



Season 4, Episode 44: Book Hypnotism + Family Vacation Book Club

Mon, 6/20 • 48:45

Kaytee Cobb 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 already know, we do not shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Mary Heim 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 press books into your hands.

Kaytee Cobb 00:33

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and it is hot outside, so I'm reading hot books.

Mary Heim 00:39

And I'm Mary Heim, a working mom of one and there is nothing I love more than checking books off of my personal summer reading list. This is episode number 44 of season four and we are so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:53

Oh, you can tell we are getting toward the end of the season because we are all about summer vibes today Mary.

Mary Heim 00:58

All the summer vibes. Get me in that hammock, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 01:02

Yes, hammock time, please and thank you. Alright, folks, I want to let you know right at the top here that today for our deep dive we are going to give some options for families that vacation together that might want to do a book club. So we've had a lot of fun brainstorming about this. I'm excited to get into it. But first we'll get started the way we always do, which is with our bookish moments of the week. Mary, what have you got for us?

Mary Heim 01:27

All right, Kaytee. So I really love this phase of picture book reading that we are in with my kiddo. But I am sure this is no news to any parent, any caregiver, anyone who is reading books to littles... for sure the library can sometimes be a little bit hit or miss, right? There's so many books, you really never know what you're gonna get, especially if you have a three year old grabbing books off the shelf. So I love getting recommendations on really good picture books from fellow parents and caregivers. And I decided, hey, I want to talk about the picture books that we are loving too and really share those ones that have been big hits for us. So I started a Bookstagram account a very niche Bookstagram account, just for our picture books. It's at @teenybookshelf, just for what Charlotte is currently absolutely devouring the books that she is asking us to read over and over and over and over again until we bring them back to the library. And it has been so much fun. I just kind of quietly thought this would be a good place to just track and record her library picture books. Maybe somewhere that we could recall when we're back at the library. Hey, what do we want to check out again, but it has turned into something that's been a really fun little creative outlet for me. It's been fun kind of exploring these other very niche corners of Bookstagram where there are tons of great other accounts that I hadn't necessarily been following for my own personal reading. And it's just been so much fun. I love getting recommendations from others. I will say that my freshly three year old still doesn't have the biggest opinions yet on what we checked out from the library. So take this with a grain of salt if your kiddos are a little bit older, but it has been a really fun way to track Charlottes reads, track those books from the library that have been hits, put other books on our holds list for us to pick up next time we're there. It's a blast. I've had a lot of fun with it.

Kaytee Cobb 03:14

I love that and we all need great picture book recommendations. I still read picture books to all my kids and my oldest is almost 12. So that account will continue to be useful long after Charlotte is no longer teeny.

Mary Heim 03:28

I love that. Yes, until she it's far from a teeny bookshelf. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 03:31

Yes. The not so teeny bookshelf. No.

Mary Heim 03:34

What about you, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 03:35

Okay, my bookish moment this week has to be the bookish friends gathering that I hosted at my house this past weekend. I had just four people join me this time and all of them were from Albuquerque. Not everyone that lives in town was able to make it because we know how summer schedules can get. There was traveling, there was sickness, etc. But we've already got another one on the books for July. And I'm super hopeful that we can follow in Meredith's footsteps and create a New Mexico bookish friends lit society thing, where we get together on a regular basis to talk books and book swap and maybe visit bookstores because that's my other favorite thing. It brings me so much joy to be in the

world with other readers. And to get to have those conversations in person I know a lot of us have had so many online friendships really blossom over the past two years. But to stand face to face with someone is just a completely different experience. And I really want to encourage anyone that's like, you know, maybe summer is the time that I can finally meet my neighbors or start a book club at my church or whatever it is. Maybe it is like try and make those in person connections because they are so life giving, especially for those extrovert and I had to be my book shaman. I loved it.

Mary Heim 04:48

I love that so much and you're reminding me that y'all have inspired me to do the same thing up here in the Midwest, which got a little derailed last summer but I think this might be the summer we're gonna go for it. So you just put me into action. into Kaytee for our bookish friends up here in the Milwaukee area. I love it. That's so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 05:05

Okay, those are great bookish moments. Let's get into some current reads Mary, what have you been reading lately?

Mary Heim 05:09

Okay, Kaytee, I have been chomping at the bit. I am like so excited to share this one. I was nervous that someone else was going to share it on the podcast before I got to it because I just want to gush about this book. It is Mary Jane by Jessica Anya Blau. So I will say Kaytee I had medium hopes for this book. It was recommended by a very trusted source and I thought I think I'm probably going to like this you know, sure, coming of age, sounds light and summery. Why not? But it's not typically my bookish catnip. So my expectations were kind of tempered. However, I loved this book. I loved it. Okay, so here's the setup. Mary Jane is a 14 year old sweet as pie church singer, showtunes lover and rule abider growing up in 1970s Baltimore in a very straight laced family. She gets the chance to be a summer nanny for a local doctor and his wife which of course thrills her kind of conservative traditional mother. Mary Jane, however, soon figures out that this family may look respectable on the outside, but they are about as bohemian and opposite to her home as you could possibly get. The father a psychiatrist has cleared out his entire schedule for the summer to help one client, a prolific rockstar recover from substance abuse. This rockstar and his wife this beloved high profile actress, move into their home for the summer and just turn Mary Jane's world upside down. Now Kaytee, as a therapist myself, were there some ethical red flags as I read this? Sure.

Kaytee Cobb 06:41

I was wondering a little bit

Mary Heim 06:43

Did I choose to ignore them because fiction, and just enjoy the ride that this story took me on? Also yes. Reading the story just felt like being a fly on the wall in the best way possible. Watching this motley crew of found family navigate this strange and really lovely summer together under such unusual circumstances, the characters just came to life and they filled my heart, filled my consciousness. I just wanted every waking second to be listening to this book. And it is really great on audio. It is really well performed. It is the perfect under hyped summer jam. It's character driven, but it's not meandering. It

was just like living in this 1970s sepia toned beach cabana just soaking up this gem of a story. I loved it so much. I'm going to be so book bossy and tell everybody to put it on your holds list this summer. That was Mary Jane by Jessica Anya Blau.

Kaytee Cobb 07:38

Interesting, Mary. I have seen that book around. I have seen other people talk about it heard other people talk about it, and not been interested in picking it up until now. What did you just do to me? I don't understand. Was there some hypnotism that just happened here?

Mary Heim 07:52

Just some bookish magic, I think. I mean, this one is a hard one to categorize, because it's kind of slice of life, but not really, there is plot happening, but it's not really about the plot. I don't think it's been marketed super well, but I also don't have an answer for how I would market it differently. But I definitely would not have picked it up unless I had had someone say you have to read this. And I am so glad that I did. So I think if that's also been you too, our listeners, if you were like "yeah, whatever I saw this, it doesn't really look up my alley." I would challenge you to give it a shot anyways, because it's a really lovely. Fairly low stakes. Nothing huge and terrible and triggering happens. Like it's a great summer read. It's a really great summer read with some substance.

Kaytee Cobb 08:39

Excellent. I do also want to point out your amazing use of Motley Crue when you're talking about rock stars in this book, a gold star to you my friend.

Mary Heim 08:48

Thank you very much. All right, what have you got Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 08:50

Okay, my first book this week is weird. I finished it and I thought I didn't really like it. But then as sometimes happens, I kept thinking about it. It's A History of Wild Places by Shea Earnshaw. Have you read this one Mary?

Mary Heim 09:05

I haven't read it, but it's been on my radar, and I'm very curious to hear what you thought about it.

Kaytee Cobb 09:10

It's weird. It's weird, but okay, it got onto my radar from our beloved Laura Tremaine. We are not booked twins, but I do keep careful eyes on what she's been reading. Because we have some interesting overlap. And the places that we do connect are really strong. So I like to, you know, keep track of those. And this is one of those overlap books. Here's the setup. First, we meet Travis Wren, who has an unusual talent for locating missing people. When he touches an object that that person has touched. He's able to essentially trace them, but families only hire him as a last resort. The police have failed. Nobody knows where my loved one is. Here's her hairbrush, etc. Right? When he takes on the case of Maggie St. James, a well known author of dark macabre children's books, he's led deep into the woods where he finds a community called Pastoral. It was founded in the 1970s, like many of these

off grid communities are by like minded people searching for a simpler way of life, right? "The world is getting too hectic. Let's let's go off grid and be our own people." By all accounts this commune should not exist anymore. And soon after Travis stumbles upon it, he disappears, just like Maggie St. James. Years later, we come upon Theo, a lifelong member of Pastoral. He's patrolling the border. That's his regular job, right. And he's been pushing the limits a little bit. In doing so he discovers Travis's truck, abandoned beyond the border of the community. No one's allowed in or out, though. Not when there's a risk of bringing a disease that they call "rot" into Pastoral and it's like, it's like kind of zombie-ish. It like eats people from the inside out, and it's making the tree split open and like run sap down their, down their bark. It's, it's kind of a creepy little weird thing happening on the side here. Unraveling the mystery of what happened reveals secrets that Theo, his wife, Kayla and her sister Bea keep from one another, secrets that prove that their perfect, isolated world isn't as safe as they believe and that darkness takes many more forms than they previously suspected. This book kept me guessing the whole way through, I thought I knew where the story was going. And then I got mad at it. And then my brain exploded a little bit. This was all part of the plan. Shea Earnshaw really takes her readers on a journey here. And this book ended up really getting under my skin, like the "rot" that's inside here, but not in a creepy, gross way. Nobody has to bury me underground to make sure I'm going to be okay. I do not recommend that the audio here because one of the narrators really got on my nerves. It kind of felt like she was whispering the entire time that she was doing her narration even though that wasn't, you know, like, she's not supposed to be talking under her breath. It's just the timbre of her voice. But it is a full cast. So she's only part of the narration. So you can you know, you can like a grin and bear it or grit your teeth through it. If you can listen to everything except her chapters, and then pick up the book and read those ones. That would be perfect. Overall, I found this to be really interesting and compelling if you're willing to let the author take you where she wants to go. But you have to be willing to kind of let go and say, okay, Shea Earnshaw. I guess like, let's give it a try. I like I had the entire gamut of emotions from eye rolls to head explosions, to like, happy feels at the end. I really enjoyed it. But it surprised me on almost every level. It's A History of Wild Places by Shea Earnshaw.

Mary Heim 12:34

Kaytee, I truly cannot decide if you just totally sold me on that book, or totally sold me away from it. But I feel like I'm gonna have to sit with that for a while. Maybe I'll pick it up from the library and give it a couple of pages and see. It sounds really compelling. But also Yeah. Oh, maybe a little weird.

Kaytee Cobb 12:49

It has that like missing person mystery at the core of it. That's really interesting. And the children's book, there's like chunks of the children's book, interlaced through the narrative that I really liked. Because then you're like, "Wait, does this have to do with the story? Or are we just learning about it? What's going on?" It's really good.

Mary Heim 13:05

Fascinating. Interesting. All right. Well, I'm gonna take us in a completely opposite direction. We're just going to jet off into the sunset. So Kaytee, my next book today is When You Get the Chance by Emma Lord. Now, this is why, this is a love story to all of my fellow former theater kids and current theater kids. Just if you have a little bit of sparkle in your soul, this book is for you. Our main character Millie Price is a drama queen. Literally. Millie has loved the theater since she was born. She was raised by her very

not dramatic, very pragmatic, single dad. And there's one piece of her life that has always felt missing, which is not knowing her mom. That's right friends, we have got a gender swapped Mamma Mia on our hands, just all sorts of exclamation points for this one in my soul. So Millie knows a few clues about her mom from her dad's, angsty 2003 Live Journal that she stumbled upon. Which let's talk for a second about really relating to the parents in a YA book over the characters? I was like, Oh, yes. Are we old now? I am a real adult. I am. I see myself in the parents. Please let my Live Journal rest in peace. Let no one ever discover it ever find it.

Kaytee Cobb 14:23

Let it die on the internet.

Mary Heim 14:25

Yes, buried, buried buried. So we've got that really fun aspect but her dad has never really said too much to her. Right? She's only discovering it via this very third party way. Millie gathers as many clues as she possibly can find from this Live Journal, and she sets off to find her mom. Kaytee I don't want to give more than that. Because this story is just effervescent. Millie has plenty of teen angst for sure. This is YA but her journey to find her mom is really hilarious and heartwarming. It is punctuated with showtunes and big theatrical moments, but it's also really real and grounded and it really puts you in the place of what must it be like to be this girl who feels not quite at home in her skin like a piece of her story has always been missing. And it's really genuine and authentic and so much fun. It is nerdy teenage love and self discovery just wrapped up in one big sparkly hug. I loved it so much. That is When You Get the Chance by Emma Lord.

Kaytee Cobb 15:26

So fun. So I read her, I think it was her first one Tweet Cute, which I adored and has lots of You've got Mail vibes. So I love that there's another kind of tie in with a beloved film slash musical here.

Mary Heim 15:41

And I've never read Tweet Cute, but it is on my radar now after loving this one so much.

Kaytee Cobb 15:45

Did you read her other one? You Have a Match?

Mary Heim 15:50

No, this was my first Emma Lord. But I would say a really nice foray.

Kaytee Cobb 15:54

us to put into our in our in our basket. Absolutely. Okay, my second one by happenstance is also YA so we're gonna go with this little flight that we have here. It's called Last Night at the Telegraph Club by Malinda Lo. This one came recommended to me by our amazing Megan who keeps the podcast running behind the scenes. She and I got to bookstore shop when she visited Santa Fe in February. And I picked this one up after her heartfelt recommendation. It was the perfect book for AAPI Heritage Month. And now it's the perfect book for Pride Month. So you can read it any month of the year apparently. Here's the setup. 17 year old Lily who hasn't fit in for as long as she can remember, there's

a question bubbling up inside her and she can't remember exactly when it took root. But the answer is in full bloom the moment she and Kathleen Miller walk under the flashing neon sign of a lesbian bar called The Telegraph Club. America in 1954 is not a safe place for two girls to fall in love. Especially not in Chinatown in San Francisco. Red Scare paranoia threatens everyone including Chinese Americans like Lily with deportation looming over her father despite his hard won citizenship, Lily and Kath risked everything to let their love see the light of day. That's the very brief setup. This is YA sapphic romance YA so very, very closed door like quiet romance right? Mixed in with historical fiction. I actually couldn't tell you if I would rather shelve it in the historical fiction section of the store or the romance section of the store. San Francisco in 1954 jumps fully off these pages and you're pulled into the story with abandon. Lily and Kath are late teens, so not 14 year olds, they're definitely a little older than that, that have been forced to grow up more quickly because of the way that they are not accepted by their families and their communities. There's definitely some teen angst on these pages, but you aren't going to drown in it. Instead, I found myself rooting for Lily especially as she navigates the tricky waters of being a first generation Chinese American during the Red Scare, mixed with not living up to her parents own expectations on a number of levels with regard to school career choices, etc. Pick this one up if you're over world war two historical fiction bandwagon, but you still like to travel back to the past. And if you love a building's Roman story about family and found family, this coming of age novel hit me in all fields and I'm so glad that Megan pressed it into my hands in person, which is the best way to press something into somebody's hands. It's Last Night at the Telegraph Club by Malinda Lo

Mary Heim 18:28

We love a Megan recommendation. I love that so much. And I think Megan just virtually pressed that into my hands via your descriptor because that sounds really lovely. Not as good as an in person press but close. Close.

Kaytee Cobb 18:41

Close. All right. What's your third book Mary?

Mary Heim 18:43

All right, Kaytee, my third book today is A Day Like This by Kelley McNeil. Now Kaytee I'm calling it "if Dark Matter and What Alice Forgot had a baby." I think it would be this book. So here's the setup. Annie Beyers has everything she's ever wanted: a beautiful daughter, a loving husband, a beautiful life and an old farmhouse out in the country. It's just a normal average day when she takes her daughter Hannah to the pediatrician and gets into a car accident. When she wakes up in the hospital hours later and asks for her daughter. her doctors are confused. Hannah has never existed. Suddenly, everything about her life is turned on its head. Her estranged sister is now her best friend. Her marriage has ended. She's a successful artist instead of a stay at home parent living in Manhattan, far away from this farmhouse in the country. Annie begins down the path of figuring out if her life from before the accident ever even existed and uncover some truths about her history that she did not expect to find. Now Kaytee, I will admit that I expected this to be maybe just total popcorn at best, right? But this was plot forward. It was well written. It totally captivated me to the very end. Is this the best book I'm gonna read all year? No, but it was exactly the book I needed to read at exactly the right time and I am absolutely out bring it to my stack to recommend for busting out of a reading slump. I would know if you don't love your books tied up neatly in a bow at the end either avoid this one or no going in that it's going to be pretty neatly

tied up. But instead of finding that a little bit annoying, I just found it a really satisfying way to wrap up the story. And I think that this is going to be a really fun one to throw in a beach bag or to grab on a weekend when you just need a bookish palate cleanser. That was *A Day Like This* by Kelley McNeil.

Kaytee Cobb 20:28

That's so fun. I had never heard of this. I looked it up while you were talking. It came out in November of 2021. And like why, why is nobody talking about this? Where did you find this?

Mary Heim 20:38

Super under the radar, a friend of mine on Instagram who is not necessarily in the Bookstagram community just shared that it was one that she really enjoyed. And I was like yeah, that sounds like my kind of book. So definitely it has not permeated the the Bookstagram or kind of the very bookish world I don't think but I really do think a lot of our listeners or bookish friends would really enjoy this one.

Kaytee Cobb 21:00

Excellent. I love that Mary. I'm so glad that you brought it to the show too like hi *Dark Matter* mixed with *What Alice Forgot*? Those are like serious buzzwords for me.

Mary Heim 21:08

That's my catnip right there. Loved it.

Kaytee Cobb 21:11

Okay, my third book has my catnip all over it. I'm like rubbing my face against this book. Picture me doing so. It's *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt. Oh my happy sighs I love this book so much. This was a fantastic pick from one of our fan favorite Indie Press List stores, *An Unlikely Story* in Plainville, Massachusetts. One of our favorite booksellers, Emily Crowe pressed this one into our hands and I could not be more grateful. Let me introduce you to Marcellus. He is a Giant Pacific Octopus in the twilight of his life and one of the star attractions at the Seoul Bay Aquarium. That's where he meets Tova Sullivan, who picked up a night shift there mopping floors to keep the place tidy. She likes to stay busy because it helps her cope with the loss of her son over 30 years ago and the recent loss of her husband. Side note here we are not dwelling in the loss of her husband. That can be really tough for some readers, we just know that he recently passed away. That is not like a big trauma point in this book at all. Tova already knew Marcellus was smart because she's been cleaning around his tank. She talks to him every time that she comes by the tanks. But when she finds him wandering the break room one night and helps him back to his tank, they are bonded. They care for each other in the way that only an octopus and an octogenarian can. Marcellus uses his amazing brain and his eight arms to make observations and connections that the rest of us would so easily overlook. Those connections become even more important when Tova breaks her foot, and Cameron shows up to temporarily help at the aquarium in her stead. He is a mess, Cameron like he really needs a head slap so many times during this book. Every reader I've talked to who was even a little bit on the fence about this one. It comes down to Cameron and his behavior and his plotline. Stick with it. Even when you want to throw the book I promise it'll pay off in the end. This book has everything I love in it. Everything. And the cover minus the infuriating read with Jenna sticker stuck right on Marcellus's face gives me all the heart eyes. I'm leading a buddy read discussion of it next week for our bookish friends and I cannot wait to delve

into the way that this debut novelist put together such a wonderful story. This book is absolutely going on my forever favorite shelf. An Unlikely Story just sent me a signed copy from the author because they knew that I would love this one. I hope you all love it as well. It is a oh my goodness. It's just everything. I loved it so much. You've got curmudgeons found family, an octopus. I love octopuses as we know. Everything about it is fantastic. It's Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt.

Kaytee Cobb 21:23

I love that. Kaytee, if you were a book, you would be that book.

Kaytee Cobb 23:49

A little old lady and an elderly octopus making friends and changing lives and a 30 year old that's kind of a dumpster fire.

Mary Heim 24:02

I love it. And only our readers and listeners and bookish friends know what a compliment that is to compare you to an octopus and a dumpster fire or whatever words you just used. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 24:14

Perfect. Okay, well, those were six great books. I'm very pleased with the selection that we had today. And now we get to get into this deep dive that when we were planning this, Mary, we were like, Okay, well, what should we deep dive on this week? And this one. Once I threw it out there you were like, Oh, yes, let's do it. So I'm very excited to see what percolated out once we started talking about family vacation book clubs. This was a suggestion from a listener. She's at @bookliz on Instagram. She wanted to know if we had suggestions for books for adult family members to talk about on vacation. This would be like a vacation book club is what she said. And I got so excited about this book because I love the idea of being like, "Hey, we're all going on a family vacation. then, you know, next month, what about we all pick up this book and one night we'll spend hanging out playing games and then we'll get into this book a little bit and we'll turn it into a family that reads together". Have you ever done anything like this, Mary?

Mary Heim 25:13

No, I haven't Kaytee but I have to tell you, as I was prepping this episode, I was like, we're doing this, I want to do this. This was so much fun coming up with these ideas. And I was like, I'm gonna be that family member that forces my family to read a book together and then put us on vacation so that we can talk about it. I love this idea. I have heard of others doing it. And I'm gonna manifest that reality into my life. And I'm gonna make it happen for my family. I love it. So you, you haven't either? This is totally dreamworld to both of us.

Kaytee Cobb 25:44

No and now I'm kind of mad that we just did this prep this weekend, because I have a big family vacation coming up in two weeks. And I don't think that's enough time to get it going in, like within that period of time, but I wish I had thought about it in February or something, you know, so I could have gotten this on the radar.

Mary Heim 26:00

I love it. Next year.

Kaytee Cobb 26:02

Yes. Next year. That's the plan. Okay. So overall, I'm calling this the family that reads together. But the way that I formatted my little categories for this for this deep dive is "the family that" and then all these different.

Mary Heim 26:16

Me too. And we did not plan it. My you know, one can see but I'm making some big facial expressions right now. Over excitement that Kaytee we were just vibing together on this page.

Kaytee Cobb 26:27

I love it. Okay, so what's your first "family that" Mary?

Mary Heim 26:31

Okay, my first family is the family that wants to solve a mystery together. So I thought this would be a really fun category to dig into. And maybe it's even, you know, you have a family group chat going before you get to your vacation so that you can text each other theories about who done it, right. I'm totally envisioning. So a couple that I thought would fit really well into this category, the first of course, being a recent Meredith book, *The Appeal* by Janice Hallett. I won't rehash too much than she just brought it but it would be a super interesting one to read together kind of a different take on an epistolary novel, told solely in emails and case briefs, I think it would be really fun to pick apart and read at the same time as family members. Another one that I thought could be cool and maybe would kind of bleed into it would take this theme into maybe a year long Family Book Club is *Eight Perfect Murders* by Peter Swanson. So within that book, we're rehashing his right he's got this list of, you know, murder mysteries, eight books with A perfect murder mystery in it and really references those books as he goes through seeing those murders play out in real life inspired by the books. So that could be a good one to read with your family and then build your further reading list. Even as you're far away across the country, wherever you are. A really good classic OG who done it locked room would be *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie. I think that this is a really like, I mean, a classic and original in the genre, and I think a great one that could appeal to so many readers. And then my last one in this category, Kaytee is maybe a little bit of a left turn, because it's not a traditional murder mystery, but I'm including it here because it's so unputdownable is *11/22/63* by Stephen King. It is my first and only Stephen King. But I think it would easily appeal to so many readers. It's massive. It's It's humongous. But if you so if you have slower readers in your family, maybe assign this like Kaytee said in February, but it goes down so easily. I think a whole family would really love reading and speculating about this story about what might have happened if JFK hadn't been assassinated, maybe really appeal to family members who were you know, fully blown adults in the 60s and can really remember this time period. It is really, really great. And not necessarily. I always associated Stephen King with horror, that's not this book. I think this is one that a whole family could really enjoy and dig into. So that's my first category. Kaytee, what about you?

Kaytee Cobb 29:07

You know, what would be really fun about that is you could then do a pairing after you have your discussion. And you can watch the miniseries on Hulu as a family.

Mary Heim 29:15

Yeah, and I love that. That's so good.

Kaytee Cobb 29:17

So yeah, that would be fun. Okay, so mystery adjacent, I had the family that doesn't mind breaking their brains together. And again, I'm starting with a Meredith rec here, *The Anomaly* by Herve Le Tellier. She just brought this one recently as well. There is so much to unpack in here, so much to kind of wrap your head around and I am recommending it to book clubs everywhere, basically like anybody that wants to get together and talk about and peel apart a book with other readers. She told us that this book was like mashing together two of her favorite books together. And I think it's a great way to really get into some of the nuances of the storyline if you have a big group of readers from a whole variety of different places that they live and backgrounds and get into this one. The other one that I'm going to put on that list it comes out in July but you could definitely do it then is *Upgraded* by Blake Crouch, which is his newest one. So much brain breaking there, so much to discuss. For me in New Mexico, I will say it was very, very strong sense of place that I love. And I was telling my husband, you have to read this one. It's so good. But you could also do *Dark Matter* if a brand new release is not on the table for you guys. So breaking your brains solving a mystery all those things kind of go together. What is your next category Mary?

Mary Heim 30:34

All right, Kaytee, my next category and this is one that I would really like to manifest into existence because it sounds so much fun is the family who wants to harness their inner Food Network host together, and maybe even cook a few bookish recipes together, right? I'm envisioning this family reading foodie memoirs or foodie books, and then getting into the kitchen and having a chopped style family dinner and I just want to invite myself onto that vacation. It sounds like so much fun. My first, another one I won't rehash too much because you just brought it to the show *Taste* by Stanley Tucci, of course, and maybe even encourage your family to listen to it so that you can have Stanley Tucci narrating that beautiful bookish story has beautiful bookish and foodie stories into your ears. One that I love and have brought to the show before *A Homemade Life* by Molly Wizenberg. Super backlist, really easy to get from the library, especially if your family wants to kind of explore some familial relationships, while also being inspired to cook some mouthwatering food recipes right in there, just like Stanley Tucci, and my third and other backlist gem *Garlic and Sapphires* by Ruth Reichl, especially if you're in together in a foodie city. Such a good classic, really fun stories about her time kind of undercover eating in restaurants. As a food critic, I think there's so many different ways you could take this category. And like I said, tell me where you go on vacation. I'm coming with I want to do this, sounds like so much fun. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 32:05

This is another one where you're totally vibing on Mary because I had the family that cooks together on vacation and *Taste* was my first choice for that one. And then I actually put *Save Me the Plums* by Ruth

Reichl, which is my favorite by her. And I will add Love and Saffron by Kim Fay, which is short and epistolary, and so fun. And like letters written in the 60s, very strong sense of time and place there. Lots of food references, really strong like family feels in that book. And I think it would be great to read with the family and there are some recipes in there that you could get very excited about.

Mary Heim 32:40

Yes. And who doesn't love like all of these books I think are going to appeal to every reader. I love it who doesn't want to read about good food? Okay, Kaytee my next category is the family that wants to grow together. Now, I my first one in this category, it was another one that I would just love to envision a family working through together is The Road Back to You by Ian Morgan Cron on the Enneagram. How much fun would it be to all read and figure out your types, really talk through it with loved ones who know you well and kind of process what that means for you and within your family? Obviously, I think this family might need to have a little bit of a reflective bent to their to their reading, but I think that could be really fun. Another great one Gumption by Nick Offerman. Each chapter is kind of about a different person in history who embodies gumption. I think it could be maybe really fun if your family doesn't want to read a whole book, maybe assign everyone a chapter. And then you know, present to the rest of the... Yeah. Like how those PowerPoint parties were really popular for a while that you can present on your your gumption character, your person from history to the rest of the crew. And of course, you know, to really round it out if your families are really ready to dig in. I think Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson could be a great gateway into conversations about the justice system, you know, reform racial justice. And I think it's both right for conversation and also that really accessible path into having those conversations about that topic with family members who are maybe a little new, or maybe a little reluctant to go there. A really excellent, one of those books that everybody I think should read anyways. So that's my family who wants to grow together.

Kaytee Cobb 34:22

I did have a family that learns random stuff together, which my books would probably fit into your category as well. I'll just have Megan put those in the show notes because I want to talk about the family that wants to include younger kids in their vacation book club and not make the adults bored. So I have a few middle grade picks here that I think appeal to adults and grandparents everyone on this entire spectrum of who might be reading together. So the first one I want to put on this list of course is Nevermoor by Jessica Townsend, which we love here at Currently Reading there are three books in the series. So this is a great gateway book as well not in the Just Mercy style, but in the style of it. If somebody really loves this book, they don't have to stop at book one, they can keep going. This planned a nine book series. So three are out now. And you can just keep diving in over and over again and getting even more of Morrigan Crow and your life. The next one is one that I recently led a buddy read on and people who don't usually read middle grade and said, I think this would be a great gateway middle grade book, it's The War that Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, which I adore. It's one of the few books that I've reread and loved just as much, if not more, the second time. And finally, The Last Quintist by Donna Barbra Higuera is a fantastic middle grade book, recently won an award for being just like so accessible. I just pressed it into my 11 year old hands so it's perfect for that age, all the way up. There's space, there's colonization of new worlds and everyone is going to be excited to read this book and to get into the story. So I think all three of those would be perfect for if you want to include your, you know, next generation down in your family book club.

Mary Heim 36:01

I love that what a great category. I didn't go there, but I wish I had because I feel like, Man, there are so many great middle grades that could fit into that category. I love it. All right, well, maybe on the opposite end of the spectrum, or at least the opposite end of the generation. I've got the family who fancies themselves Oprah's book club. And I've I've only got two choices within this category. But both of these were five star reads for me. The first is *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich. Now, I know it's a little divisive, but I think this one could be a great, great, great book to read with your family. I buddy read it with my sister. And I think it is just right for discussion. It's the kind of book you need to read with a friend or a family member to process and talk about together. And my next book in this category, a little bit of a cheat because it doesn't release in July. So it's maybe for your later vacations. But it is *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin. This one is sweeping and captivating and I just found myself wanting to talk to someone about it. The whole time I read it centers around video games, but it is not a video game book. I've maybe played 25 minutes of a video game in my whole life. And I still really loved it. So that is not a prerequisite to sharing this one with your family. But it's going to be another one of those rare books that I think appeals to so many readers, it really tells a story across almost an entire lifetime. It is joyful. It is interesting. It's beautifully written it is heartbreaking. I think it's going to want to maybe even be one that everybody just wants to sit side by side and read together on your beach chairs and just fall into the story with each other and hold each other's hands when you want to cry and laugh together. And, man, I wish I really had someone to emote with as I read this story. So I think it would be perfect for a summer family book club for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 37:46

And I'm just a little ways into it right now. So I'm gonna have to report back to you when I get a little more into it. Because right now I'm like, I wonder why this is getting so much buzz.

Mary Heim 37:56

I will say and this is not what this is about but Kaytee, I had to read maybe about half or 60% of it and then set it down. Because it is really long. You don't really see the whole threads of it come together until the end. But I set it down at 50% came back and then read the second half in a day or two. It will come together. I'll be really curious to hear what you think.

Kaytee Cobb 38:19

"Okay, okay, that's good. That's good to know, for everyone. But for me right now reading it, I definitely need it. Yeah, I'm going to add two more to your Oprah's book club. I had the family that has three or more generations reading together, which sounds similar. But I was thinking like, you know, adult children, parents and grandparents all reading together. And for both of those. I have *Memphis* by Tara M Stringfellow, which could totally be on Oprah's book club selection and *Don't Cry for Me* by Daniel Black. Both of these books, one has kind of two male characters at the center, and the other one has multiple female characters at the center of the story. And both of them, you get to see a generational divide and a generational coming together. And they would both be great to have multiple generations talking about "Well, here's how I saw it from my, you know, 70 and 80 year old point of view versus you at 50 and you at 30 and here's how we all processed this book differently." I think it would make great conversation.

Mary Heim 39:13

I love that. Oh, that I think those two categories totally go hand in hand. I love it. All right, Kaytee, my last category is the family that's on a nature vacation together, a family that's gonna go take a hike on their vacation, my first book classic, *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson. Really, truly the ultimate classic nature and adventure novel. It's dry and funny, with great sense of place that I totally think would appeal across generations. It's a book that I bought for my dad because I knew he would love it and I loved it just as much. Another one in this category, another Nick Offerman *Where the Deer and the Antelope Play* telling the story, yes, he and his friend on this hiking trip really getting back into nature with his kind of signature voice and storytelling. I think everybody would love that one. And you know if you want to get a little more contemplative my last one rounding out this category is *Upstream* by Mary Oliver, really fantastic, poetic kind of meditation on nature together while you're out in the thick of it. This one's more sad than Mary Oliver poems, but it still has her signature gorgeous prose reflections on the natural world. And I think would be really nice to read on a very nature focused vacation, I want to pack it for a camping trip and just read it out in the woods. For sure. So that's my, my final category. What about you, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 40:33

Okay, well, I'm gonna add two more to that one. And there for the little bit creepier, mountainy forest people and I'm going to add *Devolution* by Max Brooks. And the one that I just talked about earlier *History of Wild Places* by Shea Earnshaw would fit great in that category. But I do have one more category that I want to bring today. And it's the couple's vacation book club with spicy times in bed. So this would be either a childless couple, or people that you know, want to have a conversation with their adult friends after the kids go to bed. And of course, I'm gonna bring one of Mary's very favorites, *The Bromance Book Club* by Alyssa Kay Adams, to this category, as well as the *Unhoneymooners* by Christina Lauren. These are both pretty spicy books, I do think that they would make for really great vacation memories is what I'm going to call that. Yep, that's sort of shy away from any further description on that you can hear us talk about all these books, of course on other episodes of the podcast, use the show notes to go back in time and search on the website. But I think we have some really great ideas here for people, Mary.

Mary Heim 41:40

I think so too. And Kaytee, I think maybe we have a new career path in front of us... of travel agents, but we only plan your books, but we will do a really good job of it.

Kaytee Cobb 41:53

I like it. Yes, let's do it. Yeah, like a bookish matchmaking travel itinerary.

Mary Heim 41:59

Yeah, no dream job unlocked. Who knew? I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 42:04

Definitely contact Mary and I if you need any recommendations for your vacation book club. We've got you covered.

Mary Heim 42:09

We are for hire. We get paid in books.

Kaytee Cobb 42:12

Great. Love it. And words of affirmation.

Mary Heim 42:15

Yes, absolutely.

Kaytee Cobb 42:17

Okay, let's press some books into our friends hands. Mary, what are you gonna press today?

Mary Heim 42:22

All right, Kaytee. Now, this is a book that I know so many of our readers have read already. So many of our bookish friends probably even recognize it from the Indie Press List not too long ago. I am calling it. This is going to be a top 10 Book of the Year for me for sure. This is *All My Rage* by Sabaa Tahir. Now, you know I love this one Kaytee. You have heard me just wax poetic so much on how much I loved it. But it is cemented in my heart and I knew it had to make it to this to our press list. So here's the setup. Our protagonist Salahudin and Noor have been best friends since the first moment they met as children. Growing up together as outcasts in the small desert town of Juniper California, they understand each other in a way that nobody else does, until one day when an epic fight breaks both their bond and their worlds apart. In the aftermath, Sal scrambles to run the family motel as his mother Misbah's health is failing, and his grieving father loses himself to alcoholism. Noor, meanwhile, is struggling to keep herself afloat, working at her abusive uncle's liquor store while hiding the fact that she's applying for college so that she can escape him and their small oppressive hometown forever. When things start to spiral out of control, both Sal and Noor are forced to make impossible choices just to keep themselves on their path out of Juniper. It's written in contrast with his mother's journey as a young bride in Pakistan juxtaposed with current day California. We see this incredibly full picture of a family whose burden has been so great, and the weight of these impossible choices before them. We Kaytee, you and I know so many of our readers know this book is incredible. I am already a fan of Sabaa Tahir. I adore her first books, the *Ember in the Ashes* quartet. And to be frank, when I heard that she was writing a standalone novel, I was a little unsure. I didn't know if I believed it could live up to the *Ember* quartet. With all due respect to that beloved series, this one absolutely knocked my socks off. This book is not a light hearted YA love story. Triggers abound, and they are at times really, really hard to read. Your heart just breaks for these characters. I even had to message our bookish friend Katie Proctor to assure me that there would be some redemption or peace for them at the end. You can find the triggers listed at the beginning of this novel, and I do recommend that you do. But if this is one you think you could handle I highly highly recommend picking it up. The audio in particular is done spectacularly well, and only makes the experience of reading it even more meaningful. That is *All My Rage* by Sabaa Tahir.

Kaytee Cobb 44:54

I will cosign that press. Unfortunately, this is one that I had to like slide out of Mary's stack the last time we recorded. She really wanted to bring it to the show as a current read, but it was just about to be on the Indie Press List. So I'm so glad that you got to bring it today and talk about it.

Mary Heim 45:09

It was perfect timing. I think it just needed to shoot straight to the press our press list anyways, so it worked out perfectly. What have you got for us this week, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 45:18

Okay, for my press this week, I have another great pick for a family to read together on vacation. It's *The Space Between Worlds* by Micaiah Johnson. You are going to capture everyone from older teens to grandparents with this unputdownable diverse multiverse story. And there's so much to discuss in here. I read this one in February of 2021. And I still think often of Cara and Dell and Nick Nick, which is the dumbest name for a character ever, and the worlds that Micaiah Johnson built in this book. Here, let's meet Cara, she is a traveller of the multiverse. You can travel in this world to any world where your counterpart no longer lives for whatever reason, right? Cara lives on earth zero. But she gets into trouble a lot. And that personality trait means for her that she can visit 372 other worlds because she's really good at dying. On our earth, she's a survivor. That's really valuable because now she can travel to 372 other earths. She works at the Eldridge Institute with Dell, her offworld handler and the two women team up to collect data from ports on other earths. And this way, Cara is finally able to claw her way out of poverty and make a life for herself. But of course, there had to be a but, there are only eight Cara's left in the universe. And the trouble starts when one of those remaining Caras dies under mysterious circumstances. Now she has a new planet that she can visit, and it could unravel everything that she thought she knew about the Earth she lives on... because it's sci fi, and that's what happens. I love this book. I loved the setting and the characters and the world building. I loved the way that the plot moves so quickly from one scene to the next. If you want to get even more into this one, I'll point you to *The Hearts and Daggers* Podcast Episode 11, about multiple realities, where our friend Holly at BirdBrainbooks sets it up beautifully. And you can even get a romance multiverse pairing to go with it. I think that would be a great way to again, get your family talking on vacation, hand it to everyone from your 17 year old, up to your 70 year old grandmother. Everyone is going to find something to talk about here. It's *The Space Between Worlds* by Micaiah Johnson.

Mary Heim 47:28

I love it such a good one.

Kaytee Cobb 47:29

So great. Okay, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, and Meredith is at @Meredith.reads.

Mary Heim 47:39

And you can find me Mary at @Maryreadsandsips on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 47:44

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode, and there were a lot of them, and timestamps so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found at our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Mary Heim 47:55

You can also follow the show at [@currentlyreadingpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/currentlyreadingpodcast) on Instagram, or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Kaytee Cobb 48:02

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Mary Heim 48:18

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

Kaytee Cobb 48:25

Until next week. May your coffee be hot

Mary Heim 48:27

and your book be unputdownable

Kaytee Cobb 48:29

Happy reading Mary.

Mary Heim 48:30

Happy reading Kaytee.