



Season 3, Episode 47: Very Special Episode - The Listener Press!

Mon, 7/5 • 40:06

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Readers, Welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk, and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Usually we discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we press books into your hands. But today we're doing something different.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I love to talk about good books, but even more I love to hear about good books.

Kaytee Cobb 00:45

And I'm Kaytee Cobb. I'm a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I love pressing books and hearing others press books. This is episode number 47 of season three. And we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:56

There was a real synchronicity to our bite size intros Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 00:59

I wonder...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:59

Everyone must be getting what this episode is because it's a special episode.

Kaytee Cobb 01:04

It is. We are getting towards the end of season three. We are very excited to bring you guys, the one of our very special episodes, one of our favorites of the year. It's the "Listener Press" episode.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:16

This episode is the number one episode for adding to my own personal TBR. This is the TBR topper for me, because even just preparing for this episode, we got so many great submissions. We had to

winnow them down for time because otherwise this would have been a four and a half hour episode. But so many of these I wanted to add to my TBR

Kaytee Cobb 01:42

Yep, happens every year. We're like, Oh, this would be fun. And then we're like, oh, no. What did we do? Devastating.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:49

Well, there's always that first moment or first moment is always "wait, what if no one sends in the listener press"? And then we're always like, of course they're gonna send them in and they do and then there's so many good ones.

Kaytee Cobb 01:58

It's true. All right, let's stop talking about presses. And let's start hearing some What do you think about that idea? Let's do it. Okay, our first press that we're about to hear from Amy Coons is All the Lonely People by Mike Gayle.

Amy Coons 02:12

Hello, my name is Amy. I'm from the UK and I'd like to tell you about a book called All the Lonely People by Mike Gayle. This is one of the best books I've read in a long time and it was just delightful. Hubert Bird is an OAP come from Jamaica originally, so you get to go back in time, but when he just came over, and it was the Windrush generation and people's reaction to him, his relationship with a UK woman and family's reaction, which was very negative, and then it drops back to him in the present time. And he's just lonely. He's a very lonely man. He talks to his daughter every week about his free friends. But he's made them up and all of a sudden, she's coming over to visit. And he realizes that, what is she going to do when she realizes everything he's been telling her about? Everything he does all week with his friends is all a lie. And he has to suddenly find some friends to make up for it. Go and read it right now.

Kaytee Cobb 03:23

Alright, well, Amy got a little bossy there at the end. And I like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:25

I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 03:27

I love it when people are like, "Just read it. Just stop listening to me talk and go get this book". I already have it on my shelf. So I'm just saying that Amy messaged me directly about this a few months ago, but it finally is coming out in the US this month. So I already got my hands on it. And I did have to look up OAP. Meredith, do you know what that means?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:44

I didn't. What does it mean?

Kaytee Cobb 03:46

Okay, so she's a Brit, as we could hear it means "Old Age Pensioner". So it's like an like somebody on social security in the United States.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:55

Got it.

Kaytee Cobb 03:55

Okay, so of course, I wanted to hear about this book because it's a beloved curmudgeon story and that's how Amy set it up when she sent it to me. I I love old people.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:07

You do you do

Kaytee Cobb 04:08

I especially love crotchety old people that then have their hearts opened and grown three sizes. So I think this is gonna be right in my wheelhouse. I'm very excited about it. And, you know, she mentioned he's originally from Jamaica. This is an #OwnVoices read, which I can't think of many other beloved Caribbean books that are #OwnVoices. So I'm very excited about that part of it as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:29

Yeah, that's a good press. That's a good press. The next one on our list is The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue. This is by Mackenzi Lee and our presser is Aimee Iniguez.

Amy Negus 04:40

My name is Aimee Iniguez and I would like to recommend A Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue by Mackenzi Lee. It is set in the 1700s and is the story of Monty who is embarking on his grand tour of Europe. Henry Monty Montague was born and raised to be a gentleman but he was never one to be tamed. We also have Percy, who is a lovable and brilliant character. He is about to go to law school. He is trying to make Monty understand what his life is like as a dark skinned man in Europe, and he really cares a lot about his friend even when he is exasperated. And then we also have Felicity, who is Monty's younger sister and she is trying to go against the limitations that are placed upon her because of her gender. She wants to go to medical school and become a doctor, not to become a proper lady and go to finishing school. So we're following Monty, Percy and Felicity on their grand tour, which quickly goes off the rails with scandals, pirates, robbery, evil nobles, daring escapes, and impossible dilemmas. And of course, at the heart of it is a complicated love story. And I love it because it really is a genre bending, LGBTQ+, it's historical fiction. It can also be romance and mystery, really tackles issues such as gender, race, disabilities, sexualities and family responsibilities. But with such a great witty undertone, and it really is the most entertaining historical road trip. Overall, this book to me it's very witty, hilarious, adventurous, fast moving with flawed, but lovable characters, and Hello, there's pirates. So I listened to it on audio, and I really recommend it that way. And also, this is a part of a series. So while it does wrap itself up nicely, if you want more of these characters, which I did, and especially if you want more Felicity, you can get the next book, A Lady's Guide to Petticoats and Piracy. So once again, I'm pressing A Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue by Mackenzi Lee.

Kaytee Cobb 07:07

Oh, that was a delightful those titles, I mean, a gold star.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:12

Absolutely. And then when she said, it's a complicated love story, and there's pirates, I'm like, I just couldn't be more in if I tried.

Kaytee Cobb 07:19

Exactly. And I'm wondering, I feel like other people have failed me by not making me read this book beforehand, because I feel like this is what I should have read by now. Everything about it sounds up my alley. I'm so excited right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:31

That's a really, really good one.

Kaytee Cobb 07:32

Yes. Thank you, Aimee. That was great. This next one is a dual press. I'm very excited about this one. This is from Stacy Wolfe and her daughter Eliza and they both are going to talk to us here they're pressing *The Polar Bear Explorer's Club* by Alex Bell.

Stacy Wolfe (and Eliza) 07:47

Hi, bookish community. I'm Stacy Wolfe. And I'm Eliza, we love to recommend *The Polar Bear Explorer's Club* by Alex Bell. Stella Starflake Pearl really wants to be an explorer, following in the footsteps of her intrepid adopted father Felix. Unfortunately, the Polar Bear Explorer's Club refuses to admit girls, but when Stella convinces Felix to let her come on an expedition, she and three other Junior Explorers get separated from the adults. Can they survive the yetis, golden geese, carnivorous cabbages and each other? As a 10 year old, I love Stella because she was adventurous, brave and smart. This book was similar to *Brightstorm*. Thanks, Meredith. But it's more advanced and mature. It's also the first in a series. I liked *Brightstorm* but I love *The Polar Bear Explorers Club*.

Stacy Wolfe (and Eliza) 08:46

As an adult and a parent. I found this book to be magical, perilous and fanciful by turns. The writing is gorgeous and full of whimsy. If you love middle grade, adventure, sound family and quirky characters, this book is a winner for you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:05

Oh, that sounds so good. And first of all, I am going to go kidnap Eliza and take her home to be my own because she is so adorable.

Kaytee Cobb 09:14

Yeah, I want her. I want her also, Eliza come live with us. Either one of us, we'll both take you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:21

And it did remind me of Bright... when she was talking about the explorers and kind of all of that I was like, Oh, that sounds like Brightstorm. I'm so glad that she liked that one. This one is going on my TBR immediately.

Kaytee Cobb 09:31

Yes, when I was looking at it before it made it onto the show. I noticed that it's definitely part of a series so there's lots more where that came from, which always makes me excited especially because Eliza loved it so much. That means my kids, I'm sure are gonna love it and I can just get you know all 10 of them at once and press them all into their hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:49

Perfect, done and done. All right, our next one is definitely a left turn from that this is The Woman in the White Kimono. The author is Ana Johns and it's being pressed by listener Belinda Bertrand.

Belinda Bertrand 10:05

Hi, my name is Belinda and I live in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. I am a huge fan of the podcast and listened to many bookish podcasts while walking my dogs every morning. I would like to press The Woman in the White Kimono by Ana Johns. It's historical fiction told in alternating timelines, which I love. It takes place in Japan in 1957, when Naoko, who has a pre-arranged marriage, falls in love with an American sailor. In present day, a woman finds a letter with a shocking revelation in her father's things. My sister and I both gave this book five stars and I loved how it ended. So I hope other readers love it as much as we did.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:46

Doesn't that sound so good? I love a Japanese setting in a book for some reason. That is a really big sweet spot for me. I love Japanese history. It's just it's so transported to me. This one sounds like such a winner.

Kaytee Cobb 10:58

I feel like this is like a mini version of Shogun, which is how I know that you love a Japanese setting

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:04

I do. I've read several books actually, with the Japanese setting and the cover on this book is gorgeous.

Kaytee Cobb 11:11

The cover is beautiful. I went to look at the blurb to get a little bit more about it. And the very end of it says The Woman in the White Kimono illuminates a searing portrait of one woman torn between her culture and her heart and another woman on a journey to discover the true meaning of home. And both of those are basically catnip to me. And I'm really excited that the first timeline is not during World War Two.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:33

Exactly, exactly. Right. Right. It's just this one. I just I can't wait for this one.

Kaytee Cobb 11:40

Gosh, you guys this is not good. We're getting out of control already. Right? Hey, our fifth one this year from our listeners is Amelia Unabridged by Ashley Schumacher. And this is being pressed by bookish friend Jessie Weaver.

Jessie Weaver 11:56

Hi, this is Jesse Weaver. I live in Chattanooga, Tennessee. And the book I want to recommend today is Amelia Unabridged, by Ashley Schumacher. I have read a ton of YA novels the spring. It's just how I cope with the end of the school year and needing something a little lighter on my plate. And this one has definitely been my favorite so far. It's YA romance, it has a tortured and sexy young author as the love interest. Our protagonist Amelia has been really hurt. And she goes to Michigan to the lakes to escape her life and try to solve a little mystery where she meets this author, who is a little bit of a curmudgeon, and, and sparks fly. I like it, there's a little more depth in some of your YA. Our protagonist and the love interest, you know, have some self awareness to learn. And it's really just a lot of fun. There's also an incredible bookstore sort of magical has rooms themed around the different genres and just reading about it made me swoon a little bit. So if you are in the mood for some YA and some fun, I highly recommend Amelia Unabridged.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:18

We know anytime there's a bookstore, especially a bookstore with some magic to it, you know, we're going to be interested.

Kaytee Cobb 13:25

That's another I mean, it's another problem. I like I like even the title of this one. And the cover is beautiful. There's lots of color in there. But Amelia is all in black and white. So I'm really intrigued. Anyhow, I'm very excited about another great YA protagonist. And Jessie as a friend of mine sent me a picture of her hugging this book at the end. And as you all know, a book that I hug, is I mean, I got to get that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:50

Yeah, for sure. She's she absolutely loved that when it sounds like a really good one. All right, well, another great bookish friend of ours is Sara Kilpatrick and she is bringing to us one that is right smack dab in the middle of my sweet spot and that is Murder at the Brightwell by Ashley Weaver.

Sara Kilpatrick 14:10

Hey, bookish friends. This is Sara in Salem, Virginia. The book I want to press into your hands is Murder at The Brightwell by Ashley Weaver. It's the first book in a seven book mystery series in the style of Agatha Christie. Our main character is Amory Ames, an upper class woman in 1930s London, who's married to a charming but rakish playboy named Milo. Amy receives an urgent request for help from her former fiance Gil at his sister's wedding. She travels to The Brightwell, a seaside resort to see if she can help. As you may have guessed, someone turns up dead. And Amory finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation. And then Milo turns up and things get interesting. This series is

glamorous and witty, and the characters are engaging which is what I look for in books. I recommend it to fans of lady detective series, like Deanna Raybourn, and Rhys Bowen, I hope you enjoy it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:05

Doesn't that sound so good?

Kaytee Cobb 15:07

It does sound so good and even the cover of this one makes me think of a lot of those ones that are like really female centered detective stories like, like Amelia Peabody, some of the Agatha Christie stuff is being redone with covers like this. So I'm getting that vibe from a cover, which we love.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:23

Right. This one is just total catnip for me. Absolutely.

Kaytee Cobb 15:27

Okay, this next one is, again, a left turn speculative fiction. It's called The Twin Paradox by Charles Wachter and Kim Skaff is the one pressing it into our hands.

Kim Skaff 15:38

Hi, this is Kim from Zion, Illinois. And I want to press The Twin Paradox by Charles Wachter into your readers hands. This is a science fiction novel. And the synopsis is that DNA from history's greatest minds and leaders think Einstein, Da Vinci, MLK, etc. is being used to make clones. As those children turn 18 and learn who they are, they leave home to do a one year internship at a facility where time is no longer linear, and a very dangerous climate has been created. Due to how they've been bending time at this location. I don't want to give a lot away because so much of the fun of this book was going in not knowing what was going to happen. And well this book is action packed. I'm usually more of a character driven novel person. And this is probably the most plot based novel I've ever read. But I loved it. I really enjoyed it. It kept me guessing. The sci-fi was believable enough the environment was built succinctly. The characters were likable and the what the heck going on factor kept me on the edge of my seat for the entire book. I can't wait for part two to come out in January. It does not end on a cliffhanger but it ends leaving you wanting more. And I think the rights were just sold for either to turn into a movie or a TV show so I'm looking forward to that too. Anyway, check it out.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:54

Did you hear the sound of clicks in the background while we were listening to that because that was me getting this from my local indie like buying oh my gosh what a premise.

Kaytee Cobb 17:04

Yeah the the main blurb of this one I don't know if you saw it while you were adding to cart but it includes references to Ready Player One and Jurassic Park in the main blurb for this one and I'm like what please how did we not know about this book?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:17

Right exactly, right well this is exactly right Kim didn't fail us that's for dang sure.

Kaytee Cobb 17:24

She's writing a wrong

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:25

So this is exactly why we do this episode because out from the ether come these books where we're like how did we not know about this forever? Exactly. Exactly, so Twin Paradox for sure. Get in my belly. Okay. So the next one that we are going to hear about is called The Raising and this is by Laura Kasischke and this is being pressed by Sigrid Cordell.

Sigrid Cordell 17:52

Hi this is Sigrid and I can be found at @Hatcherstacks on Instagram. And the book that I want to press today is The Raising by Laura Kasischke. The book is a gothic novel that takes place on a very thinly disguised University of Michigan campus. And it is so well crafted. Kasischke really knows how to keep it spooky, how to keep it suspenseful. I've recommended this to a lot of my friends and it's just lost a weekend for them because they can't stop reading once you start. This is a book that has a suspicious car accident and that it has a possible double, a possible disappearance, possible rituals and fraternities and sororities that may have gone wrong, all sorts of elements. It is very, very spooky. It's not at all gory, but it's definitely spooky. And I very highly recommend it. The book is called The Raising by Laura Kasischke.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:51

It has a possible double, don't you just want to like hold her upside down and shake her till the rest of the plot comes out when she described. I mean, this is she did such a bang up job of setting up that book. Really, really good work on that.

Kaytee Cobb 19:06

I don't know how Sigrid would feel about that. But I'm guessing she'd be fine with it. Because she did this to us. Like how dare she give us just that little taste? It was perfect. It was perfect. I do have a question, Meredith. We know you don't love books on university campuses. How are you feeling about this?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:23

Right? So oftentimes, that will be something that doesn't necessarily pull me in. But it's not something where if the rest you know, because like Secret History is one of my favorite books. A college campus is a little better to me than a high school. It's not magical. But in this case, I think I am going to make an exception again when the rest of the plot is really strong. I've read several books that take place on a college campus and are very, very interesting. So this is one that sounds great.

Kaytee Cobb 19:49

It does sound great. I feel like this is perfect for the spooopy time of year like Mary and I talked about last year about that late fall reading time. That's where I'm slotting this one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:59

Absolutely. right at the beginning of winter, I think this is this is perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 20:04

Mhm. Book number nine for this year's press is What I Carry by Jennifer Longo and this is being pressed into our hands by Annie Tremain.

Annie Tremain 20:13

The book I want to press is What I Carry by Jennifer Longo. It's a YA book and my first five star read in a while. I don't give out five stars very easily. The main character Muir has been in 19 foster care placements in and around Seattle since birth and is getting close to aging out which means turning 18. Since she is always on the move, she has learned how to pack like never accumulating more than can fit in her suitcase and always staying ready to move at a moment's notice. Muiriel named after John Muir has come to believe over the years that she cannot rely on anyone because she believes once she ages out, it's all up to her anyway. And her alone is with this mindset that Muiriel almost what her social worker hopes will be her last placement before high school graduation. We follow Muiriel's story as she is brought to this new placement on a beautiful smart Island not far from Seattle. She makes friends, begins a relationship, gets a job and starts to ever so slowly unpack her belongings from her suitcase. As the story develops, we learned that Muiriel has a blackbird's nest, a pillowcase, full of little pieces from her life that are remnants and reminders of her past placements. We learn the stories that are woven together through what she carries. Does Muiriel make it through her senior year in this placement? You'll have to read it to find out, no spoilers here. One thing that makes this story even more touching is that Jennifer Longo wrote this book after her adopted daughter asked her to write a book about foster children, telling her that there weren't many books that showed how different the experiences of foster kids can be. Jennifer Longo interviewed lots of kids in the foster care system for this book and Muiriel came to life in part from those conversations. I loved the focus on nature and the connection between Muiriel and John Muir. I loved how the story showed the unique experiences of kids in foster care and relayed the message that not all kids want to be adopted. And that is okay. I loved that it discussed how foster parents are too often thought of as the savior, when in actuality it is every child's right to have a safe, nurturing environment to grow up in. And I thought that the book dealt well with some hard topics such as historical trauma, and racial issues as well. In conclusion, and in a slight adaptation of a John Muir quote, "the bookstore is calling and you must go" that is go and get What I Carry by Jennifer Longo today.

Kaytee Cobb 22:34

Bringing in that John Muir quote at the end. That was perfect.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:38

That was so so good. I love it. That was Yeah, that one sounds really, really good. I just read Paula McLain's When the Stars Go Dark, which I absolutely loved. And it kind of reminds, I think that would be a great pairing because it kind of deals with some of the same issues that has that nature pairing too. So I feel like that would be a good book flight.

Kaytee Cobb 22:57

Yeah, I was getting vibes of Far From the Tree by Robin Benway, which was a really early press of mine. I'm pretty sure I'm gonna say season one for that one. Because I love getting that that opportunity to look inside the foster care system from a lot of different angles. So I think this is another one that will give a really good glimpse of that as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:18

So our next one is They Never Learn by Layne Fargo and this is being pressed by Amanda Counts.

Amanda Counts 23:26

Hello Currently Reading listeners and bookish friends. I'm Amanda from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and I am so excited to press this book into your hands. This book is especially for all my murderous readers out there. And it's called They Never Learn by Layne Fargo. It was just published in fall of 2020. And it was brought to my attention by the Novel Pairings podcast. I just started a few weeks ago, but I know it's going to be in my top 10 books of 2021. Okay, as Meredith would say, here's the setup. She's a good serial killer, think Dexter. But instead of a blood spatter specialist, she's a college professor. And the people she targets are student sexual predators flying under the justice systems, and the university's radars. She's been killing successfully for years by making their deaths appear accidental. But this time she sets her sights a little higher on those of a fellow professor. You guys, I could not stop reading or talking about this book. I was telling everyone about this serial killer who is a female professor. In fact, when I was getting near the end of the book, I woke up at two o'clock in the morning from a dead sleep and I started reading and I couldn't stop until I was done with the book. Read this book if you love Chelsea Cain, Caroline Kepnes, or any other serial killer fiction with a fiercely feminine twist, you will not regret it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:04

Doesn't that sound so good?

Kaytee Cobb 25:06

It does sound so good. I remember Mindy really liking this one as well. So that means that it's going to appeal to a broad swath of readers. Right? Because we know Mindy has an opposite taste to us in some ways, and then a very great overlap with us in other ways. So I know that her loving this book and Amanda loving this is a really good sign for all of us.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:28

Absolutely. I think this is one that sounds so good.

Kaytee Cobb 25:32

Yes, although another university campus Meredith. What are you doing to yourself?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:36

I know that again, when you put it when you layer in enough else that's interesting, especially because this isn't seem to be focused on like the children who attend the school year and I mean, it's about the professor and professors. That's the kind of the administration that makes it interesting for me. Ah,

okay. It's not the campus. It's not the campus I don't like it's the children I don't like teenagers and young adults just don't

Kaytee Cobb 26:00

Okay, we won't tell them.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:01

Don't tell my, Don't tell my young adult children.

Kaytee Cobb 26:05

It's a secret. Nobody tells them. Nobody knows. Okay, our next one today is Moloka'i by Alan Brennert, pressed into our hands by Rachel Kohlbrenner.

Rachel Kohlbrenner 26:17

Hi, this is Rachel Kohlbrenner. And I wanted to press an awesome book that I just finished this past May into your hands. And it's called Moloka'i by Allen Brennert. And it is a book that's been sitting on my shelf for a little while, and I'm so glad I finally picked it up. I read it as part of a buddy read, which I highly suggest. It was emotional. And I really did hug the book at the end. I did cry a few times. But I really loved it so much. It really is an unknown history about the island of Moloka'i, which is in Hawaii. And it was the small island that people who had it later called Hansen's disease, but at the time was called leprosy was banished to this island so it didn't spread. So our main character is Rachel. And she at seven years old, she is taken away from her family. And she ends up being sent to this island. And it feels heartbreaking for her to be away at such a young age. But she ends up making friends and having sort of her own little family. I know people love found family and I adore that that trope as well. And it is here. And even through a lot of suffering and a lot of hardship. And it goes through the war. I also learned a little bit about Hawaiian history, which I knew also pretty, very small amounts of and this character of Rachel really has a wonderful place in my heart. And it was such a wonderful book with vivid descriptions of Moloka'i and Honolulu. And they were really vivid, but it's not too flowery. So I there is actually a sequel and I plan to read it coming up soon. I hope you enjoy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:21

That's another one that would not have come on our radar and yet sounds so interesting. I never I had no idea about any part of this book.

Kaytee Cobb 28:30

I only knew the slightest little bit about the island that I incorrectly called Molokai in the intro to that, about Moloka'i, because Jason had a friend when we were growing up that played tennis with him that was from that island. So he knew some of the history of the, what was termed at the time the leper colony that was on the island. So at that I like the tiniest little taste of a friend of a friend basically is all I knew about this. So I love the idea of picking up a big juicy novel and really getting into it. That one sounds really really good.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:01

All right, our next one is *The Song of the Lioness* and this is by Tamara Pierce, and it's been recommended or pressed by Amanda Nagle.

Amanda Nagle 29:12

The book series that I want to press into the hands of every middle grade reader. Young and not so young is *The Song of the Lioness* quartet by Tamra Pierce. Published in the 1980s, this book was instrumental in launching the young female protagonists role in middle grade and YA that we love today. The setup of the story is that in Tortall, noble boys begin to train as knights at age 11 and girls trained to be ladies, but Alanna wants to be a knight, so she poses as her twin brother and heads to the palace to begin training. She is dedicated to keeping her secret and becoming a great knight, but she must overcome her small size, bullies and an even greater threat to the kingdom that lurks around. It has themes of hard work, acceptance, friendship and adventure. It also lightly touches on menstruation, gender expression and sexual attraction. My favorite thing about this series is how the main character Alanna is great because of her natural abilities and hard work. There's no prophecy. She isn't the chosen one, she doesn't find the last egg or the magic jewel, or anything like that. It's an inspiring, heartwarming and fun story with adventure and characters for any reader, especially any young girls in your life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:27

I feel like I wish I would have found this book back in the early 80s. I wrote like, Where was this book when I was seven? Mom?

Kaytee Cobb 30:34

What were you doing to me?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:37

Cheryl, let's go. This sounds great.

Kaytee Cobb 30:41

It does.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:41

Yeah, I'm so excited to read it now. And then to hopefully shine some light on it for growth. Because the fact that it's not about needing to be magical to be great. I think that's a fantastic element of the story.

Kaytee Cobb 30:53

I agree. I think that's really something that that we're missing a lot in current middle grade, like I can think of a lot of really great books where we do have a chosen one. But for Alanna, to be a heroine in her own right and to make her own way in the world is really that's a really special message to be able to hand to any young person. So I'm excited to pick this one up as well. No. Okay. Our next one is called *Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese. And it is being pressed by Hollie Lawder

Hollie Lawder 31:21

Hi, Meredith and Kaytee. This is Hollie from Omemee, Ontario, Canada. And on bookstagram I'm @readingontherun. The book I want to press today is Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese. It is a fictional story, but it is loosely based on the author's life experience. It's the story of Saul Indian Horse, and when we meet him he has hit rock bottom and has started treatment in a center for his alcoholism. During his time in treatment, he's reflecting back on his past, as an Ojibwe child who was forced into a residential school, just like many other First Nations children in Canada. It's based around the time like 1960s. So it's flashing back and forth from the present time, to his time in the residential school. And he is slowly uncovering the trauma and terrible things that had happened to him as a child. Because of that, all that he remembers of this time is that he had a great talent for hockey, and that he also really loved it. But as we find out slowly, he has just covered up the really awful memories of his time there with that love of hockey. This is a really timely book, as it's a look at Canada's treatment of their of our First Nations and the racism that is still present. It's a sad story, but and challenging, but it's also extremely readable, and, and a shorter book, but I think it's a really important story that needs to be read. I also feel really strongly that it would be a great addition to our schools' curriculum. Anywho, so that's Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese and I just want to thank you, ladies for being in my earbuds every week and making me smile.

Hollie Lawder 32:00

She is the sweetest I love and I love her account too as a running reader or reading runner. She's one of my favorite follows.

Kaytee Cobb 33:32

Yeah, I picked this one because Hollie, when she emailed us, she made it clear that this book was top of mind for her because we asked for these presses at the end of May. And there was a whole big thing happening in Canada, with indigenous First Nations schools and a mass grave being uncovered with a lot of children in it. So it felt like the exact perfect press for her that week. And I'm so glad that she picked something that felt like, you know, sad but accessible in order to give us a better feel for something that is really top of mind in the news right now. I just think that's one of the one of the ways that we as readers can personalize a news story is by going to the pages of our favorite place, which is the library, the bookstore, right, and making sure that we have read something that really brings that story to life for us in a different way rather than a five minute news clip. So I just I love that about reading and I really love that Hollie brought this for that reason.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:31

Yeah, it's a great press. Alright, our last press of this episode is The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss. And this is being pressed by Andrea Carson.

Andrea Carson 34:43

My press is The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss. This is book one of three in the Kingkiller Chronicle. It is a high fantasy fiction that is simply unputdownable. It was engaging, had a touch of mystery and the world that has been created left wanting more. This book is a coming of age story about Kvothe, a feisty redheaded boy who grows up with a group of traveling troubadours and is too smart for his own good. In a unique world where true magic exists, we follow Kvothe on his journey to

learn the Name of the Wind, which would give him the power to control the wind itself. Kvothe encounters friendship and love along his journey, while also struggling to survive. There is a school that teaches magic, dark folklore elements and mythical creatures. What I loved so much about this book is it has some of the best writing and character development I have ever read. This book is in first person narrative where Kvothe is telling his own story. It flashes between where he is now as an innkeeper in a small dull town, and the adventure story of his adolescence. Because the two Kvothes, young and old, are in such stark contrast to each other. I wanted to keep reading just to figure out how he ended up so different than the risk taker of his youth. This book was an emotional rollercoaster through the lens of the protagonist in all the best ways possible. As a note, the book is 662 pages, but do not let that scare you away. I devoured this book in three days and did not want it to end. Don't walk, run immediately to your local bookstore, library, Kindle or phone to read this. That's The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss.

Kaytee Cobb 36:39

We started with a bossy press, and we are ending with a bossy press. And I like that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:43

I absolutely love it. Now, I have to say I read this book a really, really long time ago. And I think about it all the time. It has one of the most memorable especially I mean, she's right, it's a big huge honkin book and yet, it doesn't read like that. And it has one of the most memorable like first 30 pages. It's it just starts off with banging, it doesn't let go. It's really this is a this is a really, really good press for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 37:14

I'm excited about it. I think you know, Andrea, when she emailed us, she told us she wanted to kind of right a wrong in that we don't talk about a lot of high fantasy on the show. And we both mentioned it as one of the tropes or one of the genres that we tend to shy away from. But she absolutely convinced me that this is a book that I would really love. So I'm excited to get to it especially knowing that you've read it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:35

And it's and I have read a few of those. And that's part of the reason why I'm always looking for that next one that's going to be both accessible, and have that really great world building. And this one is this one, definitely the lead character here is, as she says, I love her. You can hear her kind of smiling when she talks about the book too. I love that. Well, Kaytee, those are 14 amazing presses that you and I we're not going to be bringing to the show. They're completely new to us. Or in the case of the last one I read it so long ago that I just have completely not, you know, not brought it to the show. What a gift these books are. I think this is such a great group of books for us all to explore together.

Kaytee Cobb 38:19

Yes, we find it really, it's it is it's a gift that y'all are giving us by sending us your voices and taking your time to tell us about a book that you really loved for some reason. And that's part of why this episode is one of our favorites. It's not just a TBR toppler, it's you trusting us with a story that you really love. And that's one of my favorite things about it, too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:40

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

Kaytee Cobb 38:49

And you can find me, Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:52

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.

Kaytee Cobb 39:02

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:09

And if you really want to help us, become a patron at for \$5 a month, or rate and review us on Apple podcasts, or shout us out on social media. All three of those things make a huge difference toward us being able to find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 39:24

Yes, your recommendations, your shoutouts your shares and your Patreon support are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:32

All right, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 39:34

Happy reading Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:48

So the next one that we are going to hear about is called The Raising and this is by...

Kaytee Cobb 39:56

Good luck.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:58

Thank you. I'm going to here I go... Laura Kaczynski

Kaytee Cobb 40:02

Oh I like it.