



Season 3, Episode 12: Big Bookish Feelings + Spooky Season Reading

Mon, October 19, 2020

Kaytee Cobb 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've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So be ready.

Mary Heim 00:22

We're light on the chitchat, 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

Kaytee Cobb 00:32

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four, living in New Mexico and I am very type A, especially when it comes to reading.

Mary Heim 00:40

And I'm Mary Heim, a working mom of one living in Wisconsin. And this rainstorm we're having today makes me want to ditch my responsibilities all in the name of a good book.

Kaytee Cobb 00:48

This is episode number 12 of season three. And we're so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:53

Mary, today for our deep dive this one actually, we made it just for you.

Mary Heim 00:57

I'm so excited

Kaytee Cobb 00:58

We are explaining and then exploring what is a spooky book. And I know listeners I know it sounds like I just mispronounced the word spooky. But there's a reason for that we are talking spooky books.

Mary Heim 01:12

Spooky books day, say it with me everybody, it's fun to say isn't it?

Kaytee Cobb 01:17

It seems like a word that my children would really appreciate. So I feel like I have to keep it away from them for a little while. But first we'll get started the way we always do which is with our bookish moments of the week. So Mary, what do you got for us?

Mary Heim 01:32

So I think I've talked about this a little bit before. Getting to attend author events virtually since COVID has begun has been so much fun. Now, don't get me wrong, I still I do miss live author events, I think it's a really fun experience to see someone speak about their work live. It's also there are people who I have gotten a chance to speak who would have never come to Wisconsin, who you know, this is not something that I would have gotten to do live anyways. So recently, within the last week or two, I got to see Brene Brown, my ultimate girl crush pop psychologist, (you all know this about me by now or if you don't you will) interview, Katherine Center who wrote "Things You Save in a Fire" all of those books with a beautiful kind of paper cut covers, about her most recent book, I was literally drinking a cup of tea in the bathtub while I was watching this play on my computer, it was so much fun. I loved getting to hear them speak. I loved feeling like this is something that I could do to feel connected and feel engaged and like breaks up the monotony of this kind of these pandemic days. And it was a really, really fun thing to do. And I am so here for this particular part of a very difficult time in history. But something that's a really fun silver lining is getting to attend all these author events. Yeah, well, mine. What about you, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 03:00

I like that a lot. I have not attended very many author events. But I like that you're really living into that that best life moment.

Mary Heim 03:07

You know, I find that following my local indie and other like bookstores, email newsletters is a really great way to get notified about what's happening. Because it's, you know, they want to have these events as much as anybody. So if you're looking even if you don't have a good Indie by you, a good idea to get hooked up with some prominent ones you've seen all over bookstagram and just watch their newsletter. Yeah, that's one way to find them.

Kaytee Cobb 03:31

Mostly, it's a timing issue for me. Like they're almost always in the evening. I'm trying to get my kids to bed half the time. It's Eastern time. And then it's, you know, like, it's just, I'm like, Oh, that one looks. Oh, no, that's there's no way.

Mary Heim 03:43

Yeah, no, totally. I'm very lucky to be central time with a baby who goes to bed at seven o'clock.

Kaytee Cobb 03:48

Yes. Appreciate that luck, for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 03:52

Okay, my bookish moment, I actually had something else prepared. But then today, I had gotten a notification for my library that I had a hold available. So I had my kids gather up their things. And we went and grabbed some lunch and then we drove over to the library. And I pulled into the parking lot. And I got faked out it was the rudest, meanest thing that happened to me.

Mary Heim 04:14

Oh, no.

Kaytee Cobb 04:15

Today, when we're recording is October 12, which is Columbus Day or Indigenous People's Day, depending where on the country you are, in the US at least, and the library was closed. But I thought I was so excited because I thought because there weren't any curbside pickup slots available that they had actually opened, and I was gonna go in for the first time in nine months to my library, right? So not only did I not get to go in, I didn't get to pick up my books at all, or drop off the old ones because the book drop was closed, everything was closed.

Mary Heim 04:49

Now I'm curious to see where this goes because this sounds like the opposite of a bookish moment.

Kaytee Cobb 04:54

Well, it was a fake out and it was it was like you know, sometimes bookish moments are just a realization of you know how ingrained books are in our lives. And I was so excited about the idea that maybe we would get to go in. And anyway, then so heartbroken when I realized that that was not the case. So it's just how much I love books and how much I miss my library. That's what makes it bookish.

Mary Heim 05:19

That's the I can totally see that and think about how thrilled you're going to be the day that you can walk through those doors for real, like that's going to be a bookish moment in the year.

Kaytee Cobb 05:28

Yeah, that will be. I'm very excited for that day. We've still been reading plenty and so we have some books to share. So let's get into current reads, Mary?

Mary Heim 05:37

Yes. Okay, I am gonna like kick off with a bang, I am so excited about this one. And that if you in fact, are a part of our Mighty Networks group now, as a Currently Reading Bookish Friend, I gave a little bit of a spoiler for this book on that particular group this week, just because I finished it and wanted to give it a hug. And I will not keep you in suspense any longer. This is "The Widow of Rose House" or "Widow of Rose House," rather, by Diana Biller. So this is a debut. And the setup is, we have a young widow with this really sordid past, or, you know, she's kind of the talk of the town. It's historical fiction, kind of in like the 1800s time. So very scandalous talk, you know, goes on and her history. She's the talk of the town, she buys this spooky old house in her hometown to remodel. And she wants to write a book about remodeling homes for women who are just regular ladies, not like super high society about decorating and really kind of owning your space. Turns out that was very ahead of her time. I know she's fictional, but still. So we get a couple pages in, she's working on beginning with her like work crew to, you know, start to take down some of the old bits of this house. And her crew drops everything they're doing in the middle of the day, abandons all their tools, and takes off running and refuses to come back to this house.

Mary Heim 07:07

So we find out that they have made these claims of these terrifying hauntings that they all experienced in the middle of starting kind of demolition on her home. And nobody can kind of agree on what they saw or what they experienced. But they all would agree that it is very spooky, and they don't want to go back inside. So of course, this the only person who can help her is this handsome kind, you know, young scientist who is dearly beloved, by everyone about town, he's the only one who can really help her out. So he's interested in kind of figuring out what's going on, they want to figure out is this haunted? Is there a ghost there? This was the perfect book for October. It has got the most incredible blend of spooky vibes. It has this nerdy romance, this historical fiction vibe that still feels kind of light and a little bit modern. So if like really heavy historical fiction is not your jam, don't write this one off, because I still think that it could work for you. It is moderately open door. But you can easily skip over that if this isn't your thing. It's just a couple pages here and there. It does touch on some heavier topics like abuse, some of the history of how mental health and trauma might have been treated in the, you know, 1800s, mid to late 1800s. Which is to say not great at all, but it was so redemptive, really spooky. Just so lovely. And again, it was a book I wanted to absolutely hug at the end, I loved it. I cannot wait to read what's next from this author. And like I said, this is a debut. I did see rumblings on her social media that she's got another book coming next year, which is exciting. But that one in particular was "The Widow of Rose House: by Diana Biller.

Kaytee Cobb 08:58

That sounds excellent.

Mary Heim 09:00

It was a good one.

Kaytee Cobb 09:01

Kinda like Kate Morton, but shorter and lighter.

Mary Heim 09:04

Yeah. Mm hmm. And a little like, a little bit more. plucky. You know, I love a book with a plucky heroine. This is if Kate Morton were a little pluckier.

Kaytee Cobb 09:17

All right. I like that. I'm excited about that one. And I was excited to hear from you about it.

Mary Heim 09:21

Yay.

Kaytee Cobb 09:22

Okay, my reads this week, Mary, I am so excited about my reads this week, they are just going to get better and better. And I really liked the first one. So that should tell you, we're going to have a good week here. So my first book this week was "New York" by Edward Rutherford, which does not sound like something Kaytee would be interested in. So this was my brick for September because I'm doing

my 12 bricks in '20 challenge. It's like 868 pages. But I picked it up on audio right before I drove to and from Arizona to visit my parents and I listened really fast on audio. So I finished the whole thing in two days, basically, one day driving there, one day driving back already done with an 800 page book. So it worked out great. I binge read 900 pages.

Mary Heim 10:06

Very efficient.

Kaytee Cobb 10:09

It was amazing. So it starts in the 1600s, in what becomes New York State with a Dutch tradesman, his Native American daughter, and then follows his descendants through 400 years, staying within basically New York City or what becomes New York City. We get to watch the city develop, we get to experience the Revolutionary War. So hello Hamilton fans take note because those chapters are so fun when you get to like, like hear about Yorktown and General George Washington at like, it's like, bringing it to life where the citizens but they would have been doing during the entire musical. I loved it. So yeah, so then we hit like the Civil War, various historical events all the way through. The story, I will say it does not do a great job at the diversity of our country, right? Like we have the "I'm a happy slave who loves my master, for he is so good to me" trope, which I hate. It drives me bonkers. And, and that's like, one of the only black characters in this entire book is this like happy slave. So. But from that selective white wealthy lens, we see history depicted in this way that, you know, it feels epic, because it's 400 years, and it's 900 pages, but it just flows so quickly from one generation to the other from one event to the next. And it feels really real and organic. And I really, really enjoyed it. So this was 37 hours on audio. But I just I really loved the entire thing.

Mary Heim 11:41

That sounds excellent.

Kaytee Cobb 11:43

It was so good. So that was "New York" by Edward Rutherford. All right, what's your second book?

Mary Heim 11:49

Okay, my second book this week is a sequel. And the first... this is "A Beautifully Foolish Endeavor" by Hank Green. And this is the follow up to "An Absolutely Remarkable Thing." Now, I'm going to do my best not to spoil anything from the first book with plugging the second one. But if you're not familiar with "An Absolutely Remarkable Thing," we were introduced to April, kind of this unintentional social media maven, who breaks the news of these giant alien structures that have landed in our world as we know it, right. So all of a sudden, one day in New York City, these giant metal, we're assuming extraterrestrial structures end up in New York City and nobody's really sure what they are or what's going on. The first book really follows through April's path, April's story of what the heck is going on. She like rockets to fame, having been the first person to introduce, they refer to them as the Carls. So it's following her trajectory. It is a really great social commentary on social media and technology, and the world that we are living in all while being really pop culturally relevant spunky reads like, like, popcorn, like, I just wanted to keep consuming it. It was really fun to read. But also, you know, dealt with some stuff.

Mary Heim 13:10

So this is the follow up. And again, we're we dig right into the aftermath of what happens at the end of book one. And book one wraps up nicely, but has a last few lines that just leave you in stunned silence of like "OMG. WTF. What just happened?" So if you read that first book, and you were like, ready for book number two, perfect timing, or if you haven't read book one, but it sounds up your alley, have book two ready to go so that you can dive right into it. So, in this story, Hank Green, the author is really asking us to reckon with science and big corporations and technology taking over our lives. I read it and I just kept thinking, Oh, my God, this is so timely. Like it's a little bit scary. But it's light enough. Yes, yep. Light enough that it doesn't make you feel completely terrible about your complicitness in you know, the life that we were living. But it is all still packaged in this really super snackable story. That just it was just propulsive. I just wanted to keep going forever.

Mary Heim 14:15

And it is amazing on audio. In the like aftermath notes, Hank Green talks about how audio is his favorite medium. And it was really important to him to record like a full cast performance that was more than just a reading, but something that felt like you were consuming a performance and they knocked it out of the park. If you know Hank Green, he's popular on YouTube. And he makes a surprise little guest spot in the audio, which is super fun. And I wish now that I could go back and maybe I will read book one on audio because it would be so fun to see what he does with the story in that one as well. But if you really like sci-fi, that maybe doesn't necessarily put you way out in space, but asks you to kind of live in this world that we're living in right now. But just with some adjustments, I thought it was really, really fun really made me think. And was one of those books that I finished and I was immediately running up to my husband like you have to read this book. You have to. We have to talk about it. So that was "A Beautifully Foolish Endeavor" by Hank Green.

Kaytee Cobb 15:19

Now, is it clear if it goes to a book three after this, or is it just a duology?

Mary Heim 15:24

I believe it does. But now I'm second guessing. I. I think that I honestly, I wish I could tell you I can't remember exactly how it ends. Oh, boy, I think it does. I think it's part of a trilogy. But I'll report back.

Kaytee Cobb 15:38

I'll put it in show notes if I figure that out while I'm writing those up. And if for anybody who's interested or like if it's tickling your brain a little bit, Meredith has talked about this as a current read, not this one. She talks about "An Absolutely Remarkable Thing" as a current read, and she like wanted to throw it against the wall. I really enjoyed it. And Mary apparently loved it. So we have the whole gamut of people like you can feel any which way about a book and it's totally fine over here, so...

Mary Heim 16:05

Yes, you can still be bookish friends and have vastly different opinions of what you how you feel about your reads.

Kaytee Cobb 16:14

Correct. Correct. Okay, speaking of friends, my second book this week is called "Big Friendship" by Ann Friedman and Aminatou Sow. This book, I want to hug this book. I loved this book. I listened to it on Scribd after our bookish friend, Abbey Lile-Taylor, told the Facebook group (now we have two groups, and we have to differentiate between our bookish friends groups) that she thought one of narrators sounded like me. So she was like, hey, if anybody feels like you want Kaytee to read you an audiobook, definitely pick this one up. I was like, "I want me to read me an audiobook, maybe?" So I think that hearing your own voice is different, so when I picked it up, I didn't have the feeling that I was talking to myself in my ear, which is probably for the best, but I did really enjoy it. So these two women co-host the Call Your Girlfriend Podcast, which I had not listened to prior to picking up this book. So I didn't have that as my baseline coming in. But I've since listened to a couple episodes, it's kind of a weekly chat check in between the two of them. It's kind of the chit chat and the current events that you're not getting here on currently reading. If you want girlfriends that are chatting with each other, you can go pop over there, and listen to them. If you want books, you come over here to us.

Kaytee Cobb 17:27

So this book chronicles their interracial friendship, and its challenges and successes from its inception, from the moment they met all the way to current day. They go into research behind friendship itself, and how it's commonly undervalued in our society, which that part really like hit me in the feels because we have legal designations for spouses and partners and children and family. But friendship is not legally recognized, even though oftentimes friendship is a more powerful or more immediate force than some of those other relationships in our lives. So I really, I love the way that they kind of examine the way that friendship can grow and change as we enter new life stages or as we move closer together or further apart from each other. I listen to this one, right after spending a weekend with a friend that has been very dear to me for about six years, but we've only lived we've lived apart from each other now for four. So getting to go and spend that time with her and maintaining this friendship from a distance. And then reading this book about how important friendship is in our lives and how much friends bring to the table for us and how they can, you know, call us to a higher something in our lives. It was just it was so powerful and so meaningful to me. And it just it really felt profound and lovely. And I just adored it. So that was "Big Friendship" by Ann Friedman and Aminatou Sow.

Mary Heim 18:53

That sounds so perfect. I think I really need to add that one to my TBR like stat. I love that. I think especially right now we're all kind of reckoning with these new ways of friendship. Yes, in the time of physical distancing and that sounds perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 19:08

Yeah, I think it came out at a really good time because it was like this summer so people were already kind of, well now I've been distant even for my very close friends for months. Right? So what does friendship mean? And what does it look like to us? So it was really good.

Mary Heim 19:22

Beautiful. Okay, adding to my list. Love it.

Kaytee Cobb 19:25

What's your third book Mary?

Mary Heim 19:27

All right. My final book this week is "A Monster Calls." This book is by Patrick Ness. With I'm going to say with author Siobhan Dowd. So, this book had been sitting on my shelf for literal years I have been avoiding it because everyone and their mother on Goodreads it says to read it with a box of Kleenex and be ready to sob forever and ever. Which I'll be honest with you, I was just not... didn't sound like a fun time. I've been needing a little... I normally I do. I think that I I've just been through, you know, like a very like kind of world-rocking couple years with like becoming a mom. And I'm like, I need something like I need escapism, I need something light. But this book is very short. I think it's technically couched as middle grade. But I will give a little bit of a cautionary warning later on about that designation, but it was a very, very quick I read it in a day, which is unusual for me now.

Mary Heim 20:22

But here is the setup. So this book is about our young protagonist, Connor, is watching his mother go through cancer treatments, and kind of has been doing so for a while. We jump into the story when she's really ill. One night, a monster like a literal monster of the earth, comes up at like his oldest time shows up outside his house. And he is like Connor admits that he's been having these nightmares and he's not sure if this is real or not. But this monster says that he is coming because he has to tell Connor three stories. And at the end of this time telling him these three stories, he expects Connor to tell him a fourth. And he says that, you know, that's Connor has to tell the truth, he has to tell the story of the truth. Connor - that terrifies him to no end so you kind of are going through. There's this intensely kind of magical realism realism of this monster, we have the very real trauma and tragedy of watching his mother go through cancer treatments, just kind of normal school year and stuff of bullies and broken friendships and trying to reckon with such big things in your life as a tween and, and we really see him grapple with all of that. I finished this book on the couch next to my husband hiccuping with tears. It was devastating. But it was so beautiful. I really wanted to hug it.

Mary Heim 21:54

And it was not the kind of book that wrecks you just to wreck you. It was the kind of book that a) it was probably like the emotional catharsis we all need right now. Like it was a great way to channel some big feelings out into some, some great tears. But it was a really like redemptive, beautiful, lovely story. I it was just so special. And the really cool thing. This story itself was conceived by the author Siobhan Dowd or by Siobhan Dowd. She was a writer. While she was battling her own illness, but she actually never had a chance to write it. And as she knew she was entering terminal stages of her illness. She went to Patrick Ness, who is he's written quite a few other books, I think has done a lot of YA. And she asked him to write this story, put her story to paper, and posthumously on her behalf and he wrote the story of like having just kind of the outline conceived by her. So I think it's such a cool when you have a little bit of that backstory too, of how this story came to be. It's all the more powerful, I would certainly, while it reads like middle grade in that it's very quick. It's got those big old margins around the side, and we have kind of a middle grade protagonist. I say older middle grade, or maybe read it as a parent first and see knowing your your kiddo's emotional intelligence if it's a good fit for them or not, because it's it's heavy, but it also would be an incredible way to start to discuss some of those big heavy emotions

like grief and not feeling like you fit in and dealing with kind of those own, you know, monsters that we all start to kind of awaken to as we get older and older. So really beautiful. Really glad that I read it even though I've been putting it off forever. That was "A Monster Calls" by Patrick Ness.

Kaytee Cobb 23:41

Oh, that sounds like a good one. I feel like I want to read it. But it has to be the right time. Okay, so that one pairs pretty well with my third book as well.

Kaytee Cobb 23:50

So my third book this week is called "My Storied Year" and it's by Katie Proctor. And this is a personal book for me because Katie is a bookish friend, but she's also a real life friend for me. So we've met, we've hugged, we've spent time together and our kids have played together and they love each other. And, you know, like, we just have had a lot of fun together had a lot of conversations. And so I was a little bit nervous about the idea of picking up a book written by somebody that I genuinely know and care about and love in real life. Because it could, it could go wrong, right? Like it could not be what I wanted or not be what I hoped for. And what if I didn't love it? So how would I tell her? Well, you guys, I can put those doubts to rest because I will have to figure out that situation some other time. This was not it. I adored this book. I picked it up as a galley from Katie directly. Within just a few pages of starting it, I went online and ordered my pre ordered with my own money, a paper copy because I knew that my oldest son would love it. So I wanted it for our shelves. So Katie is telling us the story of Dragon. That's his name. I know, it's fine, just go with it. He's a middle grader who's often angry, often set back in school in his work. He's trying not to show how difficult his life is. And it is difficult. It's difficult at home, where he struggles with food insecurity and a sick mother. It's difficult at school, where he struggles with dyslexia and bullying from his classmates. It's just, it's a lot on poor dragon shoulders. This year, though, as he enters school, again, like looking down the road and thinking this is just going to be another horrible mess. He is just surrounded by this wonderful cadre of teachers who, especially his delightful English writing teacher, I love her, all of whom just love him really well. And his group of friends that and they they stretch him and they asked him to grow in big ways that he couldn't have imagined at the beginning of the school year. The end of this book, and the author's now had me smashing my face into the pillow and sobbing. Because I you just can't help you cannot help but fall for dragon and the story or his siblings and his teachers and his classmates. Each one of them will just capture your heart in their own way and you and your child probably - or just you because adults can read middle grade and that's totally fine - will just have your heart grow three sizes like the Grinch from having read this one. So yes, Katie is a dear friend. And yes, you might think oh, well, maybe Kaytee's not bringing like her full objectivity to this review because of that. But I would tell you this anyway, please pick it up. You will love it. It's fantastic. It's "My Storied Year" by Katie Proctor.

Kaytee Cobb 24:29

And add to TBR

Kaytee Cobb 26:40

Oh, it's so good, Mary. I just want everybody to read it. It's so good. It's just delightful. I just loved it. Alright, let's do another transition. We are going to move into our deep dive for the day, which we conceived together based on the fact that Meredith has just started releasing her new episodes of what

she has affectionately termed "All Things Murderful with Meredith." We have gained a bunch of patrons from that. And that's been great. But some people are like, "I will listen to this, but I will never read any of those books. Because murder is scary."

Mary Heim 27:15

Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 27:16

So, based on that, I went to you and we were getting ready for this episode. And I said Mary, you have a whole Instagram highlight devoted to spooey season. I can't we talk about that on the podcast, please. And you were like heck to the Yes.

Mary Heim 27:28

Heck, yes, we can.

Kaytee Cobb 27:31

Alright, so let's get started. First, let's what is what is spooey? What does that even mean? Is it poopy?

Mary Heim 27:38

It is. No, it is not poopy. Although I think that's part of what makes it so fun to say. Right? It feels like you're getting away with something. Okay, so I actually did my research, because I was like, "What is, like, where is the beginning of spooey?" This is an internet meme that I think has been around and has been so co-opted by so many different people that there's not even really one definition for spooey anymore. I think some people take it and grab it and make it be full on spooky season. Like, you know, murder, "The Shining," you're seeing the scariest books you can imagine maybe some people to them, that's spooey, but the way that I see spooey is that it's like maybe gives me chills, but doesn't keep me up at night. Or it's kind of spooky, but it's a little self-aware or it's just a touch goofy, or you know, it's a little bit satirical or a little bit silly, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. I have books today that fit into that category of like a little goofy, scary, and some others that are like will kind of give you those spooky haunted Halloween vibes without being terrifying, because I'm not a fan of being terrified. I do like some spooky stories, though. So this kind of fits perfectly in that if "All Things Murderful with Meredith" is a little bit outside of your wheelhouse or you're not going to pick up the books that she recommends just because of your own sensitivity around spooky books, then spooey books should hopefully be for you.

Kaytee Cobb 29:09

Yay. Okay, so mostly we're avoiding gore right?

Mary Heim 29:14

Gore.

Kaytee Cobb 29:14

Definitely no gore. What else?

Mary Heim 29:16

I would say, you know, like really horror. You know, some maybe like I'm thinking Southern Vampire's Guide ("The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires") maybe could fall into a little bit spooky because even though I would say that would be probably as far as I would push the boundaries because it does have some gore and horror but we're staying away from really heavy horror, really gory, really like kind of over the top unnecessarily scary. We're kind of right in that happy little middle ground.

Kaytee Cobb 29:44

So you kind of said that there are like categories of spooky. So do you have like a first category you want to give us?

Mary Heim 29:51

Yeah, let's start out nice, nice and easy. Light, maybe even geared towards a younger audience. But still enjoyable for older readers, I have two that I think fit really well in this category. And these might be some of my favorite ones on the list today. So the first one I've actually talked about in a previous episode it was before I was a regular co host or regular rotating co host. The book is "City of Ghosts" by Victoria Schwab, who also goes as VE Schwab, for her adult novels. This is spooky Scotland atmosphere, we've got this plucky there's that word again, middle grade heroine, you've got ghosts, but you're not going to develop a complex after reading. Next, we have our protagonist Cassidy Blake, her parents are ghost hunters, they take her to Scotland to film their ghostly TV show, and then you know, kind of spookiness ensues is there's this Scottish ghost to the comes to light she's got a you know, we have these great really kind of fun friendship between her and her BFF who actually is a ghost.

Mary Heim 30:51

So I will say that this book genuinely gave me chills when it got to some of the scarier parts, but was not terrifying. It's also because I'm a little bit of a baby. So I'm sure this is perfectly appropriate, older middle grade, YA, but I was genuinely a little spooked by a ghost. But we have this fun sense of place. You know, these kind of snarky teens, pre-teen protagonists that made it ultimately not all that scary, but enough that I would like I listened to this on audio, it's a great audio then I would just kind of be walking through the neighborhood with the fall leaves falling down and I get kind of that tingly like wounds or someone behind me kind of kind of vibe. So I would say that's kind of like on the beginning of the gradient of spooky spooky.

Kaytee Cobb 31:37

Okay, well, I have two that are kind of middle grade that I was kind of curious if they fit into the spooky vibe. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about them. So the first one is "Sweep: A Girl and Her Monster" by Jonathan Auxier. And we've got kind of a like, there's just a little bit of spookiness there in that there's a piece of charcoal that kind of comes to life as a golum. Nan is our main character. She's a chimney sweep in Victorian England. So her job is kind of dangerous. And she's got this kind of monster following her around and kind of making sure she's safe and sometimes defending her and so I wasn't sure if that would count or if that's just fantasy, middle grade. And Kaytee, what are you even talking about?

Mary Heim 32:19

You know, I think that counts because I have a couple books on this list today that fall a little bit more into the fantasy kind of fairy tale retelling a little magical. I think that that's certainly spooky it's more about the vibe, like yes, that's what I want to listen to in October, right. I think that counts.

Kaytee Cobb 32:35

Okay. And then so my second one is definitely more than that. It's the Lockwood and Company series, which starts with "The Screaming Staircase" by Jonathan Stroud. This is a Victorian England again, is that spooky, just Victorian England, by itself?

Mary Heim 32:48

Definitely. It's a spooky time period.

Kaytee Cobb 32:51

That's very gray all the time. It's kind of foggy at night, right? Gaslights, you can't really see very much. So in this world, there are ghosts, and the only people who can really see them and fight them are children because as you grow, you lose your ability to sense them. So this is like a ghost hunting Ghostbuster-y group of kids that has to fight ghosts and get rid of them and Victorian England and it definitely there were times that I was like, "Hooo!" it is a little creepy for a middle grader especially, but it never kept me from sleeping, so...

Mary Heim 33:23

Sure. That sounds right up my spooky alley.

Kaytee Cobb 33:27

Perfect. Okay, what's your next category?

Mary Heim 33:30

Okay, so my next category, I'm going to do a little bit YA. I feel like this is where things could get a little bit darker, but aren't necessarily like super, super spooky, scary. And so one that kind of falls a little bit more on the light end is a graphic novel by Rainbow Rowell, "Pumpkinheads," that came out last year, that again, I don't even know if I would necessarily catch this this as spooky at all other than it takes place in a pumpkin patch. We have this kind of these two young friends who have worked together on this pumpkin patch forever. And it's really this like hapdash adventure and you are hitting all of the best things that we love about this time of year, right? You've got like autumnal snacks and hay rides and it's night time and there's rivalries, it's a really fun escape into kind of that autumnal vibe that might not necessarily be spooky in and of itself, but I think it would be a good primer. You can read it in an afternoon, you know, on a cozy day with the windows open under a blanket and prime yourself for some really, really spooky reads. Um, which I'm going to jump right into my next one from that because I think a great follow up would be anything in this category of Sherlock Holmes reimagination books, right? Reimagining Sherlock Holmes. So the first one I'm going to recommend is "A Study in Charlotte" by Brittany Cavallaro. And it kind of is like a pairing. I'm going to go with the Lady Sherlock series. By Sherry Thomas, so these two are vastly different in tone. A Study in Charlotte is a lot more modern. We have this protagonist Charlotte Holmes, who, you know struggles a lot with, you know, much of what

plagues Sherlock Holmes, has drug issues and all sorts of like. We have a complex a very complex heroine. And our Lady Sherlock series is more Victorian, again, very spooky time period. But both of these do a really good job of kind of capturing that Hound of the Baskervilles feeling of like, something kind of scary is going on here, something a little bit otherworldly. And take that and turn it on its head in a really, you know, kind of gender-bendy feminist reimaged way with two female Sherlocks. And they have just enough of a bit of a chill a little bit of a ghostly vibe. I think in particular, the third book of the Lady Sherlock series is a bit of a riff on the Headless Horseman. So that one's very October-adjacent, which is fun, but I would say these will kind of give you those chill kind of murderly Sherlocky vibes, but again, they're not going to terrify you. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 36:13

I like that. I've read both of those. And I have "Pumpkinheads" on my TBR. So I'm excited about that one.

Mary Heim 36:17

It's so fun. It's a really fun one, you'll speed through it and it will make you want to go get a cup of cider.

Kaytee Cobb 36:22

Perfect. All right, what's our next category?

Mary Heim 36:26

Okay, so I'm going to take our next category to classic spoopiness. I think you know, honestly, and I haven't read a lot in the horror genre anyways, so I know that there are plenty of classics that could be couched as horror, but I think that some of the classics do a really good job of being spooey without being really spooky. So two that I think do this super well. The first one, of course, is by our queen, Agatha Christie, "And Then There Were None." Me I mean, really Need I say more. We have this motley crew of characters that's been brought to an island one by one, they're ending up murdered from the queen of spooey mysteries herself, it is solidly in maybe she's not the queen of spooey mysteries!

Kaytee Cobb 37:14

I wonder how she would feel about that marker on her tombstone.

Mary Heim 37:18

Agatha might be turning in her grave if she heard me call her "the queen of spooey mysteries," but it is excellent in that will give you chills, gets your heart racing a little bit. It feels very, you know, like, just it's she's got a great, she's really propelling you forward in the story in the spookiness, but you're not going to be up all night long thinking that that you know ghost is gonna knock down your door and murder you. So, I think many Agatha books could fall in that category. But "And Then There Were None" is a really good one.

Kaytee Cobb 37:51

Okay.

Mary Heim 37:52

Um, next in the classics we have. Now this is I think, going to be a contentious pick. Because I know that a lot of people have big feelings about "Jane Eyre," but I'm going to put it in this list. And I am going to tell you very explicitly, not just any copy of "Jane Eyre," it is the audiobook version read by Thandie Newton. So this one had been on my list forever and ever and ever. And I just thought, Man, I'm never going to be motivated to pick up this tome of a classic. Thandie Newton does an incredible job again, performing this audio book if you're I mean, most people are familiar in this I guess with the story behind "Jane Eyre," but we have this what's going on in attic? Something is here in this scary old house in there's, you know, feelings of ghosts and fires and things are happening. She does, her narration is unmatched. She does a beautiful job of performing the story. It is perfect for those creepy chills on your spine feelings. And if you find the plot a little dull at times, because it is a very long book. When you listen on audio, you can just kind of speed it up to two or two and a half speed and zone out a little bit until you get to the good parts again. So I'm gonna say right there. Those are two great classics that will give you those spooopy vibes again without keeping you up all night long.

Kaytee Cobb 39:12

All right. Okay, so I those kind of lean into a couple that I had questions about again. So Kate Morton also does some kind of like ghostly big house kind of haunty stuff. Is she more like Gothic or she spooopy? Is she? Where is she?

Mary Heim 39:31

I feel like I put Kate Morton more in Gothic, purely because I certainly think that you could make a case that she's a great author to read in these September, October times. But I feel more a little bit more like the pace of her novels is a little bit more leaning towards a gothic novel. But really if you tried to get me to hold that up in a court of law, I don't know that I think a great case for it. I will tell you probably the thing. That is the most compelling reason for me to say Gothic novels because I love that I'm neutral on Kate Morton's books. And I will say if the Gothic novels are typically not my jam.

Kaytee Cobb 40:10

Right.

Mary Heim 40:11

So, I am going to go ahead and say, maybe Gothic just because you have a lot of that sense of place a lot of this kind of very slow foreboding. That fits very nicely into fall read. I think I go a little more graphic than spooopy. But I still think it'd be a good choice for those who know that that's what they like to read.

Kaytee Cobb 40:31

Okay, how about "The Thirteenth Tale" by Diane Setterfield?

Mary Heim 40:35

Oh, I think that women perfectly toes the line between both right, because we know that thirteenth tale is like very classically Gothic, Gothic novel. But I think that Diane Setterfield does a great job with the plot that she keeps it moving. And that, you know, it's not just we're kind of simmering in this, you know, waiting period forever, things really move along in that book. And I think there's like very blatant kind of

spooky themes that are a little bit more not heavy-handed, just like present, prevalent. Um, so I think I'd say that one probably can happily fit in either camp, but I'd hand that to a reader for spooky season. I think so.

Kaytee Cobb 41:15

Okay, fair. Did you have some that you want to round us out with and finish us off with?

Mary Heim 41:20

Yeah, let's finish us off with, um, one that, you know, I don't know. Well, here let me just say before I finish us up two books I really spoken about on the podcast before, "Truly Devious," and "Magic for Liars," I think fit great into our spooky season choices. "Magic for Liars" is a little bit. I think I said it's like Harry Potter meets Tana French. That one is like campus novel, you know, witches we have these very witchy vibes. But there also is there is a murder. So it's a little bit more grisly that probably lands on the spoozier side, the spooziest side of the spectrum. And, and "Truly Devious," again, those campus novel vibes, there's been a murder. It's got this great sense of place, but really, things kind of keep rolling along. You're a little spooked out. You're creeped out by what's happening. We see, you know, ransom notes being sent and things being projected on walls. So it's a little scary, but again, not scare your pants off scary.

Kaytee Cobb 42:19

Gotcha.

Mary Heim 42:20

Um, so Okay, let's finish it off with something that maybe we wouldn't have necessarily thought of for spooky season, but I'm going to pick "Rules of Magic" by Alice Hoffman. Have you read this one, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 42:31

I have not. No. I haven't read any of this series.

Mary Heim 42:34

Of that series. Okay. Yes. So this is a prequel to "Practical Magic," which I also do think that I haven't read her newest one, which is like the prequel of the prequels. But I could say you could put either "Rules of Magic" or "Practical Magic" in this kind of spooky season category. I think we've got this great kind of multi-generational story of this family of witches. We've got I think this setting is if it's not in Salem, they definitely have some ties to Salem, very all of these kind of classic Halloweeny elements that you have, you know, come to think of in you know, October Halloween books. But really doing a great job of exploring this family drama, we have these kind of witchy go see slightly scary elements. But also if you're like, "Listen this I don't want to read about ghosts, Mary" or "I don't want to read middle grade novels about teenage ghost hunters." This is I think your wheelhouse for spooky season is grab "Rules of Magic," grab "Practical Magic," give yourself a little bit of a, you know, a nice little spooky pairing and dig into the Owens sisters and their witchy history. I think that this would be again, maybe not, maybe not the scariest, but a really fun one to get you into those Halloween vibes. That's how I'll round out my list.

Kaytee Cobb 43:56

I like that. Very nice. All right. Well, that was a broad swath of spoopiness for all your spooopy needs. I feel like now it's my turn to get that word in as many times as possible.

Mary Heim 44:08

Just get it out. Do you feel, Kaytee, like you have a better understanding of spooopy?

Kaytee Cobb 44:13

I do, and I now I'm starting to think through some other books that I've read. And and I feel like now I'm gonna be messaging you like, Well, what about this one? Does this count? How about this? And maybe I'll make my own Instagram highlight.

Mary Heim 44:23

Oh, all right. I will be waiting with bated breath. I'd really will.

Kaytee Cobb 44:28

All right, let's press some books. Mary. What, what kind of spoopiness we have for this section? Did you bring some spooopy for us?

Mary Heim 44:35

I did. Indeed. This one I feel like is the creme de la creme of my spoopiness. I'm really excited to press this book. Now. I will say I think we have spoken about I believe it was Meredith but I might be wrong. This group trio of authors previous novel. This is "My Plain Jane" by Cynthia Hand, Jodi Meadows, and Brody Ashton. So they previously wrote "My Lady Jane." Which is, oh, jeez, I'm not even going to go into go into the details on that one because it's been a while since I read it. But this is a reimagining of "Jane Eyre." So we have this trio of authors writing about it's a YA retelling. I certainly do think that it's helpful to have some Jane Eyre knowledge going into it, I think this is going to be you're going to have more context and it's going to feel really fun when you're catching all these easter eggs from the original Jane. And if you haven't read it, maybe now's a great time to pick up a OG Jane on audio and follow it up with this one. But we have these teenage ghosts these spunky pop culture references.

Mary Heim 45:39

A really something I really liked about this version of Jane Eyre is that we take a really critical eye of all the kind of inappropriate gendered issues that did not age well from the original Jane Eyre, and totally turn them on their head reimagine them with this really great feminist slant. It was a delight to read, I flew through it. I think it has very moderate ratings on Goodreads, but you know I crave a good like I every year I'm like "Ooh, I could really go for a Jane Eyre reread." But I do not feel like I have time to devote to that long of a book on audio when I already don't have a commute to listen to anymore. So this was a great way for me to get those Jane Eyre vibes, but in something that I just did not want to put down felt really current and modern, but also super fun. And just had all sorts of delightful callbacks to the classics, but in a really modern way. And I think the voice of this trio of authors is unmatched. They do a really great job of making their reading, just really fun and engaging to read. And if you are at all a Jane Eyre fan, or even if it just sounds like "I've always wanted to read it, but I don't want to pick up the

original," give this one a shot because I thought it was just a delight. And in preparing my notes for today, I thought I should go re-read that. I love that book so much. So I would love to hear I feel like I don't see a lot about it. So I'd love to hear if anybody else has given this one a read and loves it as much as I do.

Kaytee Cobb 47:11

Nice. I have not read either of those yet. So, onto the TBR.

Mary Heim 47:15

Maybe this year, maybe this spooky season. What are you pressing this week, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 47:20

Okay, this was the most confident I was about my spooky book knowledge. When I was going through you're trying to figure out if I even had anything to contribute to this deep dive. I was like, looking through some book list and finding some scary stuff. And I was like, No, none of those are what we're looking for. But I did find "The Ocean at the End of the Lane" by Neil Gaiman. And this book came up, you know, when I was looking for spooky book recs, and it was behind stuff like "It" by Stephen King and like, "Pet Sematary." And I was like, um, I don't think that's what Mary's talking about here. But this one, I'm gonna try my hand at spookiness here. So this is the first book of Neil Gaiman's that I read and it was some seven odd years ago it was released in 2013. And that's when I marked it read on Goodreads was sometime in 2013. We are in Sussex, England, and our protagonist is returning home for a funeral to the house that he lived in as a young boy, the house is no longer there. But his neighbor's house is and so is the lake that's at the end of the lane. The little girl who used to live in that house, told him that that lake is actually an ocean. As this middle aged man sits on the edge of this lake slash ocean. He remembers his childhood and all the incredible events that transpired and this story has some ghostiness it's very atmospheric. It's beautifully done and it's pretty short. It's only 181 pages. Neil Gaiman is a sure hand at the till when it comes to creating these like fantastic storylines where you feel like you have dived in to this Ocean at the End of the Lane. You can read this in a single weekend and it will get you a little bit goose-bumpy but not scared. And if you've never read Gaiman before, this is a great place to start. So I really loved it. It's that fantasy real world crossover that I love and that is "The Ocean at the End of the Lane" by Neil Gaiman.

Mary Heim 49:20

That is an excellent choice. I love it. That one. Yeah, that is that is peak spookiness. And it's really, really good on audio. That's how I read it. And it was a fun one. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 49:30

Oh, good. I'm so glad. I think in 2013 I was not really into my audiobook mastery that I have now. So I don't think that I knew that but I'm glad to hear that it is excellent.

Kaytee Cobb 49:40

All right, that's it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me, Kaytee, @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, and Meredith is @meredith.reads.

Mary Heim 49:49

And you can find me @maryreadsandsips on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 49:53

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

Mary Heim 50:02

You can also contact us directly @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram, or via email at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Kaytee Cobb 50:10

If you guys really want to help us, you know this, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts. But even better shout us out on social media. It makes a huge difference in our being able to find the perfect audience for the podcast.

Mary Heim 50:21

Yes, a recommendation from you to your bookish friend is the absolute best way to pass along your love of this podcast to others and help us grow.

Kaytee Cobb 50:29

Alright, until next week. Happy reading, Mary.

Mary Heim 50:32

Happy reading, Kaytee.