



# Season 4, Episode 29: Discussions with Fellow Readers + Beloved Curmudgeons

Mon, 2/28 • 59:36

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:10

Hey readers, welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends that spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we do not shy away from having strong opinions so get ready.

**Mindy Brouse** 00:21

We're light on the chit chat, heavy on the book talk, and our descriptions will always be spoiler free, and ad free, thanks to the Patreon supporters.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:30

Our bookish friends make the podcast happen when they spend \$5 a month on Patreon and get tons of bonus content and bookish community in return.

**Mindy Brouse** 00:37

Today we'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:43

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and a grumpy main character will steal my heart every time.

**Mindy Brouse** 00:50

And I'm Mindy Brouse, mom to seven, homeschooling and reading in the mountains of New Mexico, and I think books and the bookish friends have helped me the most during this last year, more than anything else. This is episode number 29 of season four and we are so glad you're here.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:05

We are so glad you're here, Mindy. And I'm so glad to get to record with you today. Before we get started, I'm going to let everybody know that we are talking about our favorite curmudgeons and Mindy, I don't know about you, but this was not a hard list for me to make. I just started writing and writing and writing.

**Mindy Brouse** 01:20

Yeah, it was like this deep dives what, half hour?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:22

40 minutes easily.

**Mindy Brouse** 01:24

Yeah, perfect. Perfect.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:25

Okay, but before we get started with that, we're gonna start the way we always do, which is with our bookish moments of the week. What have you got for us Mindy?

**Mindy Brouse** 01:31

All right, my bookish moment of the week, this time was getting live tweets from Katie Proctor as she read Beartown for the very first time. I think this is probably my very favorite novel of all time. And the way I know that is every time I've read, I've read it three times now and I just weep and love and feel all the feels every time. But getting messages from someone reading it brings it all back to the surface and it makes me want to be there. And there are some books that make me so happy watching somebody read for the first time and getting to experience it. And Beartown is definitely one of those and I was super surprised Katie hadn't read it before, so the fact that she did and started messaging me I was just like, "Swoon, this is the best ever." It was really great.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:22

Oh, that's so fun. And that was one of the ones that you picked for a "Zoom with Mindy." So even though that in real time, you're just about to have that by the time this episode airs, you will have gotten to gush about it with lots of friends. I've seen people saying like, "Well, I bought it to read with Mindy or I borrowed it to read with Mindy, but now I bought it because I needed it for my shelves. Because it's amazing." But it's so great. I'm gonna go ahead and like take that...

**Mindy Brouse** 02:45

I read it thanks to you.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:46

Secondary credit. Exactly. That's what I was gonna say. I'm gonna go ahead and take that secondary credit because I'm the one who made you read it the first time.

**Mindy Brouse** 02:52

Amen, girl. Perfect. I couldn't thank you enough.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:55

All right, well, I am also doing something fun this weekend. And I've decided to make that my bookish moment. I'm sitting down this weekend to talk to someone on mic that vehemently disagrees with me about a book that I recently talked about on this show. I threw it, she loved it and the bookish friends wanted more. They wanted to have somebody disagree with me or converse about it and talk about

spoilers and such. You and I did this once before Mindy, which was so fun. We talked about a book that we disagreed about behind the paywall in the bookish friends group and I just tack it on to a Kaytee Reads Too Much episodes so it's really fun when that conversation happens you know, right before I'm about to record Kaytee Reads Too Much anyway. By the time this episode releases, that episode will already be behind Patreon in the paywall. But I'm excited too. I love having those conversations where you get to look at a book from different angles, even disagreeing about something. I just love those conversations and getting to say like, oh my gosh, I didn't think about it the way you did. And of course, you enjoyed it because you're coming at it from this other direction. I just love that experience. And so every time it happens, it makes my heart a little bigger. And I'm grateful to Lindsey for being willing to chat through with me. So Wish You Were Here. We're coming for it.

**Mindy Brouse 04:06**

Okay, I can't wait to hear it.

**Kaytee Cobb 04:08**

Or I'm coming for it. She's excited. Yeah, she's excited. She's an ICU nurse so she has this whole different way of looking at things. Very excited Alright, those are bookish moments, which means it's time for some current reads. Mindy, what are you bringing to the table this week?

**Mindy Brouse 04:24**

Okay, Kaytee, you're I can't wait to watch your face. I wish I was recording you. Alright. I am bringing first to the show, well, a first for me anyway, so don't pass out. Don't start cheering but I have a romance as my first current read.

**Kaytee Cobb 04:41**

I'm doing a cheerleading motion. I'm so excited.

**Mindy Brouse 04:44**

I cannot believe it. We are in some kind of Twilight Zone. I don't know. But here it is and the book is The Wisteria Society of Lady Scoundrels by India Holton. This title came to us via the Read Your Bookshelf bookish friends zoom in January. Amanda shared it with us and as soon as she mentioned lady pirates, I like added it to my TBR. She described it so well. I was in y'all. This book was the light, hilarious, witty, clever book I needed after a really difficult, heavy read. I did see, not til after I started it that it was billed as a romance. And so I did pause. I was like, "Okay, can I..." I was doing it on audio, I was like, "Should I keep reading," but y'all, I was already fully committed to the characters and the hilarity. This book starts right off the bat with a man showing up at a window, knocking on a window about an assassination attempt on the young woman in the sitting room chatting with her aunt preparing for luncheon. The target, Celia, is refined, proper young lady, also a thief and a wannabe lady pirate. Here's a snippet of this summary that cracks me up and makes me grin with delight remembering everything in this book. Cecilia Bassingwaite is the ideal Victorian lady. She's also a thief. Like the other members of the Wisteria Society Crime Sorority, she flies around England drinking tea, blackmailing friends and acquiring treasure by interesting means. Sure, she has a dark and traumatic past and an overbearing aunt, but all things considered it's a pleasant existence until the men show up. Ned

Lightbourne is a sometimes assassin who is smitten with Cecilia from the moment they meet. Unfortunately, that happens to be while he's under direct orders to kill her. I mean, Kaytee, Kaytee, how? I was like, yes, y'all. I can't even with this book. It's wickedly funny. That kind of humor. I'm a really huge fan of smart swift and said was straight faces. Oh my gosh, I just die. The romance is the center of this story for sure, but the plot to rid the world of women starting with the mysterious Society of Lady Scoundrels, y'all, that's as fun as it gets.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:06

Wait. The plot to rid the world of women? These men have not thought through this.

**Mindy Brouse** 07:12

Yeah. And the way that women talk about men. Oh my god, it's so great. Yes. Okay, so there's some open door scenes in here that had me bright red and I was actually very confident that you were going to text me and be like, "Mindy, what was happening? You're glowing with embarrassment?" Yeah, I can see it from Santa Fe. I nearly posted in a bookish friends group asking if everyone could sense a disturbance in the force that I was embarrassed. It is steamy. I suspect not as steamy as romances can get. It was not Outlander level, but it was much higher level than I read. Ultimately, though, Kaytee, what had me from the get go and all the way to the end was brilliant writing. Yes. Silly and sublime and back again, all in one sentence is how the New York Times said it and that's exactly what happens is brilliant, fun and now here we are. I've talked about a romance on the show. The Wisteria Society of Lady Scoundrels by India Holton.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:16

I love everything about what just happened right here.

**Mindy Brouse** 08:20

I'm so thrilled. I'm so it is so good. So good

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:23

When Amanda talked about that book, you and I were like making eyes at each other.

**Mindy Brouse** 08:28

We were like, "Buddy read."

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:29

It sounded amazing and definitely gave me some Princess Bride vibes when she talked about it. Did you get any of that when you're reading it? Perfect.

**Mindy Brouse** 08:36

Oh, yes. Like the the dry wit scenes? You know, where they say things and and Buttercup is like wait, what? Yeah. Oh, my gosh, so good.

**Kaytee Cobb 08:45**

So excited to pick that one up. That is excellent. I'm going to go a totally different direction. Or, you know what? I'm going to switch things up and I'm going to put my romance at the top here.

**Mindy Brouse 08:54**

Let's do it. I mean, it's February. Let's go ahead.

**Kaytee Cobb 08:58**

That way, we can have a little flight here. Because then everybody will be like, and we're done with romance now. Right. So my third book, which is now my first book this week is *The Heart Principle* by Helen Hoang. This is the third book in *The Kiss Quotient* series by Helen Hoang, which I'd count as THE contemporary romance that turned me into a romance reader. This was years ago, and Mindy, it gave me the same experience that you were just talking about. I vividly remember standing on the playground watching my kids play and being like, "Everyone knows what is in my earbuds right now. I am full on glowing like nobody can ignore what is happening over here." I was like standing in the sun because hoping that it would just make me look like I was flushed from the heat.

**Mindy Brouse 09:39**

Oh, yeah, it's just yeah, hot, so embarrassed,

**Kaytee Cobb 09:41**

So embarrassed. Not anymore, folks. I could listen to romance anywhere. In this one, Helen again gives us wonderful representation, both of the autism spectrum and Asian American characters and I'm so glad that Libro.fm sent me a galley copy last year to review and that I finally got to it. Anna is our main character. She's a violinist, a viral violinist. She went viral when she had to step in to perform a solo. But now the expectations surrounding her career are crushing her. Like she tries to practice violin and can't breathe because she's afraid of not being perfect again. She is sure that she is just going to disappoint everyone in the future if she ever plays again. It's a mess. This poor girl, I'm so sad for her. At the beginning of the book, her longtime boyfriend is giving her that icky, we should play the field a little to make sure we're right for each other before we settle down together speech, the one that makes you want to punch someone. You know what I mean right? So Anna decides that if he wants an open relationship, she should definitely explore the field as well. First up, have a one night stand for the first time. And in her mind, the more unacceptable the dude, the better. If her parents would cringe at this guy walking down the street, that's what she wants to get with. That's where Quan comes in. He's covered in tattoos, he rides a motorcycle, and he has everything she knows her family will not approve of. So she swipes right or however that works on the app they're using. Over and over again, they attempt to have a one night stand and get foiled through various circumstances. But of course, that means they have to try again with another date, and another until they start to get to know each other and accept each other for more than what presents to the outside world. In the background of this love story is Anna's father, and his health struggles. And her struggles with caregiving. She is having a hard time giving of herself so much, especially when she's struggling personally. That along with the representation I mentioned earlier for autism and Asian American culture and characters gives this romance a big yes/and element. Come for the steam, and it's really good open door steam, but stay for

the gut punch and the thoughtfully considered additional topics. Well, this is Hoang's third book that I've read in the series. I'll remind everyone that you do not have to read romance in order. It doesn't make you an animal. It's okay to jump around. And I loved the first book in this one, liked the second one okay, and loved this third one just as much as book one. This is *The Heart Principle* by Helen Hoang.

**Mindy Brouse** 09:43

I remember your story about *The Kiss Quotient*, and I actually got a text from Rachel this week and she was like, "So is this.... People just walk around listening to this?" She was doing a romance. I was like, oh, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:26

Yes. That's a blushy book.

**Mindy Brouse** 12:28

Oh, she was like, oh, and I was like, "You and Kaytee need to go chat."

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:32

I chatted with her about it. She's okay. She got it. Okay. Excellent. Perfect. What's your second book this week Mindy?

**Mindy Brouse** 12:38

All right. My second one is kind of the womp womp. My second current read Kaytee is one I really anticipated so greatly. I'm not really sure why. I think the title got me. Plus, I do love coming of age stories. And I love reading Black authors. There was just a lot of appeal on this. I adore lightning bugs, which is what I grew up calling them though I do agree with the author and the main character of this book, that fireflies is prettier in a much more magical name. I am bummed because it turned out not to be a love though. It's possible I'm the outlier. So hear me out. Let's see. This is *What the Fireflies Knew* by Kai Harris. This novel is a coming of age story and a debut, which I guess is his own coming of age story. My heart broke for Kenyatta, the 10 year old protagonist. Her father has just died of a drug overdose. She and her 14 year old sister Nia go to live with their grandfather and her mother is quote, "able to be there right now." The story is set in 1995 and centers around Kenyatta's struggle to understand what is actually happening in her life. And between her family members and her sister growing into a new season of life. She gathers tidbits of information the first few weeks of the summer with her grandpa to figure out things. Y'all, we feel her pain and her turmoil with each person she is trying to be connected to, with her white neighbors who she befriends but feels some kind of tension that she is still too young and inexperienced to understand what is happening there. She is also missing and needing approval, and someone to see her. Her summer and her life is traumatic. While I love the premise of this book, it didn't deliver for me. And here, here are my issues. This book read like a middle grade book until about 60% in and that made me feel tilted because I was just kind of odd because I knew this was an adult novel but it was not reading like an adult novel. And then I thought about something Anne Altman, a bookish friend shared with me about her take on *Matrix* by Lauren Groff after Meredith and I discussed that. Anne felt like the book did a lot of telling and not any showing. And I've thought about that conversation a lot as a reader since then. I felt like this book did that. It did a lot of

telling and not showing me. The middle grade voice I felt like it was too mature and too self aware and insightful in many ways that middle graders are not there. while also being really inappropriate, I mean, really immature, which was age appropriate. Also, there was a lot of sexualization of the young characters that did not land well for me, for their ages. So I often felt unconvinced by Kenyatta. The most jarring aspect thought Kaytee for me is around 60% and there's a sexual assault scene of an 11 year old that is graphic. A scene like this is always hard, right? We all you know, lots of us have read Kite Runner, and Honor and these scenes are hard. But for it to be in a book, that up until that point comes across as middle grade really didn't feel right. I was nauseous and disturbed Kaytee to the point of tears, like I was really, really upset because of how the novel was telling this story. And then this happened. I will read books with traumatic scenes that can bring real clarity and focus to a situation that needs more attention. For us as readers, I just didn't feel like this novel had that and brought something that we needed to understand and something new to any kind of conversation. And I also felt like afterward in the story, it was not treated as the trauma that it really was. I love books about coming of age. I love insights into cultures that aren't mine. I love reading about Black girlhood and getting information and knowledge and experiences from that. My favorite is Genesis Begins Again. But this one was just not for me. And I'm bummed because I really wanted to love it. But I could be the outlier Kaytee. Anyway, that is What the Fireflies Knew by Kai Harris.

**Kaytee Cobb 16:53**

Okay, well, as you know, I binge read it because I wanted to be done by the time we recorded, because I knew that you were having some complicated feelings about it. And as I was reading, I kept thinking, "Okay, well, Mindy's gonna talk about this tomorrow. Kaytee, see if you can figure out what bothered her." Okay, I knew when I hit that scene, I knew where we were going to go. I did not foresee the issue with feeling like it was a middle grade book. Until that point, it never read middle grade to me, even though the protagonist is 10 going on 11 and I don't know why that is. She didn't feel she didn't feel like a spunky middle grade character. Not that every middle grade novel has a spunky character at its center, but for me, I really, I identified a lot with Kenyatta. She turned 11 In the summer of 95, which is the summer that I turned 11. So I felt very connected to exactly like her cultural experience, you know, riding bikes around the neighborhood, she didn't have a cell phone, obviously. She would have to like go to the pool, and didn't know how to swim, you know, all of those experiences felt very similar. So it felt to me like myself looking back on my 11 year old summer, and having some of those same experiences. Thankfully, nothing as traumatic as Kenyatta went through. And my parents were home and with me, but, but trying to relive my own summer through her eyes. So I did really enjoy it. But that doesn't mean that everyone will. I did go and look at Goodreads reviews and it's sitting solidly at four right now. There's lots of people that are giving it less than four, lots of people that are giving it five stars, and of course everywhere in between.

**Mindy Brouse 18:39**

So do you feel like you felt like a 10 year old, you thought about the things that she was, the sexualization parts? That was something in your 10 year old brain?



**Kaytee Cobb** 18:49

Oh, I definitely had some of the same life's conversations and like wondering about you know, I didn't have an older sibling, so I didn't have that part of it. Yeah, but I had, you know, an older family friend that lived in Oregon, then I was like, "Wait, so am I supposed to like be falling in love with him? Like what is happening?" And I was like, whining to my classmates about having an older boyfriend kind of thing. Part of it rang true to me. Even though I was not having sex. If anybody's wondering. I was not having 11 year old sex.

**Mindy Brouse** 19:21

That's good to know. I didn't remember until just now that when I did hear about this book in the Fabled winter preview and they mentioned that it read like a middle grade, that it was a weird, unusual book in that way that you're like, "Wait, is this middle grade?" Because we don't yeah, I'm like, Oh, I'm I'm definitely not the only one reading it like that. So. But I mean, you know, not every book is for every person

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:44

Of course, of course, and I think it's totally okay. And I'm really sad that you had such a high expectation for it and then a disappointing experience. I hate it when that happens to me.

**Mindy Brouse** 19:52

I do too it. But I'm glad to try it. You know, I'm gonna keep trying new authors. You know, I love it. I really love picking up debuts for that to really help and see what they have, you know to bring to the table so I'll keep doing that. What is your second book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:09

Okay, my second book because Meredith isn't here I was like, well, we have to have some murder. So here I go. So I want to talk about *The Hidden* by Melanie Golding, which was also put on my radar by Fabled. This was a title on the January Indie Press List brought to our patrons by Fabled bookshop. I shocked Meredith during that episode when I told her this was the book that was currently on my nightstand. And I finished it just a few days later, when Elizabeth set it up for us. Here's what she said. Ruby spends her sleep deprived nights gazing longingly into her neighbor Gregory's apartment, which leads to her unfortunate discovery of his secret family, a strangely quiet daughter, and estranged wife Constance, who insists she is descended from mythological selkies. Gregor is romantically interested in Ruby, especially as she begins to help take care of his secret family to get closer to him, which launches her into the midst of a family crisis that will lead to a violent end. To make matters worse, Constance desires to reunite with her people, but accuses Gregor of hiding the sealcoat she needs to make her return. As Ruby is pulled farther into Gregor's family, she develops a precarious trust with Constance, ultimately forcing Ruby to decide who she truly believes. Especially after someone turns up dead. So that's Elizabeth's set up for it. And I was like mermaids and selkies. Oh my gosh, yes.

**Mindy Brouse** 21:32

She almost got me on that one too, right. Like maybe so I'm going to listen to you now and see if I'm going to do this.



**Kaytee Cobb** 21:37

That's right friends. This is a murder mystery slash thriller because there is action currently happening. This is not just discovering an a dead body and trying to figure out where that dead body came from. This is like on the run thrilling at the same time, mixed with mermaid selkie folklore. When we first get into this story, we know two things. Leone, the little girl is found wandering in a seaside town with no parent in sight. Ruby takes her home to keep her safe. Same time, miles away, a man is found bludgeoned in his bathtub. That's what we know from the first two chapters. That's all we get right? We skip backward and forward in time, which is what makes this both a thriller and a mystery. Ruby and Leone are running, trying to stay safe and under the radar. Constance is missing. And as we go back, we see Ruby meet the principal players and ingratiate herself into their lives. Who can be trusted? Who can keep Leone safe? Will the police help or will they put everyone in more danger? Well, I did have a little section of lag in the middle of this one at about 50% to 70%. By that 60 pages later it had picked right back up and then it was a zoom to the finish. I gave it four stars and especially loved the main police inspector character. Her name is DS Joanna Harper, and the way that she works herself through this mystery, I just want more of her. She's amazing. So this story with Ruby, Constance, Gregor, Joanna and Leone, five characters and you don't know who to trust. I couldn't put it down. It was The Hidden by Melanie Golding.

**Mindy Brouse** 23:16

Yeah, I think I'm gonna have to try it. You had me at selkies.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:22

I know. Yeah.

**Mindy Brouse** 23:23

I was like, oh, no, I'm gonna have to read it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:24

And then, you know how this happens. I feel like since then, I've seen selkies crop up in stories like three or four times and I'm like, "Huh, it's a thing. They're manifesting."

**Mindy Brouse** 23:33

They're coming everywhere. I must read. Love it. Love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:37

Okay, what's your third book Mindy?

**Mindy Brouse** 23:39

Alright, my last current read is one brought to me by my dear friend Julie at @Jns.reads. The title caught my attention and then she mentioned that it had a character with Mosaic Down syndrome so I picked it up quickly. This mystery novel is Blanche on the Lam by Barbara Neely published in 1992, and set in genteel North Carolina. This book starts out with Blanche in court for writing hot checks. It's the

second time she's busted. She's completely indignant because she planned to and already started paying back the money and she can see and we can see as readers that the judge is prejudiced against Blanche as a black person and give her a harsher sentence. Blanche does not want to go to prison, so she escapes from the courthouse. So there's that. Setting out, she's on the lam, right at the beginning of the book. She leaves her sister's kiddos and her mom behind with a plan to return in a year after everyone has forgotten about her crime. Nope. So remember, this book was published in 1992. I guess back then you thought it could just disappear for a while and come back. I'm not sure what that part is.

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:47

But well, as Meredith always says it was way easier to commit crimes.

**Mindy Brouse** 24:51

It was way easier. She slides into a domestic position for a white family who was leaving town for a while. Now Blanche is a domestic servant and she's very proud of her job. She does not tolerate anyone trying to make her feel like she should be embarrassed. She's very good at her job. She's proud of it. She works hard and has very high standards. It's a perfect situation for Blanche to just pretend she's worked for this family and disappear with them for a while to their vacation house. From there, the mystery starts. We have a dying alcoholic aunt who has a fortune to leave. Mumsfield, the young man with Mosaic Down syndrome, who has been named as a beneficiary of her state, a sheriff who's making claims and threats. And then we have the power couple Grace and Everett, who provide a place for both of the family members but clearly are out for the money. Everett is old school, Southern, rich white man, grossness and the story is fantastic. There is murder, a disappearance and a bit of mayhem. For Blanche to watch from her position, which she calls one of invisible observer. Ignored Justice Mumsfield is by most of the people and family, Blanche White, which is hilarious name for fit smart, witty, hilarious, large black woman which she claims and is proud to be so her inner dialogue is my favorite. She shared with us what she thinks but will not say and why she won't say it. Her sarcasm and her humor brought me to grins. This fantastic book is a book of its time 1992 in many ways, but it's also ahead of its time. Blanche tells us, she reflects on the word retarded that people keep using and she refuses to use it, which you know, I'm a huge fan of. She thinks Mumsfield isn't appreciated as he should be and things quote, "Everyone can understand and be friends with him if they would just stop and actually listen and be patient." Another big thumbs up for me right? And she has plenty to say about the patriarchy without actually using that term. She also has plenty to say about the southern black culture, parenting and employment. Kaytee, I enjoyed this mystery all the way to the end. It was fun, and funny, and clever. I won't say that it's up there with like Fifty-Fifty or Thirteen. But it's definitely something I'm going to keep on with because there are three more in this series, the Blanche series, so I'll be picking up the next ones. This is Blanche On The Lam by Barbara Neely.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:25

Love it. That sounds so fun. I love a great backlist gem. And as you know, of the mooches, we all want to read it now.

**Mindy Brouse** 27:32

We all do. I think we just made it a buddy read we just didn't...

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:36

it's gonna be a staggered buddy read.

**Mindy Brouse** 27:38

It wasn't a plan. And I will say, you know, here at Currently Reading I love how readers like to be intentional about diverse reading and reading outside maybe where they normally land. And we all know I'm a sucker for something if there's a character that has Down Syndrome and Mosaic Down Syndrome isn't written about a lot. It is a little bit different than Trisomy 21. Not all of the samples have an extra chromosome. And so what happens is people with Mosaic Down syndrome, they can have higher IQs and things. The interesting thing about this and having a character with Mosaic Down syndrome is it fit into the story because he was the driver and he did a lot and that is not as typical, as we see with normal or with typical Trisomy 21. And I love that the author brought a unique Down syndrome character. I thought that was really great because people will look into it. Right? They'll be like, Wait, what is that? And, you know, springboard to learning which, you know, I love that.

**Kaytee Cobb** 28:37

I love that too. And I it sounds like this author did a really great job not just putting a token character in.

**Mindy Brouse** 28:43

Yeah, I don't think she did. I've heard some people think that but I did not read it that way. He was a great character. And it was an unusual twist to have in a story. So I liked it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 28:54

That makes me so glad. I'm so glad.

**Mindy Brouse** 28:56

All right, what's your last one for today?

**Kaytee Cobb** 28:58

My last one, which was supposed to be my first one because we flipped everything around is The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story by Nikole Hannah Jones. This book is nonfiction and it is a marvel. I'm actually really grateful that I read it this year instead of in 2021 because that was the same year that I read Four Hundred Souls, and they would have been competing in my rankings for the year. And I would have had to choose. And now I don't have to because I read it one month later. So Nikole Hannah Jones put together The 1619 Project through the New York Times as an extended series investigating 400 years of African American History in 2019. It has since been turned into a podcast series which I highly recommend binge listening to and a curriculum for schools that aren't banning books. Only those schools want this curriculum. As of November 2021, it's also a full fledged book. I pre ordered this one on paper and on audio so that I could have it on my shelves, and tandem read it, which as you all know is my favorite way to take in nonfiction. I wanted somebody reading me the

words while I have the words in front of me. Bookish friend Candice and I read one chapter a day and discussed throughout the entire month of January. The audio has a cast of narrators that will blow your socks off and I found myself pausing frequently, in order to highlight, make notes and send some voice memos about what was blowing my mind or pissing me off. As I read, I realized that this book was like an anthology that summarizes the best parts of what I've learned from so many full length nonfiction books on the subjects, from Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson to The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, to Our Time is Now by Stacey Abrams, many of whom are contributors to chapters on their subjects in this book. So she like, pulled the experts from each field and said, "Will you write me a 30 page chapter?" They're amazing. They're all amazing. Wow. It's like a who's who of antiracism learning. When you get into these pages, each one of these contributors is the expert in their field. If you're listening to me talk about it and you're saying, "But Kaytee, you already told me to pick up Four Hundred Souls. Why would I want to read this?" I do have an answer for you. Four Hundred Souls is chronological, jumping from one topic to another for only a few pages every five years. So there's 80 contributors that each tackle a five year span of time. This one is topical. So you can read the entire thing cover to cover which we did, of course, or you can say I really want to learn more about how redlining affects traffic in big cities, and go to that chapter and get a comprehensive view of the topic. In that way. I think this one is both more readable and a better reference text. My one small beef with it, I'm only mentioning it because I think our listeners could help me solve it is that the music chapter was lacking to me and to Candice. While it had great information in it, it also spent nearly one full page just listing black artists with commas in between them, and failed to really get into some of the history and appropriation we see in the music space. So I would love listeners, I would love if you want to get deeper into the music aspect of this book rec. If you have read about that topic, specifically, I want a whole book about it. Otherwise, I gave it five stars and it's staying on my shelves forever and ever along with the books that gave me the foundation for each of these chapters. This is The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story by Nikole Hannah Jones.

**Mindy Brouse** 32:31

I was wondering if you were gonna bring that. I was hoping to hear from you on it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:34

I loved it and it's so tactilely beautiful too. It's lovely to touch. No deckled edges, in case anybody is wondering because I know we get a lot of questions about that.

**Mindy Brouse** 32:45

Somebody is gonna ask.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:46

Totally. Okay, those were our six current reads, which means now we get to talk about our favorite curmudgeons, Mindy, I'm so excited.

**Mindy Brouse** 32:56

Me too.

**Kaytee Cobb 32:57**

We decided we had a few ideas for what we can deep dive on today. And then we asked some people on my Instagram and got lots and lots of great recommendations. But we decided to tackle this one because as Meredith says she has a cold dead heart. She's never going to talk about this with me. But Mindy I knew you would.

**Mindy Brouse 33:15**

I love me some curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb 33:18**

Okay, do you have like a rhyme or reason to what you have prepared for us today? Or are you just like...

**Mindy Brouse 33:24**

Yeah, I kind of went into okay, what first is what is a curmudgeon? Okay, perfect.

**Kaytee Cobb 33:30**

Let's define a curmudgeon. Alright.

**Mindy Brouse 33:32**

So one of the first definitions I found for curmudgeon was that it's a person who finds no joy in life. And I was like, okay, yeah, that makes sense. Another one was crusty, ill tempered. Usually an old man. Correct. I was like, again, correct. So I was thinking when I was listening, are they always men like most curmudgsons and I love most of them are men. That definition was like, Okay, well, I'm not just being sexist. Now, a curmudgeon can be a woman, but typically, it's old men. I felt like curmudgeons are like these gruffy people who were really teddy bears inside, you know, like, yeah. Like whenever we're like, well, he's just really it's just a teddy bear. And it's kind of like that. But I also think curmudgeons have to have some kind of smartass-ness. I feel like that has to be there, whether it's grumbling under the breath to where other people aren't hearing it and he's just saying it to himself or he's flat out saying it like there's some smartass-ness going on that I think is hilarious. Like I find that funny. I definitely kind of view a curmudgeon as somebody who's like creme brulee, like they're crunchy, crackly, crusty, and then you dive in and they're just sweet and wonderful. And I just love that.

**Mindy Brouse 34:04**

I love creme brulee. I love that metaphor that you have to like use the back of the spoon and just like tap, tap, tap, and then you can get to the sweetness inside.

**Mindy Brouse 35:07**

Exactly because a curmudgeon has to be kind of poked and prodded and broken open for somebody to really see them and really fall in love with them. Because if you're just hanging out with a curmudgeon, or you pass him, you don't really get to know him, you're never gonna love him, you're never gonna like him. But a real curmudgeon is somebody that we take the time, we crack past that caramelized sugar and we're like, "oh, look at what's there." And we all love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:38

Like an armadillo. Or like a hedgehog, where it's like prickly on the outside but super cute on the inside.

**Mindy Brouse** 35:46

They're disgusting. So I was like, wait, no, you haven't been to Texas.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:51

It would be bad if all curmudgeons were smelly, like armadillo.

**Mindy Brouse** 35:54

Right? And when I think about why, why do we love them? I mean, Kaytee, as a two, how can I not love it when somebody's inner person is loved and valued? And is quote "discovered" by people, even though they're acting like they don't want. You know, "I don't want people. I don't like people, I hate you all." And meanwhile, they say things that are just enough that are almost like little tentacles, they're sending out like, maybe somebody and somebody sees it, and is like, "Ah, I see you. I love you." And they're like, "Well, rarara" I love that. How can I as a two not love that?

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:37

Well, and, and for me, now that I've recently accepted my status as an eight, this is probably the first time I've even said it on the podcast, I see a conversion in myself pretty frequently, where I have a kind of gruff exterior, I want to argue with you, right? I want to have the conversation about the book that somebody loved and I hated or vice versa. But there's a lot of tender inside of me, right? And I want, I want that justice. And I want that joy for the people around me that I love. And and when I fall in love with a curmudgeon in the book, I mean, it's me getting broken open. And I can't get enough of them.

**Mindy Brouse** 37:18

I cannot. I feel like they're it's almost like an underdog kind of thing where as a reader, you're reading about this person that you can see they're hurting, or they're lonely. A lot of the things that I read, talked about, curmudgeons have been rejected or experience loss. And so they've kind of put this protective shell around themselves, and how can we not want to pull for that person to be kind of expressed and loved? I mean, yeah. I have goosebumps, because now I'm like, "Where are all the curmudgeons? Let me hug them. I need them right now." They all need hugs. They all need hugs.

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:55

Except for the ones that die at the end of their books, because we will admit, that does happen.

**Mindy Brouse** 38:00

There's a lot of dying.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:01

There's a lot of elderly in curmudgeon books. Yeah. And there's a lot of funerals at the end of curmudgeon books.

**Mindy Brouse 38:07**

There are. I hadn't thought about it. But you're right. And the beauty of that is how loved they are in the end. Right? It is a form of happy ending, even though we're sobbing our eyeballs.

**Kaytee Cobb 38:19**

It is. Because you get to see the people around them and the way that they are celebrated at the end of a book. And that scene, even when it starts to feel formulaic like, "Okay, well, we're getting we're 40 pages from the end, this person's not gonna last a lot longer." When you get to that scene, whatever it is, whatever book it is, which we're not going to tell you on all of these if they end in death or not. But when you get to that scene, even if you're feeling like "Well, here it comes," it still is a heart render for a reason, because you get to see the impact that these people made in the world around them,

**Mindy Brouse 38:53**

Because you've grown to love them and so it's a loss for you to as a reader, and when somebody can write that, where you're like, "Oh my gosh, you little stinker butt" at the beginning and then at the end, you're like "I love you so much. I'm gonna miss you." Yes, that's a win. Yeah, it is. Yeah, bring me those books. Send them my way. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb 39:13**

I want all of them. I want them all. Unfortunately, I do feel like I've read 90% of them.

**Mindy Brouse 39:19**

When I was looking at them, I was doing some list checking, and I haven't, so I still have some to go, but I was like "Kaytee's read that one. I know she's read that one." Yeah, yeah, it was one of the ones I'm definitely picking up from my research is *The Best of a Church Curmudgeon: Then Tweets My Soul*. Kaytee, I am picking that one up immediately. So I was like, That is hilarious. Yes, please. But yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb 39:45**

Is it a book of tweets? Wait.

**Mindy Brouse 39:47**

I don't know. I don't know. I will definitely tell you. So a discussion. I had a discussion with a group of people recently who were like, well, Scrooge. And I'm like, no. So here's the thing. There is a difference are between jerks and curmudgeons and not all old white men or old men in stories, grumpy ones are curmudgeons. So here us out guys. I do not think Scrooge qualifies as a curmudgeon. So in our curmudgeon definition, they are not cynics. Right. They they're not cynics. They're pessimists or they're realists who are hurting and really grumpy.

**Kaytee Cobb 40:26**

And they're not bad people.



**Mindy Brouse** 40:27

Correct. They're not bad. They're not mean. They're not seeking to hurt others. They are just grumpy. They're closed off. Yeah. And an ill temper. Yeah, that's yeah. But so I read that CS Lewis was a curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:43

Well, that explains

**Mindy Brouse** 40:45

Doesn't it? I was like, at first I was like, what? And I was like, oh, yeah, yeah, that makes sense. But somebody tried to say Snape was a curmudgeon, and I'm hell to the no.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:56

No. Negative.

**Mindy Brouse** 40:58

We are not even, that is not discussable. That is flat out wrong. Snape is not a curmudgeon, because he's mean. So please understand curmudgeons are not mean. They cannot be mean and be a curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:11

I agree. If we take Ebenezer Scrooge off the table, because we're not considering him, I would posit that the original curmudgeon, the origin of the grump lit phase is Ove.

**Mindy Brouse** 41:25

Oh, yeah. I mean, he is the pinnacle. He is the one to model after. There's no doubt out. I hear curmudgeon, I think of Ove and I start crying. So that's step one, and then I try to make sure somebody has read it. Correct. So he is it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:46

Yeah. So he's our granddaddy curmudgeon. He's the one who started it all. Right? Yeah. And for many of us, he's our gateway curmudgeon, right? A lot of people discover grump lit, or what I call the beloved curmudgeon genre, through A Man Called Ove by Frederik Backman. Yeah, that's the one that did that for me. Yeah, I did that to you.

**Mindy Brouse** 42:07

Yes. Then I did it to my entire family last year.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:11

All right. So then when we go out from there, what's the next ones you think of? Let's throw out some titles here.

**Mindy Brouse** 42:17

Well, I the next one, I thought, of course, was All the Only People so

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:22

The curmudgeon in that book is named Hubert Bird and that book is by Mike Gayle, my boyfriend.

**Mindy Brouse** 42:27

Yes is fine. So I definitely thought of him like it was Ove and then him and then I found a Major Pettigrew. Okay. Major Pettigrew's Last Stand I really loved that book. And that one of the perks on that one is a love story too, which I think is a it's like a curmudgeon plus I guess kind of.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:47

And That's by Helen Simonson.

**Mindy Brouse** 42:49

Excellent. That's a great book. And then I thought I'd Hendrik Groen which I know you didn't love that book as much as I did.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:55

But we did read it together.

**Mindy Brouse** 42:57

We both read it. Yeah. And this Secret Diary of Hendrik Groen: Eighty Three and a Quarter Years Old. He's definitely a curmudgeon. And I loved him and then believe it or not the one I thought of and I was so excited, I was like a woman, How the Penguins Saved Veronica, right that we have a female curmudgeon right there right.

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:14

And that one's by Hazel Prior. That was a buddy read for the bookish friends last year and we loved that one. I have a few women on my list so I'm gonna slot these in here. Let's do it. So I've also got also Frederick Backman but Britt-Marie Was Here is a woman curmudgeon. Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine is a younger woman.

**Mindy Brouse** 43:32

Okay, so I have issue with that one. I saw that one on the list. I don't know that that qualifies as curmudgeon. Can you be a curmudgeon and be a young person? I think you're just grumpy at that point. I don't think you can be a curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:43

I think that she is a curmudgeon because she has a hard outer shell that has to be broken open throughout the course of the novel. Okay. And, and she has sweetness inside for even though it's hard to see at the beginning.

**Mindy Brouse** 43:57

Okay, but I argue that a curmudgeon is gotten their hard shell because they've lived a long life of hard things and that I don't I don't know if I can count Eleanor.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:09

Okay. I only have one other person that's under 50 years old.

**Mindy Brouse** 44:13

In your 30s, I don't know if you can be. I'd love to hear what everyone thinks cuz I think you have to be older and experienced more life to qualify as a curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:21

Okay. Yeah, I've only got one other that's not over 50. Well, first, I'm gonna finish my ladies here. Okay. I've also got The Brilliant life of Eudora Honeysett by Annie Lyons. That one is tough, because the very beginning of the book, the premise of the book is she's planning her own assisted suicide. You guys, like that's a tough start to a book.

**Mindy Brouse** 44:44

That's why I haven't read, I have not read that one.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:46

I feel like you started reading that one.

**Mindy Brouse** 44:47

I think I did and I was like, "oh, oh"

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:50

I remember this. Okay. And then The Love Story of Missy Carmichael by Beth Morrey. This one is not my favorite on the list. There is a one of our bookish friends uses the phrase "pet in peril", where there's a dog that has a rough storyline that I don't think moved the plot along in a way, so it was like an arbitrarily rough storyline. And I did not appreciate that and I felt very traumatized for that book. And then finally, Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk which our friend Paula just talked about on that zoom the other day by Kathleen Rooney. And this is an older woman walking through New York City on New Year's Eve, kind of reminiscing about her life. She's not cranky. But you have you get to live through her life. Oh, this is another common thing in curmudgeonly books. A lot of times we're getting a dual timeline. We're getting whatever is happening right now with them as they are in their 70s 80s 90s Right, then we get to see their life come together piece by piece as they reminisce and reflect back and we get to see what turned them into the person they are.

**Mindy Brouse** 45:53

Yes. What made them a curmudgeon, because not all 70 plus year old characters are curmudgeons.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:01

Right? Right.

**Mindy Brouse** 46:02

There are happy 70 year olds. Curmudgeons are not them, and I do love that aspect. And what does it say about me that I love to go have my heart broken with them? I love to know what got you. What broke your heart. Yeah, it's cathartic. It is. Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:20

Okay, so the only other actually I have two younger people on here. Two additional people on here. I have The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion, which is a younger man. neurodivergent, we would say probably. And he is looking to find a life partner. And he is so set in his ways, at the beginning of this book that you're like, he's never gonna find anyone. He's not a good person. But he is a good person. You just have to peel back the layers on him. And then I also have The Guncle by Steven Rowley. Have you read that one Mindy?

**Mindy Brouse** 46:56

I love the Guncle. Okay, I would say

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:00

and he's young. He has like a niece and nephew that are like eight and ten.

**Mindy Brouse** 47:03

I thought he was gray haired in the pictures.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:06

No, he's like, totally like, 40, maybe 45? I would say. Oh, yeah.

**Mindy Brouse** 47:13

Okay. Yeah, I pictured him as an actor, and I can't think of his name now. Gray haired, hilarious. That's a good book. Well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:23

I mean, Steve Martin was grey at 19. So you could be thinking of any actor.

**Mindy Brouse** 47:26

Well, that's true.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:28

But the Guncle, he has been through some stuff, right? Our main character in The Guncle whose name now I can recall, is he's been through some rough stuff. And he has a hard outer shell that his niece and nephew whose names I can recall, Maisie and Grant have to break through to get him to come out of his shell. And I think he counts as a Guncle. He does count as an uncle, but he also counts as a

curmudgeon, because we get to see that transformation from the beginning of the book to the end. I think it's part of why I loved that book so hard.

**Mindy Brouse** 47:58

And he's GUP you know, he's GUP so he's Gay Uncle Patrick. Patrick? Yeah, perfect. Yes. Yeah, okay. I'm not buying into it yet. I'm not buying into that somebody young can be a curmudgeon. I think they can be headed there.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:13

Okay, well, then I have a question for you. How old do you think Harry is in Harry's Trees? Because I think that is a curmudgeon book.

**Mindy Brouse** 48:20

You think Harry's a curmudgeon? Really? I'm shocked. I don't peg him as a curmudgeon.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:26

Well I'm putting it on the list.

**Mindy Brouse** 48:29

I think he's hurting. I think he's hurting. Right. Like, he's had a hard life. But I don't think he's gotten to the point where he's like, I'm done with all of you. And that curmudgeon to me is also like "I'm done with everyone. I'm done. Me and my shell are flipping all you off. I'm done with all this. Don't like any of you."

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:49

Okay, well, this is fun. Yeah. Okay. I got another one that might be a little controversial. The House in the Cerulean Sea. Linus is the main character. He works for the government department that goes and like has to investigate the children, the magical children, but he ends up at this orphanage type thing. Right? Right. He's probably 40. He's like midlife, dumpy crisis, I assume. To me at the beginning. He's like, I just want to be alone with my cat. I want to get my work done. And I want to go back home and I'm over it. And by the end, I think he has been opened up in a way that he is that that is curmudgeonly.

**Mindy Brouse** 49:26

And I'm gonna say no.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:27

Okay, okay. So bring us back then what do you have for true curmudgeonss? Let's let's do all the dudes because we've done everything else.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:34

They might age into their curmudgeonness?

**Mindy Brouse** 49:34

Why I brought I mean, The Storied Life of AJ Fikry and Lost for Words. Those both had both have also had curmudgeons. Okay. And I, again, I will read all of them. And I I also do love ones with soon to be curmudgeons, which I'll go ahead and say that what they are just to make you happy. I'll use the word curmudgeon.

**Mindy Brouse** 49:43

Right? Yeah. And I just love them so much. So this is funny. This is not a literary character. But when and this one is oh crap I'm about to prove myself wrong because...

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:18

Is it Roy Kent?

**Mindy Brouse** 50:22

Oh crap.

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:23

Also hot

**Mindy Brouse** 50:24

Roy Kent forever. Okay, but Roy Kent is headed to curmudgeony but he is saved. But somebody who I thought was curmudgeon II was Ron Swanson from Parks and Rec, which you haven't seen and that teddy bear inner heart. So I also think, a curmudgeon always has that heart there. So I don't feel like, like Ove doesn't become a different person at the end of the book. He is who he is the whole book, but he allows others to be in his world. So I think a curmudgeon has to still be that person but let's their world change. It's not necessarily a growth kind of thing. So that's how I'm you know, I view it differently. They're still their person, they've still got their grumpy shell, but now it has little cracks. They let people come in. But you know, Ove never became like super sweet, gentle lovey dovey speaking kind of guy

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:24

He just stops trying to hang himself off his rafters like he does in the beginning.

**Mindy Brouse** 51:28

Which is a really good thing. Yeah, that we all love that. But he, the thing that is beautiful is that he's loved for who he is. And so is Hubert right? Hubert can't accept this is where he's at in life instead of trying to pretend his life is different in all these. Major Pettigrew.

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:44

Right. The Story of Arthur Truluv by Elizabeth Berg. The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper by Phaedra Patrick.

**Mindy Brouse 51:50**

They're all valued, right? So I think what I'm saying when we're talking about the younger people, their growth, like they have some growth, Roy Kent, growth. He changes, right, he's changing. But a curmudgeon doesn't change, but his world changes and then we're all the better for it because he or she has allowed us in.

**Kaytee Cobb 52:13**

I have this stupid, sappy smile on my face. I love this so much. Okay, I'm guessing that we have done a pretty good comprehensive job at this, but somebody is going to come and be like, "You all have to read blah, blah, blah, because you're totally missing it from your list," the one that I have on my TBR so y'all better not come and ruin it for me, because you know that's how it works now, is Miss Benson's Beetle by Rachel Joyce. It's on my list. I know it's supposed to be a great curmudgeon. I have not read it yet. Do not tell me to read it. Because I am also a curmudgeon.

**Mindy Brouse 52:51**

That's right, your bouncer is here today. So if you have curmudgeon books you want us both to read, send them to me and I will slowly dole them out to Kaytee. There we go.

**Kaytee Cobb 53:02**

Okay. Do we have some books with curmudgeons to press or just regular books this week? Mindy, what have you got?

**Mindy Brouse 53:09**

I did not bring a curmudgeon because I don't get to be on every week, so I had to pick one that I've been waiting to press so I could not wait to press this. Today I bring a witty, smart woman sent her novel that is kind of things I brought to the current reads. And I just adore this book. I think it offers a lot to a variety of readers. I am pressing Just One Damned Thing After Another by Jodi Taylor, the first in the currently still running series with 12 novels so far. And 15 novellas that take place in between the novels are very short. The novellas are free on Audible, which is a really nice perk. Anywho why is this a press? Well, like I said earlier, I adore wit coupled with historical aspects and a female protagonist, who is wicked smart. You know, I also love a love story, or two, and this book, but not a romance. There's a difference. I'd love me some love stories. I first brought this book to the show in season three episode seven. My love for this series has only grown. Meredith read it and love this book too. We have Dr. Madeleine Maxwell fondly known as Max, becoming a quote "historian", which is not what we think it is, in a top secret agency of England, the St. Mary's Institute. Historians time traveled to record details of events. Banned from engaging or disrupting the event, they can only simply witness it. My love for this series starts with the relationships Max developed as part of the team. A bit of found family, historical time travel. I have even confused this book in my memory at times with Circe and A Thousand Ships due to its seriously effective sense of place. It's a great book. I love it. It's super fun and there's lots to offer. If you fall in love with this one, you got plenty more where it came from. Just One Damned Thing After Another by Jodi Taylor.



**Kaytee Cobb** 55:03

So you and Meredith always do this to us. So there's 27 titles so far in this series is what your saying.

**Mindy Brouse** 55:09

I didn't know that. Because I'm only a number five. I've read five. Wow. And I still love it. Which, you know, for me I'm not a huge series reader. I'm really not.

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:20

Except for Murderbot.

**Mindy Brouse** 55:21

Yeah, but gosh, they were tiny so that was super easy. But I think Louise Penny and Harry Potter are the only the only series I've read all of them. And I will be reading all of these they just, I prefer them on audio. So I have to, you know, get the credit. I really liked the audio narration and they're like audible exclusive, which is the problem.

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:46

All right. Good to know. Thanks, Mindy.

**Mindy Brouse** 55:48

But they're great on paper too. I do have one of them in paper. That's my press. What's yours, Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:53

My press this week is *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead. This is a slim novel that packs a huge punch. And while I'm putting it on the press list, this may be a not right now book for many readers. However, it's one that I can't stop thinking about even two years after I read it. At first, I didn't think *The Nickel Boys* was going to be for me because it was being loved on by people I consider my evil book twins. Like *Annie Jones*. I love her. I love her. We do not match up in our taste very often. And as we know, that's okay. It helps us narrow in on the books that are for us. And even better, it helps us find books that span a broad swath of readers. And this is one of those books at just over 200 pages Colson Whitehead, the author of *The Underground Railroad*, a season three press of mine takes us back to 1962 in the Nickel School for Boys. The Nickel School is based on a real place in South Florida. A sort of reform school, troubled boys were sent here to have the sense quite literally beaten into them. Elwood Curtis, our main character is sent there after he makes an innocent mistake on the way to school one day. And of course, that mistake changes his life forever. This story, it has some harrowing scenes of child abuse in it. And I cannot rightfully put it on the press list without letting our listeners know a bit about what lies within. If you are an HSP reader, you may want to look up additional triggers about this one because there are scenes in this one that flashed behind my eyes when I close them for weeks after I closed the back cover. But what you'll also find here is some found family with the boys at the school, enduring friendships, ire at the system, and a reveal of Elwood's heart and story that might leave you a little teary. This book won the Pulitzer, and while I'm not saying that's why you should pick it up, we know enough about the readers that listen to this podcast at this point. But I'm also begging you not to let it keep you away from the book. Because a Pulitzer can be a scary word and you're like, "Ahh,

award winners." I know. I know. It's difficult, but not the writing. It's accessible even when it leaves you heartbroken, and it's earned a place on my forever shelves. It's *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead.

**Mindy Brouse** 57:55

That is one of my favorite books ever. It is hard, and I am an HSP. But that book, like I mentioned earlier, there are scenes in that book that bring enlightenment and bring light to areas of history as well as modern, the modern world that we need to know about. And, and so they're a valuable part of that story. And Kaytee what a great press. I love that book so much.

**Kaytee Cobb** 58:18

I'm so glad it's on the list now. All right, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, and Meredith is at @Meredith.reads.

**Mindy Brouse** 58:30

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

**Kaytee Cobb** 58:33

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

**Mindy Brouse** 58:42

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

**Kaytee Cobb** 58:50

And if you really want to help us, become a patron. \$5 a month you get tons of bookish content, tons of bonus community. We love having people join us over there. Or you can rate and review us on Apple podcasts or shout us out on social media. It all makes a huge difference in our being able to find our perfect audience.

**Mindy Brouse** 59:07

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:13

Until next week, may your coffee be hot

**Mindy Brouse** 59:15

and your book unputdownable.

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:17

Happy reading Mindy.

**Mindy Brouse** 59:19  
Happy reading Kaytee