



Season 4, Episode 24: Reader, Know Thyself + Our Three Reading Themes

Mon, 1/24 • 1:01:12

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 read recently. And as you know, we don't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free, and our episodes are always ad free thanks to our Patreon supporters,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:31

Those supporters who we call our bookish friends make the podcast happen when they spend \$5 a month on Patreon, and they get tons of bonus content in return.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:46

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I am happy when my kids are enthusiastically reading.

Kaytee Cobb 00:54

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and my reading life is definitely eclectic. This is episode number 24 of season four. And we're so glad you're here. and enthusiastic readers Meredith. We're always excited to hear about that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:09

Yes, I'm very excited. Actually, my bookish moment of the week this week is one that Jackson said, Mom, this has to be your bookish moment. So I'm looking forward to that.

Kaytee Cobb 01:18

Oh, I love that you've had a lot of like kid love regarding the podcast lately. So I hope we get to hear a few more of those little bookish moments. Just so everybody knows, our deep dive today is that we are going to talk about the three themes that describe us as readers, which I'm excited to get into because

it was fun to think about, you know, if I had three baskets, what would they be labeled to fit my reading life inside of them? You know? Yeah, yeah, that'll be delightful. But let's start with a little more delight and get started with our bookish moments of the week. Meredith, what is yours?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:50

Okay, I'm actually going to do two, a mini one and a major one. Okay, so my mini one is just because it's the beginning of the year, I didn't want to wait to say once again, how much I am loving and benefiting from the new reading tracker that you created Kaytee. Now you guys know, I've been using the same format for my book journal for over 20 years, so the fact that I made this change to our new reading log this year was a really big deal. But now that we're into the year, and I've read some books, and I've gotten a chance to take it out for a drive, I am loving it even more than I ever thought that I could because I took some time when I first downloaded it to make it my own right, which, because I didn't want to track all the things, right? I wanted to track just the things that were right for me. That's true for everybody. Your design enabled me to do that. And then once it was all exactly the way that I wanted it, it's only taking me about 35 to 40 seconds to do an entry into the reading tracker. And the stats that I'm getting already have me opening my eyes. I mean, I've never had stats like this. And I'm just it's really adding to my reading because I'm already thinking, Hmm, I really know that I want this next one to be Own Voices, or I really know that I want to be sure that I'm getting my audio reading because I've been really print heavy. Those kinds of things are really clear. So that's my personal bookish woman of the week. And I didn't want to wait to say that.

Kaytee Cobb 03:22

Oh, I love that so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:24

It's just, you did such a good job on it, Kaytee and this is you know, again, you've done this for several years. So you guys know, I've never mentioned this in the past. This isn't a commercial of any kind. I'm just literally happy that I switched and that I'm using it. This is available to all of our bookish friends so you guys can get that. Jackson wanted me to say that he wanted this to be my bookish moment of the week. He recently read a book that he loved so much, that he had it on two formats. That's how much he loved it. And he went directly into the next one in the series. Jackson is not a gigantic series reader. So this is a big deal. And he said, "Mom, I'm really afraid that there are a lot of kids out there who maybe don't know of a great series. I feel like we need to get this into their hands."

Kaytee Cobb 04:13

Awe, yes we do Jackson.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:14

It was so important to Jackson who's 10 to let you guys know about this. So it was actually a book assigned by his teacher. So this was school reading. But we got a head start on it over the the Christmas break. It's really good you guys. It's called the City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau. I had never heard of it before. Kaytee, have you heard of it?

Kaytee Cobb 04:33

No, I haven't heard of this one at all.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:35

Okay. All right. It's about two kids who are both around Jackson's age, 10 and 11, a boy and a girl. Jackson wants us all to know the boy and the girl are not anything other than friends. Super important that I share that with you guys. They live in a city called Ember, which for 200 years has been the last refuge of the human race. It's a very orderly society. And everyone, as they get through what we would probably consider to be high school, basically is assigned a job that is perfect for their particular talents. And all of this is to make sure that the city keeps running exactly the way that it should. But now, whatever powers the city, and we don't know what it is at first, is in danger. And the kids get roped into finding out some very big secrets about what's going on in this very supposedly safe city. Now, I read this book, too. I absolutely loved it. Jackson doesn't normally like anything that I would describe as dystopian, which is really kind of what this is like a gentle dystopia. But this one just captured his imagination, because he's a kid who likes things that feel real life. And so this didn't feel like fantasy or magic to him. But it did feel like a step away from real life. So it was like this combination that really appealed to him. So like I said, he raced to the first one, he's already deep into the audio of the second one and he wants everyone to know that you should get for your children *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau. And now I can check this box because he has been relentless about making sure I talk about it.

Kaytee Cobb 06:18

Well, and you didn't get to talk about it last week, which we should touch on at this point, because as we mentioned, in last week's episode, Meredith was out with COVID. But as you all can hear, she is back this week and sounds great. And we're so happy to have you, Meredith, even though we are so glad that Mindy could step in.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:34

That was a lifesaver. I really didn't expect that COVID was going to make me sick enough that I couldn't record. But it did. And I do feel better. And I'm so grateful that you guys just stepped in so seamlessly and I didn't have to do I didn't even have to ask you guys are just the absolute best.

Kaytee Cobb 06:49

We are very grateful that that there is a team, you know that we didn't have to scramble and find a guest. That's exactly why we have Mindy and Mary in our back pockets at all times. They're the best. That's why we have a team because it makes stuff like that happen like magic. Which Jackson doesn't like. No magic for him.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:08

No magic. Okay, perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 07:10

So my bookish moment this week does have some magic, and this is both ridiculous and fabulous. And I'm excited about it. Because of an article on slate.com, the bookish friends started buzzing in December about an epically huge fanfic. Right, Meredith, you know what I'm gonna talk about here?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:28

Yes, yes, yes. This is very interesting. It's crazy.

Kaytee Cobb 07:31

It's crazy. It's called All the Young Dudes. It is a 500,000 word fanfic, which is roughly the equivalent of 2000 pages that focuses on the marauders of the Harry Potter universe. As a reminder, that means we're talking about Harry's dad and his besties during their time at Hogwarts, so we're going back 30 years in the Hogwarts timeline. Because of the bookish friends buzz, Kate Marshall, one of our bookish friends connected with Meg Tietz, of The Sorta Awesome podcast and we coordinated a sorting ceremony with hundreds of bookish friends participating in a gigantic buddy read. The plan is to get as many readers as possible finished with the entire read along again, all 2000 pages by July, when we're going to have a crossover Zoom with the superstars of The Sorta Awesome podcast and the bookish friends of Currently Reading. I'm reading it on my Kindle. And last night I hit 31%, which means I've already read like a 500 page book, this point, right? It's not published. So this is not like formally edited by a team of editors. There are errors, right spelling errors, common mistakes on a very rare occasion. This is not like a disaster that a 12 year old wrote in their basement. It is decently written fanfiction that cannot be published. It's ridiculous. When you take all that into account, it's very minimal the amount of because I that's part of what had me like stepping away for a while from this was like, I don't know if I can handle that. I like well edited books with good writing. This plot is so interesting. I'm so excited about it. It's a wolf star fanfic, which means we're mainly focused on the wolves of the Marauders, Remus and Sirius, and a potential love situation in between the two of them. So it does sometimes go off cannon. So far, I've not gotten to anything spicy. But of course, I do expect it in the future. If you're into that, if you're into fanfic, if you're into huge buddy reads, I invite you to join us. It's only like two chapters a day and you're totally caught up and there maybe 10 minutes a chapter. I'm loving it. I can't put it down.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:42

Okay, it's ridiculous. Logistically. I mean, this is crazy that you guys are doing this, but it's from a logistic point of view. If somebody is interested in this, it's called All the Young Dudes right? You buy it and then you load it onto your kindle...

Kaytee Cobb 09:54

You don't have to pay for it. You can get it off the internet, and you can load it onto your Kindle. I am reading it on my Kindle,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:01

Okay, so we're gonna put a link in show notes where people can go get it, and then it's easy to figure out how to get it onto your Kindle. That's the only way to read it right? Is it on an e-reader?

Kaytee Cobb 10:12

I mean, you could read it on your desktop computer or your phone. It's an HTML. There are bookish friends who have found a published version of it. But it looks like a very shady website. They said they've gotten their copies now, in paper. It's very tiny print. It's three volumes. And it's working for them. So I'll have that link also, in show notes. Megan will help us out there if you love a paper version. But it's just like, there's none of the anti trans bias of the original author of the series. There's a lot of like, very lovely being in that world again, because we've talked about how I feel like that world no longer belongs to JK Rowling. Right? It's kind of its own thing. It's, it's been built into its own life at this point. And that's what it feels like we're doing here. 30 years before all of that mess started, basically.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:03

Okay, so then, if they missed the sorting, the initial sorting into groups, how would they take part in the buddy read?

Kaytee Cobb 11:12

You would just want to be a bookish friend by July. You could be part of the Zoom, or the Gryffindors are being sorted as two chapters a day. So they're trying to read slightly faster and get done a little faster. And if you started reading two chapters a day now, you'd probably catch up with them relatively quickly, and could be part of the Gryffindor chat, where they are discussing what's happening in the story at that point in time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:36

Okay, so if they become a bookish friend meaning support us on Patreon, right?

Kaytee Cobb 11:40

Or a Superstar of The Sorta Awesome podcast also.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:44

Okay, perfect, or both, which would be better, great, then, right? Because that's one of my favorite Patreon. The Sorta Awesome Patreon is one of my absolute favorites. If they do that, then they will be able to reach out and get put into the right group and read in the way that they want. Okay, so all will come clear at that point.

Kaytee Cobb 12:04

Correct. Correct. Okay, good. Totally reach out to me directly. Y'all know how to get a hold of me. That doesn't seem to be a problem.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:11

Right. Right.

Kaytee Cobb 12:12

Exactly. I'll help you get sorted for sure.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:16

It's definitely the biggest fanfic buddy read I've ever been aware of. I think it's very interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 12:22

Right? It is interesting. That's a great adjective for what's happening with this buddy read.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:28

But it's fun. And everyone's having a good time. And that's exactly what we want. 2022 We need to embrace what feels good. Megan, Megan, listen to me. Meg Tietz said in this latest episode of Sorta Awesome that I listened to the fantastic one with the reading delights. Yes, such a good episode. She said just a throwaway line that I think I'm going to get tattooed on my inside of my left arm, where she said something Rebecca said something about something she was liking, but maybe not everyone would. And then Meg said, "No rules. Just right baby!" And I was like, I need that tattooed on my body.

Kaytee Cobb 13:07

That's like the one antithesis

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:10

I know. But it's so aspirational. Right, like all gasp no brakes. "No rules. Just right baby." And the way that Meg said it. I was like, I want that in my veins. I want Meg in my vein, saying that to me all the time. But anyway, that's super fun. I'm glad that you guys are doing that.

Kaytee Cobb 13:29

I'm very excited about it. Let's talk about current reads. Like, that is a current read for me but oh, and it's also on Goodreads. So you can mark it as a book that you are reading officially on Goodreads if you care about about that kind of number situation at the end of the year. So I think that makes it more legitimate feeling you know,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:47

Oh, for sure. If it goes in Goodreads, it goes in your reading tracker. If you're going to read, you know the equivalent of 2000 pages, you sure as shooting better be getting credited for that.

Kaytee Cobb 13:59

Exactly. Well, let's set that aside. And let's talk about books we've actually read. So what is your first current read this week, Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:06

Okay, my first current read this week is the absolute antithesis to everything that we just talked about, which is the most new and modern kind of reading possible, because this book was published in the 1920s. And I absolutely loved it. That's right. We're revisiting once again, my favorite Agatha Christie, because you guys I read The Murder of Roger Ackroyd by Agatha Christie, and it is my new second favorite Agatha Christie ever. This one is so good. Okay. I'm going to tell you very sternly do not look up

this book anywhere. Just know this. Here's all you need to know. Hercule Poirot retires to a village called Kings Abbot near the home of his friend Roger Ackroyd. Hercule is there to pursue a project to grow the perfect vegetable marrows, which is like a squash. Just go with me on this. Soon after he moves there, Roger Ackroyd is murdered. And of course Poirot has to leave his vegetables and come out of retirement to solve the case. That is absolutely all you need to know you don't need any more setup because all the goodies in the goodness in this book you need to be able to discover on your own. I will tell you that this is the Agatha Christie that most surprised me. When I finished my very first note, which of course you guys know I start making notes literally before I do anything else. When I shut a book, I open up the notes on my phone and I start talking about it. My notes said, "I am shook my friends." I have never said that coming out of an Agatha Christie. Part of the reason that you read Christie is because there's a format you're kind of expecting certain things to go certain ways. Not in Roger Ackroyd. This book has everything that I love in an Agatha Christie and one major elephant, element, not an elephant, an element, no elephants in this one. It has an element that I did not see coming. But what it does have that I will tell you is it has a brother sister relationship that was completely delightful. I always wish there were more brother sister relationships in fiction, I have a really good brother and I like our relationship and I wish there was more of that. There's also an interesting use of an emerging technology. This is written in the 1920s. I enjoyed that. And Hercule is at his most brilliant and his most dangerous. Please go into this book as spoiler free as possible. Don't look at Amazon or audible reviews because there are asshats who are ruining it for everyone there and it just burns my britches. But go into it, I always listen to Agatha Christie. I only do it on Audible or an audiobook. It's fantastic this way. I loved The Murder of Roger Ackroyd by Agatha Christie.

Kaytee Cobb 17:11

Well, that sounds delightful. So remind us all because everybody's gonna ask you know this. This is now your second favorite. Remind everybody what your first favorite is Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:19

Ten Little Indians, which is also called And Then There Were None. When I read it, it was Ten Little Indians. So And Then There Were None. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 17:29

Perfect. So my first book this week is nonfiction. It's called The Art of gathering by Priya Parker. I read this one in November with with hope in my heart, and dreams of gathering with others. Y'all, you can laugh at me. It's fine. It sounds full on delusional at this point, but we're going to go with it anyway. So Priya Parker, our author is a strategic facilitator. That's a fancy word for she's been hosting gatherings and figuring out what makes them work best for many years. In this book, she walks us through the essential elements of great gathering the big no no's that will send the energy levels through the floor, and how to create meaningful connections in spaces that require vulnerability and more. Right? Much of this book draws on her experience with prior gatherings, from weddings, to backyard barbecues, to corporate retreats with hundreds of people. So anything from like four people for book club, to 350 people for HelloFresh. Right, which is not what a fresh Parker? Is that a company?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:30

I don't know but it should be.

Kaytee Cobb 18:31

I think it's Fresh Parker.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:32

It's like Warby Parker, and HelloFresh.

Kaytee Cobb 18:36

Yeah, you can get glasses and dinner

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:38

and groceries. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 18:39

at the same time. Perfect, perfect. So she points out that there are certain principles that apply to all of them, and that oftentimes, we as hosts of gatherings are doing it wrong. Basically, using the prior gatherings as examples. She shows us what worked well and what derailed the proceedings, including her own actions that sometimes made something not go well. I picked this up because Laura Tremaine put it on my radar as part of her Patreon community. See, we are just spreading the love this week. We're going to talk about everybody's Patreons this week. Yes, she had it as a buddy read over there. She does these great book club discussions. I did not read it in time for that discussion. But because I was seeing the buzz, I decided I wanted to pick it up. The part that didn't really work for me, and it sounds like a number of people felt the same was that the examples flowed, but since gatherings are all so different, they are hard to make universally applicable. Right? You can't just have like one decision tree that says, More than 100 people or less than 100 people? Great follow this road, right. And that's what I wanted. I wanted like a flowchart that said, now you need to decide A or B. Now that you've made that decision, A or B, because that would have made it easier to apply in my own life when I'm looking at upcoming gatherings in the future whenever the entire world stops being stupid. So with a printable PDF, I think I would have ended up giving this five stars. But overall, it left me feeling kind of nebulous. Like I have an idea what a good gathering could look like. But I'm not sure how to apply it. What I did find, and I'll have Megan link this in show notes also, there's a guide from a talk she gave at UC Merced, about how to gather virtually on Zoom, and still have all the elements that she talks about. It's a 10 page PDF. She gave this talk in April of 2020. So now we're nearly two years later, and we're still trying to figure out genuine human connection through a screen. And the hope is that we're able to take advantage of those moments of connection however they come and that we will be actually gathering again in person soon so that we can practice The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:44

Well, this one one was one that I was interested in, because this is an issue that I have right now. I want to do better. But I'm not a natural entertainer. And I feel like I probably make some of those mistakes

that you were referencing. So this one was one that I was definitely looking looking at and circling around.

Kaytee Cobb 21:02

Yeah. Well, and my Heather, who is also an introvert, she took a lot of great info from it as well. So I think it does have things that apply nebulously across the board.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:14

All right, my next read comes to me from you guys know, one of my favorite Instagram followers is @Katieladyreads, and she is she have the big opinion and I love her and I love her Instagram, but she also was a really big fan of Harlan Coben. So she has been tempting me to get a little deeper into Harlan Coben. And so I read a book called Deal Breaker by Harlan Coben. So I'm going to give you the setup. Sometimes Wikipedia entries make me laugh so hard that I just have to share just a little bit. As I was preparing to give the set up for this book, I was doing a quick fact check. And I came across the first line to the wiki entry for the series. So I'm going to share that with you. This is what it says. "The series protagonist is a 31 year old formerly renowned basketball player and is the owner of MB Sports Reps, an agency representing sports stars and celebrities. Myron Bolitar is his name, is six feet four inches tall and considered handsome by many women." The first line of that, I just like how scientific it is. Yes, Myron Bolitar our lead character is very handsome. He's also right on the edge of finally making it into the big time of being a sports agent. And so is his number one client Christian Steele, who's a rookie quarterback. But when Christian gets a phone call from a former girlfriend, a woman who everyone including the police believes is dead, the deal starts to go sour trying to unravel the truth about a family's tragedy, a woman's secret and a man's lies. Myron is up against the dark side of the sports business, where image and talent make you rich, but the truth might get you killed. Alright, I absolutely smiled the entire time that I was listening to this book. And that's how that's how I read this one. I did it on audio and I loved it. It's great on audio. First of all, I will say that the writing is hilarious. Sometimes purposely hilarious. Sometimes not so purposely hilarious but it still made me laugh. The tongue in cheek constant wittiness of Myron Bolitar just made me giggle. Yes, it is cheesy in parts for sure. But it's such a specific writing style that I just kind of enjoyed it. I guess I was just in the right mood for it. And many people, as I was reading this had mentioned that the character of Win, Bolitar's erudite, preppy Black Belt partner in his firm is totally worth the price of admission. Win is a complete character. I think that he even well, it's not I think he even has his own book that just came out recently that just focuses on Win, and I'm definitely going to pick that up because he's a super hot psychopath who works for the good guys and I love him so much. So Myron and Win, they're hilarious. They're hilarious individually and together. The other thing that made me smile was that this book was written in 1995 when I was 21 years old and just become a mother for the first time. It had so many references that dated it so completely, that I was laughing out loud. I'm now going to mention some things Kaytee, that you probably aren't even going to recognize.

Kaytee Cobb 24:41

I was alive in 1995. Settle down.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:44

Okay. All right. Phil Donahue.

Kaytee Cobb 24:47

Okay, I do know Phil Donahue.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:48

Merlin Olsen?

Kaytee Cobb 24:50

Don't know who that is.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:51

Yeah, right. So many odd and dated references dealing with TVs and audio equipment that I honest think there are readers today who could listen to this and there would be parts they literally didn't understand. And it was making me so happy. Now, the downside of it having been written in 1995, is that there were definitely places where I was cringing, especially some of the language around women and women's bodies and women's sexuality. This wasn't a pardon the pun "deal breaker" for me, because I read it as having been written in a really specific period of time. But if you read it through a lens of today, there are definitely going to be some parts that will make you either smack your head or just throw the book. So proceed with caution if that kind of thing bothers you. I don't want you walking into a book that hasn't aged well without at least knowing where you are. And there are trigger warnings in this book, especially for sexual assault. So I want you to be aware of that too. But it was a real page turner. It's not gory or overly sexual. So for a lot of people, that combination is a real win. I also liked the sports agent setting, and I know that I'm going to want to read further into the series, but I'm not going to do it for a while. This strikes me as the kind of series that if I were to read it back to back, it would become cheesy really fast. But on its own, I loved it. This is Deal Breaker by Harlan Coben.

Kaytee Cobb 26:22

I feel like okay, I know about Harlan Coben, but I feel like there's like a resurgence happening right now where I feel like I'm hearing about him all the time from all different places at this point.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:33

Well, I think he's still writing. I think he's been writing for, he's kind of like a James Patterson. I mean, when you read something like this, you're kind of in a James Patterson-y space. Right? And so again, reader know thyself. This is not great literature. This is not a literary mystery, like you just got to be in the right mood. But I feel like I just want to give, I want to talk about all my current reads. But also sometimes this is exactly what you're in the mood for, especially people who grew up in the 90s there's gonna be a lot there for you to, to laugh at.

Kaytee Cobb 27:08

Or, or if you were already grown up in the 90s. Because I did grow up in the 90s as we just pointed out, and

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:14

I guess, right, if you were if you were a young adult in the 90s, it would be perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 27:18

Okay. Okay, my second book this week also has some humor to it. I'm going to talk about All Things Reconsidered by Knox McCoy. Knox McCoy is of course half of one of our very favorite podcasting duos, Knox and Jamie from The Popcast, another Patreon, but you could totally get on board with because it's amazing and has fabulous content. This book was published in June of 2020. So you know, nothing at all happening in the world at that time. Totally normal day for everyone at all times. Right? Well, thankfully, he does not shy away from the hard stuff. But I do think that that's why it didn't buzz all over the internet, right? June of 2020 was, was a rough or rough time for a lot of people.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:01

I felt so bad that that's when his book came out.

Kaytee Cobb 28:03

I know. I know. So he doesn't shy away from the hard stuff like whether or not heaven or hell is a bigger reason to believe in God. Or growing up being taught that color blindness is the way to be a good human, or the church not stepping into difficult conversations. Lest I make it sound like this is a big slog fest and a heavy book, I will remind you that Knox wheezie laughs every week into my earbuds and in this book, I was always laughing right back at him. He's tackling participation trophies, his favorite foods, sports teams, other stuff we might need to reconsider after a number of decades on this planet. Fabulously, there are also a number of Hamilton references throughout this book, which even on the audio version are notated with footnote Hamilton reference whenever they crop up, because Knox reads it, which means you have to listen to it on the audio, especially because Jamie Golden, our other dear friend wrote the foreword and reads it herself as well. I am not saying that you have to be a ride or die fan of The Popcast to enjoy this, although I am and we are ride or die fans of The Popcast, but it definitely would not hurt. It's probably also obvious from my description that there are a number of topics here and in his previous book, The Wandering Years that deal with Christianity and the Christian church. I can say that you don't have to be a practicing Christian or a heavy hitting evangelical to enjoy them. Because I definitely don't fit into those categories right now. But the poking fun is legit. And it's hysterical. This book with the big eraser on the cover is All Things Reconsidered by Knox McCoy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:33

I love this one. I love this book. I love Knox. I love his writing. I mean he's absolutely fantastic on The Popcast, but I think he's such a smart writer. He really balances being funny without he never forces the joke and he also really comes at things with a deep level of intellect. And I love that what he's asking us to do is be open to reconsidering some things that we've held on to really tightly. And that I think is something we can all I know that I can really benefit from. And I know that I've benefited from in this book. And I just I couldn't recommend any more highly. I absolutely love, I love him. I love his take on the world and I love both of his books.

Kaytee Cobb 30:21

They're both absolutely wonderful. And like, really, this is a book that is fantastic on audio. I can't say it enough. Having Knox read you, it's probably six hours on audio, having him talk to you for six hours is totally worth your time. Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:39

Absolutely. That's a good one Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 30:40

Okay, what's your third one Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:42

Okay, my third one is very, very different from that. So this is hard screeching tires left turn. I want to talk about a book called *The House of Hollow* by Krystal Sutherland. I don't know if you've ever seen this book, but it has a beautiful cover. It really has one of those covers that just draws you in. Here's the setup. And this is a really good one. Iris Hollow and her two older sisters are unquestionably strange, ever since they disappeared on a suburban street in Scotland as children, only to return a month later, exactly where they disappeared, but with no memory of what happened to them. Odd, eerie occurrences seem to follow them everywhere that they go. And there's also the fact that since they've been back, they've been changing. First upon their immediate return, their dark hair previously turns completely white. And then their blue eyes slowly turned black. They have crazy appetites that they never gain weight. And people weirdly find them intoxicating. Like they will follow them around and become completely obsessed with them, even when they've had very little interaction with them. But now when our book opens, it's 10 years later, and 17 year old Iris Hollow is doing all she can to fit in and she just wants to graduate high school on time, something her two famously glamorous globe trotting older sisters Grey and Vivi never managed to do. But when Grey, who is a very famous fashion influencer, goes missing without a trace, leaving behind some bizarre clues as to what might have happened, Iris and Vivi are left to trace her last few days. But they aren't the only ones looking for her. As they brush against the supernatural, they realize that the story they've been told about their past is unraveling and the world that returned them seemingly unharmed 10 years ago, might just be calling them back. This book is cuh-razy. Okay, let me just let me just say this. It was recommended to me by Roxanna, who would never in a bazillion years you could pay a million dollars, she would not read this book, but she tripped over herself to make sure I knew about it because she knew how completely it fit into my wheelhouse. And it really really does. This is very much a YA fantasy. But it's also very much a fairy tale. But let me make super clear that this is a fairy tale in the vein of the earliest Grimms fairy tales. We are not in Disney territory here, people. There were things I absolutely loved about this book. Krystal Sutherland does an excellent job of introducing her characters and setting the scene. She draws you in slowly but surely in the most seductive way possible. I kept feeling like I was in the beginning of *Hansel and Gretel*. Only the breadcrumbs were being left by the witch. And she was drawing me to her house. And this story is interesting and heart pounding all the way through. But I just can't stress enough how evocative this book is in really good ways, but you guys in really gross ways too. I need you to hear me on this. There is a tremendous amount of blood and gore, and viscera in this book. I just need to say that nine times because I don't want any of you to ask me and I don't want you

to hand this to your teenager not knowing that that's there. Because OMG I am still thinking about some of these scenes. Also, there's quite a bit in the way of strangeness or weirdness. And usually I don't like that. But this works on a lot of levels in this book. I would say that if you liked *The Hazel Wood* by Melissa Albert, and if you really liked the Seanan McGuire series that starts with *Every Heart a Doorway*, this will very much be for you. You need to go get it right now. And if you love a book with a ton of creativity and imagination, and something that is really, really visual, this is definitely for you. But if you like fairy tales for their sweetness, as I often do, I would tell you to run away from this book. Just turn around, ma'am, because this is not that book. Toward the end, I did feel like the story got away from the author a little bit, but she managed to rein it in in a way that was really satisfying. I have absolutely no desire to ever read this book again because as I said, it has a lot in it that is that I can't unsee but it was a fascinating journey. So this is *the House of Hollow* by Krystal Sutherland.

Kaytee Cobb 35:41

Sounds so good and creepy. You know what it sounds like to me is like the book *Wilder Girls* by Rory Power, what I wanted it to be instead of what it was. So I'm intrigued. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:55

Approach if you dare reader. Yeah, it's a wild ride. Unforgettable for sure. That's a word that I don't often use with books, but I would use that. The cover is very, very pretty.

Kaytee Cobb 36:10

Like I kind of want it just up on my wall. Just get like a poster board size of the cover.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:15

It's really really pretty. It's very seductive. Everything about it is very seductive.

Kaytee Cobb 36:19

Yeah. Yeah, like *Come closer my sweet*. Yes, exactly. Love it. Okay. Okay. We're gonna just keep doing this today. My third one is also YA but that's the only thing that these two books have in common, what you just told us about and what I am going to bring. My third book this week is *Camp* by L.C. Rosen. This was actually a final book of 2021. I finished it on New Year's Eve. This book has serious *Cyrano de Bergerac* vibes. And when I say that I actually mean *Roxanne*, the 1987 film gem, starring Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah. You're, you're just gonna have to go with me on this. In *Roxanne*, Steve Martin is C.D. Bales. He's in love with local hottie Roxanne. But he has a very large nose like four inches long. Well, he models the possibilities of plastic surgery and learns makeup for contouring and shading and attempts to find different ways to disguise his schnoz. He also helps Chris, a hot but stupid firefighter to capture her heart instead. He feeds him lines, gives him tips on books to talk about and basically makes him turn into Chris, but with C.D.'s brain. The movie is not what I'm here to talk you into. But you do want to watch it because it's amazing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:36

It's good. Yeah, I like that one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:37

Those were two really, really different books. You know what? I feel very sure with the current reads that we talked about today...

Kaytee Cobb 37:37

And I think that having seen Roxanne will totally help anyone love a goofy retelling of Cyrano de Bergerac even more. That's why I'm setting up that whole movie. Just to tell you about Camp. In camp, we meet 16 year old Randy, who has spent the past few summers at Camp Outland, a camp for queer teens. He met his best friends there. He's totally in with the theater crew and he has a huge crush on the camp playboy Hudson, who likes straight acting bro dudes. That's the only kind of dude that Hudson is into. Randy is not anywhere near the straight acting bro dude stereotype. So this summer, he has reinvented himself. He's Dell. He's been working out, he changed his wardrobe and he no longer paints his nails with blue sparkles. He's determined to catch Hudson's eye and be more than just a minor fling for the four weeks of camp during the summertime. Things start to go off the rails almost immediately. And this book is billed as a screwball comedy on the jacket copy. There are so many laugh out loud moments and happy heart moments and tender moments of vulnerability. Bookish friend Brady Parkin posted all the books he read in 2021 in ranked order and this was his number one. So I picked it up because of that. We had so many other books in common that he loved and I loved also, so I figured it was a pretty good bet for me. While it wasn't a top book of the year for me, mostly because as I discussed with Mindy last week, there was quite a bit of lying as a plot driver here and that bugs me in any book, but it happens a lot with YA, I did really love it. I loved the plot, the characters, the setting, and I did laugh out loud over and over again. I'm so glad he got me to pick it up. And he put up with all my super dramatic messages about it that I sent him as I read it like oh my god Brady now this and he was like, "I know Kaytee, I know just stick with it". He was very kind and supportive of throughout. So this book, if you loved Roxanne, you can handle some YA angst and a little bit of lying in your books you have to pick up Camp by L.C. Rosen.

Kaytee Cobb 39:43

There's something for everyone.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:44

There's something for everybody there.

Kaytee Cobb 39:46

I love it. And I love us, Meredith. Okay, those were our six current reads. And now we get to talk about our deep dive, which of course we both prepared for a week and a half ago and then didn't get to record so I have been anxiously awaiting this conversation. So Meredith, let's talk about what three themes describe us as readers?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:03

Exactly. I thought this was such an interesting way to think about our reading life. And we actually can't take credit for the idea because this idea came to us from a bookish friend Kristin Clark. Here's what Kristin said. She said, "I listened to What Should I Read Next this week, and I've been thinking about

her guests attempt to choose books that represented her as a reader. I've been thinking about what my three themes would be. And I've settled on historical fiction, especially if it leads me to learn more about a topic, social justice books that inform me about social justice topics, and women's fiction, including dysfunctional family stories that include lots of great females." So Kristen asked us what three themes best describe our reading life. And I thought this, again, was an interesting way to think about the way that we do our reading. So for me, Kaytee, the very first one that I thought of, so I thought of my three actually, very quickly, and I think that that is very emblematic of my reading right now, because I feel sure, surer than ever, about what I'm looking for from my reading, and choosing books that fit those kind of baskets that you were talking about. So the first one, the biggest basket, the Big Mama basket, for me, is where all my mysteries and thrillers fit. And that is for me, in my reading, I like books that helped me make order out of chaos. That's what my mysteries and thrillers are doing. That's why I normally don't love thrillers. But I do love literary mysteries, mysteries with puzzles at their center, or even books that don't necessarily, that aren't necessarily the mystery genre, but they have some sense of something that needs to be solved in order to bring closure or make sense of chaos. And so I think that's why I like police procedurals, right, because that's what we're doing. We have a crime, and now we're going to bring justice, we're going to put all the puzzle together and we're going to have an entire picture. That's my first bucket and it is by far my biggest bucket.

Kaytee Cobb 42:15

Okay, I like that. I also came up with my three buckets pretty quickly, because I couldn't do what Kristen did, God bless her heart, and just come up with three genres. And I think this is why you also have kind of a bigger, overarching umbrella over your themes, right. So my first theme that I'll put first, just to pair it with yours is thrills in general. And that means anything edge of my seat, plot driven murder, sci fi, fantasy, or outlandish, and so it doesn't have to be thrilling as in terrifying, it could be thrilling as in ridiculous. And that's still a thrill for me. So while it's not my biggest bucket, that was definitely one of the three that I absolutely was able to nail down right away, what's your second one Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:59

All right, my second one is I have, I'm very happy when whatever book I'm reading is really illuminating another person's life experience, especially when it is a life experience that is really far outside of my own life experience. So a really great example of this, for me is *A Gentleman in Moscow*. I think that's a fantastic example of a book that really illuminates a life, both in what happens in that life, but also what's going on inside the person within their mind, within their evolution of themselves as a character. And I love finding that in my books. It always, I'm just, I feel like light bulbs are going on over my head, when my books are helping me see the world through another person's life experience.

Kaytee Cobb 43:50

Right? My bucket for that I called my growth bucket. And for me, this encompasses, of course, my Own Voices reading, social justice reading, but also productivity, right? Self Help, that kind of thing. Learning new things, deepening what I know about whatever it is I already know. That could be through history, or God forbid a biography, right? We all know how I feel about biographies at this point. And it's peeling back those layers and finding out what I don't know, so that I can fix it. So I can make it so that I do know about it. And that often involves walking in someone else's shoes through those Own Voices

stories, where I'm like, I will never be a Black boy in Harlem. I never will be that, but I can be in that story and I can feel those feels, because we have great authors writing for us. So that's my growth bucket basket.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:39

Exactly. Right Pony is another example of this for me, a book that really brought this out for me where I was thinking, "Why am I so happy with this reading experience?" Because I'm seeing this world through a character that's illuminating things that were completely different for me. I love that. Alright, my third one is I definitely find that I've read oftentimes for comfort. So when I'm looking to fill that basket, I'm mostly, there's lots of genres that can fall into this. But for me, I mostly go to middle grade or I go to cozy mysteries, right? So cozy mysteries, or books by authors like Debbie Macomber even, you know, it's not a mystery. But just, that's comfort reading for me. And that's a definite, that's probably my smallest basket. But it is one that when it gets all the way empty, I immediately need to fill it. So it's like an emergency basket, like you better get something in there right now. Pull the ripcord, I need to read for comfort. I need to be this. So I want to read middle grade, but I don't want to read middle grade that's going to be super upsetting in any way. I don't want to read middle grade that's super issues oriented. I just want something that's going to make me feel like it's going to have that sweetness, that sweet space, that safety where nothing too horrible is going to happen. Because sometimes I really need my reading to provide that outlet for me.

Kaytee Cobb 46:11

Right? Yeah. So my my third basket is...is it my biggest basket? I'm not totally sure. But I would probably put it there. I would call it my delight basket. And these are the books that have found family in them or beloved curmudgeons. Buddy reading fills my delight basket, oftentimes, middle grade sweetness, right? YA ridiculousness or fantasy, humor, anything humorous will fill that delight basket. So and it's the same thing. It's comfort, but it's a little different than comfort, right? Sometimes when I need comforting, I actually want to be thrilled. Because that will take me out of my own head and put me in a situation that I can't stop thinking about right? Takes me out from whatever I'm perseverating on. But delight fills my cup in a different way. And so I do I have to like make sure that when I'm looking at my books for the month that it's not too heavy, there's something in there that brings me delight and sweetness and fun. So that I mean that stuff like A.J. Fikry has delight in it and fills that basket for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:21

I love that. And I completely am understanding what you're going for there. Because I love that when I find that in my reading too. Here's what I'm thinking about when I look so now because I didn't know your baskets you didn't know my baskets, right? My three feel like things that I'm retreating from life in in a certain way to be filled up by my reading. Yours seem to be not about necessarily retreating, but almost reading to take you up to take you forward and I'm almost getting like an introvert I need to retreat to fill up and an extrovert you need to sort of move forward and go out to fill up. Right. And I think all of yours kind of have that forward, out kind of feeling. And all of mine have this more internal retreat sort of feeling. Isn't that interesting?

Kaytee Cobb 48:11

Yeah. So tell me the name of like, what kind of overarching umbrella you put on your three baskets again.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:17

Alright, so I have make an order out of chaos. I have other people relishing other people's experiences, and then going to reading for comfort.

Kaytee Cobb 48:29

Okay. And I have thrills, growth and delight, which are, which do sound like almost opposite things that we are pointing at in our reading. The interesting thing for me is that you and I are different readers, of course, but we do have so much overlap in certain areas. And, and we put those things into our separate baskets, right? Like, you find your mysteries and thrillers and you'll put them into your order out of chaos basket. And I'm over here like, yes, they're so exciting and thrilling, right? So still that introvert extrovert and we can be at the same party. Right? But take away a different thing from both of them.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:08

That's very interesting. Weird. That's right. And my I want to relish other people's experiences, basically, so that I stop being so judgmental about everybody and look at the world and I'm so in my own head all the time, and so positive that I'm right about everything all the time, which of course I'm not and that's just that's a toxic trait of mine, that what I love about other people's experiences is that it really knocks me off of that and it's like, "You have no freakin idea what you're talking about Meredith. You need to look at the world from a completely different lens." And, and yet you put that exact thing into your growth bucket like yes, I'm going to grow and I'm going to grow and find good things and you know what I mean? That it is it's very interesting that but then there is overlap, because for me when I was thinking, I could have made a bucket for escape, because I really do look at my reading as escape from, yeah, just what my head is always doing. Reading kind of gets me out of that. But I wanted to be a little more specific in that, but that almost could fall into the thrills category. But that's not really it for me. It's not the thrill element really isn't it. So I feel like we've come up with some good. I think this is a good lens for everyone.

Kaytee Cobb 50:26

And I want to hear about everybody else's buckets.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:30

Right, I definitely think that Megan will be able to do something interesting with social media with this, because she'll be able to show these different things. And then I think people will, will want to weigh in with their own thoughts about their three buckets, because I think this would be a fascinating conversation for the bookish friends to have. I would love to know what some of our what all of our bookish friends think that their, their big buckets are.

Kaytee Cobb 50:56

Yeah, I'm very interested in how it plays out. And if, if it does seem like, you know, we have these different buckets, but there are common threads throughout kind of readerly lives and what you put in this bucket, I put in this one, and that means we can come together on such and such title. Like I just I love that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:17

Well, not only do we come together on it, so we have that common ground, but then I'm gonna see one thing out of a book or a story, and you're gonna see something different. And by us sharing that we're, again, we're expanding our own experience on that book. So that's another reason why I think this conversation amongst the bookish friends will be so interesting, because I think we'll be able to make even more connections where people will be like, "Oh, wait, that's one of your buckets? That's definitely one of my buckets. What book did you, you know, fits that", and then that becomes a conversation that readers find each other that way.

Kaytee Cobb 51:49

Oh, this is so great. I'm so excited about this.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:52

Yeah, no, I really love it.

Kaytee Cobb 51:53

I love Kristin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:54

Thank you, Kristin Clark, and all of you please know, we don't have trouble coming up with topics ourselves. Certainly we're overflowing with them. But we love it when you guys send us an email to currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com. Suggest a topic for a deep dive. You never know when we're going to drop everything like we did for this one and say, "That is brilliant. Let's talk about it this week."

Kaytee Cobb 52:15

Yeah, we love we love doing that. And we'll make sure that the episode that of What Should I Read Next that Kristin is talking about in her submission for this topic is also linked in the show notes. So we'll just send you on rabbit trails this week. That's what we're doing. We're giving you 18 other podcasts to listen to and fill all your buckets. That's what we're here. Let's press some books into people's buckets. What have you got for us this week Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:38

One of the things that I have actually gotten several emails and DMS about recently from people is people saying, "You used to recommend more books about business or productivity and I haven't heard that from you in a really long time." And they're totally right. I used to actually read quite a bit more in this space than I do now. But there is a book that at the beginning of every year if I don't do a full reread of it, I at least do a partial reread it is that important to me and the way that I've chosen to structure my

life. So I wanted to press it and it's a book called First Things First by Stephen Covey. Are you familiar with this book Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 53:16

I know of Stephen Covey. But I do not know this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:19

Well, I love Stephen Covey. And The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is an that's just a foundational book for me, no question. I get the the teen version for my kids. All of my children have gone through it. So super important to me. But First Things First is foundational for a lot of reasons. This book came out way back in 1997. So again, I've brought a lot of backlist to the show. But it's still a great one. And it basically what it does is it applies the insights that we find in Stephen Covey's very popular The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, to our daily problems of struggling with the ever increasing demands on our time, of our work, and our home life, and everything else that we're struggling to fit into our days. Rather than focusing though on time and things, First Things First emphasizes relationships, and results. And this is why it speaks to me so deeply. Instead of efficiency, this approach emphasizes effectiveness. It tells us why we feel a gap between how we spend our time and what is actually deeply important to us. How focusing on efficiency and control actually increases that gap instead of closing it, and how to determine if what you're doing is really important, or is it just urgent? And that last piece is something that every single day, every hour of every day I ask myself for my own work and my team, "Is this important? Or does it just seem urgent?" And a lot of times we're spending a lot of time on things that are not important, but masquerade as important in their urgency. This book speaks to the very core of everything I believe about how I try to run my life and my business. It's all about focusing on the result that you're looking for, and then working backwards from there. And I love it because it's not theoretical, and it's not preachy. Stephen Covey gives you real actionable steps. Kaytee, you know, this is super important to me in these kinds of books, on how to transform your days, from a list of tasks into steps that will help you spend time on the things that actually matter to you most in your business and in your personal life. This is basically the guide to managing your day, not letting your day manage you. And I love it so much. This is First Things First by Stephen Covey. And this is a great time of year to grab it, read it and implement it.

Kaytee Cobb 56:00

I love that. And that just reminded me that I need to be looking at Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, for teens, for Micah, because he is coming right up into those teenage years and starting to learn how to manage his own school situation, homework and all that. So, right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:16

I will tell you with that book, all three of my kids, my older kids went through it, they all hated it at the time. Every one of them has come back to me and said that was a foundational experience for me. But they all fought me at the time when I made them go through it. So just moms and dads, you just so you know,

Kaytee Cobb 56:34

That's my favorite thing to do with my children, obviously. Fight them, I mean.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:40

Sure. Then you know you're doing something right. If your kids aren't happy with you, you know you're doing something right.

Kaytee Cobb 56:45

Correct. Correct. Okay, so I don't know the last time that this happened, but I also have nonfiction today. And both of us pressing nonfiction in one episode. I don't even know. I don't even know how long it's been. So mine actually has to do with your family, Meredith, with the fact that you're going to be a grandma soon. So I kept thinking about *Expecting Better* by Emily Oster. This is the book, the one that I press into the hands of my friends that are thinking about starting a family which obviously Meredith is not thinking about starting a family but Devon is just about ready to have her first. I didn't read it until in between my third and fourth pregnancies because it was relatively new and and a dear friend pressed it into my hands. But I so wish I had had it sooner. I felt mostly throughout all four of my pregnancies until that last one like I was floundering around as I tried to make the best decisions for myself, and my family and my babies every time that I was pregnant. Like I knew how to read and do research, but it's overwhelming because you can find for and against evidence for every single thing under the sun. This book is described as *What to Expect When You're Expecting* meets *Freakonomics*. And that's accurate. It's full of graphs and statistics, which y'all know I love. And it will make a data nerds hearts thing. Throughout a pregnancy, any pregnant person and their spouse are buffeted by information regarding what to do and what to avoid. Thankfully, Emily Oster is an economist who really knows how to look at a whole variety of data and distill it into something manageable so that you, pregnant person, can make a fully informed decision for yourself. She does chat about what she decided from each of these different data points and gives you the space to decide differently, with everything that she knows at your fingertips. It can be anything from eating lunch meat, to drinking coffee, to having genetic testing done in utero. But parents are bombarded by these questions each and every day of those nine months. And before and afterwards. So this book really helped me feel prepared, as prepared as I could be, and feel confident in the decisions that I made for me and for my children when they were within my belly. It's *Expecting Better* by Emily Oster.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 59:01

I think this book is the perfect book to give as the congratulations when you first get that news from someone. Hand them this book for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 59:09

Yes, although I even like there's stuff about getting pregnant. That's really useful in here as well. So, I mean, even if you're in the midst of infertility, or you know, you just got married, and you're like, I don't know, maybe someday we're going to have a baby. It's a great thing to have on hand just so you can read those first few chapters, and then know that it's there for you whenever you're ready for the rest of them. I just I love it. I love it. It's so data nerdy. It's ridiculous, and I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 59:38

There's something about January to that, I think speaks to productivity and data and all of that. So I'm glad that we brought some nonfiction. We need more of that on the press list.

Kaytee Cobb 59:47

I think so too. It was a good call on both our parts.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 59:51

Alright, 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 59:59

and you can Find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:00:03

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.

Kaytee Cobb 1:00:13

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:00:20

And if you really want to help us become a bookish friend for just \$5 a month. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things help us find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 1:00:34

Bookish friends are the best friends y'all All those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:00:40

All right, until next week, to quote bookish friend Rachel Haney, "May your coffee be hot and your book unputdownable." Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 1:00:48

Happy reading Meredith.