



# Season 5, Episode 13: Reading Genes + Books That Should Blow Up Bookstagram

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**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 as you know, we never shy away from those 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. Today we'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll visit the fountain.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am done scaring the teetee out of myself for the season.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and both my love of reading and my nerdiness are genetic. This is episode number 13 of season five and we're so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:55

Oh, Kaytee, speaking of genetics, do you know that your dad friended me on Facebook? And I about died of joy?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:00

Really?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:02

Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:03

Well, you started friending my friends and your daughter friended me and I died of joy. So I feel like we're all just one big happy family here now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:11

Right? I needed to be friends. I needed to be friends with your dad but I was too nervous to ask. And it just I was so so happy. So you have great parents.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:20

I do have great parents.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:22

So we want to let you know, right up at the top of the show that we are going to do. I think we have a fun deep dive today. And it Kaytee, it was your idea I believe.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:32

It was in a spreadsheet. Who knows where it came from?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:35

Right? Well, it wasn't my idea. It's a really, really good one. It's we're kind of doing a version of the Wayback Machine, which is we each chose five books that we think if they were brand new right now would be all over Bookstagram. And so these books had to be at least five years old, which was an interesting rule to put on it because that means it pre predates the show, right? So what books did we choose? Why did we choose them? What do we think makes a book big on Bookstagram? So that's what we're going to talk about in our deep dive today. All right, so before we get to that, we are going to start the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what have you got this week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:15

Well, my dad now has featured already in this episode, but he's coming back again around for the bookish moment. So I already sent you a message about this Meredith, because I didn't want to forget. So I was like, "Here, hold this for me. It's my bookish moment this week." We are currently up in Sedona on a couple's vacation, as I mentioned last week, but before we came up here, we spent a few days with my parents. The conversations at their house are always they like circle around books as like the center of the table. Just somebody's going to talk about books here soon. Just wait a breath, right? My dad and I were talking one morning about his books that he's read lately. And he let me know that he started keeping track of them a few years back, he reads about 18 to 25 books a year, and he started keeping just a simple reading log of what he read starting in 2017. It's only the title, the author, what number book it was for the year and how many books he's logged total. So really bare bones. Simple, simple, simple. But he went ahead and printed me out the three pages of his reading log, so that I could, you know, play around in there and see what he had been reading. And I got to find he was like, "Look, these are all ones that you recommend it to me. And they're always a hit. And look, these are ones that your mom reads and that's why there's so many women on this spreadsheet." And so like getting to kind of pick around in his reading life like digging around in his underwear drawers, which I don't want to do. But I do love digging around his book drawers and seeing what's in there. So he's he's almost or he just turned 73 and I kind of wish that I could see all the 1000s of books he's read in his lifetime. But for now I'm getting to start with the 108 that he printed me this week. And I'm very excited to get to play around in there a little bit.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 03:56

I think that is wonderful. And my first thought is what do you think we would have to do to get Wayne to guest host on the show and to talk books with you. I just think that would be so much fun. We've learned so much about you by hearing the two of you talk about books, right? I think that would be really fun.

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:15

I think it would be a lot of fun too. And even I was thinking about my mom being a guest host also like almost set up my recording equipment and say "Let's just record an episode and I'll just put it in someday when we need an episode like we'll just have it as like a back pocket episode." I just think my mom is really brilliant. My dad has this really great like scientific mind that's fun to pick around. And so I think both of my parents would make great currently reading guests.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:38

I think they would that would be so much fun. I would absolutely love that. All right, well, my bookish moment of week I alluded to in my bite size intro which is that I finally arrived at a point and I'm not sure I ever thought it was possible for me, but I finally arrived at a point where I cannot read any more scary or spooky books, I think, for the rest of the year. I have read so many big, scary books, including one that I'm going to bring in third position, which of course we always, you know, keep our I always keep my favorite books for the third position of my current, our current reads Today...

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:15

No one's supposed to know.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 05:16

Well, I do. If I don't like, if I don't like a book, it's gonna be positioned two but not always. Sometimes position two is a book that I do like, but if I don't like one it's gonna be position two. And if I have a five star, it's always gonna go position three. And this one was a five star book for me. But Kaytee, I just have read so much scary that I, I knew this. But when I went to book flight, right, so I went to go like say, hey, what am I going to read next? And I realized I looked at the pile, I sort of walked away from it for a second to stir what was on the stove, and I came back and I was like, "Okay, either a nine year old has chosen my books for me, or Meredith's brain has said, you're going to read middle grade, because we cannot do any more scary".

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:59

We've reached saturation it sounds like.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:02

Scary saturation has been reached. But you know what, it's the third week of October. That's probably a good time to reach it. Right? I went hard into spooky season. Okay. Kaytee, let's talk a little bit about our current reads. What do you bring in position one and does position one mean something to you?

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:23

Well, it depends. But I do agree that usually if there is a womp in my stack, it's going in position two so usually it's like, good, eh, great is what I usually tend to do.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:37

That's what I do, too. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:39

Yep, the universe was telling you,

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:39

If I have a meh, I mean, some some weeks, we have like three fantastic books, right? You just never know. It's still book roulette. There's just a method to the madness. So my first book this week is Heartstopper by Alice Oseman. So this one has triple bookish serendipity for me. I put this one on my TBR because Stacy Rutledge Chin one of our brilliant bookish friends posted a monthly wrap up a few months back and said something like, "I'll just be over here reading all four volumes of Heartstopper forever for the rest of my life." And I was like, "Wait, what? Stacy Chin, our like literary brilliant goddess of a listener is like just rereading a YA graphic novel over and over again?" like, so I had to find out what was going on there. Because I was intrigued, I put it on hold. And then Roxanna came on and recorded with me and specifically said you have to read Check Please by Ngozi Ukazu. So I picked that up and read them very fast and then I got an if you liked this, maybe try suggestion and it was for Heartstopper. That was number two. And I was like, Oh, what happened here? Finally I was listening to a recent episode of Sorta Awesome with Meg Tietz and our Mindy, who is a show regular over there as well, Meg's awesome of the week was Heartstopper by Alice Oseman, and I was like, "Whoa, okay, settle down, Kaytee".

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:03

The universe was telling me and it shouted loud and clear. Luckily, my library haul came in that day. So number three happened. I was ready to dive in. So let me tell you about it. Heartstopper follows Charlie mostly and also Nick, Charlie and Nick, Nick and Charlie. Charlie is in year 10 at the Truham Grammar School for Boys. He's British. He was outed last year at school by some of his classmates, and faced some pretty intense bullying because of it. But now year 10 has started and he's in a new place and things are looking up. Especially when he starts hanging out with Nick, who is a rugby lad who is the year above Charlie in school. Charlie starts to develop a crush even though he doesn't think he has any chance because Nick is probably just being nice. And he's for sure straight. Right. Right. Right. So this series has four published volumes. So if you think it ends with Charlie's heart being broken, you're probably going to be sorely disappointed. People who loved Check Please brought to us by our lovely Roxanna should totally pick this one up and vice versa. If you read either one, you can hear the similarities in the setup the one for the other. They are slightly different in that Check Please is New Adult slash adults in college and has lots of F words in it. While Heartstopper is YA. There is in both, some angstiness about how things are going to work out, there's a sports background, hockey in Check Please, rugby in Heartstopper and there's not, the angstiness is not overpowering in either one of them. The drawings are relatively simple, the pages are easy to follow, and each volume is an easy read in less than an hour. I'm currently waiting on volume three from the library but this is probably one that I'm

going to end up buying the entire series for my forever shelves. Longtime listeners will note this is very important here that I said this book kept popping up on my radar right? Ding ding ding bookish serendipity. That is different from multiple people sending it to me and saying, "Kaytee, this book would be so great for you." Because if I get three of those, the answer is ain't no way honey. I do not have time for that. Right but this way, it was like when Sarah Mackenzie at Read-Aloud Revival talks about strewing books through the house that you're interested in your children reading. It was basically like the Internet and book gods were strewing this book in front of me, which is what made it such a hit. It was a five star reading experience for me. I loved Hheartstopper by Alice Oseman.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:32

I'm so glad that that was such a hit for you. And I love bookish serendipity. And I take it very seriously. And I'm so glad that you did too. Like you were getting those messages from the universe. Good for you, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 10:44

I heard them, received.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:46

All right. My first book is middle grade slash early ya, and doesn't, I think fall into either one of those categories. Because when I was reading this book as a full grown adult lady, I completely forgot that young children might also be given this book in school, but let me tell you about it. This book is called Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer. Kaytee, have you ever read this book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:13

No, I haven't heard of it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:15

Okay, get ready because you and Micah are about to read this book. Here's the setup. And the setup is not difficult with this book. At the start of our story, a meteor knocks the moon not only out of orbit, but much closer to the earth.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:32

Oh no.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:33

We watch what unfolds next through the eyes of Miranda who is a non annoying high school sophomore. She's an outlier in that way. She's not annoying. And Miranda takes shelter with her family as they weather what happens next. And my friends, it is mind blowing what happens next because I don't think I really... I know before I picked this book up, I had never really thought through what would happen if the moon's orbit was not the moon's orbit? What if it was different? Right? If you took a second, you could probably sort of foresee some of this stuff. But here's what happens. First, and immediately after this happens, and people are like watching it, like the Eclipse like they know it's gonna they know this asteroids can hit the moon. So remember when there's big eclipses, and people are like, Let's go watch the Eclipse. And it's like this big fun, everybody's gonna do it thing. Only, all hell

breaks loose after this happens very quickly. Each coast of the United States is just G O N E gone. Millions are dead because immediate tsunamis hit and actually flood every continent, not just the United States. And then massive weather changes and earthquakes start to happen. Because apparently, I guess I learned this in science, the moon has something to do with the magnetic core of the earth. So all of that gets out of whack. And then other things happen. But I'm gonna let you find that out in the book like I did. Oh, my Lord in sweet, sweet heaven above the Earth. We watch all of this happen again, through journal entries from poor sweet Miranda. She's navigating the after effects of all of this, but also, because all these things happen, her social life changes and like she was in the middle of like life. And she's 15. And so she's still alive after all this happens. But so she's navigating these gigantic, the earth never seen it before changes, but she's also still 15 and this book does a really good job in a non annoying way of having a see all of this through her lens, which is not unlike the Age of Miracles, which does something

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:35

That's what I was thinking.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:36

It's not Yeah, if you like the Age of Miracles, you will definitely like this book. They're not similar beyond that one particular thing. So this is, this actually predates that book. So these poor people. Now, how far fetched do you think that this story really is? Well, I will invite you to remember that just like 10 days ago, NASA was practicing knocking asteroids off their trajectory. And I don't think they're doing that because it's fun. So this book completely and absolutely flipped me out. Like on an every day. Every time I look at the moon, I literally whisper "Please stay where you are", like, this book, this book left so much residue, like I just could not stop thinking about it because it's so absolutely realistic. The good thing is that it made me very much like constantly grateful for everything that we have right now. Like every time I flick on a light or turn on the stove every time my air conditioning clicks on. I think, "Oh, I'm so grateful for normal life". This book is very interesting. The whole way through it is the definition of page turning. The first half is very interesting because you are watching sort of this disaster rollout. Right and there's an element of Cli-fi interest there. The second half, I have to say is tough because it is very much a survival story. It's a story of this family surviving. The author does a great job of portraying a very real family. They aren't picture perfect. They're just a really real loving family, and how these things would roll out. These kids are not perfect. The mom is not perfect, but they love each other. And they are all trying their best. And there were many, many sweet moments that almost made me kind of tear up because they were just so realistic. There's no question that 10 year old Meredith would have eaten this book up with a spoon. My little catastrophizing self would have been so into it. But I would be careful about what child I gave this book to now that I'm an adult, because it feels so realistic, I could definitely see this book, sort of getting in particular child's brain and being like a ticking time bomb, and then they grow up to be a prepper. You know, like, I could definitely see that happening. I don't know how this book was never on my radar before, because after I talked about it on Instagram, lots of people reached out to me saying that they had read it in late middle school or early high school. And this is the kind of fiction that I think would be great for teachers to hand to their students, because it's very interesting and it leads to a lot of interesting discussion. Also, if you are the kind of parent who's trying to pull together multiple subjects, man, there's a lot of science and literature that could be brought together with this book. Am I glad I read it? Yes. Do I feel like I want to read the other three books in

this series? No, ma'am. Because I needed to be done. I couldn't, I definitely wanted to be done with this book. And it does wrap up in a natural way. I didn't like wait, why did I read this whole thing only to be left hanging, but I definitely feel like I don't need to read further and all I want to do is go take a hot shower and make lasagna just because I can. This is Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer, and it was published all the way back in 2006.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:04

Nice, look at you with your backlist awesomeness.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:07

I have got some backlist awesomeness in this, in this episode.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:11

So do I for my second pick, which is not a ho hum. So don't fast forward. My second book this week is The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:21

Oh, okay. I really can't wait to see what you thought of it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:24

So this book is one that was part of our season three listener press episode, the same one that got Meredith to read The Twin Paradox that she talked about a few weeks back, Andrea Carson, one of our bookish friends pressed this fantasy epic into our hands more than two years ago. And I decided to choose it for the September buddy read for the bookish friends. About 20-25 of us got together at the end of September to discuss this 690 page novel in depth and really had a great time doing so. Andrea did a wonderful job setting this up two years ago. So I actually I went back to listen to that episode and I pulled some of her words in order to do my setup today. So good. This is book one of three in the Kingkiller Chronicle series. It's a coming of age story about Kvothe a feisty, redheaded boy who grows up with a group of traveling troubadours and is too smart for his own good. As part of his young formative years, he meets a magician who starts to teach him some of the ways of using magic, including the power that words and names have. And so we follow Kvothe on his journey to learn the Name of the Wind, which would also give him the power to control the wind itself. After the untimely death of his parents, he struggles to survive, but as eventually admitted to a magical school, and will stay and learn everything he can, as long as he stays out of trouble. Andrea says "What I loved so much about this book is it has some of the best writing and character development I have ever read. It also has an interesting present and past format. It flashes between where he is now as an innkeeper in a small dull town and the adventure story of his adolescence". It's kind of a Russian nesting doll of a story. He's telling this story to the chronicler who's recording it for posterity. But that's the outer shell. And then inside, we've got Kvothe as a young child, and going to school and then sometimes within that story, he flashes back to something else that happened within his childhood. So each time we're like going further into this Russian nesting doll of a story. This first volume of the series was published in 2007. Book Two came out in 2011. And we're now in 2022 and there is no release date yet for book three. So if you're into this description, here's what you need to know. Well, that outer layer story of this description, and the questions about how Kvothe came to be an innkeeper after living this very

adventurous life does not get answered in book one. The inner story to me felt like it stood fine on its own. I felt like I got a wonderful coming of age novel that blends campus novel elements, magic, mythical creatures, a merry band of misfits, and moments that have seared themselves into my memory. I don't need more from this story. And about half of us that were in the buddy read discussion felt like this one was good. We don't need to go on to book two. The other half has already read the novellas, moving on to book two and anxiously awaiting book three. So you could land either way on this listener if you have not read this one yet. When I went back to listen, though, I did hear, Meredith, that you read this one a long time ago, and you thought that it was a great book at the time. So this one has a fantastic premise, a great listener press that you can go way back to episode three to listen to, or maybe you'll just decide to pick it up now. Because it was excellent. It's *The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:40

I did find it to be very, very memorable. But what I don't remember is why I didn't go on to the next book. It may very well have been because it wasn't out yet.

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:45

Right? Yeah. Cuz it was four years after the first one. And now it's been 11 years since the second one. I mean, he's just taking his sweet time.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:07

Right? He's trying to do that George RR Martin thing that like, you know, I can take as long as I want thing. Okay, all right. Well, we are going to go back to the backlist even from that one, Kaytee and we are going to talk about the recent slow but steady book that I read called *In This House of Brede* by Rumer Godden. Kaytee, have you ever read anything by Rumer Godden?

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:32

No, I have seen this book around. But even the title does not really interest me. So I'm excited to hear about it because I feel like this doesn't sound like a Kaytee book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:42

Right. Exactly. And I'm kind of interested I've, I've read a few slow but studies that I have that exact thing to say about the title. Like there was some for some reason the title had kind of put me off of it. So I'm almost thinking of doing a bunch of slow but studies that fall into just that category. Like weird titles. In this one, *In This House of Brede* is very weird. It's It's very weird title, but it is a five star book for me. It is not going to be the book for everyone. So this is one of those just know yourself know what mood you're in. Let me give you the setup. At the start of our book, we meet Philippa Talbott, who I love. She's an outlier from the start because she's a super successful woman, by the way this book was written and it was published in 1969. So use your lens for that. So Philippa was a super successful woman working in the British civil service. She's well to do, she travels in excellent social circles, and she wants to give it all up to become a nun. Like she's at the height of her career. She's got all sorts of money and power, and she wants to give it up. She's like my age. She wants to give it up to become a nun. The first scenes in where her employees and her colleagues in the British civil service are finding out what she plans to do are masterful. Not only are we watching their shock at this turn of events at



this decision, but Rumer Godden introduces us to Philippa so artfully through the way she writes the scenes. It's so so good. So Philippa being a woman who knows her own mind travels to Sussex, which is in the south of England and she begins her new life inside Brede Abbey, a 130 year old Benedictine monastery. And there she joins a diverse group of women, young and old, educated and not experienced in the world and very, very not, and she is welcomed into the complex world of these women who immediately become her sisters. And I hate to sound like law and order but these are their stories. Philippa's, yes, as she goes from being the newest sister to being a valued member of their society, but also the other nuns who come from vastly different backgrounds. It's fascinating to see how they all arrived at this place and this calling, and also how they make a life together. It's also interesting to note that author Rumer Godden spent three years living in close proximity to Stanbrook Abbey in Worcestershire communing with Benedictine nuns to prepare her to write this book. And again, it was a best seller when it came out in 1969. This book was a perfect slow but steady for me. It absolutely was five stars. And it's so hard to sum up how I feel about a book like this one, because there is a small subset of books that when I finished them, I feel like they have become intrinsically a part of me. And this book is one of those. This is the second book that I've read in not very long that centers on an abbey full of nuns, and the first one or the first one, of course was *Matrix* by Lauren Goff, and it's such a surprise to me as much as surprises to anyone that I am so drawn to this nunnery monastery setting, until I started talking about this book with Roxanna, and I realized that I have made my entire career out of building a culture that is founded on what we call a sisterhood. So it does make sense that a book all about a group of women living and working together would appeal to me. There was no question as I read this book, that it was really hitting at a deep place for me, I was constantly highlighting, and book doting and talking to Roxanna, who had read it before and loved it, and had recommended it to me all about the lessons that I was learning, especially watching Dame Catherine, who was the head of the monastery lead her fellow nuns through the decades and this book does cover decades, then Catherine was by no means a perfect leader. She doubted herself all the time, but she never let that paralyze her. Instead, she finds ways to reach out and get the help and resources that she needs to be the best possible leader for her sisters who means so much to her. And I admire that so much. Now, hearing what this book is about, you would think that it would be boring and character driven, and it is not just that. It can be looked at as a slice of life book because it is a look at very human women living together and trying to be closer to God. Can you imagine what that would be like? Can you imagine having absolutely no say over who you spend your time with, the work that you do? Who you have to live your entire life side by side with because spoiler alert, you can't fire nuns, even if they're really bitchy. There is however plenty of plot to move the story forward, including that fantastic beginning where we see Philippa at work in the British civil service. And there also are sketchy business dealings, we have sisters betraying sisters in some of the most mic drop moments ever. And we even have a story centering around secret jewels. All of these things together, weave into the overall story in the most beautiful way and they tie up in a perfect ending. This book had me laughing and very much crying, very much crying. This is a crying book for me, Kaytee. And it had me clutching my pearls and shaking my head, the whole range of human emotion. And I think that is really what Rumer Godden does so well in this book. She captures the entire range of what it is to be truly human, and elevates it in the most godly way possible. I can see myself returning to this book, reading it whole or in part over and over again, as it brings such comfort to me. And wisdom. And I can always use both of those things. This is *In This House of Brede* by Rumer Godden.

**Kaytee Cobb 28:02**

There was a lot to unpack there. Okay. In my head, this is a very large book. Is it a chunker?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:09**

It is it's not you know, like, amazingly large. But I mean, I would say my memory says that it was maybe 500- 600 pages. Yeah, it's not small.

**Kaytee Cobb 28:20**

Okay. And then it was published in 1969. But you said it covers decades? Does it start in like the 20s and 30s? Or is it current to 1969 ish when it starts and then it goes forward from there?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:33**

No, because that would make it dystopian. No. So yeah, it looks back and then and then goes ... Yeah, we're with these women over the course of decades together.

**Kaytee Cobb 28:43**

Gotcha. It does sound very interesting. And I like the idea of it as a slow but steady and just kind of integrating this daily slice of life into your own daily slice of life.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:54**

And I think too, it really comes to, at least for me, it comes to expectations. My best slow but studies are books that very trusted sources have said, "Meredith, this will be a book that might really speak to you in particular", if I'm going to if it's a slow but steady that I'm going to do on my own. And then I might go in with expectation that, "You know, no matter what, I can read a few pages of this every day no matter how whatever it is". But then, when all of a sudden it's both interesting, and it's illuminating things. It's giving words to things that I didn't have words for before. There are scenes with Dame Catherine when she becomes the leader of the monastery, that I literally was like, I've never had words for what she's going through right now but I've gone through that and seeing the way she navigated it was so helpful to me, just to feel that I wasn't alone in feeling as lost as I felt or as incapable as I felt or as much of a fraud as I felt. But all in this way that these women are just known to you, the writing is so good that you just know them. It's really, really well done.

**Kaytee Cobb 30:14**

Okay, my third book this month is one that I was not prepared for. It's called A More Perfect Union by Tammye Huf. I've mentioned before that sometimes I look at the audible daily deal, and I delete the email, but I go, put it on my library holds list if it interests me in some way. So this is one of those times that I was like, "Well, I don't think I'm gonna buy that because I don't know what it is. But I'm interested enough, I'm gonna go check it out". So I was pretty sure I was getting into historical fiction with this one because it has a blue cover, with a woman kind of looking up toward the sky. Not her back, her face looking up toward the sky. But I was like, "Man, this looks like historical fiction to me", but I didn't really know what I had until I got into the story. We've got three main characters, and their stories intertwine here, like a braid. Sarah is a young black woman who at the beginning of the story is sold to work on Jubilee plantation. She has to figure out who to trust and who to steer clear of, but she's always got one thing on her mind. And of course, its freedom. Maple is already at Jubilee plantation but she has

recently been separated from her own husband and daughter. She's hoping to stack the deck in her favor in order to get them all reunited, and she doesn't really care who gets in the way and what she has to do to get them out of the way. Maybe Sarah's arrival is the shakeup that she needs. And finally we have Henry O'Toole. He set sail for the Americas in 1848 in order to escape the Irish famine, but everywhere he looks for a job, he faces anti Irish sentiment. So he changes his name to Henry Taylor, and drops his Irish brogue in order to gain employment as a traveling blacksmith. When he visits Jubilee plantation, he meets Sarah, and they are instantly drawn to each other, this Irish white man and this enslaved Black woman. At its heart, I would surprise of all surprises, call this book a romance rather than straight historical fiction. And there are some spicy scenes in here. But in the same way that we started adding pluses to certain books like last week when you talked about Daphne and that being horror plus, this one is a romance plus, right? There's a lot of really difficult subject matter in here, including corporeal punishment of enslaved people, sexual assault, and lynching. So it's not going to be for every reader, especially if you're like, oh, romance that sounds interesting. And you are thinking fluff and bedsheets. That's not what you're going to find here. These characters, though, and the ways they connect to each other, and get to know each other, and the terrible situations that ensue, and the ways they get themselves out of those situations, made it feel kind of like half spice heavy romance, half historical fiction drama heavy and half thriller plot heavy because there were times that I was like, Oh, my gosh, how are they going to get out of this, and it felt like I was reading a thriller, where I was like this moment, we have to fix it right now, it was so intensely scary at certain moments. So it's a lot of halves, that was more than three halves, that's fine. The audio uses three separate narrators for the three separate narratives and that's a great way to take it in if you can handle this type of content in your ears. And, again, this is type of content, where Meredith doesn't want to listen to sexy times on audio and some people don't want to listen to bodily harm on audio. There's a lot of reasons that this might not be a good one for any certain reader. But overall, I found it fantastic. I thought the story is weaved together so well. And I'm so glad that I let that audible daily deal convinced me to put it on hold at my library. So this was A More Perfect Union by Tammye Huf.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 33:53

More bookish serendipity.

**Kaytee Cobb** 33:55

It was but just one hit this time, instead of a whole bunch.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 33:59

I love the idea sometimes of going into a book, knowing very, very, very little about it sometimes, but then sometimes the surprises are not good. But other times, man, I had no idea what I was gonna get. But this was so good. Okay. My third book is a five star book for me. It is another book that is not going to be for everyone. But I feel like everyone who was like, Oh, I might want to read In This House of Brede. I feel like you guys can just bounce because this next one is probably not going to be for you and vice versa. This is Gallows Hill by Darcy Coates. And this was the book that put me over the edge of me saying I cannot read any more scary. I need to clear my chakras. This book was so good, so good that it clicked every one of my boxes and I just need to be done with scary books for a while. Here's the setup of Gallows Hill. The Hull family has owned the Gallows Hill winery for generations like 12 generations. The sprawling big house has long been perched on the top of a hill overlooking the

nearby town, guarding the estates secrets and have they got secrets, my friends, but their wines win awards, their business prospers beyond imagination. Their family grows... until Hugh and Maria Hull enter the dark halls of Gallows Hill one last time, and they are found dead the next morning. At that point, it's been more than a decade since Hugh and Maria's daughter Margot Hall had last saw her childhood home. She was only eight when she was summarily sent away from that childhood home and she doesn't remember much about it, or her parents because she never saw them again. But now, in her mid 30s, she's returned to bury them and to reconnect with the winery that is her family's legacy. The house, the winery, the business everything has been left to Margot. Alone in the sprawling big house, Margot is forced to come face to face with the horrors of the past and realize that she may very well be the next victim of a house that never rests. Oh my lord. Okay. It has been a long time since a scary book has both scared me and made me cry. But this one did. And I know it sounds like I've been super emo lately. I read In This House of Brede months ago so it's not like I'm crying every book that I read, right? This is a fantastic book. It is horror, though. I want to be super clear right from the start. This is horror. This is not spooky. This is not scary. This is horror. And it is scary. No joke frightening with ghosts and jumpscare and freaky little details that will stay with you even the next morning. And the nighttime scenes y'all are terrifying. I think if I were Margot I would have died from fright on the first night. But there's so much more to the story. I loved the depth of detail that was involved in the curse that is on Gallows Hill. It haunts the house. It haunts the vineyards. Darcy Coates does an amazing job coming up with layers upon layers of why these horrible things might be happening. It almost had its own puzzle in this curse. And I really enjoyed this element of things. There were things about the curse that made sense, even amidst all the chaos that was happening. That felt like a lifeline for me as I made my way through this book. And there are inescapable themes of loss and parental love and devotion and privilege and contrition. And what kind of debt do you owe when your family has done bad things, but you had no part in it. And then there is the ending. And you guys know that I'm not a person who gets really involved with endings. This book had one of the best endings I have ever read. Full stop. The last 25% was so wonderful. I literally cried at one point during one scene that I would have thought I would have been completely grossed out by. But it was done so beautifully. Literally, there are there's this it is gross, and horrible and beautiful. In one scene that I will never forget. This is definitely one of my favorite horror novels I've ever read. And I will absolutely recommend it to the brave, non HSP folks that are looking for a scary read with emotional depth at this time of year. I will also say that is available right now on Kindle Unlimited if that kind of thing is of interest to you. It's getting on towards the end of October. I can't think of a better way to end your October reading. This is Gallows Hill by Darcy Coates.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:42

Alright, sounds creepy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:30

It's more than creepy. It's way it's so far past creepy. Yeah, like you've gone down the highway and gone past 10 exits from creepy. It's really really scary. But oh man, I loved it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:50

Okay, unrelated. She has a book called From Below, and it's about a sunken ship, that this team is now investigating all the dead bodies. So it's underwater horror. And I was like, Well, I don't know why Meredith didn't pick that one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:25

Well, right, exactly. That one is on is on my Kindle as we speak. But I definitely said you know what, I'm going to put some time in between. I was in the mood for a haunted vineyard.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:37

Haunted vineyard is like those are words that I didn't know were catnip for me. I love that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:42

Oh my goodness. Yes. So see what y'all think about that, but proceed with caution. All right, Kaytee. Those are our current reads. Let's talk a little bit about our deep dive. So we're gonna hop in the Wayback Machine. Yep. And we're gonna set it to before 2017, right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:02

Yeah, five years.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:03

We're gonna cruise at least that far back and you and I are gonna give each other our five books that we think if they were to come out now would be big hits on Bookstagram. And so these might be three great new reads for everyone. If you haven't read these books like Ann Patchett from Parnassus books says, "If you haven't read it, this book is new to you." So perfect. Right. All right, can you what was the first book that you thought about?

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:30

Well, I don't know if you want to tackle this part first. But I started thinking about the book right now, on the New York Times bestseller list is like six Colleen Hoover books. Not not just her most recent one, but all like all her books. And then last summer, The Song of Achilles became a best seller even though it was like seven years old, because tik tok and booktalk which, again, geriatric millennial, I'm not on booktok. But they're doing some kind of magic over there with books and algorithms and turning backlist titles into best sellers. And so I was trying to think about like, well, what makes a great option for something like a community of readers on social media to get really excited about, I do think social media skews a little young. So the first one I thought of was The Selection by Kiera Cass, which was first published in 2012. I think it would be a huge hit for 20 to 30 something tick tokers and bookstagrammers to get into this world because they all grew up on The Hunger Games, they all grew up on The Bachelor, right? They all have these cultural touchpoints. And I think this book, especially if it came out right now, could be the next Song of Achilles or the next Colleen Hoover, because it's got all those different touch points for the people that are blowing books up on Bookstagram and tik tok.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:55

Yeah, it's a really, really good point. Now when I was thinking through my list, I never, I'm almost 50 years old. Booktok. Tik tok is too loud for me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:04

A mystery.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:05

I don't want to be assailed by sound, the second I open up an app. Yes, it so. But I feel as you do I fully understand the powerhouse that it is and it's not going away. So when I made my choices, I was thinking more of Bookstagram. But I think you're absolutely right about The Selection if it came out now, especially as the beginning of a really successful series. I can see there being really really big fans on booktok especially. Plus it's a really great book. I love that book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:37

It is so good. And a reminder, you it's a series of five you only read the first three folks, we do not talk about books four and five.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:44

Right? And I need to read books two and three. Right. And I right, I had not forgotten that you told us that, Kaytee, thank you. Okay, Kaytee, the first book that I had on my list that came to my mind immediately because of a conversation I had last weekend with bookish friend Betsie, @bookishbetsie, she had never heard of a Castle of Water by Dane Huckelbridge and how I and it just like it's really skirting our five year, like boundary line that we set. But man, I feel like if that book came out today, it would just be on everyone's nightstand. Right? It's one of those books that is it's about it. You know, it's a it's a deserted island, desert island, right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:30

And a plane crash to get there.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:32

Right, but it's right but it's not really about the plane. So like it's not like a plane crash book. That's not what it is. Right. But it's it's a desert island. It's a we're stranded book, what happens when you're stranded with a stranger and how do you survive and all of that. It's just one of those books that you can hand to anyone. They're going to tear through it. They're going to absolutely love it. There's a ton to talk about. It's got a gorgeous cover, which of course on Bookstagram is...

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:57

That matters. That's money

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:00

Right? And it's so easy to pass on to your friend, your mom, your you know, my husband read it and he loved it. I feel like Castle of Water would be huge if it came out today.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:11

When did it come out? That was my very first press on currently reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:16

I think it came out in 2017.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:19

April of 2017. Yeah, but right now it's October. So that's five and a half years ago.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:25

That's why I put it on my list. I was like, you know, it's not real old but it's older than what we said

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:31

Before Currently Reading that's that's for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:33

Right. So that's a really good one. All right, next one.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:36

I have a 2016 option. It's a thriller. It's called The Last One by Alexandra Oliva. It has a reality TV show component mixed with a pandemic that starts taking out the population. And it has that apocalyptic nature of society devolving when, you know the structures start to become unstable. I think in the same way that Station Eleven never really went away really not really surged during the pandemic, but it never went away. This would be a great one to pick up now and blow up everywhere. And if it came out now people would be like, "Oh, yeah, of course, this fits perfect with what we've just been through. And she must have done all this research," but instead, it came out six years ago. And instead instead it feels very prescient, right. Like, oh, my gosh, "Let's blow up Alexandra Oliva and this like debut novel of hers, because we've gotten to live through it now", and we could see exactly how this would play out and ultimately, it would go great on the screen. It's propulsive and interesting the whole way through.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:33

Oh, that's a really, really good one. I think you're totally right about that. All right, Kaytee. So for my next one, I'm going all the way back to 1997. So we are definitely taking the way back the wayback machine back. I think Turtle Moon by Alice Hoffman would be huge on Bookstagram if it came out today, in all the same ways because I think if you like Louise Erdrich, I think you're really going to like early Alice Hoffman. Okay. And Turtle Moon is, I think, the best of early Alice Hoffman. And so I think that, if you like that kind of writing, if you like, those locales, if you like a little bit of magical realism, in your literary fiction, I think Turtle Moon, which also has a really compelling mystery element in it, too, and just some great characters. I think Turtle Moon would be really, really big, especially in the book club set.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:32

Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah. All right. I like it. I like it. There's a lot of that like literary depth to something like Song of Achilles, too. So that doesn't, that doesn't preclude any of these novels. So my next one is kind of literary as well. It's Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese, which is the chunker for me on this list.

This was first published in 2009 and it's more than 600 pages. It also has twins in it, Marian and Shiva. They are born of the secret union between one of apparently one of Meredith's favorite things, an Indian nun, and a British surgeon in Ethiopia. So the way it brings Ethiopia to life and illuminates the history of whole country while also being hyper focused in on this one family is really like a masterwork. So you've got this like broad view, and then this like microscopic view of this family, and how it came to be, and what it turns into, and how each child grows up differently. It's so so good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:31

That yeah, I can definitely see that when being big again, in the book club set in the you know, the award winning set. I've tried that book a couple of times. I know it's a huge, it's one of those books, that is a huge favorite of so many readers, right. And so I feel that I just It hasn't come to me at the right moment yet, because I've tried it a couple of times and been like it feels a little too much for me right now.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:55

It might be a good slow but steady has kind of a weird title.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:59

Yeah, yeah, no, absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. My next one is a mystery that I think if it came out today, it would be all over Bookstagram because I think it would be so discussable and divisive. And that is In the Woods by Tana French.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:15

Oh, interesting choice. I like it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:17

Yeah, this came out in 2007. It's the first book in the Dublin Murder Squad series, which now has become a, you know, a gigantic hit. I think it's the best one of that series. It has a riveting mystery. It's very, very readable. And people either love or hate this book. I just feel like there would be so many spicy takes in all over Bookstagram if it were to come out right now.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:44

And you know, Bookstagram loves that too. Getting to argue about a book is huge on Bookstagram. I love that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:50

Well, and I think it would be one of those measuring sticks. It's a book that I use as a measuring stick, but like my Bookstagram measuring stick is "What did you think about The Silent Patient?" Like if I see somebody's profile and I scroll back and back and back and I see The Silent Patient I'm like, "Perfect. This will let me know if they are my book twin or my anti book twin". And it's like a good kind of lets you know, I think In the Woods does the same sort of thing.



**Kaytee Cobb** 49:13

That book is like a is like a measuring stick for me. Also, even though I've never read it just because of the conversations that you and I have.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:21

You've never read it?

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:23

The Silent Patient No, you tore it to shreds.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:25

Oh no. Okay. I thought you meant In the Woods. Yeah, no. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:28

No, The Silent Patient.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:29

Yes, right. Yeah. Don't even, well. I mean, I don't know Kaytee, there are a lot of people that like it. I know.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:35

No, you're you're gonna that's your turn to go next, and I almost picked that book. Kaytee. I totally agree. Yes, I almost picked The Memory Keeper's Daughter. Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:35

There are a lot of people that like it. That's fine. People like what they like. It's fine. Okay, my next one is from 2006. It's called The Memory Keeper's Daughter or did you? You're going right with five.

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:00

Well that's very special. So this one published in 2006. I don't even know if I finished saying The Memory Keeper's Daughter by Kim Edwards published in 2006. I think I read it around 2010. But it takes place in 1964. And it deals with a doctor who is forced by weather to deliver, again, here we are, his own twins. The boy is born healthy, the girl has Down syndrome. So he hands her over to a nurse and asked her to find a home for the child. In a hallmark esque twist, the nurse keeps the baby. And that's the story that we're unpacking here. I think that nearly 20 years later, now, there would be so much to unpack, and there'd be a lot of interest and commentary about the ways that Saviorism, and Down syndrome are depicted in this book. And there's also an interesting in here for other hot button issues that are in public society today. So I think it would be a great one to really like tear open with a bunch of readers. And I think for that reason, it could really blow up on Bookstagram for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:57

Yes, I totally agree. I really, really went back and forth. Because yes, it's kind of got that Kristin Hannah, the early Kristin Hannah, vibe to it, you know, so, right. It's a crying book, but then it also has just a really, really good story. I think that's a great choice. Nice. Okay. I was thinking about good old Ellen

Hildebrand and Colleen Hoover when I made my next choice because I we have to have some book that fits into that parameter. And I chose the 2002 juggernaut by Nora Roberts, The Villa. I think if The Villa came out today, and it was by Colleen Hoover, okay, it would be it would be absolutely huge. This is a juicy soapy, flip the pages so quick because you can't wait to see what happens book. It's got savvy businesswoman who has to go to this, you know, she she works in a winery, there's a merger, so she has to go work on this vineyard that she's never been to before. And there's the hot son, who is there and he knows how to be in the earth and he knows how to just have fun and relax. But our lead character can't and sparks fly between the two of them. And I'm making it sound like this book is funny, but the reality is I flippin loved this book. It's so much fun. So this is this is my entry for if you like Ellen Hildebrand, or you like Colleen Hoover read Nora Roberts, The Villa.

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:31

Right, that's a good pairing. Okay, so I think this is my fifth one. So my final pick is The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion. This was first released in 2013 and it would I think it would make a booktok darling for a number of reasons. Although I did see an article from 2021 saying that Henry Cavill is going to start in the film adaptation about it, but there's no further news on it. So I don't know if that's actually happening. And I don't agree with that casting for, for Don in The Rosie Project. But what I do know is that Bookstagram loves an unlikely hero. And this one has the right amount of quirk and sweetness to play into the revival of 90s rom coms that we're seeing on Netflix and some of the other studios are making happen. So I think for that reason, it would fit really well right now into the reading community.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:22

Yes, I think you're totally right. I agree that Henry Cavill is a weird choice for that. But just for rom coms in general, I feel like it would be yeah, it would find its place on Bookstagram for sure. All right, I will cap this off with my fifth and final choice, which is the Year of Wonders by Geraldine Brooks. This is a plague story. It's historical fiction. I think if you like Maggie O'Farrells most recent works Hamlet and The Marriage Portrait, I think we're right here in the sweet spot of Geraldine Brooks's early fiction. So I love the Year of Wonders. But I love a plague story almost as much as I love an orphan. I love a plague. And so this one is just incredibly well done. It's it's got a strong female protagonist. It's got beautiful, lyrical writing, but writing that doesn't get in the way of this story. I think it would be I think it would be a really, really big hit.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:19

Good call. I think. I think we just gave the internet plenty of fodder for the entire next year. Good job.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:25

Exactly. 10 fantastic books. Okay, Kaytee, let's cap this off by having a few moments at the fountain. What is your wish today as you go to the fountain?

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:36

Okay, I'm actually turning this into like a book end segment because my wish today is that every reader would keep at least a simple reading log. So my reading life record on Goodreads goes back to July of 2013. And for the life of me, I do not know why I didn't keep track of the books I read before then. I probably thought it wasn't that important. But after the conversation that I had this week with my dad, I

could say it's not too late to start, because even five years of history in his log was enough to spur many hours of conversation. His is so simple. The date finished, the title, the author, the total of number of books, but how I wish I could go through those other 67 years or even 20 additional years of his reading history. Because I think it shows, I think that keeping a record of our reading, even if it's really simple gives us a way to reflect on the readers we've been in the past, it gives us a chance to choose backlist or off the beaten path books that we read long ago for other readers in our lives or for the Wayback Machine. It helps our kids and the generations after us to see which books shaped us. And it shows us how our interests change and shift over the years how our reading rhythms changed, like he had some years that were only 18 books and some that were 26. And, and that's, you know, a 50% increase from one year to the next. So what was different from that one year to the next. And that's just with the simplest, most bare bones log. And y'all know I love a spreadsheet I love like extensive amount of data. But even a really simple list like this, even if you start today, whatever next book, you finish, there will be some number of books in there that you can then show to somebody in your life that wants to know about your reading life. And I think that's so special. So I wish that everyone would take the time to at least write down the title of the books that they read. That's my wish.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:30**

Yes, absolutely. I am so glad that I started doing that all the way back in 2002, I think is my first, my first reading log, but maybe even back further than that. I am so glad that I've done that because my daughter has gotten a chance to look through my handwritten notes and she's like, Oh my gosh, this is so great. That's like following your life, you know? So it's yes, wherever you are, doesn't matter if you haven't been doing it, doing it a note on your phone, do it at what however you do it. It doesn't need to be big and formal and take a bunch of time. Okay, Kaytee, I wish that November and December would get here so soon, for a couple of reasons, both related to my favorite author Louise Penny. On November 29, her new book, The 18th book in the series comes out. It's called A World of Curiosities. And I am so so excited for this book. And in December, we get the new Three Pines series that's dropping on Amazon Prime. We don't know the exact date yet. But they have said December. It will be based on the first four books of the series. The trailer dropped this week, Megan will put a link to that in the show notes. The trailer is very, very good. It's very interesting. I think we're all going to be very interested to see how they handle this because I've read these books multiple times. And there were some things that I was like, I'm sorry, what book is that from? I don't remember that at all. Louise Penny apparently is well, not apparently she's been very vocal about the fact that she's really excited about this new series. She has been involved to a certain extent. She's very happy with the choice of Alfred Molina as Inspector Gamache as him. I think he's absolutely going to be perfect. But in the trailer, Louise Penny, let us know that there is a moment that she was very, very upset about and that is a moment we're in voiceover. Ruth, our, one of our characters the older one who owns the duck she is saying something that I don't believe is an actual line from the books at all. She's seen something like "Three Pines is a very welcoming place. But if you don't belong here, Three Pines will find a way to get rid of you one way or another," is the gist of what she says and Louise Penny was really upset about that because she was saying Three Pines is a welcoming place. Spicy take a little bit because I actually think what Ruth was trying to say is, you know, but if you're, if you're like bad or evil, or you're bringing evil to the town, Three Pines will protect the good and get rid of the bad like, that's kind of how I took it. But again, not aligned from the canon, but it is going to be very interesting to see what we all think about those episodes. It's going to be interesting to see what Louise who seems that she'll be very

transparent about what she thinks. I am very much looking forward to the new series called Three Pines again, it's on Amazon Prime. So that's my wish that those would come soon, soon, soon, because I can't wait to watch them.

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:36

You're like a kid at Christmas. I love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:38

Literally like a kid at Christmas. And also, of course, let me just put up the universe, please help A World of Curiosities be as good as all her other books. Because I always think that would

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:48

That cover is great. And that title is fantastic.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:51

And the premise sounds really, really wonderful. So we shall see. We shall see. Okay, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:06

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:10

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** 1:00:20

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**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:27

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**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:51

Bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:56

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot,

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:59

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:01:01

Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:01:03

Happy reading Meredith