) We will show you how to get started, where to go first and how to progress depending on your kids' ages, as soon as you sign up. So you won't feel lost and our community is right there to help you any step of the way, so if you are a premium member and you think, "Wait, I do feel kind of lost," then come onto the forum and tell us so, because there are a lot of us there waiting to help you find the next best thing for your family. We spread Family Book Clubs, Circles with Sarah, masterclasses, WOW: Writers on Writing workshops, out like a feast so that your family can take just what you need right now. And we are more than happy to help you figure out what that might be, depending on your kids' ages and what you're looking for in particular. So Paulet, we would love to have you in RAR Premium and you can join us at rarpremium.com.

Sarah: [08:24](#) All right, so let's talk about this Read-Aloud Challenge. The Read-Aloud Challenge, it's really a very simple way to kick off a great reading year, so here's how it works. During the challenge, your kids commit to reading aloud for at least 10 minutes, on as many days as possible throughout January. Yeah, so this is a challenge for your kids. It's not a challenge for you. Pretty sure you don't need something else added to your list this month, right? I didn't think so. Neither do I, but your kids, sometimes it can be a little bit tricky to jump back into the rhythm of school after the holidays, homeschoolers have always known this. It might just be a little extra tricky though this year, given the circumstances of the world and such. So I think this challenge could really help sort of spur us back into good habits and a productive schedule, and a really fruitful, warm kind of connection time, that also has some academic benefits.

Sarah: [09:34](#) Now we already know that reading aloud to our kids offers a wide range of academic and social and emotional benefits. We did a whole episode on it. If you missed it, you can find it in your podcast app, it's episode 157, or you can go to read aloud revival.com/why, like W-H-Y, because we answered the question, why read aloud to kids who can read to themselves? What's the benefit? Really we outlined how reading aloud develops bigger picture perspective and empathy in our kids. It improves

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

their academic performance, their vocabulary and their information processing skills. It models fluency and expression. It builds community in our homes, and it slows down and enriches time for all of us.

Sarah: [10:25](#) When our kids become fluent at doing the reading aloud themselves, those benefits compound. They take on a new dimension, because when our kids gain fluency and skill in reading out loud, they become more confident in the skills of elocution, and all of those benefits that happen when we read aloud to our kids are still present when our kids are doing the reading aloud, but they're also getting all of these academic benefits of practicing elocution. The ability to read a text correctly, using the appropriate pacing and the right expressions and intonation, that's a learned skill. We get better at it with practice, and our kids will get more confident in it, the more that they practice as well.

Sarah: [11:14](#) This might even be more important than it helping them be better readers. It also can help our kids enjoy reading more, because we enjoy what we're good at, and it can be really worthwhile to help our kids learn the skills of reading aloud. At the top of the show, I mentioned that doing the Read-Aloud Challenge is the way to help our kids participate in an act of love every day. And that's because we all know if we're reading aloud to our kids, that reading aloud is an act of love. We are sort of tabling our agenda, the other things on our to-do list, everything else that's dinging and pinging and vying for our attention, and we're just sitting in the present moment, with our kids, enjoying a story together. That in itself is an act of love, so I can't really think of a better way to start the new year than by encouraging our kids to love one another, by reading aloud to each other.

Sarah: [12:08](#) Also getting immersed in the rich world of story, and then getting all those academic benefits of elocution, of reading out loud and developing those skills of intonation and pacing, and understanding how the words should sound, so that they sound that way in your child's mind when they're reading on their own.

Sarah: [12:36](#) Here's how it works. First of all, remember, like I said, this is the challenge for your kids. So what you're going to do is just help them get set up, and then you're going to let

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

them take the reins on this one. So the first thing you're going to do is sign up. When you sign up, I'm going to send you your 31 day Read-Aloud packet and it's going to have everything you need in it. So the sign up, you want to text the word challenge to the number 33777, or just go to [readaloudrevival.com/challenge](http://readaloudrevival.com/challenge), whichever of those is easier for you to do.

Sarah: [13:09](#) I'm going to send you the read aloud packet right away. In the packet, you're going to find a tracker and the tracker is something you're going to want to print off for each of your kids, who's participating in the challenge. You're going to want to hang it up somewhere, they're going to see it often, like on the fridge or on a kitchen cabinet or something like that.

Sarah: [13:30](#) Now who can participate? Everybody, your youngest kids can participate. I'm going to tell you in a second, how pre-readers, kids who are not reading at all, or who are not reading fluently can participate, all the way up to anybody in your home, who you want to be reading aloud to somebody else for at least 10 minutes a day. Okay, so the first thing you're going to do is print a tracker for each of the kids who are participating and hang it up somewhere, they're going to see it often.

Sarah: [13:56](#) The second thing you want to do is choose a reward. So once your kids have read aloud for 10 minutes each day, they're going to mark a circle off on their tracker. Once they've done that for 25 days, not 25 consecutive days. They don't have to be 25 days in a row, just 25 days over the course of a month. Here's something to remember. Reading, of course is its own reward. We know this, but sharing a wonderful family experience is another way to celebrate. So I would encourage you to choose a reward for the 25 day prize. That's a gift of your time and not a material gift, because your time and attention is what your kids really want. So here are some ideas and you'll find more ideas in your challenge packet.

Sarah: [14:43](#) If you're stuck at home, then there's some really good things you can do for your 25 day reward. For example, have a camp out in the living room, as a family. You could even pitch a tent in your living room, if you have space for it and sleep there, or just let everybody sleep in the living room and stay up late. You can do a family game night.

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

You could have a dessert bar where everyone gets to pick one dessert and you do a delicious dessert buffet. You could make a dinner that includes each family member's favorite food. So just for one dinner, don't worry about getting all the different food groups in. Just let everybody tell you their favorite food, and then make a meal where everybody's favorite food is featured.

Sarah: [15:25](#) There's some more ideas too, in your challenge packet. You could also give them a book as a reward, let them choose any book that they want, for example, from your local bookshop or order it online. If you're able to get out and about, depending on where you live and how things are going for you and your part of the world. There's a lot of things you can do out and about as a reward. You could go ice skating or roller skating or bowling or miniature golfing. You could take your kids to the bookstore, to let them choose a book there, or maybe go swimming at an indoor pool or something like that. You'll find some more ideas in your packet, like I said.

Sarah: [15:59](#) So once you've printed out the tracker and you've chosen your 25 day reward, then you really just want to set them loose and cheer them on. So every day your child reads aloud, he or she is going to mark a day on the tracker. What you'll notice about the tracker is that every fifth day is specially marked. It's a different kind of circle than the rest, and that's because we want to help our kids understand that small steps count. The challenge is a really great way to teach our kids, that bigger goals are best split up into little bite sized goals, and that makes all the difference, and that small steps and small progress, in imperfect progress, makes a huge difference in getting to where we want to go.

Sarah: [16:46](#) When your kids get five more days down the path, and they get to that specially marked circle that you'll see on your tracker, you celebrate by giving them one of the coupons from your packet. These can be printed off on regular printer paper or on card stock, and then you just cut them out. We have two pages of coupons in the packet for you, and they're smaller rewards that you're just using as a motivator to keep your kids celebrating their small wins along their way to a bigger goal. Again, we're trying to focus on sharing experiences, on offering our time and attention and not on material things.

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

- Sarah: [17:24](#) So things like having dessert at lunchtime, getting to stay up late for bedtime, letting whatever kid is getting the coupon, pick the next read aloud or skipping a chore. Any of those would be a really good prize, smaller prize, and you'll see those on the coupons you can print out. There's a few other coupons in there as well. As well as a whole page of blank coupons, in case you would want to come up with your own fun perks that are more custom to your particular family and what your kids would really like. So every time you get to a fifth day and you get to one of those specially marked circles, you give your kids a coupon to cheer them on. You know what, that's it, that's as simple as this thing is.
- Sarah: [18:09](#) Your kids are going to read aloud for at least 10 minutes for 25 days in January, and I think you're going to be floored at the differences you'll see in your kids, when you do this challenge. We hear it every year. I cannot believe this worked so well. I cannot believe my kids' reading improved so much. I can't believe my kids are reading for fun so much more often. I can't believe how much they're reading to each other, even when they don't have to. It doesn't always happen, and it doesn't happen every day, but man, it is good when it does, and it is completely worth giving it a go, to see what happens in your home.
- Sarah: [18:53](#) So let me answer a few questions that I know we get a lot of, about the challenge. The first question is always, who are my kids reading to? Who are they reading to when they're reading aloud? Does that need to be an adult? No, it can be anyone. It can be a parent, a sibling, a grandparent, a neighbor, a friend. It can be your dog. It can be any pet. It can be a stuffed animal. It can be a doll. It can be a Lego dude. It can be anyone or anything at all. The purpose that we want to focus on here is having your kids practice reading out loud, so they can do that to their dog or their goldfish just as well as they can do it to grandma or to you. They could even read to a family member or a friend by video call.
- Sarah: [19:40](#) So there's a lot of different ways to do this. Your kids can read to anyone. Now in my house, I'm just going to be up front with you and say that I don't actually let my kids read to anyone, as much as I tell you, you can. You totally can, but I have six kids and there's a lot of reading aloud, I want to happen every day. So I tell my kids, they have to

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

read to a sibling, and that way all of my kids are getting read to and are reading out loud, every day, quite a bit. Also it helps my younger kids get read to extra by the older kids, and it helps my younger kids practice their own reading by reading aloud to somebody who can help them with the words that they get stuck on. So in my house, I always say, pick a sibling or a parent.

Sarah: [20:18](#) For the most part, my teenagers, they have to pick a younger sibling, but you get to make the rules in your house. So official Read-Aloud Challenge rules are that they can read to anyone, and then you're the boss. Okay, so which books count? The answer to which books count is that all of them do, picture books, chapter books, novels, comics, graphic novels, all of it counts, the Sunday comics, it does not matter. Anything counts. Again, those are the official Read-Aloud Challenge rules, but you're the boss.

Sarah: [20:49](#) So in my house, not only do my kids have to read to a sibling, but I like them to choose a book. It doesn't have to be a particular book, of picture books, chapter books, graphic novels. If it's a book, it counts. Now, what can you do if your child gets frustrated, let's talk about this. If reading is hard work for your child, then what we want to do is do whatever we can to make this a pleasant, successful experience. Because our kids are more likely to fall in love with reading and to do it for pleasure, if they associate it with warmth and connection and joy.

Sarah: [21:28](#) So if your child is not enjoying it, we need to kind of think about how to fix that. Is it the books that they're choosing? Do they feel like they're not doing it, they're not doing it right. Maybe we could take a different tack and I'll give you an idea for that in a second. One thing I want you to keep in mind is that if your child is not reading quite fluently yet, and they're stumbling a lot in their reading, and they need help with a word, for the challenge, my advice is just tell them the word. Don't ask them to sound it out. Don't say you knew this word yesterday, or you knew this word in our lesson last week, or you've read this word before. I know it's tempting, but what we want to do is we really want this reading aloud practice to be joyful and successful for them.

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

- Sarah: [22:13](#) Honestly, if you just tell your child the word, and that happens again and again, they're going to get it. At some point, it's going to click and they're going to remember it. So if your child stumbles and needs help with a word, just tell them the word. Here's some other ideas. You can take turns reading the pages. I do this often with my eight year old daughter. She'll read a page of *The Boxcar Children*, and then I read a page of *The Boxcar Children*, and then she reads a page and I read a page. It just gives her a chance to take a breather and to stop working so hard all the time. Because when you're learning how to read your brain is on overdrive. It's a lot of hard work, and so it gives the brain just a chance to rest and it also keeps the momentum going.
- Sarah: [22:55](#) I'm also modeling every page that I'm reading, the right intonation and pacing and expression, like I was talking about earlier. So she's seeing how the words we're reading together, how they look on the page with their quotation marks. How I say those differently than the words that I say that aren't in quotation marks. So I'm modeling how to read aloud, and then she's practicing because we do a page, a page, a page, a page. She reads, I read, she reads, I read. Does that make sense?
- Sarah: [23:26](#) You could even read most of the book to them. If they're getting really frustrated, you can read most of the book to them, and encourage them just to read shorter sentences or phrases here and there, or a word here and there. There are no rules here. What we don't want is, we don't want frustrated kids feeling like they're being unsuccessful. What we do want is our kids to practice being readers every day, seeing themselves as readers every day, looking forward to this time, because it's a warm opportunity for connection. You can not help your child too much, so just help them whenever they need it.
- Sarah: [24:25](#) Developing readers and pre-readers: They're going to have more success if they read something that they have heard read aloud many times. They're already familiar with the story, so they might just prefer to read something that they've heard a lot. I know that one year we did this challenge, one of my twins chose the *Three Billy Goats Gruff* almost every day. I had read that book to him so many times that he knew the story really well. And he could just, "read it to me". This is before he was reading at

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

all. He actually read it to me most every day for that challenge. If your child prefers to read the same book aloud day after day, that is great. That is wonderful practice, and that is actually a really good way for your child to become companions and very good friends with this particular book.

Sarah: [25:16](#) There are no hard and fast rules here, except that you can't help your child too much. We want to focus on making this about joy and connection, first and foremost. Another idea here, especially with kids who are not reading yet or who are not reading well on their own yet, is to use wordless books. This works really well, especially if your kids aren't reading at all. So a lot of times we've got families participating and they've got younger kids who are not reading yet at all, and they still want to participate. That's amazing. That means your child is identifying themselves as a reader, even before they're actively reading words on their own, and that's wonderful, so we want to encourage this.

Sarah: [25:56](#) You can just let your child flip through any book that has pictures and just tell you what's happening in the pictures. I oftentimes will prompt my pre-readers by saying, "What do you see happening here? What do you see happening here on the pages?" Wordless books can work especially well for this, because there's no wrong way to read them. A child who's been read aloud to a lot knows, even if they can't read the words that there are words on that page that you read to them. So there is in their mind a "right way to read the book". A wordless book will take away that pressure because there is no wrong way to read them. There are no words to get right or wrong. You just talk about what you see in the picture.

Sarah: [26:41](#) In an upcoming episode of the podcast, I'm going to be talking with you about ideas for how to read wordless books and really make these a joy and a staple in your home, and we love reading aloud wordless books around here. In the meantime, you can find our favorite wordless books in a list at [readaloudrevival.com/wordless](http://readaloudrevival.com/wordless). So if you need some ideas of books to get from the library or to add to your family book shelves that are wordless, go to [readaloudrevival.com/wordless](http://readaloudrevival.com/wordless) for our best ideas in our favorite wordless books. That's it really. I said at the

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

beginning, this isn't magic. It's just simple and really effective.

- Sarah: [27:22](#) I can't wait to hear about your kids participating in the challenge. One thing that you can do is post pictures of your kids participating in the challenge on Facebook or an Instagram. You can use the hashtag #readaloudrevival so we can all find you and see what you're up to. I love checking out that hashtag during January and seeing everybody participating in the challenge and kids reading to one another. It warms my heart, in January every year, to walk into a room and find my kids reading to each other. It'll happen, even when they're not necessarily doing it to track time. It's funny how that happens.
- Sarah: [27:58](#) We say often on the podcast that reading begets reading. The more you read, the more you want to read, this is true for all of us. The more we read, the more we tend to want to read, and I think this is true for the Read-Aloud Challenge as well. The more our kids are reading together and enjoying a story, the more they think, "Oh, I want to find out what happened at the end of that chapter or my 10 minutes are up, but we want to read just a little bit longer." I want to hear about that if it happens in your home too. So make sure to share that on social media and tag us at read aloud revival.
- Sarah: [28:28](#) Once again, you can grab your packet by texting the word challenge to 33777 or by going to [readaloudrevival.com/challenge](http://readaloudrevival.com/challenge). It's free, and I will send you that packet as soon as you sign up.
- Sarah: [28:50](#) Now it's time for Let the Kids Speak. I love this part of the podcast because kids share the books that they've been loving lately.
- Hannah: [29:07](#) My name is Hannah [inaudible 00:29:08]. I live in Ferndale, Washington and I'm three years old. My favorite book is The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle, and my favorite part is where the hungry caterpillar has a stomach ache.
- Sasha: [29:27](#) Hi, my name is Sasha and I'm six years old and I live in Ferndale, Washington. My favorite book is Scaredy Squirrel by Melanie Watt. My favorite part is because he is so funny and he's so scared of sharks and germs and stuff. At one time, he's a scaredy squirrel and Scaredy

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

Squirrel glide into a tree, and then he plays dead for a couple hours and then he returns home. And I like, because there's funny parts.

- Ella: [29:59](#) Hi, my name is Ella. I'm from Conroe, Texas. I'm six and my favorite book is The Magic Tree House, and that it's so [adventurous 00:30:10] and I just love reading it.
- Halley: [30:13](#) Hi, my name's Halley. I'm eight years old and I'm in Conroe, Texas. My favorite book is The Rise of the Wyrms Lord. What I love about it is how Antoinette goes to this realm and she has to fight and ride unicorns and she goes on adventures. That's what I love about it.
- Kayden: [30:34](#) Hi, my name is Kayden. I'm 11 years old. I live in Conroe, Texas. My favorite book is The Door Within, and my favorite part of it is when Aidan travels to a separate realm to take the [inaudible 00:30:45].
- Catherine: [30:46](#) Hi, my name's Catherine. I'm seven years old. My favorite book is The Boxcar Children. I like it because they have lots of mysteries.
- Samuel: [30:58](#) My name is Samuel and my favorite book is, I think it's one of the Eric Carle books. I live in Pennsylvania.
- Leah: [31:12](#) My name is Leah. I am nine years old and I live in North Carolina. My favorite book is Ban This Book. It is a funny story about a lady who banned books from the school library, and the girl who tries to show everyone that if you can ban one book, you can ban them all.
- Ava: [31:33](#) My name is Ava. I am eight years old and I live in North Carolina. I liked The Magic Tree House series because Jack and Annie crack me up.
- Ethan: [31:41](#) Hi, my name is Ethan and I'm 10 years old and I live in Georgia. My favorite series is the Mysterious Benedict Society and I like it because there's plenty of riddles and lots of mystery.
- Evelyn: [31:52](#) My name is Evelyn and I'm 10 years old. I'm from California. My favorite book is Harry Potter because it's magical [inaudible 00:32:01] and I like books like that.
- Melody Snow: [32:04](#) Hi, my name is Melody Snow. I am 12 years old and I live in Northern California. My favorite books are The Collected

EPISODE 169: **The Read-Aloud Challenge**

Poems of Emily Dickinson and the Penderwicks by Jeanne Birdsall. I first read the Penderwicks when I was six, with my mother-daughter book club. Then four years later, I lost my home in a wildfire in 2018 and I listened to the Penderwicks on my phone everywhere, all the time. Jane Penderwick became like a sister to me and helped me get through a very difficult chapter in my life. I still listen to and read both of my favorites frequently, now more than ever in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sarah: [32:40](#)

Wow. Wow. Wow. Melody, you sure have been through a lot and I can really resonate with that idea of books carrying you through difficult times. I'm so sorry you lost your home in a wildfire fire. I want you to know that I passed your voice message onto Jeanne Birdsall herself so that she could hear the impact that her book has had on your life. Thank you, all of you kids for your messages. You know I love to hear about what you're reading, and I also really appreciate your patience, because I know that the wait on hearing your message on the show is about six months right now, which is a long time to wait, but you kids are the best. Keep those messages coming. We really do love to hear what you're loving to read.

Sarah: [33:25](#)

Grab your Read-Aloud Challenge packets by texting Challenge to 33777 or go to [readaloudrevival.com/challenge](http://readaloudrevival.com/challenge). In the meantime, you know what to do, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.