



# Season 3, Episode 32: A Bookish Field Trip + Streamlining Your TBR

Mon, 3/22 • 51:24

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10**

Hey readers, welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And you should 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. We'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:32**

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas and I'll read, well, almost anything.

**Kaytee Cobb 00:40**

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and I'm constantly trying to make my reading life more efficient. This is episode number 32 of season three, and we're so glad you're here. Meredith, almost anything?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53**

Almost anything, right? I'm realizing more and more about my reading habits. And you know, I want to say I'll read anything, but it's almost it's not just anything,

**Kaytee Cobb 01:04**

actually anything. Okay, before we get into the show for today. First, I want to let everybody know that our deep dive is going to be about streamlining your TBR, how to make sure that your TBR is working for you and not against you. But first, I want to welcome any new listeners that came over from Laura's podcast Ten Things to Tell You. We had so much fun chatting books with Laura. And it was so great to see our numbers spike right after that conversation. So welcome to anyone who's brand new to Currently Reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:33**

Absolutely, we are so happy to have you. Talking about books is our absolute favorite thing to do. The other thing that we wanted to do before we got in is we want to do just a little bit of an update on some of the goals that we had set. Longtime listeners know at the beginning of the year, Kaytee and I had a long conversation and we decided on a couple of goals that we really, really wanted to concentrate on

for the podcast for the year. And actually we ended up hitting one of those goals this week. Can you do you want to tell them about that?

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:01

Yeah, that's one of our first goals for this year. What we said right at the beginning of the year is that we have decided to pivot away from advertising and focus exclusively on our Patreon community in order to support the work that we're doing on the show. And our first goal in that regard was to hit 1000 patrons and that we did it you guys. We did it. We hit it on March 11 of 2021. Which is amazing, because we still have nine months to go in this year, right? So thankfully, we...

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:30

Right, we thought it might take all all year, but it went a lot faster than we thought which is fantastic. Luckily, even back at that beginning of the year conversation, we had set a goal A and goal B so now we have a new goal, our new goal is to get to 1200 patrons. So we're going to just put our heads down and sharpen our pencils and continue to do the work so that we can get to that goal. So it is just \$5 a month to join us. And there is a lot of great content, including Kaytee does Kaytee Reads Too Much every month where she talks about all the books that didn't make the Big Show because she reads way more than what we talked about on the Big Show. I do All Things Murderful with Meredith, which is a podcast that's monthly just about my favorite mysteries and thrillers for everyone who loves all the scary stuff. And we also do the Indie Press List, which we have no words for how amazing the response was to the first month of the Indie Press List. You guys we sold out every one of the five books that Fabled chose for our group. And they immediately got new ones in so everyone's receiving their books now. And we are super excited about it. So \$5 a month, become a patron. And it's a great way to support us, we don't have any ads in the show. And also you get a lot of extra, extra goodies. The other goal we are aiming toward is to get to 10,000 followers. And you guys we are currently as of this recording at 9131. So we're getting close, but we really want to get to 10,000. So we can get that swipe up and provide even better content for you guys. So yes, lots of exciting things happening. Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:06

It's very exciting. And we're doing pretty well with our our final goal for the year, which was to make sure that we have some exciting guests. So people already got to hear from Laura, earlier in the year. And Gretchen and we already know about our next big one that we're very excited about as well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:22

Oh my gosh, I yes. Yes, I cannot. I cannot wait

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:26

cannot wait. Okay, let's get into bookish moments. Let's get this show on the road. Meredith, what do you have for us?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:33

All right, my bookish moment of the week actually has to do with my husband, Johnny, and he is everyone knows a reader. But he's well he's a very consistent reader. He's always reading something.

He doesn't burn through books really, really quickly. He'll get involved in like a big long brick and he'll be reading it for months months, but he reads consistently right. What I am trying to convince him to do more of is to DNF. This is something that he is so opposed to. And every once in a while he will get stuck behind a book and it drives me crazy because I'm like, Johnny, you're, you're reading a book that you don't want to be reading. It's not pulling you in. You're not, you're not you don't want to read that much. When you read, you're not taking every opportunity to read. And I said, remember a couple of weeks ago, you blasted through and your Anita Shreve novel in like, a week. But now you've been reading The Goldfinch, heaven help him, he's reading The Goldfinch. I told him, but he picked it up. And now he's 40% into it. And he just is like, No, no, no, it's good. I want to be reading it. But I'm like, No, you don't I can tell. I can tell. But you don't. So I'm trying to teach him to DNF. But he is just really, really stubbornly opposed to it. He feels, I don't know. I don't even know what he he can't even really explain why he can't just like he's giving up or failing. I don't know. So we'll see. I'm going to continue to work on it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:01

Okay, that sounds like a good goal. What would happen if you hit it?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:06

Oh, he would probably just continue to complain about it until I found like, he's not that easily drawn off. You know what I mean?

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:13

Not a 10 year old ping it. I felt like that was a really good idea there for a second.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:18

Right. And he knows that I don't lose any like I don't, I don't lose track of things. Clear. It would clearly be something I had done on purpose, which would then trigger his eight minutes into like, trying to control me. And

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:31

Okay, fair, well, my bookish moment is also about a family member, my little caboose baby is coming up quickly on three years old, and she wants to be helpful, but usually isn't. Lately she has taken to bringing me things that she thinks I need in the moment. It could be a diaper. It could be my water bottle. It could be my beer, which is always really exciting for her to bring that to me. But lately, my favorite thing that she brings me is my current read. So she'll just, like, wander up to me holding my book. Mommy, I brought this for you. Does not matter what I'm doing. I could be cooking dinner and she's like, Mommy, I'm like, Oh, you're right. I should be reading instead of cooking dinner right now. That's a great idea Onalee. So right. It's just this like, I know it's gonna pass and I just want to mark it in my mind, but this was just a really cute phase where she would bring me anything that I might be needing from her.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:24

Well, Onalee is our little podcast baby right because we started the podcast when she was just four weeks six weeks she was so tiny. And for so long we recorded like around her naps and everything. So

I like marking what's happening with Onalee because it's, it's directly tied to you know how old the podcast right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:44

So our podcast is a toddler. Well, that means our podcast is just about to start potty training as well. So wish me luck. All right, let's get into current reads. Meredith, what do you have for your first book this week?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:59

All right, my first book this week, speaking of Fabled, who is our Indie Press List this month and next month. They are, when I was there in January, I they had a pile of books ready for me just that they had picked out. Elizabeth, their book buyer said I think these ones would be good for you. This is one of those. And she was absolutely right. This book is called The Sherlockian and it's by Graham Moore. This is a really, really fun one. Alright, here's our setup. So we all know or any Sherlock Holmes fan knows that in December 1893, the author of the Sherlock Holmes books Arthur Conan Doyle killed off Holmes, in his latest story, right? Our first of two timelines that this book follows is covering what happened immediately after the public finds out that sure that Sherlock Holmes has been killed off in the stories. In short, London freaked out, and Arthur Conan Doyle was immediately vilified. So both in print and in person, it was horrible. It was like mad twitter, but in real life. He couldn't even go to the butcher without being butchered.

**Kaytee Cobb** 09:04

Oh, no,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 09:05

Really, right. He it was a real, it was a really, really, really big deal, and it very much affected his life. So then in 1901, just as abruptly as he had murdered Holmes, he brought him back to life. He kept diaries, and everyone knew that he kept really details and detailed diaries and journals of his days in his work, but he never publicly explained why he had this change of heart. After his death, one of the journals from this interim period of time was discovered to be missing. And then the decades since it's never been found, but our story asks the question, What if it had? Our current day timeline has a starting out when literary researcher Harold White is being inducted into the preeminent Sherlock Holmes enthusiast society, the Baker Street Irregulars. This society, and this is true in real life, is the holy grail of Holmes obsessives, and Harold White is totally shocked that they let someone in that's as young as he is. But of course he accepts this is our story starts the night that he's accepting his induction into this group. And then just moments later, the world's leading Arthur Conan Doyle scholar who is rumored to have finally found the diary from this period of time back in the 1890s, is found murdered. And of course, Harold White has to use everything he knows about Sherlock Holmes and his deductive ways to solve the mystery to solve the murder. And to find the diary. This was fantastic. This is very much one of those, if you like a puzzle, if you like a closed room mystery, you're gonna love it. I loved the two timelines, because I was googling the whole time trying to figure out how much of it was true and how much of it was fiction. And a lot of it is is taken from Arthur Conan Doyle, his real life. So I feel like as a devoted, you know, sort of Holmes scholar, this book actually taught me a lot of things. I loved it, too. I

didn't realize this until it was like three quarters through the book. But Graham Moore, the author of the book, he also wrote The Holdout.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:13

I was going to ask,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:15

right, which is the legal thriller that was, you know, kind of big a few months ago, I really loved that, too. So the writing style is really, really easy to move through. It's very propulsive with short chapters that go back and forth between the two timelines. And I really loved the very well researched character of Arthur Conan Doyle. He put in a lot of personality into the actual character in the book, and I just really enjoyed it from start to finish. So this was The Sherlockian by Graham Moore.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:43

Well, that was I mean, I feel like we could have predicted that was going to be a hit out of the park for you. So I'm glad that it was.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:50

Yes. Elizabeth strikes again. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:52

indeed. Okay, my first one this week, you're gonna laugh even at the title of this Meredith. The book is called How to be Black by Baratunde Thurston. Yep. That's right. I've gotten this far.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:04

You just now you just

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:06

gonna go for it? Yes. So this book was already on my TBR. And then we did Episode 26 of season three about books that make us laugh out loud. And somebody commented, her name is Irene, Irene 89, on Instagram, and she said that this was a book that made her laugh out loud. And I like rats record screech moment where I was like, wait, what I thought this was like, social justice serious. So then I had to get it right away. So I went to grab it from the library. Baratunde Thurston is the Director of Digital for The Onion, the satirical online newspaper, and the co founder of Jack and Jill politics. So he is coming to this book with humor and politics squarely like in his gun holsters, right. He's like, ready to knock it out. So he's very funny. He's very funny. I laughed out loud multiple times while I listened to this book, and I felt called out in a number of ways. All that being said, I would love an updated version, because this one was published in 2012, during Obama's second run for president, and a lot has happened in the last nine years. Can we agree?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:13

We need an update to this book? Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:16

Exactly. We need an update. Because about 50% of the book felt dated to me because it was so firmly rooted in that time. And in that moment, where it was like, you know, you're clapping yourself on the back, because maybe you voted for the first black president twice, like good for you. So it just felt a little bit of like overwrought, because it didn't have that like really fresh perspective on what was happening right now. The part that I really loved about this is he uses what he calls the black panel, since the title seems so far reaching how to be Black like, and he's like, I'm not speaking for all Black people. But he has, like seven other people that contribute regularly to the work. So he'll go to them and ask questions. And they will respond with their own. You know, when were you when were you bravest as a Black person? Or when were you the most Black you've ever been? And he has one white dude on his panel, who is the creator of Stuff White People Like. Did you hear about this website at the time? It's very funny as well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:14

That's ringing a bell. Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:16

So that guy also gets to contribute his thoughts to how to be Black, which is like, it's just hysterical. It's so funny. I was laughing over and over and over again. So really, this is my call for Baratunde Thurston to write us an updated version because I want to give it to people. But I don't want to have to put that caveat on it. Like, hey, this is a little dated, but it'll still make you laugh. I want it to be fresh and hilarious and perfect for this moment right now. So that was How to Be Black by Baratunde Thurston.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:46

Okay. Kaytee, this next one is something I have never brought to the show before and I have gone round and round about whether or not anyone else is going to care about this. And finally, I just decided GD I can talk about whatever I want to talk about and I had... right? I had a bookish experience that I want to not only talk about. I want to urge everyone to create a similar experience. Okay, so let me let me tell you this. So, a couple of weeks ago, actually, it was literally the last at the end of ice mageddon. I was just feeling so housebound, I was feeling so like, we couldn't go anywhere. For nine days, I was just feeling so claustrophobic. And I was feeling so much sadness over the fact that we have not been able to travel really, anywhere for a year. But now for the last nine days, like I hadn't been able to leave my house. And I was just like thinking, I just would love more than anything. I want to do like a garden tour of England. This is like my dream trip, right? I want to do like a literary tour and a garden tour of England. No, would you know, that literally, as I was sitting there thinking that my fantastic library, The Lake Travis Library, had this running kind of chyron of their brand new books, and one of the books that they had come in was a coffee table book, Lord help us, called Adventures in Eden: An Intimate Tour of the Private Gardens of Europe.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:17

No way.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:18

So I said, You know what, I'm gonna grab that coffee table book, which I never buy coffee and never do anything with coffee table books, right? I got it from the library. And it was so stinking gorgeous. It was so gorgeous. It basically allowed me to take a trip of my own safely into exactly where I wanted to go. In this case, that was to the British and Irish countryside, touring these private gardens. So these are gardens that we're not, you can't, you can't just go to at any at any moment, the book delivered exactly what I wanted. It was these gorgeous photos, juicy details about the gardens and how they came to be and the people who lived there. And just so many gorgeous images, I learned so much that I didn't know before. In fact, I had no idea what a dovecote was. Okay, do you know what a dovecote is?

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:09

I assume that's where doves live,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:12

Right, I had no idea that several, like people bought these old manor houses in England completely, just to redo the gardens. And then they became obsessed with them. Some of these people redid these gardens to the point where they quit their jobs. And literally building and maintaining and designing their gardens became their entire job. Now I obviously, who knows how these people could afford to do that. But I the my point is, I got to live vicariously through them through this coffee table book, I ended up spending two hours with this book, I added to the experience by playing an ASMR room of the British countryside in the background. There was rain, of course, and it added to the mood. And I had a cup of tea, which I hardly ever drink tea. But just you know, I wanted to create a bookish experience around doing this. And I just devoted to quiet hours, which I almost never get to traveling someplace by means of a book. And so this particular book was Adventures in Eden by Carolyn Mullet. Yes, I think it would be wonderful if everyone could read that actual book. But my what I really want people to do is to if you can go into your library, because these coffee table books are ridiculously expensive. They're so I mean, they're not in my budget, maybe they're in other people, they're just not in my budget. But go to your library online, or in person if you can, and choose one or two books in the travel section, or the cooking section, or the food section or whatever section floats your metaphorical boat and take one of those home, put on the right ASMR room, make a beverage that works and create a bookish experience. This is my advice because I friggin loved it. I felt like I had gone somewhere. And that brought joy to my soul.

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:04

This is this is getting very book bossy at this point.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:07

I am really because well I'm being bossy about it because I think a lot of people are going to be like, Huh. Try it and tell me what you think that's why I'm being booked report back.

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:16

Absolutely. I like this plan. So this is a left turn from the beautiful idyllic gardens of Europe to a book by one of my favorite novelists John Marrs. His new book is called The Minders. And this is the perfect time to talk about it because The One, his book that I first fell in love with is now on Netflix. And I have

some feelings about the first episode that I watched last night, but I'm not going to go into that here. The Minders. This is unfortunately the most convoluted book of his that I've read. We live in the near future sci fi again, it kind of pivots around some of the other books that we've read that are of that time, The Passengers, The One, they're all taking place in the same near future world. There have been hackings of huge government databases around the world where the data has been held for ransom, as in, pay us this exorbitant fund this exorbitant amount of money and or else we will release all your secrets to the world about, you know, state sanctioned murders, and what really happened with the nuclear disaster and that kind of thing. So every government obviously is like, holy bananas, we need to lock down our data. Well, the British government in this world decides to implant it into the brains of five British citizens. And these are people who have kind of disconnected from their daily lives, they either have suffered a loss, or maybe their marriage isn't great. So they need to leave or something is going on where they're, they just, they need to get out of their regular lives. So they cut all ties. They are funded as with a stipend by the British government, and they have all the state secrets in their brains. That's the premise of this book. So you're following five minders, you're following somebody who wants to kill all these people and get access to the data. And it's just very like scatterbrained brain, of course, because the data is in their brains, it's really hard to get your head around each of the five characters, but you have to because you have to invest in them in order to care when one of them gets killed off, you know, so he had to do it with the premise that he set up, but it's really hard to follow. And it's really hard to care deeply about each of the five characters. So eventually you get there. But it's a lot to ask from your reader. And I, that's not to say that I didn't enjoy it, it just turned into a lot more difficult read than I'm used to. From my beloved John Marrs, I still adore him. I still read all his books, but this one just felt like a little too far of a reach for me. So that was The Minders by John Marrs.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:01

Alright, so if everyone felt like I had lost my ever loving mind with my last current read, let me bring you squarely back into everything is fine, because Meredith is bringing us an absolutely horrific book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:13

Okay, perfect.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:15

All right. So everyone just feel feel calm now. So I want to talk about a book that I absolutely loved, cannot stop thinking about or pressing into people's hands. This is Into the Drowning Deep by Mira Grant. All right, let me give you the setup. Seven years before our story starts, a big famous entertainment company sent a boat to the Mariana Trench to film a movie that was bringing to life ancient sea creatures. Simply put, they were going to make a movie about mermaids. But just a few days in, that boat was lost at sea, and there were no survivors. And there's just a tiny bit of footage that was shot on the last day before they lost communication. And that footage seems to show something that is impossible. Some people call the footage a hoax. Other people have called the expedition a tragedy. That's the fault of an irresponsible media company that just cared about profit and not people. So now seven years later, when our story starts, a new crew has been assembled. And a new boat that has been outfitted differently, just in case, is going back to the Mariana Trench. But this time, they're not out to entertain. The crew goes out with a mix of motivations. We have scientists on board who are trying to validate their life's work. We have the movie company who wants to find out what happened



seven years ago, but they also want to film a profitable documentary. And then we have our lead character who's young scientist, Victoria Stewart, her sister was lost in that first expedition, and she wants to find out the truth of what happened on that ship. All right, let me just tell you, this is the mermaid horror that you did not know you needed. All right. This book is so spine tinglingly good. So to your point, Kaytee, about the book that you just talked about before. That one of the things that I really loved about the way Mira Grant wrote this book is that there are it's a fairly large cast of characters that's going out on the second expedition, the people who are going to be in our story, she does such a good job of creating those characters before the expedition starts, you're meeting them and you feel like you know them so that once the action starts rolling, and we're actually going out to the Mariana Trench, you not only can keep them apart, which is the right kind of a feat to begin with. But you also care what happens to them and in some cases, you kind of hope they get eaten by mermaid. Alright, let me tell you guys, that there is no question that this is hard. Okay, this is mermaid horror if you have a lifelong devotion to the Little Mermaid, please do not read this book because it will ruin that memory for

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:10

oh my gosh,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:12

This is gory and graphic not all the way through. It's not like you know a blood fest the entire time, but in the scenes where there is that there is that in spades. But it is so well done, it melds the these fantastic sort of scientific details with really solid scientific theory with a plot that moves along so amazingly well, but I kept thinking, Man, if you love Michael Creighton, you're gonna love this book, because that just that melding of those two things is such a sweet spot. I learned so much as I was reading this book, which normally I'm not into the science stuff, but the way that she does it, I was really, really interested the entire time. It turns out between the way that evolution works and the way that climate change works, you guys, mermaids, killer mermaids could actually exist. And I'm like, I'm not even sh-ing you. Okay. This book shook me. Like, it's so well done. It is such a great story. I ripped through it like I was watching a movie. And by the way, can I ask why we are doing sequels for stupid things like King Kong and Godzilla and every Marvel movie, when someone should be making this, this book into a movie? Where is James Cameron like, this is his excuse to do one of those little tiny things and go deep down into the ocean and film stuff. This book is crying out to be made into a movie, but it is so so great as a book. This is Into the Drowning Deep by Mira Grant.

**Kaytee Cobb** 26:59

Who, raise of hands who put a hold on that while Meredith was talking. That's the question that I have for you right now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:06

It is so good.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:08

Okay, excellent. I'm so excited. So my next book has nothing to do with mermaids. I know you might be surprised about that. I'm going to talk about The Mighty Miss Malone by Christopher Paul Curtis. So

Christopher Paul Curtis is a super prolific middle grade author of historical fiction usually centered around the Depression. Do you see how big of a left turn I just made for us here?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:33

Wow...

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:34

Our main character...

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:35

So I already know that mermaids would make this book better. But go ahead.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:38

I I'm wondering if we can work them in somehow. Let me tell you a little bit about it. So Deza Malone is our main character. And she's young and brilliant and living in Gary, Indiana, which yes, I did want to sing every time I heard it with her mom and her dad and her brother. When the Depression hits and then continues to get worse and worse and worse, her dad gets into a boating accident and is forever changed. He leaves to find work and doesn't return. So eventually the family leaves to find him. They end up in a Hooverville which I learned about in the reading of this book, Depression Era camp right outside of Flint, Michigan, where the water is no good, Meredith so I don't know about the mermaids in Flint, Michigan. I feel like that would be a bad, although maybe they would be murderous. Maybe you're right. Well, yeah, maybe you're right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 28:25

Maybe that's where it all starts

**Kaytee Cobb** 28:26

This is what happened. This is how mermaids got created. Okay, so the city has become a political maelstrom in this previous decade from here, but for Christopher Paul Curtis, our author, it's where he was born and raised. So setting plays a big role here. He's really bringing the town of Flint, Michigan to life. Deza and her family and the way they love each other and interact with each other and are just completely unforgettable. I love the names that they have for each other which all play with alliteration like the title, the Mighty Miss Malone. The family gets put through the wringer you guys, this is not an easy read, but you fall for them and their story. I learned about Hoovervilles and the Depression. And I loved this, this entire thing. I did almost give up at about 20% I'm because I thought this book was going somewhere that I was not happy about. But thankfully I did keep going and it turns out okay. So this is kind of a like a Fierce Kingdom caveat where it's like, oh, I don't, I don't think I like this and somebody has to tell you push through. You're gonna be okay. This is me saying reader push through, you're gonna be okay. You can handle it. Your kiddo, you might want to pre-read for them. But I really really loved it. It's the Mighty Miss Malone, middle grade historical fiction by Christopher Paul Curtis.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:43

I feel like the Depression may be starting to be like the next place where we're getting a lot of a lot of historical fiction and I'm here for it. I mean, anything that's not World War Two, right? I mean, it's just not World War Two, right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 29:59

Well, this one I've written in 2012, so it's not if it is, he's, like a forerunner to it, you know?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:07

Right. Right. I just that's kind of my, my gut is telling me that that that era is becoming one that we're going to get a little more about. So I think it's good. Let's explore other, there's a lot of other history, let's explore it, right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:18

Definitely. Okay, those were our six current reads, we went all over the map today. And so now, after giving you this variety of reads, we're going to talk about streamlining your TBR. And how to whittle it back in and focus in on what you actually need to be reading. So this happens to all of us, right, Meredith?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:37

It definitely does. And I feel like with bookstagram, and book podcasts, and you and I both listen to lots of book pods, it's just become and then of course, now the Indie Press List, and now we're pressing even more. It's serious. I mean, knowing how to choose your next read, streamlining your TBR is a really big skill.

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:56

Right. We did talk about how to pick your next read, which was Episode 12 of season one, which as far as I know, even like Apple podcasts, users can't even get those anymore. It's so far back in the catalogue at this point, it is. So if you're interested, you can go back and listen to that one. But that was when we were a little baby podcast, Onalee, was so tiny.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:17

Right? We need to update this discussion for sure. Right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:20

So let's say for the sake of argument that all of us have 100 books on our TBR 1000 10,000. Who knows, right? Whatever it is, any number you can think of, you're never gonna finish it reader, I'm telling you right now, you're never going to finish it. We're all going to die with TBR intact, never having completed the entire list. Because there's so many new books coming every year, you're never going to catch all the way up. And I think that's the first thing we have to admit. Right? Let it go.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:51

well, and let it go. Yes. And embrace that. And lean into that. Just saying really, the only thing, the best thing that we can do then is realize that it's great to know that there are so many books that we want to

read that just state is kind of a happy for, for readers. So embrace the state of knowing you will never run out of great books to read,

**Kaytee Cobb 32:14**

You will never run out. You're not. Even if you take all the tips, whatever we're about to tell you, and you wittle wittle wittle wittle, you're still never going to run out of books. But let's talk about how to streamline it. Let's pretend where we're sitting here looking at our 1000 book list. Meredith, what's the first thing that you do? When you're thinking about streamlining your TBR?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:34**

First thing that I thought about is you need to sort of know the result that you're looking for with your reading, in order to make the best decisions. Because there's having a TBR, which is sort of a running list, whether it's in on paper or in Goodreads or in you know, your note app, there's a million ways to sort of have a list of books that you may want to read. But streamlining it so that you can actually make a choice for your next read is what we're talking about today. And that involves knowing what results are you looking for as a reader. And that involves knowing who you are as a reader. And I think that that is the number one thing that people need to do is to sort of read or know thyself, I am a mood reader, right. I'm also a rebel reader. So that means that when I need to choose my next book, I have to have systems in place, that my stream my TBR has to be streamlined enough so that I have the freedom to choose whatever I'm in the mood for. And I have to also know that if someone tells me Oh, you must read this book, it will automatically fall off of my immediate TBR. So I'm that's the rebel reader part of me. So I know those two things about myself. And so I then can create a more streamlined TBR system that works for me.

**Kaytee Cobb 33:56**

So how do you decide what to let's say you like you have your book cart in your bookshelves at your house? Right? I have a TBR shelf at my house that only has an unread books on it. Do you ever take books off without even flipping through them? Do you continue to add forever until you actually die under your bookshelf?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:14**

Right? Okay, so I have a most of the books in my house. I have not read because I don't, except for a very small number of books. I don't keep books once I've read them. So I might pass it on to Johnny and then we pass it on or I might pass it on to friends or take it to the library for a book sale, something like that. But so I don't have a lot of books in my home other than ones I have not yet read. So my I have my owned books that are on my TBR because I bought them saying hey Meredith, you might want to read this someday. So I have an "on deck" book cart and I have an "up next" shelf. So this is my system that I'm currently working with. So I've got my cart, which is filled with books that I'm really excited with and I've got my shelf which is like here are 25 books that run the gamut from many different genres, many different recommendation sources, but these are the ones that are really, really, really pulling at me right now. And so when it's time for me to choose a book, I either choose a library book because sometimes I'm choosing those or then if I've read a library book, then I'm picking an owned book. The beauty of this streamlined right now TBR shelf is that it is a constantly evolving grouping of books. So in a in the course of a week, I might get a few more books in, you know, through

various sources now might be you know what, right now, I'm going to take these two off of this shelf, put it into my on deck cart. And these two now are going in, or maybe something from one of my other shelves catches my eye, the Mira Grant book I just talked about, I had had sitting on just a nothing bookshelf of mine for like three years. So sometimes I'll just pick something up totally randomly, but my TBR shelf gives me enough books and enough variety that I know there's going to be something there that I can choose from when I go to pick out my next book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:16

Okay, I feel like you have done a better job than me at making sure that what's on those bookshelves is really good stuff. I, especially in years past, obviously not in the past year, but used to go to Goodwill, Savers and the bookstore and just wander and let things catch my eye. And it seems to me that a lot of the books that are on my TBR, my physical TBR shelf that have not moved to the piano, which is my on deck area are ones that I'm not really interested in reading, some of them have been there for like 5,6,7,10 years where I'm just like, I don't know about this one. And so I have decided to institute a culling, a reaping, if you will, like in The Hunger Games. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:01

Yes, it's time very good idea. It is time. Yes. And when I moved to Austin, in October of 2019, I did a very, very large culling, right. And so now here in our home in Austin. I'm really high and tight with my books, because I did that culling in October. So yes to what you're absolutely, that's what you should do.

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:21

Yes. And I did a culling because we moved in May of 2019. But then the podcast got bigger. And then people started sending us more galleys, and then you know, and sometimes the galleys that we get, I'm just not interested. So I put them on that shelf.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:34

Yeah, I won't even put those in. I won't even put those on the show. Just if I'm not interested. Yeah. If I just if I get a book from any source, then I'm like, yeah, it goes right back out. Like I just really I have no, yeah, I just I yeah, I am very clear on the only books that are in my home are ones that I really, really want to read. I do not have the time or attention to clutter up my house with books that I don't want to read

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:59

I like that. I think that's a good plan.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:01

Yeah, it doesn't even go on a shelf, just I have a place in my house that is for outgoing books. And literally, it's in my it's in my coat closet. It's a big like shopping bag. Remember back when used to shopping stores. That was like a big bag. Yeah, back in the before time. So I get one of those like a big Neiman Marcus bag or whatever, and put it in the corner of my coat closet. And literally the second I read a book, if I'm not giving it to a specific friend or to Johnny or whatever, it goes right into that bag.

And that bag when it gets full, will either go to my library if it's opened for those kinds of donations or to Goodwill, which is always open, right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:39

Yeah. Yes, that's a good point. And I do like constantly, I'm constantly putting books out of my house that I'm not going to keep for whatever reason. But I do need to do a better job culling that shelf down so that the ones that are on there are ones that I genuinely am excited to read. Now, I do have a second issue here, which is that and I feel like you're just dipping your toes in the water here. But longtime Kindle readers will understand the Kindle TBR, Kindle deal issue where you will get a book for 2.99 that that you do genuinely want to read. But then there's no physical copy sitting there. It does not take up any space in your house. And it's just languishing. It's just sitting there doing nothing, because you only got it for 2.99.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:23

That's a definite issue. I like I feel that already. And I've already like I felt that coming. I mean, now keep in mind, I'm compulsive about this kind of stuff, right. So I felt that coming when I got my Kindle Oasis. And I already started like a little bit of that started that it's a very slippery slope. I put for August 1st on my calendar it says review and get and get rid of any Kindle books that are not current, like I already have a date on my calendar that says spend 10 minutes culling your Kindle. Because yeah, I just I don't I don't want I don't want to link up... I want my TBR whether it's physical or a digital list or anything, I want it to spark joy. Like, okay, Marie Kondo, whatever. Okay?

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:10

That's the exact right word, though.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:13

I want my bookshelves to be like, these are so calling to me, I can hear their voices when I go past. I don't want any, like meh voices yelling at me. I want like, really,

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:24

Like a chorus of angels, crystal clear. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:26

Exactly. And so and the same thing on my Kindle. So now the one place now I will say, the one place where I really do let myself just sort of like be messy, can TBR wise, is if I can't find, you know, I haven't bought a copy, I haven't gotten it from my library, it hasn't risen to that place where I want to put a hold on it, whatever. But it's sort of like maybe in the future. I'm now using StoryGraph. I was using Amazon before I'm now using StoryGraph, I'm moving this over to them. And I'm just sort of putting it in I want to read. And that's a place where I will use very little discretion. I will sort of be like, yeah, I want to read. And I'll decide later if it really moves into one of my other kind of like more real TBR rotations. But there I'm just like, I'm just a slut. Just anything I'll just do I'll just put anything in Want to Read?

**Kaytee Cobb 41:18**

Okay, well, you will eventually have an issue there too. Because Goodreads users have many years and now StoryGraph users know that when that number on your want to read shelf hits 500. And you're just like, Oh, no, I don't even know where I heard about these books from like, why did I even put this on here, it's been here for five years, it gets really overwhelming. So there's also the culling of that TBR, which I do do once a year, where I sit down and I look at all the books on that shelf, that digital ephemeral shelf and say, Are there things on here that I'm ready to let go of that have been sitting here for so long, or that I heard about fly by night, but now I know a little more about them or whatever that it's time to let go. Because that way, if I do use that for any reason, it's not overwhelming. So that's the one place that I feel like I'm really good at streamlining my TBR. Because I do make a date with myself little self care to say, let's whittle this down, let's turn it into a list that actually is things that you really want to eventually have in your hands so you can read them.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:20**

Right? So big picture, make sure that you do regular sort of sweep through either of your physical books or your your lists of all kinds, and then really figure out know what it is that you're trying to accomplish with your reading or know how you like to make your choice for your next book. So are you one of these people who really knows I, I don't like making decisions, I have decision fatigue or decision paralysis. So I really need to make sure that I just have three books in my home at any moment. And I'm going to read just one of those three, or I'm going to or each month, I'm going to set a listing for my list for myself and say, for the month of March, these are this is my TBR for March and then I don't have to decide anything. So if you know that about yourself, then you can streamline your TBR by saying no, every month, I'm just going to pick five books, I'm going to put them in a pile, take a picture of them. And I just those are my five books for the month. If you know you're the inverse kind of reader, like Kaytee and I would actually where that would really, really put a damper on our reading. Know that instead, you need to create a shelf or list someplace that maybe has 25 to 50 books on it and just allow yourself to be like, Oh, I'm kind of shopping for my next book, and give yourself the freedom to do that. But I think streamlining your TBR all goes back to you need to know what kind of reader you are.

**Kaytee Cobb 43:48**

I agree. And I think the final thing that I want to say about this topic, and I'm not closing it down by any means is that it's okay to take books off your shelves or off your digital shelves or off your want to read list and let them go. And if that happens to be a book that you're really, really supposed to read, the universe will bring it back to you. If you end up putting something back on your TBR, five years from now that you got rid of after listening to this episode this week. It's okay. It's okay. And maybe it's better than if you had picked it up this week. Anyway, so I think we all just need to get comfortable with that idea to just let it go. If it if it's not sparking joy right now. And if it if it's perfect for you one day, it will find you again, the bookish universe is vast and powerful. It will find you again if it's the right book for you. Perfect. Now let's put some books on TBRs shall we?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:42**

I know. there is I mean the elephant in the room of course is if people want to streamline TBR they should just stop listening to bookish podcasts like, right but who wants to do that when we've given you

all these other systems? Okay, terrible idea. All right. The book that I want to press today is actually came up crossed my my mind because I had talked about it a few weeks ago on All Things Murderful with Meredith. And when I did that it was looking at my book journal and remembering that it was actually on my shelves for a really long time before I picked it up. And when I picked it up, it was the exact right time. This book is Black Rabbit Hall by Eve Chase. So I read this back in 2017. So let me give you the setup. This is another book in two timelines. The first one takes place in the 1960s. And it focuses on the Walton family. We've got mom, dad and four kids and they've come to spend their summers at Black Rabbit Hall, which is their Cornish country house because they normally live in London for many years that they do this. And so one of the summers, this sort of idealic family vacation that they do every year turns to tragedy. So then more than three decades later, our other lead character is newly engaged. Lorna has been searching for her perfect wedding venue and when she finds it, she is determined to get married in the ivy colored walls of Black Rabbit Hall. But as Lorna is drawn deeper into the overgrown grounds and the derelict mansion and you guys, what I love about this is that there are flowers growing through the floors in this mansion when she tours it through the ballroom floor. It's so it's so evocative, Lorna soon finds herself ensnared in the house has dark history, and she's overcome with the need for answers about her own past. And what happened to the once golden family who sort of still haunts the estate. So if you love Kate Morton, grab this book right now, because it is, it is the best of Kate Morton, it's the dual timeline, it's the gentle mystery, I would it's gentle. In fact, on the scary scale, I would give this you know, three out of 10 it's really more spooky than scary. It's sort of perfectly spooey. But it is really very evocative. It's got a great mystery. It's just a very nice, gentle, mysterious read. And I enjoyed it a lot. I do want to say, and this is kind of one of those weird readerly things. But I do have to say that I read it in a copy that I'd gotten a long time ago in the hardback. And the cover is really, really great. The new paperback cover I think, is much less great. So if you can get it from the library or any used bookstore where you can get an old version of it, I highly recommend that older copy, you know, just because I like the cover better. But who cares, because it's a fantastic book, it's Black Rabbit Hall by Eve Chase.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:39

Interesting. I like that. That little specification about the cover, that's important to know.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:45

Well, it is especially when you sort of remember a book because you love the cover so much. And then you go look at it on Amazon or StoryGraph or whatever and you're like, really boo, that's what they did with the paperback.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:57

Okay, I also have a book to add to your TBR or put it back on if you ever removed it and you find a lot of Kaytee commonality in your reading. The book that I'm going to press today is called Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond. And this one came back into my bookish memory when I did the episode a few weeks ago with Mary about genre convincers because I mentioned it there. And I have thought about it ever since. So this book was my very first book of 2017. Four years ago now, Matthew Desmond is doing interviews in the city of Milwaukee, and interspersing that with data and research, it really it becomes this very personal narrative as you follow families that can't get their feet under them. single moms, a person newly released from prison, the way the



landlord's use the eviction process to benefit themselves the way the court system works around eviction. And the way that people get buried under fines and paperwork in a way that they cannot escape from it. The amount of research that he had to do for this book was completely staggering. But it reads like narrative nonfiction, because you're so invested in the personal lives and the struggles of the people that he incorporates. In that way, it was very similar to *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson, which is like a bonus pairing for this. The good news about this book, though, is that it's hard but it's not hopeless. He gives us action steps solutions. So this is not a downer read. This is not like, wow, the world is terrible. And I hate everything about it. You walk away feeling empowered to know what to look for informed that making better decisions about policy and procedure going forward. It is so excellent. And I know it sounds like well, gosh, Kaytee of those two I'd much rather read *Black Rabbit Hall* because I want an ivy covered wall in my life. But this book is incredible and informative and life changing. And I I really really loved it. So that was *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:55

Well, I always love the concept of reading a book that's maybe a little more difficult a difficult topic or an chasing it with a book that's maybe a little, you know, I mean, sort of a little reward for ourselves when we do the hard work of learning about difficult things. So I think it could be those presses could be a good pairing in that way. That is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @meredith.reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:20

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:24

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 on our website at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:34

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:43

And if you really want to help us, become a patron become a bookish friend. It's \$5 a month and you get a ton of really, really great extra content. You can also help us by rating and reviewing us on Apple podcasts. And shout us out on social media because that my friends is the one thing that has most helped helped us to build the perfect audience.

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:04

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:11

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:13  
Happy reading Meredith.