



Season 5, Episode 21: A Look Back - Our Favorite Books of 2018

Mon, Dec 19, 2022 • 46:14

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers. Welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chit chat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today, we have a very special episode for you. Surprise!

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:30

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas and I love bookish surprises.

Kaytee Cobb 00:38

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and sometimes a look back helps me to look forward. This is episode number 21 of season five, and we are so glad you're here. Surprise, surprise.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:50

You didn't think you were gonna hear from us this week. But Kaytee, do you want to tell them why we are coming at them with a new episode they were not expecting?

Kaytee Cobb 00:59

Yes, this is a surprise even for us, y'all. We have never done this before. But bookish friend Kristen Clark posted in our Facebook bookish friends group and said, I have an idea. What if we got to revisit some of your top 10 lists from years past. So that got our wheels turning right away. Meredith and I got very excited about it. And we decided we're gonna go even further back than last year, we're gonna go fully back in the time machine all the way to our first year of currently reading. And we are going to re air our 2018, top 10 lists. So we get to revisit those 10 books for each of us, which ends up being a few repeats. And then we're going to come back in and we're going to share a little bit about if we still feel the same way about those books, whether we have any different feels about any of those authors. I'm very excited for this look back.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:50

I know. It is such a great idea to spend one of these weeks doing this because it's an easy thing from a production standpoint. And then Kaytee when you had the idea to do five years ago, because those books are really backlist, now I thought a lot of these I had completely forgotten about truth. So it was just so smart. So we knew that we wanted to do this for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 02:11

Definitely. Okay, so here's a few little things that I want y'all to know ahead of time. Back in 2018, when we started, a lot of you know, I had a tiny baby, you will hear Onalee chime in a few times during this segment. They're just little baby hiccups and noises. It was part of who we were at the time. She recorded with me for almost the entire first season of Currently Reading.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:33

You know what, Kaytee? That was one of my favorite parts about re-listening to this episode, because I had kind of forgotten myself. And I was like, Oh, look, we can hear it. I love it. And that was really true. She was with us for every single episode of that first season. And I miss her to this day. And now she would be totally happy to be on the mic with us, which would be a really nice full circle moment.

Kaytee Cobb 02:54

Yeah, but she would have a lot more to say. And she would be very upset if anybody else had any talking to do right. Also, because this is our new final episode of 2022, as a surprise, I just wanted to take one quick second and say thank you to everyone who jumped in as a Patron supporter this past week and got us over our goal of 2022 patrons in 2022. We really get to do a real time update on this because of our episode timeline. There's a 10 day lag between when we record and when we air the episode. But since this one has a quick turnaround, we got to count down in real time this past week and see that number get past our goal. And it was very exciting. And we were celebrating all week long.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:35

So exciting. I'm so happy that people joined us for the tracker. And as we said, totally great if that's all you do. But we, I am hoping that they'll at least give one of the extra pieces of content a try, because I think that they might like it. But we are so happy for all of our listeners, whether you're part of the bookish Patreon community or not, we're just glad you're here. And I think you're really going to enjoy this look back to 2018.

Kaytee Cobb 03:59

Certainly. Okay, let's take a quick trip down memory lane. When we finish this top 10 segment, we will chime back in reflect a wee bit. And then we will sign off until the new year. Now we are going to get into our deep dive for this episode, which is something that all of our listeners had been asking for. They want to know our favorite books of 2018. So we're each going to talk about nine books from 2018. And then our 10th book will be the ones that we're going to press into your hands this week reader so you're going to hear nine books from each of us and Meredith, do you want to just go back and forth on this?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:33

Yeah, so let's just go back and forth. We're gonna make this you know, we're gonna do this quicker, because obviously we would be here for hours and hours and hours if we did the full treatment. And several of these are ones that at least for me, I don't know what's exactly on your list, but several of these for me are ones that I have already talked about in previous episodes. So what I should point out to listeners if you're ever interested, you can always do a search on the desktop version of our website and you can very easily get a list of any and all episodes where the different books have been discussed. And then of course, you can go to the show notes, which gives you timestamps. So you can very quickly and easily access a deeper dive on these titles if we don't go into a lot of detail. But so for me, my first one was actually the book that I press into readers hands for the very first time on our very first episode. And this is a book that I read in 2018. But is absolutely now on my top five list of books I read in my lifetime. And that is *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell and I love this book so much. I am so grateful that I heard about it on another podcast, it was mentioned as a book that that particular person didn't like. But I am so glad that I recognized there were some themes that I would like I it's often described as Jesuits in space, which is what it is. But oh my gosh, this book defies description. And I want to press it into people's hands and just say, just don't worry about what it's about. Just start reading it and let it unfold. Because what an incredible story this book is. So that is my number, my number one pick, these aren't in order, but it just happens to be the first one that popped into my mind that I read in 2018. And it's the only one from 2018 that I think has landed on my top five of all time lists, like actually bumped something else off my list.

Kaytee Cobb 06:30

That's amazing. And I also read that in 2018 because Meredith pressed it into my hands. So good job, Meredith. Thank you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:38

What's your first book?

Kaytee Cobb 06:38

So I decided to put mine in the order that I read them. So there is no favorites in here. But I will say that I threw a temper tantrum when Meredith said we were limiting ourselves to 10 books this year, because as of the end of this year, I believe I'm going to hit 240. So guys, this is like the cream of the crop for me for 2018. So the first one that I'm going to talk about is *The Heart's Invisible Furies* by John Boyne. This was the third book I read this year. So it really like, it was right at the beginning just blew me out of the water. It's about a young man named Cyril. The story jumps into his life every seven years. So at his birth, when he's seven, when he's 14, etc, etc. Of course, because it's a novel, very pivotal things happen in his life at each of those seven year visits, I will say that it's about a 500, maybe 600 page book, it takes a while to really get into the story, you have to give it like 200 pages, which for me, it normally is way past the abandoned point, it's just a really slow burn before that. But once you hit that two to 300 page mark, it just flies by because you are so engrossed in his story. Cyril is a young gay man, you get to learn about the AIDS epidemic in the 80s. It is heartbreaking. There's some abuse, so I'm going to give a little HSP trigger here for like child abuse, spousal abuse, etc. But it is just an incredible book. I loved it. And it was the third book of my year, you know, 234 books a year ago, and I'm still thinking about it all the time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:16

Absolutely. That actually was my final book of 2017. And so if I had read it like one book later, it might have made my list for this year too. Because yeah, that's, that's an incredible book and a book that I have to say, it was getting so much buzz that I read it, it wasn't necessarily one that I was super interested in from a topic perspective. But man, what a gorgeous, gorgeous book.

Kaytee Cobb 08:39

So well written. So beautifully done. All right, second book Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:44

And if I had to guess, I think I might, but by doing this one, this might be one that we both have on our list. And we've talked about it a few times. So I'll just quickly say for me, one of my my top picks of 2018 was *The Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivey. And I just love this one. This one, is it's a sweet book, but it also has some almost supernatural, you know, a little bit of supernatural spooky elements to it. It's a gorgeous book for winter. It's incredibly well written. It's a book about a family. I mean, I feel like we've talked about *The Snow Child* a lot, but I just I absolutely loved this one this year.

Kaytee Cobb 09:19

That one is basically the same thing for me. I read it right at the end of 2017. So it doesn't make my 2018 book list, but it absolutely would have if I had read it just a couple of weeks later. I love that book also. Oh, man. Okay, this second one for me is one that I mentioned at one point just based on the audiobook alone, it's *Essentialism* by Greg McKeown and I talked about how his Scottish accent makes the audiobook 100% worth it. But I will say that after I broke my book resolution this year and started buying books, I did buy a copy of this one for my shelves because like I talked about having nonfiction in front of me to highlight is really vital to me and now that I've already listened to the audio, I can't wait to get back into it as a highlight double experience as well if I felt like just really whittling down your life to the essentials, and really learning how to say yes and no and to well, okay, so I loved this book. And it definitely made it onto my 2018 favorites list. And it might even become a yearly reread for me, this was my 17th book of the year. And that means I read it in January, and I feel like January is the perfect time to read this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:31

Absolutely. I loved that one. And it's one that you definitely do you need to be taking notes. Yeah, for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 10:38

For sure. All right, so Meredith, third book is?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:42

Okay. My third book is one that I just pressed into readers hands last episode, and in episode, the episode that I did with my brother, and that's *The Read Aloud Family* by Sarah Mackenzie. And, again, it's just if reading is important to you and your family, and you want to raise readers, to me, this book is an excellent handbook, incredibly readable, incredibly usable in day to day life, for raising readers, and

that's really important to me, and I was shocked by how much I still had to learn after 24 years of being a parent. And kind of feeling like I had that on lock. There was still a lot more to learn. I love her podcast, The Read Aloud Revival. And so then The Read Aloud Family 100% makes my makes my list for 2018.

Kaytee Cobb 11:34

Totally cosign that one, I did buy that one. But I called it a homeschool resource. So that way, I wasn't buying breaking my book buying ban. I love that book as well. And I love her podcast. Yes. All right. Third book for me is one that I mentioned on Episode Seven with Jessica Turner is one that I pressed into your hands, but she kind of did it for me. It's American Marriage by Tayari Jones. This book centers around Roy and Celeste, a young married couple and Roy gets sent to prison. And you can go back to episode seven if you want to hear more about it. But it is phenomenally written. Totally opens your eyes to the the Black experience and the African American trials in the prison system. And it's just it's phenomenal. I loved it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:16

Yeah, that book is making a lot of people's bests. And it was interesting because I was listening to all the books, and it was on one of their best lists. And they were saying that it. That book really illustrates how even in today, even in today's society where we are as far as race relations for an African American family, they are closer to the kinds of incredibly difficult circumstances that occur in the book, then people maybe who aren't having that experience realize, so I thought that's a book that that needs to be on my list.

Kaytee Cobb 12:53

It's it's phenomenal. You got to read it. What's your fourth book Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:55

So my fourth book, another nonfiction is Braving the Wilderness by Brene Brown. It's not her newest one and I don't think that it came out in 2018. But I got to it in 2018 and I just really, really loved this book. This book really spoke to me in the same way that all of Brene Brown's work speaks to me where she kind of just unpacks things that maybe I was feeling, but I didn't have the words to describe how I was feeling. And so Braving the Wilderness is just one of those books that I felt kind of peeled away some layers for me. And it really got to a very vulnerable kind of center for me. So again, all of her work, I think every year one of her books for the past several years would be on my best list. And for this year, it's Braving the Wilderness for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 13:46

Yes, when I read that one, I wanted to get a tattoo that said "strong back, soft heart", because that's one of the tenants that she talks about in that book, because I just felt like, oh, that's exactly where I need to be with my self at this point in time. Right. Excellent. All right. So my fourth book is Educated by Tara Westover. And I, I loved this book, Mormon fundamentalist family, not polygamist, but distrust to the government, distrust of medicine. And I will say much like you're the only girl in the world makes you feel better about your own parenting, this book, this is a quote unquote, "homeschool family". I'll tell you what, if you're a homeschool mom out there, you're gonna feel a lot better about whatever is

happening with your own kids if you pick up Educated this year, because I mean, no matter what you've taught them, you've taught them more than Tara Westover's family taught her and she ends up with a PhD from Oxford, so it's going to turn out okay, mamas. That's what I learned from this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:48

It's gonna be okay. I feel tremendous guilt over this book. Katie, I really do. Um, this is a this is a bookish confession. i This book came out right on the heels of my own reading of The Glass Castle and I really loved that book. And so it felt too similar just from the description. It felt too similar for me to read it. And then I saw an interview with Tara Westover. And I just didn't she, I feel so bad saying this, but the interview turned me off to her. And I just felt like, I don't know, she seemed a little fool of herself. And so I feel bad because clearly, I don't know this woman at all. I haven't read her book that like this is a really uninformed opinion. And I, but I feel like I haven't wanted to read this book. I mean, should I get over that? Is it good enough for me to do you think the book will rid me of those feelings?

Kaytee Cobb 15:48

I feel like the book really shows you how far she's come. I will say I haven't, I haven't watched interviews with her or listened to interviews with her, or, you know, gotten to know her as a human being. But by the end, I was just so rooting for her. And so feeling like, well, she she did this, she pulled herself up with some help from the actual Mormon church with some help from some great scholarships, with some help from her siblings that managed to make it out. But she did it and it kind of feels like she deserves to feel really good about how far she has come in her life. So in that sense, I would say yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:30

Yeah, okay. Maybe I will continue to keep it kind of out there as a book that I need to read. I think the further I get away from my reading of The Glass Castle, the more interesting it becomes to me. So yeah, so I will, I will put a pin in that opinion and know that it might change with a reading of that book. Or maybe even with watching more interviews, maybe I just happen to catch it in where I was in a weird mood. Who knows?

Kaytee Cobb 16:55

Maybe not every book is for every reader.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:57

Exactly. But let me tell you about a book that I do think it's for every reader and I know that you I'm almost I mean, I want to talk about Circe...

Kaytee Cobb 17:06

Oh, yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:07

by Madeline Miller. To me, this is one of those books that is just a no brainer as far as... I can't think of a reader who wouldn't read it and find something in it to love or be interested in. I just you know, this is a retelling of story of a of a demigod, she's a demigod, right. And it's, it's just it gets into all Greek

mythology, it's a great story with an incredible female protagonist. There's so much adventure, there's so much sweep, literally over the course of you know, hundreds or 1000s of, I mean, it's just a sweeping saga. You care so much about the Circe character. I loved this book. This was absolutely one of my favorites from 2018.

Kaytee Cobb 17:56

I also love that book that was going to be number six for me. I will say I just looked back through my show notes. And that was mentioned on episode 10. That was when Meredith first pressed that into you guys, into our listeners hands. It was absolutely beautiful. Like we were talking about earlier, this is a book that I listened to on audiobook and I very clearly remember walking on July Fourth, trying to walk my baby out and listening to this book and feeling like I could walk forever because I wanted to keep going with the story of Circe. I just I loved it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:28

This was a book that actually made me I teared up at the end, for a variety of reasons, but not, not least of which was that I just cared so much about the Circe character. I really did not want the story to end, right. You're just going right the tearing up thing doesn't happen with me a lot. So that's a really, really good one.

Kaytee Cobb 18:47

Fair enough. All right, so my next one then is going to be Tattoos on the Heart by Gregory Boyle. This book came out a long time ago. I want to put it at like maybe 2010, 2012. Greg Boyle is a Catholic priest. So he's he's technically Father Greg Boyle. This is written like, all your favorite sermon stories kind of wrapped up into one. You know how a lot of times you don't remember the actual sermon at church, you just remember the story that illustrated the point. So this book, the little subtitle is The Power of Boundless Compassion. And that's absolutely what this is. Father Greg Boyle founded Homeboy Ministries in LA. It's like a bakery where ex cons can go to work, and he has some amazing stories. Some of them are completely heartbreaking. Great on audio, Father Greg Boyle reads them. He looks like Santa Claus. You feel like you're listening to Santa Claus talk about gang members. It's amazing. I love this book. I pressed it into my mom's hand. She also loved this book. I highly recommend it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:47

All right. That's a That's a good one. That's a good one. Well, my next one I think is going to potentially knock another one out for your list too. Maybe you shouldn't have let me go first.

Kaytee Cobb 19:57

Oh, it's okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:58

I want to talk about Calypso. Is that on your list by David Sedaris?

Kaytee Cobb 20:03

Oh, it's not on my list. Circe and Calypso for some reason I was like, wow, didn't you just talk about that? No, I love Calypso though too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:11

Calypso. So Right. So David Sedaris, this is memoir, humor. It's his return to his inimitable style. I absolutely was so glad this book was so good because the previous diary kind of excerpts that he left by finding that he had put out really kind of left me cold after so many fantastic books of his. Calypso is a return to what I think he does really, really well. I laughed, I almost choked. It's just so good. The next time he comes around and is reading I am my brother and I for sure are going to be going to see him. And so yeah, this was one of my favorites, absolute favorites of 2018.

Kaytee Cobb 20:57

Wow, I know that was one of the press into your hands reads for 2018. But I can't find it right now. It's in there somewhere guys search for it in the show notes. I promise we've talked about it. I loved that book also. But like I said, I was like severely whittling. So when I had 20 titles to talk about Calypso, it was on there. Right. But instead I'm going to move on and talk about let's see what's next on my list, the one that you may also have on yours, but one that we've talked about a lot, and it's The War that Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley. This one I first talked about on episode three, and then it's been mentioned many times since then. Guys, if we have not convinced you to pick this up, you need to.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:36

It is on my list of top 10 for 2018. So good. I'm glad I'm glad that that were that we're talking about that because right if you're looking for heartfelt middle grade fiction book to share with your children. It's so good.

Kaytee Cobb 21:52

It's phenomenal. And the sequel is equally good. Have you read that yet? I have not read it yet. Okay, because you said you were going to run off and pick up the sequel right away.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:01

I right what I always do with series books and then I haven't read Thunderhead, I haven't you know, so...

Kaytee Cobb 22:06

It happens. So Ava and Jamie, World War Two historical fiction, middle grade, definitely disney syndrome and this one, they do not have a happy childhood. Oh my gosh, is so great. I have pressed it into so many readers hands since what September it was that when we first talked about it. I think it is so good. My son finally picked it up. He loved it. He could not wait to listen to the second one. He just adored Ava and Jamie and like you said totally felt exactly what they were feeling the whole way through because it is so well written. Pick it up, guys. You've got to pick this one up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:42

For sure. That's one of those ones that I think I can't think of a reader who wouldn't, who wouldn't absolutely love it. Yeah, absolutely. All right. It's a really good one. So my next one, and actually when I look at my list I'm really interested on because I read so much mystery and thriller. I'm really interested that my list is actually not heavier, heavy, more heavily weighted towards mysteries and thrillers. But my favorite mystery of the year was *The Word is Murder* by Anthony Horowitz. I loved this book, I loved the kind of interesting meta structure of the book I really like Anthony Horowitz's writing. If you're looking for just a great solid modern day, Agatha Christie ish better version of Robert Galbraith. JK Rowling, you know, you know kind of story with with a great, great, gritty, you know, lead character, but an actual plot that moves quickly and is interesting from start to finish, *The Word is Murder* is the book for you. It's absolutely my number one straight up mystery recommendation for 2018.

Kaytee Cobb 23:53

Awesome. I'm actually surprised that I don't have more thrillers and or mystery on mine, either. Yeah. Yeah. Maybe those are really great books to read, but they don't stick in your head as much as at some.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:07

Right. That might be. That might be it because I read several this year that I really that I really, really liked. Okay, so next one for yo?

Kaytee Cobb 24:14

All right. So my next one is also the only mystery on my list and it is from Episode 18. *Delia Owens, Where the Crawdads Sing*. I love this book. I know that I just talked about it two episodes ago guys, but Oh, I loved it. And our giveaway ends for that really soon. Actually. It's already ended by the time this episode releases. So hopefully two more of you have that book in your hands by now. And you can read it and love it as much as I do. We talked about Kya and the marsh girl and *Delia Owens* was so fantastic if you didn't listen to episode 18 go back and listen to it because it's amazing. But yeah, that was the only mystery on my list for this year.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:52

Is that that book is one of those books that that has just surprised me because I did not think that it was as much had as much mystery element it because it was kind of marketed in a different way, right? And so I feel like when you actually start reading it, you're like, hey, wait, whoa, this is not what I expected this book to be. It's, and your interview with her was really fantastic. And really, I already had a lot of affection for *Delia Owens* and just deep into that affection so much. And it's not a long, that portion of it is not long, I think it's 10 or 15 minutes, but it's really I highly recommend listening to that if you're at all interested in reading this book, I highly recommend listening to that part of the podcast too, because it really deep into not only my affection for her, but my understanding kind of, of why she decided to write the book.

Kaytee Cobb 25:40

Right? Yes, I thought it was so well put together, not the interview, the book. And even if you you know, listen to the interview, and you thought, Oh, well now I definitely want to pick that up, go read it, and

then listen to the interview again, because just getting to hear her thoughts on some of those elements that you then discover in the book is just, it's the icing on the cake. It's perfection. So yeah, it's really really great.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:01

So okay, so then the last one that I have before the one that I want to press into readers hands as we end the show, is of course not surprisingly, it's Nevermoor by Townsend. Right. So I think what we'll do is recommend both Nevermoor and its follow up Wundermith which we read both of those this year, right? Oh, my gosh, I these books are middle grade fiction. These books are just so much fun. They're just fun books. They're just you know, if you if you have a reader who loves Harry Potter, and has kind of been looking for something to scratch that same kind of itch, I really think it's not like, it's not the same. It's not you know what I mean? It's not plot wise the same, but it scratches a lot of the same itches. And I just, I really, really, really loved this book. This was this book and the follow up, which I hardly ever do read more in a series for whatever reason, I tend to read the first one and if I really loved it, I don't move on. Because I don't want anything to be ruined. But this one, both Nevermoor and Wundermith are ones that I highly recommend.

Kaytee Cobb 27:09

Yes, Morrigan is totally a beloved character. She is flawed and fantastic. I loved the tiny details that Jessica Townsend puts in throughout like we talked about the smoking parlor, we talked about her bedroom. I don't think we've mentioned the glass chandelier in the hotel Deucalion. It's, oh, it's so fun.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:31

The whole hotel that she lives in is really, really fun. And it's awesome. And the town and the festivals that they go to. It's just so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 27:40

It's so much fun.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:41

Adults will love it. They're great read alouds for your kids. They're great on audio, if that's a way that you or your kids want to listen to it. I just I absolutely love this series. I'm so glad that Jessica Townsend has had such great critical response because I think it's going to mean that she's going to write more in this series, and I'm looking forward to it.

Kaytee Cobb 28:00

I hope so too. I do hope that they option them into a movie too. I know that sometimes that's the gateway for some kids to get into books like right my kids love the Harry Potter movies. And now they love the books as well. But I think it would make a great visual like stunning movie option as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:18

Oh my gosh, and the costumes. I saw tons of kids were dressing up as Morrigan Crowe for Halloween. I just love I just love everything about it.

Kaytee Cobb 28:28

So fun. All right, so now we're into our favorite part of the podcast and the capstone of our top 10 for 2018 episode. What is the book that you want to press into readers hands this year?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:40

Well, right it's not my book. I don't at all want to say that this is my book of the year or my favorite book of the year. But it is a book that I wanted to, that I have thought many times since I read it this this was one that I would consider in the category of a book that I want to press into readers hands because I have actually purchased this for multiple multiple readers in my life and everyone has loved it and that is The Last Mrs. Parrish by Liv Constantine. Did you read this one Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 29:09

I did read this one. I didn't like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:14

You didn't. You didn't like it? Okay, that's stronger pitch welcome. Right because I liked this book because the trope I do not like is the unreliable narrator or thrillers that are peopled with characters that I don't like that you can't like. Right. And this book has some of those. It does. But it also has some characters that you really do like and that you really are rooting for. So what we have here is we have a couple of female characters. We have a young woman who is a real climber, she wants wealth, she wants a certain kind of life. She grew up very differently and she has just decided that she is going to go out and she's going to get the kind of life that the sort of socialites have. She is just going to do anything that it takes. And so she meets up with another character who is married to a high powered man, and they have what looks to be the perfect marriage. And they have perfect, just everything. And so our young, our young female character decides that she is going to try to, you know, take take the life that is that she feels is owed to her. And so then the story goes from there, and it's got twists and turns and characters you can root for and characters that you can really satisfyingly root against. And I think it's very well plotted, and it just moved from start to finish. It's a fast book, it's a fast read, you're gonna want to read it, you know, in in just a couple of sittings, because it's just a page turner. So why didn't you like it?

Kaytee Cobb 30:58

It is a page turner. To me, it felt kind of predictable. I think I think I had read too many thrillers in the same vein relatively recently. And to me, it felt like I've already read this book. So it reminded me a lot of Behind Closed Doors by B.A Paris. It reminded me a lot of almost like The Woman in the Window by A.J. Finn. And I feel like if I had read it separate enough from those, I probably would have liked it a lot more. It was just timing probably, that made me not appreciate it. But I feel like I've closed it. And I was like, Well, I don't care about that book at all.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:35

That's interesting, because I thought that it felt fresher than than the ones that you mentioned. And I think that that's why I really liked it. Because I was like, No, this is the kind of thriller that I'm looking for. It feels fresher. And I and I did feel like there were some places where it wasn't predictable, where I had not predicted the way that it was gonna go. So, so yeah, there you go.

Kaytee Cobb 31:55

There you go. We can disagree. And we still like each other.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:59

I mean, absolutely, absolutely. Disagree. All right.

Kaytee Cobb 32:03

So the the last book that I want to press into readers hands for this year, is it's a cheat. It's the 2018 book that I read is Us Against You by Frederik Backman. But you cannot read this if you have not read Beartown, which is the first in the series by Frederik Backman. This is totally different than his other book I realized I already pressed A Man Called Ove into y'all's hands. Don't don't ask me about this. I love him. He's my favorite. So Beartown is a hockey town. It's dying. Their Hockey Club is a mess. If you don't care about hockey, it's okay. That doesn't matter for this book. I don't care about hockey either. But this is a great winter read it takes place in Sweden. It's freaking cold there. It's dark all the time. And it's hockey season. So it's even frickin colder and even freakin darker. Us Against You is the followup. Beartown has a big event that shakes the entire structure of this hockey town where everybody has to kind of decide if they're going to support the team captain or if they're going to support a young woman who says that he did something to her. So that's kind of where we end on Beartown. I'm not spoiling it for you at all. There's a lot that happens in this book. But Us Against You picks up with the hockey club disintegrating. I mean it's just a mess. A lot of the players have gone to the rival town Hede, which is just down the road. We are still following some of our favorite characters from Beartown, Maya and Benji. I will tell you this as a fiction book, I have never highlighted so many things in a fiction book as I did in this one. Frederik Backman is not a mother, but he describes motherhood and he puts so many quotes in there that made me just like rip my heart open realize that he sees mothers in this way. Like he's been there. He's not a mom, but he's been there somehow. And he is a phenomenal writer. This is not like Ove at all. This is not a cranky curmudgeon feel good story. It is dark and dramatic and thrilling. and wonderful. It's wonderful.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:07

So this both of those books are ones that have been on so many favorites lists.

Kaytee Cobb 34:13

I'm pretty sure that Beartown made my 2017 best of lists and now Us Against You is absolutely on my 2018 best of the best of list.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:22

Now I know what a lot of people say is they're not books about hockey. And unfortunately those are I loved Ove, these two books have not made my my reading yet because I keep feeling like they're books about hockey and I'm just not interested in hockey.

Kaytee Cobb 34:38

Yeah, it's not. It's about the town. It's about the people. And like hockey is the the coalescing force for all these people. But it's not like you're sitting there reading about hockey games and wondering what a

penalty shot is. I think there's penalty shots in hockey, obviously I don't even know that much about hockey and I still I loved these books. They're amazing. They're so different. And when I first read Beartown, I said that I felt like A Man Called Ove, and Britt Marie Was Here, and My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry, were the way that Backman proved himself as a writer so that he could then tell the publisher, now I'm gonna write what I want. And this is what he wanted to write. And this is where he really shines as somebody who really understands like the human condition. And again, like motherhood quotes, I mean, they were really compelling. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:31

Interesting. Very interesting. Okay, good. All right, Kaytee, I thought it was so fun to listen to this top 10 of 2018, for a couple of reasons. You can really tell that we're different podcasters. Like I can hear differences in the way that we talked about things then and now. So that's interesting. We did get to hear Onalee's little coos and her little noises. And I love that. And also, we got to really think about some of these books, Kaytee for me, several of them made total sense to me. But there were a couple books on my list that I was like, really? That was on my top 10.

Kaytee Cobb 36:08

Really, truly, yes, it was super surprising for me to be like, Wow, 2018 Kaytee was a little different reader than 2022 Kaytee is so...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:19

For me, the biggest difference is that I know well, because we started the podcast in August of 2018. So more than halfway through the year, you know, we had a smaller only four months of the podcast before we did this episode. And so I wasn't reading as much in 2018 as I read now, so I didn't have as many books to pull from, which I think explains a few of my choices. Now, The Sparrow, I talked about on the 2018 show, and it still remains one of my top 10 books of all time. So that one for sure made sense to me. The Snow Child made sense to me and The War that Saved My Life. Those are ones and Nevermoor. Those are ones that are on my kind of permanent best of list. Right, those made perfect sense to me. But The Last Mrs. Parrish, which is a book that I like, but on my top 10? What was I thinking?

Kaytee Cobb 37:17

We also had a what were we thinking moment about the fact that lately, whenever we've done our top 10 lists, we have made that the entire episode, and that does a few things. It lets us talk about those books for longerv and it also means that we have another week without current reads. We get to build up a little bit more of that cushion in our reading lives to make sure that we are only bringing the ones that we're really excited about to the show and that there's not pressure on our reading lives. In this episode, we talked about books for a full 27 minutes before we got to the deep dive, which was our top 10 books of the year. What were we thinking? That was, that was crazy. There were so many titles linked in the original show notes. I was gobsmacked. I was like "Kaytee and Meredith what... what ladies?"

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:03

We were, we were figuring it out. We were figuring it out. When you know better you do better Kaytee. And that's we were living that in real time.

Kaytee Cobb 38:11

For sure we were. Okay, I also had a few kind of WTF about my book choices moments. First, is that while I really did enjoy Educated at the time, I read it and I would still say everything I said especially about homeschooling, it never ended up being a book I wanted to press into our listeners hands. And that's because as you pointed out in the episode, there were some kind of icky things about the author that made it a little, like faded it a little bit for me in retrospect where I was like, Well, I mean, I liked it. Is it one that I want everybody to read? Hmm, probably not. It's it doesn't feel like that to me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:47

Right? The Word is Murder I mentioned in the show was my only Well, I mean, I guess The Last Mrs. Parrish too were like mysteries or thrillers. And The Word is Murder is a book that I really, really like for sure. But again, now with my reading the level that I like that book, it wouldn't make my top 10 because I just am reading, I mean, after five years of doing this, and I think even beyond you and me, Kaytee, I think a lot of our listeners who've been with us this whole time, they listened to us, they listened to other book podcasts. I think an entire group of us has gotten better at making choices for our reading in the last five years.

Kaytee Cobb 39:25

Definitely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:26

So it makes sense that we have more really, really quality five star books, at least ones that really make our top 10 list. Kaytee, I haven't even started on my top 10 list for this year. I'm still reading a couple of books and we still have a couple more days. So I haven't started but I am fascinated to see what the 2022 list is going to look like compared to this 2018 list.

Kaytee Cobb 39:51

Definitely that is something I save for the very end of the year as well. In fact, I usually keep it down to the wire right before we record that episode, because I'm like, what if today I finished something that's incredible, and it has to go in there. But I do have one more book in this episode to reflect on and it's also kind of what you're talking about that evolution of us as podcasters. It's about Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens. So Jason and I started watching this movie last night in real time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:19

Oh, Kaytee. Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 40:20

Right. Yeah, there's things to say about this. We're probably going to finish the movie tonight. Because we're old people we go to bed at like, 7pm. It's fine. The movie is really well made, but much like Educated, some stuff has come out about the author that put her in a bit of a dubious light. You can

google Delia Owens to read some of those articles. However, she was this baby podcaster, she was my first author interview. She was one of the first books that we both got sent copies of like, "Hey, do you want a hard copy of this brand new release? Would you be interested in talking to that author?" It felt like a big breakthrough moment for us.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:55

Yes, it did.

Kaytee Cobb 40:56

So that author interview is on episode 17 of season one. And sometimes... what was really fun about that for me, is I get a little bit dumbstruck by the idea that we are only two degrees away like that six degrees to Kevin Bacon. We are only two degrees away from some really amazing people, right like because of Delia Owens, I'm two degrees away from Reese Witherspoon because they like got to hang out and make a movie. Because of Gretchen Rubin, we are two degrees away from Matt Damon and Kevin Hart. Because of Laura Tremaine, there's a whole host of people in Hollywood that we're two degrees away from. And because of the very recent episode with Louise Penny, we are two degrees away from her via Ann Bogle. So there's all these very cool connections we've gotten to make over the past five years in the bookish community, because of interviews and having guests. And that was the first one that was like the start of it. So it did kind of have a rose colored lens to it by the end of the year for me where I was like, this has to be on my top 10. It was such a cool experience, even though now I'm like, yeah, it was fine. And if somebody else is picking it up in the store, I'm like, Isn't there something else you'd rather read? Would you like something? Suggestions? So yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:13

I laughed when I saw when I heard you talking about that, because I thought 2022 Kaytee would just not pick that. But again, it was 2018. And I mean, that's why it's fun to look back in this way. And it's also fun to look back and realize that when we released this episode, I think we had about 2000, 1500 to 2000 listeners a week. Right? Crazy, right? So there really are a lot of people who haven't heard this episode back in the day, five years, in some ways goes by like a flash. And in a lot of ways, it goes by like a flash. And in some ways, it's fun to mark how far you've come in that period of time. And we just continue to have more and more fun doing what we're doing.

Kaytee Cobb 42:56

Indeed, this was so fun. I'm so glad we looked back like this.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:59

This was so fun. And Kaytee, I wanted to tell you one other thing just because I wanted to share, because I know a lot of you guys have been so sweet to be with me on my journey as a new grandmother. I wanted to share with all of you that one of my dreams has come true and my daughter Devon, and my son in law Mark and my grandson, Jeffrey are moving to Texas. And they're actually moving to my neighborhood. And we're only going to live five minutes apart. And I wanted to tell you guys, because by the time this episode drops, they will be here in Austin. And we're gonna get to celebrate Christmas together. And it's Jeffrey's first Christmas and Devon and I have long wanted to live close to each other. And so this is really a dream that five years ago, I couldn't even imagine. And so I

wanted to announce it here in this special surprise episode as a special surprise. And thank you to all of you who've been so sweet to just give me so much advice and support and just loving my pictures of Jeffrey, which why would you guys do that you're so sweet. And you know, I just absolutely have loved it. And I felt so supported. So Mimi gets Jeffrey all the time now.

Kaytee Cobb 44:07

Yay. We are all jumping up and down and squealing with glee over this because I mean, I know that I speak for the audience in saying that pictures of Mimi and Jeffrey are some of my favorite things that come into my feed. So more time with Jeffrey please and thank you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:24

Absolutely. Oh my gosh, I'm gonna be able to do so much bookish content now.

Kaytee Cobb 44:28

Book circles galore.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:29

Exactly. Exactly. All right. That is it for this week. I can't do it. Kaytee. I can't do it from memory. I just can't do it. I have to have it pulled up in front of me. I should be able to do it and I can't it gives me the hives to do it. I know that I could but I can't.

Kaytee Cobb 44:46

I think if you close your eyes, you would be able to do it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:49

Okay. I can't do it. I'm gonna read it. 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 45:01

and you can find me Kaytee at [@notesonbookmarks](#) on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:04

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in this 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 45:14

You can also follow the show at [@currentlyreadingpodcast](#) on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:20

And if you really want to help us or you just want to spend more time with us, there is still time come join us as a bookish friend. Join us on Patreon and it's \$5 a month. You get the fantastic reading tracker and all of the content that we do. We promise you will love it. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts or shout us out on social media. All of those things help us find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 45:47

Bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and we actually hit our goal. Yay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:53

All right, Kaytee. And now I will finally say until next year, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 45:59

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:01

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 46:02

Happy reading Meredith.