



Season 3, Episode 46: Backlist Goodness + The Low-Down on Summer Reading Guides

Mon, 6/28 • 44:43

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 already know, we don't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Mindy Brouse 00:23

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're gonna press books into your hand.

Kaytee Cobb 00:34

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and I am ready for summer reading.

Mindy Brouse 00:40

And I Mindy Brouse, a mom of seven reading and hiking in the mountains in New Mexico. And I think book bingeing a theme can be super fun in unexpected ways. This is episode number 46 of season three, and we're so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:54

Hi, Mindy. I'm excited to record with you today.

Mindy Brouse 00:57

Hi, Kaytee. I'm excited too. I love talking books with you guys.

Kaytee Cobb 01:01

And we love talking books with you too. And, you know, we've been kind of playing this up over the last few weeks. But I just want to do a quick announcement right here at the top to remind everybody, this is actually our last regular season episode of season three, we have three more bonus episodes coming. We call them our "very special episodes for the end of the season". And then we're gonna take a one week break. So only one week off for you guys. But we are about to start our big long summer break. And I'm very excited for some summer reading.

Mindy Brouse 01:29

I loved hearing about what you guys are going to be doing during your summer break. I love that. That's great.

Kaytee Cobb 01:34

Yeah, we'll see if any of that actually happens. Today, what we're going to talk about for our deep dive, is we're going to do a summer reading guide overview slash deep dive. And I'm really excited to talk about just the best ways to make sure that your feet are firmly planted underneath you for summer reading. I know we have some southern hemisphere listeners and to you I say be cozy and warm while we talk about summer reading in the Northern Hemisphere. Let's get started the way that we always do Mindy, which is with our Bookish Moment of the Week. What do you have for us?

Mindy Brouse 02:05

Alright, my bookish moment is that this past week, several times Jubilee, our youngest, she's almost six, she has Down syndrome, she came and woke me up with books under her arm. She's kind of barely awake. She's really, really sleepy looking. But she just walked up and taps me and said morning, and she's just standing there. And I was like, wait, it's 6:30. And I said, Do you want me to read a book? She goes, yes. I was just so excited. Because she does. She's always loved to sit and read. And she'll bring us books, but she's never wanted to start her day like that and kind of decided to be pretty persistently aggressive about by waking me up with some books. It was wonderful. I loved I'm gonna read to her no matter what time of day. So I think she knows that.

Kaytee Cobb 02:50

Yes, that's something my kids know as well. And I will say reading out loud to Jubilee is one of my favorite things to so...

Mindy Brouse 02:58

She does love Kaytee book time.

Kaytee Cobb 03:00

I like sending you guys videos of me reading to my kids and Noah and Onalee love reading with Jubilee, it's really great. My bookish moment this week is kind of a teaser, because this thing is going to happen during our summer break. So I found out that before we come back for season four, my library will be open again. And I will be able to walk in and browse the shelves and touch the books and talk to librarians and sit on the steps in the children's area while my kids browse and read my own book. I'm just so excited to get back into those doors and get to have library moments. Again, all of it. I'm just thrilled. I'm just thrilled. So that's happening on July 7, coming right up. But I won't be doing bookish moments for a few weeks here because of summer break. So I really wanted to get this in there now.

Mindy Brouse 03:49

And that'll probably be a bookish moment for your librarians also because I bet they've missed you and your kids a lot.

Kaytee Cobb 03:56

I think they have like, like plexiglass, you know, as we did book pickups over the past few months, but we haven't gotten to go in there and hang out with them. So I'm hoping they missed us. We'll see.

Mindy Brouse 04:07

They will they will. That will be great.

Kaytee Cobb 04:09

Let's talk about some current reads. Mindy, what is your first current read this week?

Mindy Brouse 04:13

So I recently needed like a feel good crying book. You know how sometimes you get one of those moods and you're just like, I need a book that's gonna feel good and also have some crying. Definitely crying at the end. You can just tell by the cover that you know that's going to happen. And I really needed that. So when I was scrolling I was looking through Scribd trying to find something for a road trip and I saw a dog on a cover Kaytee Hmm, we all know what that means. And

Kaytee Cobb 04:40

sobbing,

Mindy Brouse 04:40

sobbing and it was super highly rated like four and a half stars. So I was like, oh, okay, well, that sounds good. So I picked it up. This is The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein.

Kaytee Cobb 04:51

I love this book.

Mindy Brouse 04:54

So much (inaudible) I totally stumbled across it. We have a main character and this book is from Enzo's point of view the entire book and so is a dog. I brought you a book before that was front told from a dog's perspective, another time and it was, it was a little darker, a lot darker.

Kaytee Cobb 05:12

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time?

Mindy Brouse 05:14

No, I also brought that one. But yes, I also read an apocalyptic one. And anyway, but this is not bad. This is Enzo. He's a lab. He's so fantastic. But the best part and the reason I immediately knew I was gonna read this entire book is sometimes you can tell in the beginning, you're like, ehh, this is gonna be way too cheesy or whatever. But so his point of view is so epically hilarious on all things that happen in a home. told from a dog's perspective. My favorite scene is so great. I laughed so many times, but this scene where he destroys some stuffed animals, but it's what happened, according to him. And it definitely wasn't him destroying all those stuffed animals, even though he was the only living thing in the house for three days, right, yeah. And so is so funny, like so, so funny. But also so precious. He loves

his human so much. And I really was sold on this book, from the point of view, being funny, but also because this wasn't just a cute dog story. This has some hard topics. And there's a loss. The father, his human, has to suffer persecution and some of what I would call a dad's nightmare, or having to walk through in his life. And Enzo is there the entire time. And I, this just checkbox, everything, feel good, love, support all these beautiful things told from a dog. And of course, there's a dog on the cover. So yeah, there's crying at the end. Like, that's not a spoiler. Everyone knows if there's a dog on the cover there, you will be crying. I'm so glad I read it. If you're looking for something sweet, but also, hard topics like these are not easy things that his human walks through and told from the point of view of a dog who's always at your side, or at your child's side. Oh, my Yeah, let's bring it on. So I loved it. And that was *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein.

Kaytee Cobb 07:18

I read that book probably at least 10 years ago. And Jason I still quote a line from it to each other. When we get our cars washed or wash our cars, we say "rain isn't dirty, dirt is dirty". And we still say that to each other all these many years later. And I know it's from that book.

Mindy Brouse 07:36

Yeah, it's a backlist. This is a 2011 book. And I had not stumbled on it. And now it's a movie and it has one of my very favorite actors. Milo Ventimiglia, Ventimiglia from *This Is Us*. Yes, please. So yeah, I haven't seen it. But when I was telling my sister about it, because she loves dogs, she was like, Oh, I saw that movie. And I was like, Well, I'm doing the book first. Now you can also watch the movie.

Kaytee Cobb 08:04

My first book this week, *Mindy* is one that we kind of did a staggered buddy read of. I want to talk about *Finlay Donovan is Killing It* by Elle Cosimano. Yes. I love this book. It just has the best setup. And of course, I adored it from beginning to end. This was one of the Indie Press List picks for June and I devoured it. And it was extra fun because of course I sent you live updates while I read and was just cracking up the whole time. You guys might like voice memos to her. She was like keep those coming for sure. So let's set the scene. We meet Finlay on a regular morning. She's trying to get the kids ready for the day. There's an incident with a kitchen knife which leads to the knife and a blade towel getting thrown into her diaper bag. Her daughter has cut a chunk out of her hair, which suddenly makes the dubious decision to duct tape back onto her daughter's head at her insistence. Her son's diaper is so full. She's almost thrilled that her ex has been fired her nanny so now she has to take both kids to his farm instead of being able to leave them at home with a forementioned nanny. All that leads to her being late to her meeting at Panera where Finlay has to convince her editor that she really does have an idea for her next crime novel. A misunderstanding based on eavesdropping leads to Finlay getting the proposition at the core of this book \$50,000 to do away with a terrible dude. And she's strapped for cash and balancing bills that are coming in pink envelopes. And she can't do it. But should she? This book is hysterical. It is so funny. It had me laughing from page two. There's miscommunication, slapstick comedy, error upon error. Laughing out loud. You just talked about a crying book that's like an actual crying book right? This one is a tears squirting out of your eyes like the crying laughing emoji that apparently Millennials are not supposed to use anymore. I use it all the time. It is me. You're just like are waiting trying to figure out what's happening next. It's a perfect beach read filled with characters you love to root for in situations you cannot imagine and you cannot figure out how this author came up with

these ideas. I loved it from the first page to the last. And while it wraps up really beautifully, it also sets up for another novel, which you can bet I will be reading as well. That one's called Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead and is currently slated to come out in February of 2022. The good news is in the meantime, this one Finlay Donovan is Killing It has already been optioned for TV. So just like Racing in the Rain, you may be able to watch it on the silver screen soon. I'm excited to see how it comes to the screen. But mostly I'm excited for everybody to read this book. I just think it's perfect for summer. It's Finlay Donovan is Killing It by Elle Cosimano.

Mindy Brouse 10:46

Oh my gosh, Kaytee, that book is freaking hilarious. Now, some people are saying that it's too unrealistic. That's fine. And my husband was so irritated with Finlay, y'all. You can suspend belief for a really funny, great character who is just hilarious like I just loved her so much. So that's what a good entertaining book does. Like you're saying like, this is a perfect summer read. Read this. this. You will laugh your head off. Yeah, it's okay to squirt tears out our eyes. I'm good with that.

Kaytee Cobb 11:14

Yeah, we can be outdated emojis. Right? It's fine.

Mindy Brouse 11:16

Bring it on.

Kaytee Cobb 11:17

Alright, what's your second book, Mindy?

Mindy Brouse 11:19

Okay, this next book is so quirky. Like, this is really odd book Kaytee. Listeners, some of you, if you've read this, you might be like, wait, Mindy loves this book? Or if you read it, there's gonna be parts you're going to be like, Wait, who talked about this? Kaytee or Mindy? This is Spoonbenders by Daryl Gregory. Alright. y'all we have a con artist and psychic family. Yes. You're both those things. Okay. So we have Teddy, and Frankie, and Buddy, and Matty. And if those don't all sound like awesome Greek mob names, what I mean, those are all people in the family. We also have "Mo" and "Reenie" and "Malice". Who are the amazing women of the Telemachus family. So we have this Greek family. They're freaking hilarious. They're con artists. They used to be on TV. They traveled, did all sorts of amazing psychic shows. Were they really psychics or were they con artists though? Or maybe some of them are con artists as some of them are truly have supernatural powers. Hey, guys, I'm a sucker for a con artist or a mob story. I just am, Kaytee knows. I don't know why, but I am bringing them on. If you throw in some odd but hilarious characters, and possibly supernatural powers in the family and in the grandkids, I'm in. So this book is not for everyone though, Kaytee. And here's the part that you're going to be like, I can't believe you kept listening to this. But because I did it on audio, which I do recommend because of the Greek accents. Everyone talks with the mob chat, which is just so entertaining to me. So this book isn't for everyone. And it's a four star for me only because of these parts that I felt like were unnecessary, and just Mindy's little opinion. There's a lot of sexual moments that I felt like were not necessary. And then also, there's some body part chat, a specific one, because

Kaytee Cobb 13:10

That's called dancing around a word ladies and gentlemen.

Mindy Brouse 13:12

Dancing around a word to keep the G rating. Thank you very much. So we start with Matty and he's one of the grandchildren from the main characters who is suddenly finds himself outside his body when he becomes aroused for the first time. Hmm, okay, so that happens. And then all of a sudden he's outside his body and he's flying through the air. Matty has true actual supernatural powers, but they only come on, on in certain kinds of feelings happen

Kaytee Cobb 13:43

Situations. Okay.

Mindy Brouse 13:44

So we have a dual timeline here with Mo and Teddy, who are the parents. They meet and they're just their journey. And then we go back and forth from then to the modern Telemachus family with the grandkids. We're moving forward the entire time to some kind of, quote, "end of time" event, according to Buddy who is doing really odd things. His whole family's written him off. He's putting on metal doors. He's digging holes in the yard. They're all like, yeah, that's just Buddy, and he's not right in the head anymore. We don't know what's wrong with Buddy. Anyway, this book is like a mystery with some really quirky stuff thrown in. I absolutely loved it. The humor and the oddness just made for a really fun dynamic for me. So check that one out. That's Spoonbenders by Daryl Gregory.

Kaytee Cobb 14:30

How did this one come across your radar Mindy? Do you know?

Mindy Brouse 14:33

Yeah. So every once in a while I if I'm going to be on the show, I Google books under the radar or underrated books or hidden gems to try to make sure I'm bringing something different to the show. And that's how I found this one.

Kaytee Cobb 14:46

Wow. So it wasn't like a specific person. Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

Mindy Brouse 14:51

No, right. Like "Who told Mindy..."

Kaytee Cobb 14:53

I know you don't like to read setups so I can see how you could be like starting on this book and being like, I don't what happened? Where am I?

Mindy Brouse 15:00

That is how you feel when you start this book. And I will say that scene with Matty is like the very first thing in the book, so I was at like "am I should I keep reading"? But I was so intrigued by the con artist

psychic family gig that I was like, yeah, I'm gonna give this a go and I'm really glad I did. So interesting. Yeah. What is your second book?

Kaytee Cobb 15:19

Okay, my second book this week is *The Black Count* by Tom Reiss. On Episode 34 of season three, Meredith and I talked about the genres that we like to shy away from, I mentioned biographies in passing as one of my not favorite things.

Mindy Brouse 15:34

Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 15:34

Well, Jessica Howard, my biography and history loving friend set out to change my mind. If you want to you can go back and listen to her on season two, Episode Three. She decided to make a very concerted effort to push *The Black Count* into my hands. And we ended up setting up this epic Instagram buddy read one chapter a day of this book. The subtitle of this book is *Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo*. It follows the life and story of General Alexandre Dumas, the father of the novelist, and grandfather of the playwright. Yes, there are three generations of Alexandre Dumas. He was the son of a black slave, but rose to prominence during the French Revolution, rubbing elbows with Lafayette, which of course, when you read, you have to say Lafayette, Napoleon and others, while his son is the one who gets the glory. Now, General Dumas was a giant, historically and physically, he inspired art everywhere he went. Our buddy read of this biography was scintillating, which is shocking what, from discussions of French fashion, hashtag #thighguysummer, to piracy and small man syndrome, to enemas as a medical treatment to casting a movie of his life, we had a bumping good time. And I cannot imagine a better way to dip into biography and find one that I genuinely loved. I was shocked at how much I enjoyed it. So if you have read and loved the *Count of Monte Cristo*, this book will bring that story to life in a totally different way. If you didn't, perhaps it will inspire you to pick up the tome and read it in a new light. Either way, the pairing of the two of them having the background or maybe at least watching the *Wishbone* version of *The Count of Monte Cristo* is an absolute must. I loved this experience. We're gonna call it an experience. It's *The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo* by Tom Reiss.

Mindy Brouse 17:33

Nice, nice second book there. It's a big one, right? It's long, isn't it?

Kaytee Cobb 17:38

No, it's not too bad. There's, there's a lot of footnotes. So when you pick it up, you're like, Oh, this one's pretty hefty, but each chapter is only in 10 to 15 pages. So it's pretty easy to do one chapter a day. Okay.

Mindy Brouse 17:50

Excellent. All right. Well, my third book is *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis. Before there was *Circe*, before there was *A Thousand Ships*. There was *Till We Have Faces*. Y'all, this is a myth retelling of *Psyche* and *Cupid's* story. But it brings a backstory that we never would have guessed and a journey of

one woman as a princess who is shunned to a woman of power and I thought it was great. In Episode 45, you brought to the conversation *Disfigured* a book on disability and myths and fairy tales and things. And I thought that was great. And I was like, Oh my gosh, this is gonna be great because C.S. Lewis has a character who is physically different, physically disabled, who is the main character and becomes a heroine. So it's, that was pretty great. And this was written in I think, in 1951. This is as backlist as I get guys, so this is easy to get a hold of. Many people say this is Lewis's best novel of all his writing. And so if you think he's a genius, like, Yeah, he's definitely a literary genius. pick this one up. This book really made me think of a cross between *The Lost Queen* and *Circe*, but shorter. And I think with more deeply felt and really powerful lessons. So we have betrayals, and blame and grief are all here. And this story is told from the perspective of Psyche's sister, and this is her charge against the gods. She has written this entire book, and she she's talking to you the entire time. She's furious with the gods, and she's bringing in charge to them, which is, you know, pretty brazen. I loved how this book touches on our fallibility, and how we rarely see it until it's too late. And maybe we've hurt somebody else unintentionally. And I love that it also has us consider the meaning of our lives in beautiful ways. I felt like Lewis really brings raw honesty in this book, and I really liked it. I liked the strong female characters in this book. And I think it just is one of those books that you read and you don't forget about so I'm really glad I read it. And if you liked *Circe* and *A Thousand Ships* and all those other types of myth retellings, then pick up *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis.

Kaytee Cobb 20:03

I love that you brought that. I had to go look, but I read that one four years ago. And I still think about it sometimes so...

Mindy Brouse 20:10

I pre-read it for my kids school. It was on their book list and I had never read it. And I thought, I'm gonna hate this. I'm just not into Greek myths and all those like my kids are, but I have never (inaudible). So I read it two days ago, just to make sure I really did want to talk about it. And it's still held up.

Kaytee Cobb 20:25

Yeah. Nice. I'll throw in *Lovely War* and *Olympus, Texas*. If you're totally into those Greek myths, retellings. There's other ones that we've talked about on the show that are great options too yeah,

Mindy Brouse 20:37

and *Lovely War* is one of my favorite books of last year. And again, so every once in a while an author can tell a story really well so much so that Mindy, who isn't so into myth retellings loves it. So this is one of those.

Kaytee Cobb 20:48

I agree. Okay, my last one this week is *One Last Stop* by Casey McQuiston. This book, I have something that I need to insist upon for this book. Okay. There are descriptions of it all over the internet, and the podcast world. And I feel like there are moments in this book that are really special that have gotten spoiled in the wide bookish world, because I had heard and seen too much about it before I read it. So before you pick this up, or before you go on bookstagram to read about it, don't do that. Try to forget anything you've heard about it. And let Casey McQuiston take you on this journey, because there

were moments that, you know, I was messaging with someone else. And they were like, Oh my gosh, this is this is so surprising. And I was like, Oh, I already knew about that thing before I went into it. And I didn't get to have that same joy. So here's what I'm going to give you the bare minimum. This is the next novel from the author of Red, White and Royal Blue, which I adored, but did not like on audio. We are firmly planted in New York City and we meet August, she's cynical and jaded. Mostly from her time growing up with her mom, who's basically trying to solve her own true crime situation and brought August as a child along on the ride. August just wants to make it through her days and make it in this city. Oftentimes, her commute happens on the Q train where she needs Jane. Jane is gorgeous and retro and friendly to everyone she meets and sparks start to fly. And that's it. That's all I'm going to give you. I want you to pick up this book and know that August has some amazing roommates that are like a found family to her. Which Hi, I love that trope. You guys know this about me. This book has LGBTQIA+ representation across the entire spectrum. And that's an it's just not a thing. It's not like and now we are introducing our trans character and everybody give a round of applause. No, just part of the story. It's delightful. It has some really, really good steam, and some hilarious moments of levity and a wee bit of mystery mixed in and I loved it from beginning to end. I buddy read this one with bookish friend Aimee and we adored getting to discuss it with one another. Sometimes that gets a little weird with romance but she and I had a great time. I cannot wait for the rest of you to read it and please please please please please send me messages if you do. The audio is fabulous. The story is wonderful. Get the to the bookstore. It's One Last Stop by Casey McQuiston.

Mindy Brouse 23:17

Nice. I like you're like picturing you guys having a message chat about a romance. That's that's entertaining to me just to think about.

Kaytee Cobb 23:24

I like that you enjoyed that. And I feel like I could see you being like, Oh, I'm in and then I got to steam and you were like "aaaand removed from TBR".

Mindy Brouse 23:33

And there it goes. And there's a scene in Spoonbenders that I messaged you about, you know, that I was like, I don't know. So yeah, every once in a while I read one and I still love the book. And but I'm grateful when it's just a very short scene. That's just that's me. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 23:50

right. Perfect. Those were our six current reads. Let's get into our deep dive Mindy. We're going to talk a little bit about summer reading guides. This is such a fun topic because it's one of my favorite parts about summer. I don't necessarily choose all my summer reads from guides but there's something about seeing something pop up over and over again and having people I really like love and respect their taste, talking about a book that I just ohh it's like catnip for me. I can't stay away. Before we get into the meat of this deep dive which I'm very excited about. I'm going to quick run through some of at least mine and Meredith's favorites and I want to see what you think about some of these Mindy so I have to start have to have to have to with Modern Mrs. Darcy because this is her 10th annual summer reading guide. Wow. And the way she puts her's together, they come in this like magazine style format and it feels so lush like if you go get it printed at Office Depot or whatever on like glossy 8x10s you are

going to feel like you've got something special in your hand. The main guide for the public has 31 titles but if you're a member of her Patreon or Modern Mrs. Darcy book club, you get the expanded guide with even more goodness to it, and that's definitely a big seller for her to be able to get people in the doors for her membership communities because you want those extras right? You're like FOMO about what are those other 15 titles? I can't not find out right

Mindy Brouse 25:14

Right.

Kaytee Cobb 25:15

This is one of very few that I found that includes YA picks, including many that we've loved over here on Currently Reading I should make a bingo card. She probably has a bingo card, but to see where our tastes interweave and overlap because it would be fun. Next I have Sarah's Bookshelves one of our favorite podcast pals, Sarah's bookshelves has put together an amazing collection of 32 titles, including some books that really overlap with my own taste and with Meredith's tastes. Her cheat sheet is especially fun because it includes the covers and then little categories like "brain candy with serious substance", "top notch debuts", "devious authors" and "romances that aren't cheesy". And I like that Sarah puts those together for us and gives us a little tiny taste. There's a full fledged reading guide, but the cheat sheet just makes my heart a little bit happy. So that one's a great one as well and she has a podcast you guys. We've talked about it many times but if you have good overlap with Meredith especially Sarah's bookshelves is going to be a great place for you. Third I have a bookish friend Kelly Hook, who's at @kellyhook.readsbooks on Instagram. And her guide includes 28 books that she's already read as well as 12 more that she was looking forward to at the time that she put together her guide for a total of 40 titles, three of her categories with four titles. Each of them are great for murderous readers. So we have "thrills and kills", "slow burn mystery" and "domestic suspense", as well as poolside books, nonfiction books, family drama, history books, it's just a great collection. Great breadth in that one.

Mindy Brouse 25:17

That sounds really good.

Kaytee Cobb 26:50

It's a good one and it's that one's really beautifully put together as well. Janssen Bradshaw is my fourth one. She's over at @everydayreading, and she puts together a gorgeous guide every year as well. This one's no exception. It has 25 titles in it, and does not shy away from a backlist, which I really appreciate as we all know from the deep dive last week. So there are five titles each for chicklit audiobooks, which Mindy you and I, we love a guide that includes audiobooks.

Mindy Brouse 27:16

Yes, we do.

Kaytee Cobb 27:17

Right? Nonfiction, page turning novels and books for the family, which, you know, as I've kind of mentioned, there's not a lot more of those in these other guide selections. So that leads me perfectly into the final pick of this bunch, which is Mindy's guide from Bookend Homeschoolers, you guys maybe made a summer reading guide. Okay, I'm going to set this up really quick. We have 31 titles all together. 16 in her general summer reading guide and 15 for Japan. The best part is that second half, it's the expanded version that gives our kids all kinds of titles to be able to dive deep into Japan for the Summer Olympics. Because a homeschooler loves a theme, right, Mindy?

Mindy Brouse 28:01

We do we give us a theme and we're happy.

Kaytee Cobb 28:03

So the reason that this fits perfectly right here is because those 31 titles that I've talked about already are divided into middle grade titles, high school, YA titles and ones for teachers, which of course is for you and me, right the adult. Yeah. And it's just, you know, it's kind of short and sweet. You have one page for each guide. But that means it's super easy to print out, take to the library, hand to your kid and let them mark it off like it's a scholastic catalog, right? Which ones do you want to get? Right? Yeah. That's why my kids love Summer Reading guides. And just just the ability to have something for my kids to say, Hey, here's a whole collection of books that might be great for summer reading. What do you want to check out? What should we go grab? It's like, the toy catalogs that come before Christmas, you know, yeah, where they can like get all stoked about something. So that leads us into the second half of our deep dive, which is Mindy. How do you put together a summer reading guide? Because Meredith and I are like, nope, no, ma'am. No, sir. Back away.

Mindy Brouse 29:02

Well, that's funny because Meredith gave me the idea. You and Meredith!

Kaytee Cobb 29:06

We kind of forced you to do it.

Mindy Brouse 29:07

Well, as soon as you suggested I was like, duhh, that is so on point for me and in our podcasts. So we love books, Rachel and I both and so we naturally were like, duh, yeah, let's do a summer reading guide. And so what we did is we talked about, okay, what would we want, like as a parent, what we want someone to hand does, even if we're big readers already. And so we decided we wanted to have two, because one, we wanted just to have a general smattering of genres, and really great books that you could springboard from each of those. And then we'd love books that are relevant to current events, what's going on, and we'd like themes, they're super fun. And for people who either A: are schooling year round or B: want to count some of this summertime stuff, activities and things as some school, or if you just want to make the Olympics a little bit more personal and can personally connect it for your family, this is a great way to do it. So that's when we decided we're definitely going to focus on Japan. We didn't want to focus on the Olympics, because that's real general. And then you get into all kinds of sports and the history of the Olympics. We thought it'd be way more fun to be immersed in a culture. And so that's why we decided to go with Japan, which has been so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 29:29

And so Mindy, why would we even want a summer reading guide for our kids, like, why even create it in the first place?

Mindy Brouse 30:26

I think having a guide for our kids helps us not have to stress about what they're reading this summer, but we keep books in their hands, you know what I mean? So if you can have a guide that you can print out, and go to the library and say, Hey, this is what we're going to read this summer. And then you have found an easy way to keep your kids reading. And you've gotten something that you know, somebody else thinks is really fun and engaging. Because we all want our kids to read, right? And it's really easy during this summer, to fall into a lull and let them play on games or forget because you get out of your normal routine. But if you have a reading guide, then that helps you keep them in books.

Kaytee Cobb 30:58

So what did your prep look like? As you were putting together this guide? Did you have to like binge listen? Did you already know everything you wanted to put in? Like how did that look putting together the two parts especially?

Mindy Brouse 31:10

There was a whole lot of reading, I had to binge read a whole lot of books, and I wanted to have my hands on them. And some of them weren't, and this you guys know, I get irked if the book is not available in audio format, because I can blast through an audio book and it takes me longer for paper. But I had to do that for a lot of them. But I wanted to make sure I personally read it, I wanted to make sure I enjoyed it, you know and would press this into someone's hands. And so for the first guide for the general one, I had read most of those, but I wanted a little bit more diversity. And so we tried to make sure we had a variety of authors. We weren't as great as that for our first guide. Our second guide is chock full of Japanese authors, we really worked hard for that. But like Sal and Gabi Break the Universe, which is on the first guide, I knew I wanted to read one of those picks, one of those authors that Rick Riordan had been sponsoring. So I went and got that one and read that one, the rest I had definitely read and enjoyed. But I wanted to make sure there was a variety. So like we put a mystery, we put historical fiction, we put fantasy, and we put animal because kids love animal books. So we made sure to include that. That's why we have the Warrior Cats on there. And then we had some quirky weirdness, which is I felt like Sal and Gabi Break The Universe brought to the list. Same kind of thing for the high school is we wanted to make sure we had a variety there. And then the fun thing for almost all of them on our first guide, almost all of them are series. So you know, out of this six for the middle grade, four of them are part of a series, the beginning of the series. If your kids love it, then you can keep going. And that's the other thing we wanted to bring is that if you end up loving this, just keep going. Yeah, there's plenty more. And even with the high school we had Cinder on there. And there's more in that one, you know, so we wanted to kind of bring that to the table for the for the high school, though, and why we definitely wanted to bring some books that make you think, and books it might challenge some ideas that you're having in high school and give you some conversations. So that's kind of what we did for the Japan window. Our entire idea was, we want you to have a strong sense of place, and a strong sense of culture. Most of us are not going to get to go to Japan. I tried to talk Paul

into saying like, I really need to go do this research for the guide, I just need to pop on over to Japan, he was like you're the funniest wave ever. So so I didn't get to do that. And I'm probably never going to get to go Japan. That's just not my life. But I will tell you, Kaytee, I read so many books. There, there are books on the cutting room floor that didn't make it to the guide, because we didn't want to give 100 book list. It was tempting.

Kaytee Cobb 33:46

Some of us would appreciate that.

Mindy Brouse 33:47

Yeah, you and I right. And Rachel's, like stop it right now. So Rachel's the one that has to rein me in on the book list. She's like Mindy, can we please be reasonable? I'm like, this is reasonable. It's only 40 books. She's like, step away from the guide right now. But I had to read so many. And the best part for me was when I was googling books sent in Japan books with a sense of place for Japan. books by Japanese authors. How wonderful is it to find authors that are a really big deal in a country and you don't know about them. And I felt like that's what I really got out of this. And I feel like I've been in Japan now. And these authors are so beautiful at cultivating that culture that I really enjoyed it. And that's why I said at the beginning, I feel like Wow, really bingeing a theme. I didn't expect to like it because I expected to get bored or you know, kind of like Enough is enough. But the good news is there's so many really good books out there that you that's not how you feel. So I loved hearing about the teen culture. So we really wanted to make sure we had books that describe the teen culture because teenagers love tha. They don't want Shogun but

Kaytee Cobb 34:54

(inaudible) in Japan Yeah.

Mindy Brouse 34:55

I love Shogun right it's on the list because I freaking love it but teenagers want to know "what are people my age doing in Japan" right? And so that has been fun. I learned about manga. That was stepping outside, you know, my little comfort zone. It's been really fun. Kaytee, I think I encourage all listeners to pick a theme maybe this summer. That's another thing you could do if you don't want to pick up our guide, pick a theme. But I mean, how fun is it going to be this summer to watch the Olympics and when the opening ceremonies happen in the the closing ceremonies, which are always about Japanese culture and history, country's culture, right? The host country. And so if you have read some of these books ahead of time with your kids or just for yourself, the adult ones, you're going to see stuff on there. And it's going to, it's going to make a little bit more sense. And so I think that's just really fun about why we chose that theme. It can just make this summer even more fun.

Kaytee Cobb 35:49

Okay, my last question about this is it's a two parter, actually. Okay. Did your kids contribute anything to the guide? And will you be making them read anything from the guide?

Mindy Brouse 36:00

Yes, Esther, especially wanted Cinder and Warrior Cats on the general guide. Paul Lewis really wanted Project Hail Mary on there.

Kaytee Cobb 36:09

Perfect.

Mindy Brouse 36:10

And that was going to be on there anyway, but I didn't tell him that. I was like, Oh, yeah, that's a great idea. But they were really sweet. And they were like, please have this on there. Esther is a little disappointed that I made the guide as short as it is. She had a whole lot of

Kaytee Cobb 36:23

45 titles for each also.

Mindy Brouse 36:25

Correct. Esther is like Meredith, and you and I, she's bookish, and she wanted more. But she was really happy. She was upset that I didn't put the Wings of Fire series. But maybe next summer, I told her said look, you know, make another one next summer. As far as the Japan guide, they didn't have anything to contribute to that, except manga. They wanted me to make sure. And I was like, well, I already knew manga had to be on there. And they just giggled, because they're like, so you're gonna read manga huh? And I was like, Yes, I'm gonna find a very innocent, sweet one. And they were like, oh, okay. They have a lot of favorites for manga that I didn't put on there. Because I wanted to start listeners off with something gentle. Yeah, something. And the one we put on the guide is very innocent. It's a little five year old girl. But you definitely see the humor and the artistry that's involved in manga and a different way that and I learned a lot just about how you have to read manga. I didn't know the way your eyes have to travel on a page. So that was fun, but they are gonna have to read like I already told them last night I was like, so guess what mom has some books this summer. And they're like, Mom, when I told him what they were about. And then I picked some really great ones. They're they're fine. they're okay with it.

Kaytee Cobb 37:34

Okay, guys, we will be putting links, of course to the Bookend Homeschoolers episodes where Mindy goes into the general guide, and the Japan guide, so you can go listen to him for yourself, because I'll tell you what, if you love hearing people get excited about books, these episodes are total catnip for you. I promise you will find something that you want to put on your own TBR or on the TBR of a young person in your life. You don't have to be a parent, you don't have to be a grandparent. There's somebody in your life that you could press these books into the hands of. And I'm excited for you guys to get to check them out and get excited about summer reading for your young people as well as for yourself. So so many great guides in the show notes for this episode. And of course on Thursday, we want you to come and tell us what you thought. Who else has a guide that it's great that we skipped over or need to know about? All of it. We're just excited about the whole thing. Yay summer reading. Sorry, southern hemisphere. We love you too. Yeah.

Mindy Brouse 38:29

And you mentioned bingo cards earlier. And bingo. We have a Japan bingo for the elementary kids that is bookish adjacent. So that's really fun, too. And I did tell my older kids, like, Look, we'll play bingo too, so you can earn something. Thanks for having me talk about this. It's been really fun. And it's something that you and Meredith have cultivated on the show. And I say this in our episode 38. If I didn't enjoy the book, then I don't want to hand it to my kids. So everything that's on here, adults will love. And you're going to see that when we talk about presses. But in my opinion, if a book is on a guide then an adult should be able to love it also.

Kaytee Cobb 39:02

Yes. And you know, like we talked about right at the top of this. There's not a lot of summer reading guides out there that are directed toward your kids. So that's why we basically asked Mindy to make one of these and she just she just knocked it out of the park. You guys we're so proud of her. Mindy, we're so proud of you.

Mindy Brouse 39:20

Thanks, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 39:20

Let's press some books, shall we friend? What are you going to press into our hands today?

Mindy Brouse 39:24

All right, well, I'm pressing a book that's on the Japan guide because I fell in love with this book and cried several times and thought, holy crud, how have I not heard about this book? And again, it's because I stuck to a theme and went looking for it right? This is All The Ways Home by Elsie Chapman. Oh my gosh, you guys we have Kaede who is 13 year old boy who's living in Canada because his parents divorced in Japan. And he and his mom moved to Canada. It's been 10 years, his mom has died now and he is experiencing a lot of loss and a lot of trauma, he is not acting very nice because of all of that and his grief. And his grandfather has stepped into the picture and decides he should go back to Japan and spend some time with this dad. And so his whole goal is to connect to his father in Japan. He brings a box of questions in his head, they're very heavy, and he wants to get them all solved. He wants to be his dad's son, and really experience that. But that's not what is waiting for him. And he is spends time with Shoma, his older brother, who is 10 years older than him, and their relationship just blows me away. Kaede has to accept some loss. And he has to accept that maybe things aren't going to ever be how he thinks they should be. And this book brings forgiveness and family to the table into your heart like not any other book I've read in just a really unusual way. It's it's just a really unusual setting and family dynamic. And I loved it. Plus the bonus is I learned so much about Japan, as seen through a 13 year old and a 22 year old that was really fun. So this is on our shelf now. I bought it because as soon as I finished it, I was like oop, click and you know, Kaytee that's pretty rare for me. I don't buy books very often. But this is really, really good. I think you should all pick it up. This is titled All The Ways Home by Elsie Chapman.

Kaytee Cobb 41:23

That sounds so great. And I'm I'm actually really glad that you decided to press something from the guide because I was a little overwhelmed looking at it but now I feel like I have a really good starting spot for myself. You know, obviously for my kids too, but mostly for myself.

Mindy Brouse 41:37

What is your press, Kaytee? I can't wait to hear.

Kaytee Cobb 41:39

Okay, as my final press for season three. And my final press for pride month of 2021, I want everyone to pick up *You Should See Me in a Crown* by Leah Johnson. This is some of the best YA that I've read lately we'd call it lately. It's at least a year since I since I read this book. Liz is our main character, and she is too much of everything. She's too Black. She's too poor, she's too awkward. She's also too not straight. And that's a problem because Liz has a plan, a way to get out of her tiny town and get into her dream college. But it revolves around winning Prom Queen, which comes with a big scholarship at her school, but never ever goes to an LGBT student. That's okay. Liz can squash herself down into the right box for another year and take the title, she's sure of it. But then she meets Mack. Mack is new to the school she doesn't fit in. But she also kind of doesn't care. And the story goes from there. And I loved it. I listened to this one. But if I had a hard copy, I totally would have hugged it at the end. Because I just adored it. Liz and Mack are endearing and funny. The setting is very *10 Things I Hate About You* or *She's All That* so if you're a sucker for 90s YA Rom-coms, like I am, but with better representation, you absolutely have to pick this one up. It's just delightful. It's *You Should See Me in a Crown* by Leah Johnson.

Mindy Brouse 43:03

I haven't read that yet.

Kaytee Cobb 43:04

This one you know because it's YA it I absolutely would press it into your hands as well. Mindy it's not angsty, like she's a teenager. But it's not... and of course there's not a lot of sex scenes in it or any as far as I remember. Like, it's just an easy, fun read that also tugs at your heartstrings and makes you want to hug it. So it's a great one.

Mindy Brouse 43:25

Excellent. Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 43:26

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

Mindy Brouse 43:36

And you can find me Mindy at @gratefulforgrace on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 43:40

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 currentlyreadingpodcast.com

Mindy Brouse 43:49

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

Kaytee Cobb 43:58

And if you really want to help us you guys become a bookish friend, especially as we go into the dark week at the end of season three. There's so much bonus content over there. We'd love to have you join us. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts or shout us out on social media. Those all make a huge difference in our being able to find our perfect audience.

Mindy Brouse 44:16

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

Kaytee Cobb 44:24

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Mindy.

Mindy Brouse 44:27

Happy reading Kaytee.