



# Season 3, Episode 13: Convoluted Plots + The Most Readable Classics

Mon, October 26, 2020

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:10

Hey, readers! Welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we read recently. And as you know, we don't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:24

We are light on the chit-chat, heavy on the book talk, and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. We'll discuss our current reads a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I love books, but not books that make me cry.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:44

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I love my mailman, and my librarians for keeping me in books. This is episode number 13 of season three. And we're so glad you're here. I almost changed my intro to go just exactly opposite of yours, Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:59

Right, right. You love books and ones that make you cry.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:04

Especially ones that make me cry.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:06

Right? Well, I think it's a good thing that we feel so differently about that. Because I think if we felt the same, we would bring more of the same kinds of books to the show. So it's a good thing. Before we get into too much more, let's tell everybody what our deep dive is going to be about later on in the show, we are going to talk a little bit about what we think are the most readable classics. I know fall is the season where sometimes people want to read scary spooky. Some times people want to read spooky. And sometimes people want to really get into those sort of classic reads that are maybe ones they've wanted to tackle for a while. So we're going to talk about what are some really readable classics later on this show. But, before we do that, let's talk about our bookish moments of the week. What have you got for us, Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:56

Okay, my bookish moment, this week is actually a month-long thing for me, I gave into a little bit of pressure on Instagram, and from our bookish friends. There are plenty of readers who set a monthly TBR. And I have never tried this before, because I am afraid of it. And this month, I was looking at my TBR piano, which as you know, is where my TBR shelf overflows. And I was thinking, wow, there's, there's a few of these that I really want to get to soon. So I put some intention out in the universe, we're just gonna see how it goes. I put eight books up, which as most readers or, as most listeners know, I read quite a bit more than that in a given month. But I was like, This is what I'm starting with. We're gonna see how it goes. And I mean, eh... we're most the way through the month now we're more than halfway and I have finished one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:45

I'm just gonna say how to say, how's it going? We are we are pretty far through the month. And I'm yeah, I think if you think of those as being just helpful suggestions, as opposed to this is what I need to read these maybe that is helpful if it's just a very light suggestion.

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:04

Yeah. Yeah, I think I'll get through it, at least the two that I'm working on, and maybe one more, but we'll see. We'll see how it goes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 03:12

Well, it's funny that you say that because I was just thinking about what so one of the things I talked about a couple of months ago that's been working really well for me and continues to work really well is this back and forth thing that I've been doing, where I choose one library book, and then the next book I read, I really, really tried to make it a book that I own. So I don't have to do it 100% of the time. But what I'm finding is I do it almost all the time, it's very easy to do, because again, each pile has a lot of different options. So I don't feel pigeon holed. So that's working really well, for me, but what's not working or... it's not a bad thing, that it's not been going the way I thought it was gonna go. I don't want to frame it that way. But I created this sort of TBR shelf, this rolled, you know, this wheeled shelf that I was thinking I'm going to put my highest priority owned books in this particular shelf. And then when I go to choose one, I will choose from that shelf. The last four books I have read that I owned have not been from that shelf.

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:19

I mean, we're basically doing the same thing here. Like, oh, I totally This is the priority. Yeah. What about that shiny book over there?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:26

Right? For whatever reason, I just don't want any hindrances on my choices. I'm such a mood reader, and also a rebound reader. And this is another category that I'm really kind of developing on my, you know, in my mind is the rebound. Whatever I've just read. I feel like I need to ping to a very different part of the spectrum with the next book. That's almost always true for me. I almost never want to read two of the same book. Kaytee, what's your first read this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 05:00**

Okay, my first current read this week. I put a lot of exclamation points in my description of it for my notes today. So it's *Lovely War* by Julie Berry. Yay, a war book. Okay, but Okay, wait, no. Stay with me, Meredith, this is good stuff. So this book, I feel like everybody's already read it. But I know you haven't. So I'm going to talk you into it. So we start in 1917. During the peak of World War One, we're going back a full generation right from your hated center of the century timeframe. We've got Hazel and James, they meet at a party in London, and their feelings and their eyes are being orchestrated by the gods. And that means the actual Greek gods Aphrodite, is there in the room where it happens. And she's trying to make these to fall in love. Yeah. So Hazel, and James, fall fast fall hard. James gets sent to war because it's World War One. Our next character is Aubrey Edwards. He is an American, an African American. He's a musician. He's amazing. And his music is woven through the audiobook of this book. So if you like audio books, you got to pick it up that way. He's part of the 15th infantry, which is one of the few all black regiments that was sent to Europe during World War One. He just wants to survive and gets get back to the US so he can play more music. But then he meets Colette. And again, Aphrodite has some machinations here. She wants to make sure things go her way. So the way that we're hearing this story, it's kind of as a flashback because 30 years hence, we're in the middle of World War Two, and Aphrodite is with her husband, Hephaestus and her lover Ares, who is the god of war, trying to convince Hephaestus that love and war are inextricably intertwined. So she's telling the story of how war turns into love turns into war and, and how the two have to be together. Ares and Aphrodite belong together. They're the Greek gods of love and war. So her husband is basically putting them on trial, trying to figure out if what she has done is bad or not. And she's telling the story of Hazel and James and Aubrey and Colette in order to bring her case to life. It's so fun. It's so well done.

**Kaytee Cobb 07:16**

It's a full cast recording. So each of those four characters I mentioned, plus Aphrodite, Aries and Haphestus each have their own actor voicing that part of their story. It was fantastic. It's kind of like a jaunty fun version of *Circe* and I realized I keep using the word fun about a war book. Stay with me here, mixed with the snappy dialogue of *Everyone Brave is Forgiven* by Chris Cleave set mostly against the backdrop of World War One. And I just loved it. It was so it was just wonderful. I loved it. I would put it YA, it's very like you could hand this to your teenager, but it doesn't feel like a whiny YA book. I mean, these are young adults in that they are being sent to war, but they're not. You know, like piddling their lives away and angsty about the state of the world. They're getting things done. They're volunteering for the Red Cross, they're going to war. They're all fantastic. I loved all four of those main characters and the gods, they were just great. I loved it. It was so fun.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:18**

All right, my next read is a five star read for me and one that I have been very much looking forward to talking about. In fact, I mentioned it a couple of weeks ago and on the bookish friends Facebook page, there became this thread with people trying to guess what book I was talking about. And one person did, in fact, get it right. So I had said that there was a really big book of like almost a 700 page book that I was just absolutely loving the experience of reading so much. It was absolutely perfect. And so that book was *Moonflower Murders* by Anthony Horowitz. So a couple things about this book. So this book comes out on November 10. So from the day that this episode drops, it's about two weeks away, but it's really not too long to wait, you can definitely get your pre order in now. And also this is the follow up,

and it's loosely related to, Magpie Murders, also by Anthony Horowitz, obviously, and they feature some of the same characters. I do think that it would be great if you read Magpie Murders first and then Moonflower Murders, but they're not. It's not absolutely necessary. So in Moonflower Murders, we have Susan Ryland, and she's a character from the first book to she is a publisher. And she has recently retired and she's living on an island, one of the Greek islands running a hotel with her boyfriend. But as often happens, she finds out that running a small business anywhere, even if it's in Paradise is exhausting. And so she's kind of at loose ends a little bit. Well then to her hotel in Greece come the Treehearns. This couple, and they are talking to Susan, and telling her about the fact that their daughter had just gotten married at the hotel that they run in England. But on the day of this wedding, there is a murder. Okay, so they're telling the story about how this murder completely changed their their daughter's wedding day. So add to that this complication, Susan was a publisher. And Alan Conway was her most famous writer, he writes a series of kind of Agatha-Christie-like novels, and they play in Magpie Murders, and they also come into play here. Well, Alan Conway knew the victim from the wedding, and wrote a book that was inspired by what happened at that wedding. And that book was a huge bestseller. Well, the person who in real life and in the book was pinned as the killer. They, there's reason to believe in fact, was innocent, and now in present day, the person who most believes that that person is innocent has gone missing.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:13

So this is convoluted plot when I describe it, but in the book itself, it's really, really well done. It's really fascinating. What I love most about both Magpie Murders and Moonflower Murders, is that there is a full book within the book. And I mean, a full book. And I actually, in both cases, prefer I really like the book within the book, even more than the external book. They're just so well done. There's very much an Agatha Christie-esque feeling to the books within the books. The character, Atticus Pundt, who's at the heart of the books, he's the detective in those books is so he's so great. I actually like him as much as Hercule Poirot. And it's really clever. Both of the mysteries are incredibly clever. And this one just page after page after page. I was interested the entire time, it didn't matter that it's a really, really big thick book. I wanted it to go on forever. I love Anthony Horowitz. I love this series. It just is that modern day classic. who done it that makes me so satisfied to read. I absolutely love it. So that's Moonflower Murders by Anthony Horowitz.

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:35

I'm so glad that one was a hit for you. Because I know how excited you were to get your hands on the galley copy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:41

Yes, this is one of those authors, where if his latest book is disappointing, it's very, very upsetting to me. But luckily, this one was a total win for me. I absolutely loved it. All right, what's your next book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:55

Okay, my next one is called We Ride Upon Sticks by Quan Barry. And that's a different Barry than the Berry I already discussed. These two women are not related, different spellings. So I had to squeak this one in before the end of October. Because if it feels like it might be a good hit for you listener, I want you to pick it up right away. This is a YA book again, weird. And it centers on the 1989 Danvers field

hockey team. The Falcons. Danvers, Massachusetts is relatively close to Salem. Lots of witchy history in both of those towns, right. So in 1989, the field hockey team sucks. They are terrible. And they are just they're looking forward to another season, where they're probably going to lose every game. Right at the beginning of the season, they're at like summer camp kind of getting ready for the season. The team captain gets everyone to take a collective oath, harnessing the power of Emilio Estevez. And the dark Witches of the past in order to put them on a path to win. And they do. They win. They win a lot. This book is chock full of 80s nostalgia and unforgettable characters.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:06

It's told in kind of a Greek chorus like, like *The Good Neighborhood* by Terese Ann Fowler that we talked about a few episodes back. So this is a lot of "we" in the writing, while letting us get to touch base with each of the 11 girls in the field hockey team in turn. I think for me, I may be the slightest bit too young to really appreciate all the nostalgic love that people have for this book. Because it seems like people either really, really love it. Or they're like me, and they're like, this was kind of weird. I don't really know what happens here. I was only five in 1989. And I'm not pouring salt in a wound here. I'm just mentioning that for me, it wasn't that huge of a hit because I wasn't living through this period of time as a high schooler thinking, Oh my gosh, that was exactly.... Oh, that was so funny. That was exactly like my high school experience. You know?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:59

Well, If you don't fully automatically understand that there is tremendous power in the force that is Emilio Estevez, then this book is not for you.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:09

I do love Emilio Estevez.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:10

I do need to read it. Yeah. Because that speaks to me deeply.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:15

Right? It is, it's the perfect... because in 1989, you would have been what? 16? Right, Meredith? Yeah. So it's, it's a really great fit for you. And even though we're not a generation apart, but that decade makes a difference for us, right. So I, I was kind of on the this is weird fence. But my favorite parts were definitely the nods to *The Crucible* throughout, which is weird because I didn't love *The Crucible*. When I read it in high school. This is the Arthur Miller play, like I don't have any kind of fondness.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:47

I loved that. More, wait!

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:49

Okay, you need to read this book. I also loved in this book, the side "characters," which I'm putting in quotes, because I'm talking about *The Claw* and *The Spot* who are not people. But anybody who has read this book, they will come back to me and they will say, Oh my gosh, yes, *The Claw* and *The Spot*. 100% I'm right there with you, Kaytee. So I did I did really enjoy some parts of it. But mostly I sat there

thinking this is really weird. I know that there are plenty of people listening who would love to read this one and pick it up. And if it sounds like a hit for you, it probably will be. It's *We Ride Upon Sticks* by Quan Berry.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:27

All right, my next book is called *The Burning* by Jane Casey. So this is a real wheelhouse book for me. So we're set in London. And there is no one will be surprised a serial killer afoot. He's called the Burning Man. And so it's I'm making it sound funny. It's not funny. It's a series of brutal murders where the women have been set ablaze in secluded parks around London and now a fifth victim has been found and our lead character is Maeve Kerrigan. I love this character, she is ambitious. She is dealing with having a bunch of male colleagues and trying to be both her authentic self, and also kind of navigate this incredible boys club that is the police station that she works in. And so I love her character and the way she navigates those two things because she comes at her job with a real level of empathy, which is considered to be weakness, but really gives her a lot of insights that her male colleagues miss. So that was a real win for me in this particular character in this particular book. So Maeve is trying to solve these murders. And now there's been this fifth victim that's been found in and her name is Rebecca Hayworth. And the book is told, in alternating points of view from Maeve, the detective. And then Louise North, who is an attorney who happens to be Rebecca Hayworth's best friend.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 18:07

So you're going back and forth between these points of view, which are really, really interesting. And I'm not going to give any more away, because there's just a lot to be that unfolds in the story. But it's absolutely fascinating. I ripped through this book, it's set in England. And for some reason, I really wish I could, I could explain this. When I read a serial killer book set in England. It's not as scary to me, which is ridiculous. I don't know why that may. It's just add or remove. And so it's not as scary to me. But there's something more police procedural than serial killer about this book, largely because you're seeing it through the eyes of the detective for most of the book. I really, really liked the entire book. But as I've been kind of a few weeks away from the reading of it, what I'm realizing is the points of view that were from the point of view of Louise North, the character, that's the best friend of the victim, were the pieces of the book that have stuck with me. So I keep thinking about the way that whole arc took place. It was really well done. It's a serial killer book. It's a police procedural, but it definitely brought some different aspects to the table than what we normally see. And I liked it for that reason. So that is *The Burning* by Jane Casey and I will absolutely be reading further into this series because it's very well done. All right, what what's your next book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:34

Okay, my third book this week is *When No One Is Watching* by Alyssa Cole. I loved this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:42

Really

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:43

It was so good. I did. I loved it. Okay, so our main character is Sydney. She has recently returned to the neighborhood in Brooklyn where she grew up after her mother became too ill to continue on her own.



However, this neighborhood has changed a lot since she grew up there. There's lots of for sale signs. The residents are turning over very quickly. It's becoming gentrified. This is a thriller, about gentrification, which I was like, what are we sure about this plan? Stay with me. It's awesome. So these houses are being sold left and right. Sidney goes right at the beginning of the book on this walking tour of the neighborhood to learn about its history. And the whole thing is just completely whitewashed. They don't talk about any of the amazing black residents who have been part of this neighborhood for her entire life. So she's like, you know, what, F you guys, I'm gonna make my own walking tour, and she starts doing her own research. And she ends up with kind of a, an assistant slash puppy, named Theo. Theo is one of the white neighbors who has moved in next door. And she's like, you know, I don't really want your help. I don't really want to hang around with you. I don't really need a white dude following me everywhere I go, but Fine, whatever.

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:54

So they are this kind of unlikely duo. And they start poking into things around the neighborhood trying to figure out where residents have gone. And if there's any interesting history behind any of the buildings, and things start getting a little weird, and a little creepy and more people are disappearing then they can really account for in their research. If you if you liked Get Out this movie, this is often compared to that movie, that it's a good, it's a good pairing there. It's a good recommendation. I would also recommend it for people who loved one of my favorite books of the year so far, Pride by Ibi Zoboi, which is also about gentrification, but it's like a fun YA Pride and Prejudice retelling, right. So this is kind of a mix of those two things thrown together. This is Alyssa Cole's first thriller. She is a prolific romance writer. And I've talked about at least one of hers on the podcast before, which I also really enjoyed. And I think it shows that this is her debut in this genre, because there are some pacing issues, you go through a large portion of the book where you're like, Okay, it feels like we've been preparing for this walking tour for a while, when are things going to start to pick up. When it does though, towards the end of the book, you have to like hang on to the table and just wait for the thrill ride to end because it is bonkers towards the end. It definitely doesn't have that steady hum of tension throughout. But once it gets there, you're not going to get to leave. So that I just I loved it. The ending was breathless. For me, I just, I thought it was so good. Enough to kind of get over my kind of boredom at the beginning where we were getting things set up. So that was When No One Is Watching by Alyssa Cole.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:39

I'm really glad that you speak to the issue of pacing, because there's no question that this was one that we were really excited about anytime someone sort of switches genre. It's exciting and interesting. But what we started to hear really quickly was it's being marketed as a thriller. But it's not really a thriller. In fact, it certainly be marketed as a thriller on the cover. It says a thriller like it actually is telling people that that is what it is. And then a lot of people said, you know, I'm halfway through and they're really this is not a thriller, nothing is happening. So I'm glad that you spoke to that issue, because I feel like for a lot of people, it wasn't living up to its very strong claim.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:19

Right? Yeah. And it definitely, I mean, the setup needs to happen in order for the thrilling part at the end to happen. But it does feel like it takes a long time to get there. So I recognize the pacing issues, but I think it's worth it is I guess where I'm going with that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:37

Okay. All right. I have my second five star book alert here. And this is one of those that I want everybody to read. So the first the first five star book is a mystery. So if you don't love that you're not you know, whatever, but this one everyone needs to get their hands on and it is it is really flying. As far as I'm concerned under the radar and it shouldn't be. I read a treasure of a book called To Night Owl, From Dogfish by Holly Goldberg Sloan and Meg Wolitzer. Have you Do you know this book, Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:12

Meredith, you told me that this book would be perfect for me. So I made sure to read it before you talked about it so that I would already know what you were going to say. So go ahead cuz I'm excited.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 24:23

Okay, here's the setup. So this is middle grade. Although it feels middle grade, trending a little bit toward YA, but it's definitely still middle grade. Okay, so our two characters are Avery Bloom. And Bette Devlin. And so Avery is bookish and very type A and she's afraid of all the things all the time and she wants to have a plan for everything all the time in my mind. Avery was a little baby Mary Heim, just in my own mind right from the beginning. She just I had Mary in my mind for Avery. All right, and then Bette Devlin is fearless and outgoing. And she's she loves to surf. She's from California, she's very much a risk taker. So it's a great setup when our two lead characters are polar opposites, right? So these girls have absolutely nothing in common except for the fact that they're both 12. And they both have gay dads. And very, very quickly, at the very beginning of our book, their gay dads meet, and fall head over heels in love with each other. And so very quickly, Avery and bet realize that if they want their lives to continue being the great little setups that they have had, they better do something about it, right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:43

And so, in this book, which is an epistolary novel, which most of the time I do not like, I am not a fan of a novel done in letters or correspondence. This is all done in emails. But it is so much fun. From the very beginning, I fell in love with both of these girls, their relationship is so sweet. And yet so authentic to the way that 12 year old girls communicate with each other. It made me totally remember, what is so awesome, and fearsome and horrible about being a 12 year old girl, and trying to figure out who you are and who you are, as it has to do with your family and your parents and the world at large. And it's so good. So the girls, you know, they have to figure out how do we keep the dads apart? And then it just goes on from there. And you care so much about what is going to happen with these two families? Are they going to be merged together? Are they not? Should they should they not be? Will these girls be friends forever? I was rooting for every single person in this book, and I could not wait to see what happened. I love To Night Owl, From Dogfish by Holly Goldberg Sloan and Meg Wolitzer. And that is the same Meg Wolitzer, by the way, who wrote several great adult novels, including The Interestings. So really amazing books. So, Kaytee, you read it. What did you think?

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:10

I did, I actually listened to this one on audio. And I also found it to be a delight. However, I will say for the audio because it's written in email format. The first what maybe third of the book is really one long email chain. And for whatever reason, I don't feel like this happens in the in the real world anymore, we



had re re re re re re in the subject line. And it got longer and longer and longer. So sometimes I was listening to the word re,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:37

like 15 times mm

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:39

Yeah, 35 times in a row at the beginning right before an email actually started. And it might be a four word email. But the narrator would actually narrate all 58 of the re re re re re re res in there, and it drove me bonkers. As soon as they moved off of that first email chain. I was all in. But that first part really bothered me. So don't listen on audio.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 28:02

Right. So I definitely think that this book is best done in print, not on audio for that reason, not for that one particular reason. But where in that case that was irritating to you. When you're reading an in print, it's kind of one of these sweet, you're realizing how much they've been corresponding back and forth. Because you're I can just glance over it, and then you're done with it. Right. I will say something about the print persons though, which I made me kind of disappointed. I read my library copy, which was this fantastic. It's like a yellow cover, really graphic. And I actually didn't know until I picked it up that it was middle grade, I was thinking that it was YA going toward adult, but it solidly middle grade. And the cover is great. But I just saw as I was doing research getting ready for the show that they have released a new cover. And it is really horrible. It's like animated. It's like cartoon, a cartoony cover with two girls kind of standing back to back and it just makes the whole thing seem really silly like the cover is not good compared to what's inside. And very frankly, if it had had that cover, I don't think I ever would have opened it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:18

So I'm really hoping that people will either be able to look past the paperback copy or get a hardback copy with the good first cover. Because man, I just feel like they went the wrong direction from a marketing perspective with that. I actually heard about this though, from a mom, who's both a teacher, a fifth grade teacher, and she's a mom herself of a 12 year old girl and she was doing a book club with other moms with kind of tween girls, and this book would be so perfect for that but it's not just perfect for that. If you want a light palate cleanser, that's just going to make you feel really really good. This is just absolutely perfect. I love this book so much. It made me deliriously happy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:04

It was really, it was really great. I also loved it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:08

So, let's talk a little bit then about our deep dive today. So we wanted to talk about classics that are very readable again, this time of year, a lot of people as we get to sort of cooler weather, we want to snuggle up under a blanket with a cup of coffee and kind of that book we've been meaning to read for a long time or a book with some heft. We're turning away from beach reads, and getting into something that we can dig into a little bit deeper. And classics oftentimes make us feel like we're getting

somewhere in our reading, or we're checking boxes off. So we want to come up with some books that are readable and make you feel like you can check some boxes off in your reading. So Kaytee, where did your brain go when we first introduced this deep dive topic?

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:56

So the first thing that I thought of was actually a quote. So I'm gonna just put that out here as like the little header for this episode, so Italo Calvino said, "A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say." And I like that because I think that's exactly what you're talking about, about picking up classics in the fall, we want to be a little bit more intellectually stimulated, maybe. And a classic may have been written 150 years ago. But we still there's still something to glean from it. There's something to learn. And, and that makes me think about like, well, what is the classic canon? And why do those books still have something to say? So the first one I thought of, like, for better or for worse, was *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, which I think is very readable. And you know, it's not even very long, but has a lot of heft to it, and now has more heft to it in the fact that there's different things to discuss then when you read it as a child when I read it as a child, because we're in a different place as a society. So even though this book is 80 years old, or so, gosh, I probably should have looked that up before this. It still has a lot to say and a lot to discuss, and really gets into some deeper themes while being completely eminently readable, easy to breeze through, and then percolate and sit there and bother you for a long time afterward.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:28

Right? No, I definitely agree. And it's funny because I also, like kind of went two places the very first thought I had was a book that I read in high school that at the time, I was surprised how readable it was. And that was *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. Now, this doesn't apply in my mind to all Dickens, I've actually read a lot of his cannon. I liked Dickens. But not everybody does, I think, a tale of two cities. It's a slim novel. It's very readable and memorable. And like you said, we can read it at different points in history and take something completely different out of it. Right now, the, you know, the thought of revolution doesn't seem as far away as it has another generations of, you know, American society. And so this, you know, this, this book is really good example of one that you kind of feel like, Oh, it's one of those, you know Paragons of classic literature. But as you start reading it, you're like, Oh, wait, no, these characters are very much alive right now. So *A Tale of Two Cities*, I think for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 33:35

The other place my brain went pretty immediately was, of course, I think, when you talk about readable classics, you have to talk about classic children's literature, because that's a place where you can go to say, Oh, you know, I'm reading a classic, but it's not you're not tripping over every single turn of phrase. So I thought, first and foremost, my one of my very favorites is *The Hobbit*. And it's one of those books that I feel like maybe we all think we read as a child, but it's, it bears revisiting, especially with all the movie stuff that's happened over the past decade. With all of these things being made. They went so far away from the actual text of *The Hobbit* when they made the movie, when Peter Jackson made the movies, I really want to encourage people reread *The Hobbit* remember what was actually in that book

and the the really amazing world that was created in that book, it's really just one of my favorites and it's so easy to pick up and do as a read aloud, it's very readable.

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:38

Agree. And I had a number of children's books on my West as well like Anne of Green Gables, which has to be read in October because Anne loves October, The Blue Castle also by LM Montgomery, yes, Secret Garden and Little Princess by Francis Hodgson Burnett, these are these are great books for a reason. And even though they're 100 plus years old, you can hand them to a child now and they're still gonna want to run in the fields or want to explore a garden or you know, like it's still applicable. And then as an adult picking up the same thing, you're just on awash in nostalgia and, and that same sense of childhood wonder. It's still has something to say even as an adult reader.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:23

Yes. And those books, all the ones that you just mentioned, you can because they are so classic, you can get some really gorgeous versions of them. There are so many publishers that are putting out just lickable copies of all the books that you've just that you just mentioned, really ones that you want to have in your library that you want to read not only because the story is so amazing, but because the actual book itself is being done in a really beautiful way. I want to put a plug in. Anytime we talk about Anne of Green Gables. I feel like I want to put a major plug in for for the book that I've mentioned a couple times before on the show. It's one of my favorite classics. It's called Understood Betsy, and it's by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. It was written in 1916 and if you like Anne of Green Gables, this is going to be right up your alley. It is so wonderful. It's the it's not the same story but it has that same very charming feeling to it the lead you know young girl character that you just want good things to happen to you that you understand so deeply and in the family that surrounds her that you come to love so much. So Understood Betsy is just one of those very readable classics that I feel like this would be the perfect season to pick up.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:40

What about Okay, so I've got... for classic thriller, basically classic mystery, we have to talk about Agatha Christie, right? Murder on the Orient Express I looked up was published in 1934. But you can like, A) they're still making movies of Murder on the Orient Express. And you can pick it up. I probably only read it two years ago. And it was scintillating the entire way through which is ridiculous. It's an 86 year old book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:08

Right. Right. And I think if you like that, I think And Then There Were None is three notches even better, just from a story perspective and a pacing perspective. And Then There Were None is flat out terrifying. And yet, you will sort of happily remember Oh, and I'm reading Agatha Christie, I'm I'm drinking these pages in like I'm reading the latest Riley Sager. But it's Agatha Christie. It's that good. So I completely agree that you can you can be right in there with the classic genre and be reading mystery that you really love.

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:43

Yeah, yeah, I mean, classic classics don't have to be dusty, or Victorian or any, like there. There's a whole base of various genres that we can go into and the classics that are very readable, of course.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:00

Well, right. In fact, I was thinking about the fact that if you know we all love to read dystopian novels or before the pandemic, we were really into dystopian novels. Alas, Babylon by Pat Frank, one of our bookish friend Morgan Tallman's favorite books. That's a great dystopian novel that is a classic. It's not huge. It's a fast. It's a fast read. And it's really interesting.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:23

It is. It is. And then if you want to go a little further back, but also still on the American canon, I like I feel like East of Eden is a very readable classic. That's by John Steinbeck. And you, I mean, you can breeze through that. And, and like Meredith said, when she first told me to read it, when we first started this baby podcast, she was like, it is one of the most evil female characters in literature. And she's the worst.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:50

Cathy. Yes, she is memorably horrible, really, really, really just a villain to beat all villains. I love East of Eden, that is such a good book. And, you know, just speaking of memorable female characters, a book that I read in the last year that I was very surprised by how readable it was, was the House of Mirth by Edith Wharton, the lead character there, you will never ever forget, sassy, sassy, you know, woman kind of trying to make her way to a really unhealthy enneagram three, if you love an ambitious woman story, House of Mirth is really interesting. And it just sparkles with the time period that it was written in. I mean, I prefer it to Gatsby, hands down, if you're looking for something written kind of about about the same time period.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:44

That also the same time period that like, early 1920s ish Jazz Age is Passing by Nella Larsen, which is just as short as Gatsby and I will admit that I didn't even know about it until our friends Sarah and Chelsey talked about it on novel pairings. I went to pick it up, this book feels like it could have been written today, and has these two female characters that you just do not know who to root for. And you can breeze through this in like, three or four hours. It's super quick, super readable. But wow will it stick with you and it? Oh, man Passing is bananas.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:24

You know, the other book that I read just in the last year that I was so glad to finally have have, have read was A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith, that was just a beloved novel that for some reason, my childhood I completely missed. But I loved I loved that book, it was so wonderful. Francie is such a wonderful lead character that you just want all the good things for. That's a really, really beloved novel.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:52

I really considered putting that as my press for today. And I ended up going with something else. I loved *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, too. But I didn't read it until maybe five years ago.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:02

And then the other kind of it's sort of a strange recommendation. But I gotta say, I think all the time about the *Swiss Family Robinson*, which is a really, really classic, I don't remember exactly what book what year that was written. But that is a really classic novel about a family who becomes stranded and they have to make their life on an island and it is fascinating and some of the things that happen to them, I think about all the time like what would my family do in this situation if like, it's just really really really interesting.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:35

Absolutely. And that one you could hand to any number of kids on up and they would be excited about all the situations that *Swiss Family Robinson* get into for a final for me my final more adult pick I'm gonna say *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. This is another one that's not very long, but has a lot of those really, those deeper themes, where you really fall for your main character, you want good things for her, you're kind of getting to dig into her life a little bit. And it's just really well done and Zora is an icon for a reason. And this book is why.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:14

Yeah, absolutely. Well, my kind of plug from for the adult classic is I really just want to encourage people to give a try to *100 Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez one of my favorite books of all time, it is one of those books that you have to give 50 to 75 pages to to begin with. Mostly because we have this really annoying issue of almost all the male characters having the same name. No one will ever be able to explain that to me, it is difficult at first to keep everybody straight. But once you can do that, this book is worth the time that it takes is really readable from there. And if magical realism is something that you like in your books, that is definitely a reason to read *100 Years of Solitude*. So that's a lot of readable classics. Kaytee, I feel like we've given people

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:07

Nineteen.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:07

You know, several different options. Yeah, that they can they can choose from. Alright, so let's then get into our books that we want to press this week. Kaytee, which book did you decide was your press this week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:25

I went with a readable classic one that I love that falls squarely into the children's lit classics that we kind of mentioned briefly. And I cannot believe it's not on the press list yet. It's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by CS Lewis, which will just make me cry to talk about. So CS Lewis is the author of the entire *Narnia* series, of course, but he also has the wonderful and very apt quote, it's, it's often misquoted, I had to go look it up today, "I am almost inclined to set it up as cannon that a children's

story which can only be enjoyed by children is a bad children's story." And I think that's exactly what we're talking about with the classics, right? If you can't hand a classic children's story to an adult and have them enjoy it as well. It's not worth being included as a classic. This one, the beginning of the Narnia series, and I'm calling it the beginning because I say publication order is king here, not chronological order.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:23

Absolutely.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:25

It is everything a fantasy middle grade novel should be. It's beautiful and breathtaking, sweet and delightful, unforgettable characters, a fantastic setting, wonderful world building. The Pevensie children are sent away from London during the Blitz in order to safely live in the country with the professor. They're playing hide and seek one day and our youngest child Lucy hides in a wardrobe and then figures out that there's no back and she walks from the wardrobe into Narnia, where she meets Mr. Tumnus and the White Witch and the beavers and Aslan. And Aslan! Oh, the The world of good versus evil Narnia, the world he created from a picture he saw when he was 16 years old. I loved getting to dive a little deeper into this today. Have a fun carrying a suitcase. This is where the entire idea came from. He published it decades later, and we are so glad that he did. If you have not read The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe yet by CS Lewis, what are you doing with your life? Please go get it right now. It is my press today.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:29

One of the formative books of my childhood I remember so distinctly being in my bed. I think I was seven years old. And I remember the scene where she's going through the wardrobe. And she begins to feel the cold on her skin and hear a crunch crunch crunch of snow beneath her feet. And I remember the moment where my body experienced something that was coming in through my reading what an absolutely impactful moment. Maybe the moment that most fully made me a reader. I mean, what a fantastic book. Should have been on the press list much sooner but I'm so glad that you put it on there today.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:10

Alright, so my press is a readable classic, and I really want to press The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle. Nobody who listened to the show is unaware of my unabashed love for Sherlock Holmes. Everything related to Sherlock Holmes, and I find The Hound of the Baskervilles to be the easiest way to get into his stories. It's very, very readable. It's not very long, but it is so spine-tingling. So here's our setup, the rich so we have a rich landowner, Sir Charles Baskerville, and he's found dead in the park of his Manor in the county of Devon, which I named my daughter after. His death seems to have been caused by a heart attack, but the victim's best friend, Dr. Mortimer is convinced that, in fact, his death was due to a supernatural creature which haunts the moor in the shape of an enormous hound, a hound that has blazing red eyes and huge jaws. And so Dr. Mortimer asks the great detective Sherlock Holmes, to help him solve this mystery, right and to save the rest of the Baskervilles because there is a curse on the Baskervilles family, supposedly. And so they, Sherlock Holmes has to go into unwind what is actually happening here.



**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:42

What I love about this is because it's a great introduction to Sherlock Holmes, the character and the way that he solves mysteries using deduction, which is not guessing. But also, I love that this particular book forces Sherlock and his very, very logical mind to deal with the possibility that the murder is actually due to something supernatural. And the book does such a good job of convincing you that that might actually be the case. And Sherlock has to deal with that, which is just antithetical to everything that he represents. So it is so fantastic from start to finish. It is the best introduction to Sherlock Holmes that you can possibly have. And it is perfect for this time of year. So that is the Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:36

Yes, it was time. Both of those, we needed to have those on the list for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:41

Those are some good readable classics. All right. That's it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith @meredith.reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:51

And you can find me Kaytee @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:55

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found at our website at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:06

You can also contact us directly @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or via email at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:15

And if you really want to help us, rate and review us on Apple podcasts. That really does make a difference to us. And also shout us out on social media because that single action is the biggest one you can take to help us find the perfect audience for the show.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:31

Yes, your recommendation to your bookish friend is the best way to pass on your love of the podcast to others and help us continue to grow. Thanks for doing that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:39

Alright, until next week. Happy reading, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:42

Happy reading, Meredith