



Season 5, Episode 4: Our Books as a Gauge + Reading the World

Mon, 8/22 • 1:04:52

Kaytee Cobb 00:10

Hi 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.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 00:24

We're light on the chit chat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today we'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll visit the fountain.

Kaytee Cobb 00:34

I'm Katie Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I'm using books to make my days better.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 00:40

And I'm Roxanna Kassam Kara, a mom, a marketer and a mood reader living in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. And I love to read under the radar and off the beaten path. This is episode number four of season five. And we're so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:56

Roxanna, I am so excited to get behind the mic with you and record with you. We've been wanting to get another episode with you out into the universe so that our listeners can continue to get to know you. So thank you for joining me today.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 01:08

I am so thrilled to be here with you today Kaytee. As I told you before, I have been like jealously guarding books that I want to bring and press, specifically into your hands. So I'm so excited to share them with you and with all our readers today.

Kaytee Cobb 01:22

It's so fun. I'm picturing Gollum with his precious unfortunately, which is not very flattering. But yeah, actually,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 01:29

I know the light in this walk in closet is bad, but it's not that bad.

Kaytee Cobb 01:35

No, you look lovely. I'm just picturing you with your precious next to you. Okay, I'm going to let everybody know right here at the top of the show that our deep dive today is books set in different countries and how we find them and why we read them and why they are so core to Roxanna's reading life. So we're going to get to know Roxanna a little bit better through that deep dive. And I also have some business to attend to. Two weeks ago, on episode two of season five, I brought a book brought to me by Brilliant Books in Traverse City, Michigan. And I mentioned on that episode that it was in the Upper Peninsula of the state. And guess what, Roxanna? I was wrong.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 02:13

Oh, no.

Kaytee Cobb 02:14

It's in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, in the hand portion. It's very high in the Lower Peninsula, but it is not in the Upper Peninsula. We had many, many, many, many lovely readers tell me about my mistake. So I did want to correct on mic and apologize to Brilliant books, who's done such a great job curating a wonderful book box for me over the past eight months.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 02:36

Well, that's very generous of you to bring that correction to the show, Kaytee, and I will take note, not to mention any US geography on this podcast, because I will say it's a bit abysmal coming from a Canadian, so I'll just make sure not to even step into that quagmire.

Kaytee Cobb 02:53

Well, as we know, the Lower Peninsula of Michigan is much closer to Canada than it is to the US. So that's actually true. Maybe you would be better at it, honestly. Okay, so now we're gonna get started the way we always do, Roxana with our bookish moments of the week. What have you got for us?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 03:09

Okay, well, my bookish moment of the week has to do with learning to use my reading as a gauge for my physical and mental health. So this is a bit different from some of the bright, you know, rosy moments, but I just thought it was important to share with listeners. So you know, sometimes people tell you to listen to your body to help diagnose with what you're feeling. Yes. I'm not great with that. But I'm learning to listen to my reading to help diagnose when I'm feeling. So recently, I noticed that my reading was veering more and more into my comfort reading zone. And I just couldn't handle books that were emotionally challenging or had hard things. And that's really odd for me, because even though I'm an HSP, I do actually read books with hard themes, and you know, in literary fiction, and I actually really enjoy them. But recently, my book club had picked up Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as our next read. And, yes, it's a dark book, but honestly, I literally could not pick it up off of my bookshelf. It was just I had a block. And I was stuck in this loop of these rom coms and gentle mysteries. And, you know, I'll sometimes pick up one as a palate cleanser, but to have, you know, three or four in a row and not be able to pick up, you know, a literary fiction book was rare for me. And then I realized, you know, it was really saying something about my mental bandwidth and my exhaustion levels. You know, as a

mom, you know, we're not always great at listening to our body, we kind of wake up and go downstairs and push through and make the lunches and do all the things. But then I realized I can listen to my reading. And the fact that my reading pattern was off, was kind of telling me something about my body might have been off too. And so I went to the doctor and told her, you know, feel abnormally tired. I can't read the books I'm usually reading and I'm not sure what's going on. And there was a medical reason for the fatigue that was totally addressable. It was all fine. But it was just an kind of an aha moment to me that I could actually look at my reading. And yes, we all go through seasons of reading and patterns. And that's great. And we should all follow our rhythms. But if something is feeling not right in your reading, I realized, for me, it might be a symptom of something being not right with my mental or my physical health, and it's good to pick up on that.

Kaytee Cobb 05:19

I think that is such an astute observation, I'm so glad you brought it to the show, because we as readers can really hone in on ourselves using our reading rhythms. And that is such an amazing observation, even applying it to my own life, as people can probably hear, I have a little bit of a cold right now. And as I think back over the past week, which is before I came down with feeling crappy, and then actually feeling like death's door, I can see how my reading tanked even before my body started to feel it, and I didn't know what was going on with me. But now, putting it in the context of your bookish moment, I can see how that was reflecting what was going on in my body.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 06:00

So interesting, right? Like, I've never thought of my reading from that point of view. But it really, I think, because reading is something we do for pleasure, our minds will intuitively go to what we can handle. And then that sometimes is a sign of what we can handle. And it's just a, you know, could be a good measure sometimes

Kaytee Cobb 06:17

Wow, okay, so my bookish moment is not nearly as insightful. But I'm going to tell you that this week, I had a number of events come together, coming into this week for a perfect library bookish moment. First, Mary, our show regular periodically reminds people on her Instagram that borrowing cookbooks from the library is a really great option for checking them out, trying them out, maybe checking out a few recipes and deciding if you actually need a copy cookbooks are expensive.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 06:46

Yes. And you know, it is very, that is such a great insight. Because it is hard. Sometimes you make two or three recipes. And you're like, This is okay. And you just dropped 50 bucks and like two inches of counterspace on it. And it's you know, you don't know what to do with it

Kaytee Cobb 07:01

Exactly. My kitchen bookshelf is running low, I have to be judicious about what goes in there. Add that together with the fact that my Heather came to stay with me for a week and we talked about all sorts of things, but one was lunch, and how hard it can be to pull together a lunch plan for the day or the week. So I decided to look at my library specifically for cookbooks about lunch, and brought a few home for some inspiration. So the one I want to talk about here in the bookish moment is called Modern Lunch

by Allison Day, she has put together more than 100 recipes for that midday meal that aren't just what I've been doing, which is eating leftovers or eating whatever garbage my kids picked or picking fast food. The best part about this cookbook is it's almost like a Lazy Genius cookbook. She talks about substitutions, what to keep on hand to make lunch easy, and how to make make ahead meals that will still taste great by the end of the week. So she's talking about making ahead on Sunday, and still eating it for lunch on Friday. All of that together made this cookbook a winner for me. And I didn't even have to spend \$25 for the pleasure of it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:01

That is so smart, honestly, and what a great way because a lunch cookbook, I'm not sure I would want to invest in that right away. I'm with you. You want it you know a sample of you and this is a great way to sample and then invest if you feel that you want to invest or say these are the three or four recipes that really worked for me great. I'm gonna run with these and you know, I don't know if you're feeling I'm feeling post pandemic even just the dinner I love making dinner but I'm so tired.

Kaytee Cobb 08:28

Over dinner,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:30

I'm so over dinner. I'm just I'm mainly over my family's reactions to dinner, to be honest, I would have been happily cook dinner for myself everyday be thrilled. But sometimes a new cookbook from the library will inject some, you know, thrill into it. But I don't always want to keep that cookbook. So I think that's so smart and such a great way. Good job Mary for bringing that to the to the world.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:50

Thanks, Mary. Okay, let's do some current reads Roxanna. What have you been preciously guarding and hoarding up to talk to me about today?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:53

Okay, now I really do feel like all because this book I've been holding on to for a long time, Kaytee. I'm so excited. It is just for you and true to my intro. It's really off the beaten path. But I think you're gonna love it. It's called Orange for the Sunsets by Tina Athaide. Have you heard of this book Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 09:18

No, but I'm picturing a gorgeous orange cover. So tell me about it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 09:22

It is does have beautiful, gorgeous orange cover. So Orange for the Sunsets is a suspenseful page turner, but it's also a middle grade story of friendship and hard decisions at a time of political crisis. So here's the setup. Our story takes place in 1972 in a small village of Entebbe in Uganda. So Asha and Yesofu are 12 year old best friends. And even though they're very different, Asha is an Indian girl and Yesofu was an African boy, they spend nearly every day together. So Yesofu comes over to enjoy after school samosas and Asha always goes to Yesofu's cricket games, but the reader and Yesofu slowly starts to see how Indians and Africans are treated differently in Uganda. So Yesofu and his family live in

a considerably less modernized part of town with no running water. Yesofu's mother works for Asha's parents and Yesofu was denied opportunities to play cricket at school, even though he's one of the better players. This is all indicative of a social class system set up by the British when they colonized Uganda. So when Idi Amin comes to power in Uganda in this book, he proclaims that he will return Africa to the Africans by declaring that all Indians leave Uganda. And they have 90 days to do it. So this book is told in a 90 day countdown, and then as the clock ticks down, yeah, it's very, it's very pressure, the pressure builds as the book goes on. And you see those days tick down because many of Asha's friends and family are forced to flee their home and their livelihoods. The businesses stand empty, and riots and violence against Indians intensifies and soldiers from the streets with guns looking to keep the peace and keep the Indians in their place. Asha loves Entebbe and she's grown up there doesn't know anything else and doesn't want to leave and resorts to sabotaging her family's efforts to flee in time. Yesofu loves Asha, but he also sees that his people have fewer opportunities than hers, and begin to support Idi Amin. But what will this mean for their friendship? Will Asha in her family be able to flee Uganda in time, while Yesofu and his family be able to enjoy the rights that should be theirs? This book sounds really heavy and important and gut wrenching, but can I just tell you, Kaytee and tell everybody, it is none of those things. It's none of those things. It is a story of a boy and a girl in a very different circumstance, who are forced to make huge life choices, it is suspenseful, and it is page turning to the very end. But it is not override it is not overwritten. There's no hammer hitting you over the head, which I know you don't like. And I really don't like either. You know, it's I don't know how Athaide manages to do it. But it's beautifully told in simple prose. So you could read this with your child. And they could pick it up as a thrilling page turner, or about a time of political crisis. Or you could pick up the nuances of how systemic racism and colonization left their effects on Uganda and on its people. So you can read it from both ways, which is one of the things I really love about it.

Kaytee Cobb 12:25

It sounds excellent. I pulled it up while you were talking, of course, and looked at the cover, and I'm just obsessed with it. So thank you, Roxanna.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 12:34

Score one. Well, and as you know, you know, I'm an HSP, as I said off the top, and I sometimes have a hard time with a weighty issue some literature, I really cannot do books with endless misery. I just I cannot, I cannot. But at the same time, I do love the way that literature shines a light on places and time periods we haven't been to before. And middle grade is great for that. Right? You know, one Goodreads reviewer said about this book, "I basically learned all of my world history from middle grade novels now." And you know, I couldn't agree more. I find it's a great way to get sort of an overview and doesn't it doesn't kind of come off as that sort of gut wrenching read. Sometimes, I will say this issue is very personal to me. You know, my parents left Tanzania, which is the country neighboring Uganda, around the same time for some of the same reasons, even though generations of my family had lived there because they were afraid of that persecution. You know, my grandparents ran the general store in a small town called Singita. My dad was a teacher in Dar Salaam and my mom actually did a stint in the army, but they weren't welcome in their birthplace anymore. So they just left with the clothes on their backs in the middle of the night. This book made it even more real for me. You know, this is such a sensitive issue, the class system that the British setup pitted colonized people at peoples against colonized peoples. And it's hard to find a clear right and wrong. And I thought Tina Athaide did a

remarkable job of addressing that conflict sensitively, without ever making it about the conflict. It's really about these two 12 year olds, and the confusing thoughts and emotions they have to work through as this political upheaval was taking place. This is such a readable page turning story that also sheds light on what systemic racism looks like in a non western context. So that's Orange for the Sunsets by Tina Athaide. And bonus, Athaide is Canadian now. And I'm always looking to bring more CanLit to the podcast.

Kaytee Cobb 14:30

So many bonuses in this one. I find it really interesting that you talked about, you know shying away from reading hard stuff in literature, even if it's not what we would consider HSP adjacent like gory or murder or whatever. Since you do love literary fiction so much. What do you think it is that makes it possible for you to dive into the literary without it being really difficult?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 14:55

I think for this one, and for many books, it's such a great question, Kaytee. I don't know like when they get, as I said, sort of emotionally gut wrenching when you spend a lot, a lot of time in a character's head, or you're just really deep in it. Of course, there's moments of that in every book. But you know, when it pulls the endless misery all the way through, I have to just kind of put the brakes on and I have to pause because it's just pulling me too deep.

Kaytee Cobb 15:20

Okay, would you call this a swing up then as Meredith and I like to call them? So we go to the heart, but then we swing up toward the end?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 15:28

You know, that's so hard to say, because this conflict is not a swing up, right? Okay. Idi Amin's legacy on Uganda and what that meant for the South Asians who are kicked out of the country, and also for the Africans, who are left behind who now had to sort of assume these new roles. And in sort of the wake of what had happened in Uganda was just it was it was hard. So she doesn't go into any of that. And there's definitely resolution and they're, you know, good things happen to both the characters. But I wouldn't say it's like a, you know, a curmudgeon book where everybody's lovely and happy at the end. You know, there's difficult things that they're working through.

Kaytee Cobb 16:06

Okay. I love that. Thank you for bringing that to the show. Roxanna, I am so excited, because now we're gonna have to bright orange books as our very first ones because the first one I want to talk about this week is Shine Bright: A Very Personal History of Black Women in Pop by Danyel Smith. Are you excited?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 16:27

I am so excited. Is this the one I texted you about at the library?

Kaytee Cobb 16:31

It is. I have a whole series, a whole epic saga that I had to go through to get onto the show to talk with you about it today.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 16:39

Oh, I'm so glad and yes, this cover is beautiful. And I remember as soon as I saw it, I thought, you know Kaytee has been looking for this for so long. I really hope that she gets this book and I'd love to hear about it.

Kaytee Cobb 16:50

Exactly. On episode 29 of season four, I brought The 1619 Project to the show. And I mentioned that the chapters are arranged thematically, but the one about music really left something to be desired. I asked for recommendations for what could go into that spot in my brain and really helped me understand the influence of Black Americans on music. Well, I've read three books since then, that were suggested by listeners and bookish friends. None of them had what I was looking for. Until now. A few months later, we worked with Cafe Con Libros for two months on the Indie Press List. As I browse through Instagram, this book stood out to me as something that might be a good fit. They featured it as a new release in April of 2022. So I grabbed it on Libro.fm right then. Then it sat there until you Roxanna also messaged me to ask me about it and to see if it might be what I was looking for. I decided to prioritize it and listen to it that very same weekend and friends. Yes, yes. This is it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 17:48

Yay. Oh, I love to hear that.

Kaytee Cobb 17:51

Yay. I love this music memoir and I cannot wait to tell you why. Danyel Smith started out as in quotes, "just a music fan." Then she became an essayist and an editor for Vibe and Billboard magazines, and finally a podcast host for Black Girl Songbook. She has been living this history since she was a latchkey kid, listening to Midnight Train to Georgia on the family stereo. This history slash memoir weaves together her own biography and vast experience in the music industry. With the history of Black women in music, specifically from the country's founding onward. She starts with Phyllis Wheatley, who was enslaved and was also such a renowned poet that she got to travel to Europe to sing her poems for audience there as an enslaved woman. She was hugely influential in the up and coming nature of Black women in poetry and music. We get to hear very personal stories about interviews with black women recording artists like Dionne Warwick and Gladys Knight, who Danyel Smith got to talk to in person. While the audio which as I mentioned, I grabbed on Libro.fm we even hear Danielle choke up during certain stories. So when the subtitle says this is a very personal history of Black woman and pop, you can hear it in her voice. This is not rote, dry academic writing, but someone's story woven through music. I gave this stunning book and it's stunning on every level, from the cover to the audio to the way that it's presented. I gave it five stars, and I highly recommended the audio experience as a way to take it in. Danyel Smith wrote exactly the book I was hoping to read. And I'm so glad it finally made it into my hands and my ears and onto the show. This was Shine Bright: A Very Personal History of Black Women in Pop by Danyel Smith.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 19:40

That sounds amazing. Oh my god. This is for sure going on my TBR as well as the corresponding playlist that I can listen to in the mornings bopping around making lunches. It sounds so great.

Kaytee Cobb 19:50

It does need a playlist. I feel like maybe the paper book would have included. You know, here's a playlist of songs that you could listen to while All you go through this book, but I'm wondering now even if I had gone to her Instagram or something if there's a link to a Spotify playlist, because I would love an interactive element to that.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 20:10

Well, and I'll say that I often do that when I'm reading a book, whether it's a music book or not, I'll type in the name into Spotify, and often peep, either the author or somebody has put together a playlist that sort of has music that's, you know, atmospheric. So like there's one for A Gentleman in Moscow, for example, that obviously music hasn't been featured in the book, but you can have in the background and then for ones that feature music. Often the author has put together a playlist and I find that just such a fun way to sort of 360 it.

Kaytee Cobb 20:38

Oh my gosh, that's such a great tip. I love it. What's your second book?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 20:43

Okay, I'm so excited to bring this one. I know Kaytee I said that about the last one, but this one, I'm really excited to bring to you. Okay, now we're going to take an abrupt left turn from my first book and actually from from your book. I'm bringing Check Please by Ngozi Ukazu. Have you read this one, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 21:01

I have not. I can picture the cover on this one though, so I know I've seen it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 21:06

Okay, I'm so excited. Listen up all you Ted lasso lovers, if you like me are anxiously awaiting the third season, this is the perfect graphic novel to absorb while you wait. So here's the setup. Eric Bittle who everyone calls Bitty grew up in Georgia, where he was a figure skating champion, a hockey player and a famous baking vlogger known for his pies on his YouTube channel. But when he gets accepted into Samwell University to play for their college hockey team, he realizes that it's way more than he bargained for. See, doesn't that sound perfect right there? Aren't you already grinning?

Kaytee Cobb 21:42

I feel like I have to make a joke about Canadians Of course, bringing a hockey book because that just writes itself.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 21:48

Okay, so I will say I actually do not watch hockey, you know, I'm the one person in my family I do not, I don't even like hockey. To anyone else listening to this, all the Canadians are going like, how could you just divorce yourself from your heritage? It's horrible. I do drink Tim Horton's coffee occasionally, but I don't really like hockey. But this book isn't about hockey. You know, it's really about relationships, and it's just the most heartwarming book you will ever read. First of all, there's the hockey bros and who are just not, you know, Eric, Bitty's scene and and you know, he's a figure skating pie baking Georgia boy. So that's just not what he was expecting. And then there's college hockey, and he is so terrified of physical contact, then he literally faints every time he's about to be checked on the ice, like he's doing pirouettes on the ice because he's a junior figures kid. But, like Ted Lasso, the hockey bros end up being surprisingly supportive and a funny bunch, who grow to love Bitty. And maybe there's even something a little more between Bitty and Team Captain Jack. So I will say I don't read a lot of graphic novels, and I don't read books about hockey, sadly. But this one completely captured my heart. It is, as I said, it's heartwarming. It's lovable. It's laugh out loud, funny. It is so inventively told, you know, there's clips of Bitty's baking vlog, scenes at the frat house that he lives in and the hockey team playing in the rink at Sandwell University. You literally feel like you're watching a TV show. I don't know how she does it, but you really feel that whole sort of all encompassing experience. And Bitty is the most charming, lovable character you'll ever meet. When he meets those hockey bros for the first time, he bakes them a pecan pie because of course he does and then later on his YouTube channel, he's lamenting about how that first meeting went. And he goes, "I guess it just takes a while to click with people after they do unspeakable things to your pies."

Kaytee Cobb 23:51

Oh, no.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 23:54

You have to go for anybody who is not sure if this is for you or not, if you type in Check, Please, if you just Google it, you'll see this used to be a webcomic. And so you can find it on internet and you can read it and see if it is actually a good fit for you. So the author Ngozi Ukazu is the daughter of Nigerian immigrants and she did as I said, start this as a webcomic. But it grew such a following that she developed a series of books from it, not only has her series won multiple awards, but it's been translated into three languages. And the year two and year three volumes, both raised over \$300,000 on Kickstarter. The way she tells the story, the quality and details of the illustration, the angles, even that she uses are remarkable too. And in the author's note, she talks all about the decisions she made to really, you know, come up with a narrative and it's fascinating. I've honestly never read another graphic novel like this. Now I will leave you with a couple of notes. You know, do not leave this book lying around for your kids to pick up. Graphics are very inviting and accessible and they will pick it up but the language is not appropriate for children. You know, it takes place in a frat house in a university campus. And so there's a lot of swearing and discussion of sex. So you'll get a lot of questions. So I would just, you know, put this one on yourself. And this will be a big plus for you, Kaytee, it is listed on the ALA website as one of the most challenged books of 2020. Yes. So all you lovers of supporting banned books, this one is for you. And like, honestly, it just, I won't go into a whole rant here. But it's such a book of love and joy and supportiveness that to put this on a banned books list feels especially wrong to me. So do yourself a favor, buy this book, keep it on your shelf. And when you're having a

particularly bad day, then gift yourself with an hour, get yourself a cup of coffee, get comfy on the couch, pull down this book and prepare to grin like an idiot all day long. It's going to be the best hour you spent all week. And that's Check Please by Ngozi Ukazu.

Kaytee Cobb 25:59

Oh, it sounds amazing. And I do need to get it onto my shelf. And I do appreciate also that caveat for the children. Because my kids, anytime I read anything that looks like a graphic novel, or like, "Am I next? Do I get to pick that one up after you?" They are just relentless in their pursuit.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 26:18

So yeah, my 11 year old picked this up and I quickly took it back right away. You know, the themes and the messages are actually great and great for kids. But the the way the story is told, you know, it's frat boys, it's that's not appropriate. So yeah, this one would be one I would keep on your shelf or in your bedside table so they don't see it.

Kaytee Cobb 26:36

Perfect. Love that. Okay, my second book this week is Jubilee by Margaret Walker. I am bringing a classic to the show today. Jubilee was first published in 1966, and tells the story of Vyry, the child of a white plantation owner and one of his Black slaves. Each chapter has an epigraph of a song, a hymn, a verse on the first page that adds so much to the story, and kind of makes this a great book flight with Shine Bright, even though that was not my plan. And don't worry, music is not the theme of this episode. Vyry's story is the counterpart without being intentionally the counterpart to Scarlet's story in Gone With the Wind. There is no sweet plantation owner white washing in here. There's gritty truth and desperately awful scenes. We experience life with fiery and her cohorts as they grow up on the plantation, as the news of revolt reaches them, as Lincoln is elected President of the United States. And as the South goes to war against the North, we see families torn apart, and promises made and broken. It's not all darkness, though, if that's how I'm making you feel. This story arcs upward toward justice. Margaret Walker's grandmother is the daughter of the real Vyry. That's who this story is based on Margaret Walker's great grandmother. This book is the personal history of her own family, and published in 1966. It was written during the Civil Rights era in the United States when slavery had been illegal for 100 years, but there was still so much work to be done. It's historical fiction, but just like the rich and well drawn characters of Gone with the Wind, these pages come to life in living color. It doesn't feel like you're reading a dusty book that has been sitting on the shelves for 60 years. I thought this one was going to be a slow but steady read for me at about 500 pages because that is a substantially large book for some people, but instead, I listened to the audio in the course of a single day. I just drank it down. I could not get enough a Vyry's story. Occasionally, I sat down with my paper copy to match up my bookmark, like Meredith talked about last week about slow but steadies and to read the verses at the beginning of each chapter because those little epigraphs the way that she works it into the chapter following is really beautiful. If you like to Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi, or The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois by Honoree Fanonne Jeffers, this should be your next pick. And you too will be amazed that this book is nearly 60 years old and reads so current, it is a stunner on every level. I'm so glad I finally picked it up. I had just been letting it sit there because in my head, I shelved it as the sequel to Gone With the Wind which it's not at all. There's another book that's the sequel to Gone With the Wind, but this is Jubilee by Margaret Walker.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 29:30

Oh, I love that Kaytee. I've always wanted to read sort of the counterpart to *Gone With the Wind* and it seems like this one might be an interesting book flight with *Kindred* by Octavia Butler as well.

Kaytee Cobb 29:40

Yes, that one has some more interesting takes on what would happen if as we know *Kindred* is about a modern woman in the 70s being taken back to plantation times being put on to a plantation and having her modern sensibilities challenged by the era of slavery. And so having this as a different take on that same time period, but still written from a modern lens, like, comparatively, Margaret Walker is 100 years post the events in this book, so she has that long look at it, whereas Margaret Mitchell who wrote *Gone With the Wind* is writing in about 1910. So she's only a few generations post the Civil War, it's a very different look at these two eras are the same era in American history.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 30:31

Oh, that is so interesting. And what a great one. I know. You said it's not set up that way. But wouldn't it be great, I love reading books in their historical context, like reading *Gone With the Wind*, I think is a valuable experience, knowing what we know now in the world we're in now. And wouldn't it be great to shed some light on that, you know, using a book like *Jubilee*, if they pair those together, who I feel like that could give you just a much more rich experience of what what America was like at that time.

Kaytee Cobb 30:58

I think it would be a great pairing, and I read *Gone With the Wind*. I didn't read it as a child, like many people did, or like Meredith did, but I read it at the beginning of 2020. So I had already been making sure to read from Black authors for a long time and had a very different sensibility going into it. And I really wish that I would have paired it like that and had this one directly afterwards. So I could have seen that entire era again, but rotated slightly from a different viewpoint.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 31:23

That sounds awesome. Well, I'm putting that on my TBR too. Now that's two for two Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 31:27

Alright, Roxanna, what's your third book?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 31:30

Okay, Kaytee. My third book is a memoir that is for fans of *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir,

Kaytee Cobb 31:36

me.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 31:37

Yes, exactly. And you can imagine it as our main character Ryland Grace coming to life and telling his life story. This book is called *The Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth* by Chris Hadfield. So Chris Hadfield is the most famous astronaut in Canada, the only Canadian to ever command the International

Space Station, and basically our national treasure. He's the most likable, humble, hardworking person you'll ever meet, which is why he remind me of Ryland Grace. You may have seen his video playing David Bowie's Space Oddity from space. This book wins the award for having me read the most parts aloud ever to anyone. At one point, I snuck it under and brought it to the dinner table like snuck under my sweater and brought it to the dinner table. And both my husband Aziz and my two kids were like, Why are you bringing that book again? Stop, put it back now. And I was like, No, there's just one paragraph, I just have to read you this one story. And they were like, No, put that book back now. I just It killed me. And so of course, I then left Meredith about 17 voice messages about every single part of this book, which, you know, I said, I know you're going to be so sick of me talking about this. But I have to tell you this one last part. It really is such a thrilling, surprising, fascinating and reflective book about what it means to live a good life. So on one hand, this book is everything you would expect it to be. It's filled with Hadfield's thrilling adventures as a fighter pilot and then as an astronaut, and packed with cool space trivia. He talks about a time a bee got stuck in his helmet and the time he got to space and couldn't open the exit hatch and had to carve himself out with a Swiss army knife. You will be gasping in amazement at every page. There are memories he recounts where he's literally on a mission to do something that could blow up the International Space Station if things are off by a millimeter. This is harrowing stuff. But on the other hand, this book is about a lot of things you wouldn't expect, like what astronauts do when they're not in space, which honestly, I had never thought of before. I think I just imagined them this huge cosmic locker room, you know, waiting for their turn. But shockingly, that's not what happens.

Kaytee Cobb 33:57

Weird. Muscle Atrophy is probably a thing.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 34:00

Well, and he talks about how they kind of work through their different roles at NASA. And you know, you come back from being astronaut, and then you might be being Director of Operations, or the person talking to the people in space. They all take sort of different roles. And he talks about his career path that he followed to become an astronaut. And he talks a lot about the leadership style and organizational model of NASA, which I found particularly interesting. And he also talks about what it takes to support an astronaut as his or her family members. And some of the challenges his wife in particular faced and his family faced, which was really interesting. I hadn't thought about that before. But even more than that, it's a handbook on how to live a fulfilling and satisfying life. Because Hadfield was a Canadian at a time when there was no Canadian space program, there was actually a very small chance that he would ever become an astronaut. So his philosophy was to live his life in a way that prepared him to go to space if his chance came, but also to enjoy every moment of the process. So he would be satisfied with life even if he didn't. And that's really what this book is about, how to enjoy every step of the process, not just the big moments like peering at the Earth from space, and how to plan for every eventuality, but also lean into the uncertainty. He also talks about why being the low man on the pole doing the grunt work and being "a zero" as he calls it are so important. He talks about how not to become an arrogant jerk, even when you are a famous astronaut. It's a handbook on life, living life to your values, and how to achieve your goals while helping others achieve their goals. It was a five star read for me that I will remember and come back to you for many years and even made my 50 book cut. So that's The Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth by Chris Hadfield.

Kaytee Cobb 35:46

That sounds incredible. And it sounds like something I would love to get for my almost 12 year old for his birthday. Would that be appropriate for him Roxanna?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 35:55

I think it would be totally appropriate. You know, when I was talking about this to Meredith, she actually got it for her brother, because she thought it'd be a great read for him too. And yeah, I do think it'd be appropriate for a 12 year old, there's nothing in here that's, you know, too mature for him or anything like that. It does get a bit technical at times. But honestly, I loved that even though I didn't like that about Project Hail Mary, I skipped over those parts. In this book, I found it really interesting, I think because I knew it was part of actual, you know, space work that was going on to get him into space and, and how NASA worked. I thought it was really interesting. Now be prepared, because your 12 year old will be talking about this book for years to come, as you'll hear a lot of space tidbits. But there's, it's really, really fun. So yeah, I think that would be great.

Kaytee Cobb 36:43

Excellent. My newly minted nine year old because we just had birthday week here at our house, got Packing for Mars by Mary Roach, the young readers version as one of his birthday gifts. We have a lot of kids here who are very interested in space. So I feel like this might be a good book flight for the two of them, especially.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 37:01

Yeah, I think that would be great and so smart. And that way they can sort of play off each other because Hadfield talks about his personal experience and then you can kind of, you know, put that together with packing for Mars. And then there's also just a lot of fun stuff in here. You know, he talks about how astronauts actually spent a lot of time wiping jam off the space shuttle walls, because apparently jam because there's no gravity has a tendency to come off their toast. So there it just floats, I guess, and that sticks to the wall. So, you know, that's one of the things they have to take off. So I just feel like there's a lot of silly facts in there that he might gravitate to.

Kaytee Cobb 37:38

Excellence. I like that gravitate put in there too. I feel like that's perfect for for an astronaut book. Nicely played. Okay, well, that means that this week, we have three nonfiction picks again, which of course it's not intentional. But my third book this week is Hola Papi by John Paul Brammer. So this is my light hearted addition to today's reads. Hola Papi is the gay man's version of Dear Sugar, or Dear Abby, and it definitely needs to go on your list. It is hilarious. Even the blurb for this one named JP as we call him, the Cheryl Strayed for younger queer people everywhere. But I hadn't read that yet when I sent it to again Mary Heim, and told her she needed to get this onto her TBR stack immediately. It made me think of her because the very first time she was on the show she pressed Dear Sugar by Cheryl Strayed, as her first book press ever on Currently Reading. JP is biracial and growing up in the center of the US where most towns are not so gay friendly. He earns the moniker Papi on the gay hookup app Grindr. When he's offered an advice column through Grindr, he shared that a 20 Something knows basically nothing and can offer zero good advice but takes the role anyway. Because money is tight, and you do

what you have to do to survive. He then gives us hilarious, but mostly insightful wisdom about coming out of the closet. Whether it's possible to be too gay, hooking up with guys you've known since grade school and more. Of course, this may not sound like something you listener or you Roxanna think you need advice on right neither of us needs to come out of the closet or hook up with guys we've known since grade school, but that's okay. I also don't need advice on those things. The way he weaves in his personal stories alongside universal truths about loving yourself and accepting who you are, made it a powerful albeit short read for me as well. There were so many lines that I texted directly to my gay bestie Shad, and we laugh together about them. I'm sure I ruined the book for shad. If you're not him, and you need a slump buster, a short book that will have you grasping your side with giggles pick this one up and message me all your favorite moments because you can't ruin it for me. I've already read them and I just want to relive them again. It was so fun. There are so many lines in here that like I want to say right now, but I don't want to ruin it for anybody else when they get to come across that same gem. So this was *Hola Papi* by John Paul Bremmer.

Kaytee Cobb 37:47

That sounds so great. And you know, so many people love *Dear Sugar*, like what a great way to sort of relive that. But in a kind of more modern fresh context, it just sounds and it sounds so funny. Sounds like a great one.

Kaytee Cobb 40:22

Very fresh and funny. And even the cover, it's, it's like over the top. Ridiculous. I adored it. It's very fun.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 40:30

I love that a little bit of over to the top ridiculousness for the end of your summer.

Kaytee Cobb 40:34

Exactly. That's what we all need. Okay, so those were our six current reads. Which means now it's time for our deep dive where we get to talk about books set in different countries. And I'm going to set this up a little bit Roxanna, I'm very glad we're talking about this, because it's important to me, but I'm terrible at it. I have a big giant spreadsheet that bookish friends get access to and I put it together every year and this year is there's a map for author nationality, where the authors are from, right, and it fills in automatically based on what you put into your spreadsheet. Which means it's very obvious my shortfall in this area, when the United States is very dark blue, the UK has a little tint of blue, and then there's a few other countries that are kind of gray. And that's because between the US the UK and Canada, that's 85% of my reads. That means of of the other 192 countries in the world. They only make up 15% of the books that I've read so far this year as of August 15 2022, which to me feels like a huge shortcoming. And so I really want to get into how do I fix it, Roxanna, fix me? How do I find great books written by people from other countries? And why do I care?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 41:51

Okay, well, that's a great question, Kaytee. And I will say you're not alone. I also, by the way, use and love your reading tracker, as many of us do.

Kaytee Cobb 41:59

It's for true nerds.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 42:00

It's what it's so good, right? Like, like we talked about off the top of the show, it's really good at helping you diagnose, you know, see patterns, and then realize, okay, you know, I would love to pick up some more of reads from different countries, or I've been reading a lot of, you know, rom coms, which is fine, but maybe that says something. I love that reading tracker for just, you know, kind of seeing how my reading has been over the last few months. We're so good at living day to day and not so great at seeing the longer term. So it's great for sort of bringing things to the forefront and like you said, you notice things like, okay, maybe I'm not reading a lot of books from other countries. Right. So I honestly, you know, it's I will say it's challenging. I love to read off the beaten path, as I call it. And I find that's partly because, you know, I have the opposite of FOMO. So I don't know if that's MOFO...

Kaytee Cobb 42:50

Oh, no, I hope not. No, I think it's it's joy of missing out. It's JOMO.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 42:57

JOMO. Okay, okay. Yeah, I don't want to read what everybody's reading. I want to read what everyone is not reading. And that may be because, you know, I did my degree in English. I read a lot of sort of Western authors from university and then afterwards, but then I did, I think it was in university, I started seeing a lot of books coming out of India, you know, when the Indian literature was becoming really popular, like Arundhati Roy and Vikram Seth and Rohinton Mistry, and it really made me think like, wow, there's a lot of great books in different parts of the world that I just haven't been exposed to. But then I, you know, out of school, I kind of fell off the literature literary fiction bandwagon, because I just wanted to read sort of fun books. And I found there weren't a lot of, of books in other countries that were accessible to me that were not literary fiction. And so actually, using a reading tracker, I realized, okay, I really need to up my books that I'm reading from other countries. And that's because I was reading a lot of books, I was reading more Own Voices, which I love. But I do find that the books that come at least into Canada and America are often about an experience from a different country, but interfaced with the Western world. So whether that's an immigrant experience, or whether that's someone visiting a different land, it's usually you know, kind of how Western worlds sort of interact with different cultures. But you don't get a lot of stories about just what is that experience like, you know, of living in a different country and what are some of the challenges people are going through? So I have been trying to read I will say, I still read a lot of you know, font list and I get a lot of recommendations and I read a lot of, you know, popular books, but I do try to switch it up every now and again, I really try hard to find books that represent a different experience just so it can open my eyes and and also just really, they're just very different stories. So it's nice to sort of infuse some of that into my reading too.

Kaytee Cobb 44:56

I love that. Have you been able I mean, do you try and hone in on countries that you've never read from? Or are you just game for anything that's not Canadian or us or whatever is already populating itself,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 45:12

I don't hone in. I find that it's so hard to find. Sometimes these books that if I try to hone in, then I'm even, like, if I, if I try to make it, planning it too much, then it never happens. Or I get frustrated, because I can't find books, and then I'm out. So I just, I'm open to anything, but it has to be well written. And I do honestly use Goodreads ratings a lot. Because it's hard to know, right? Like, it's hard to know if a book is going to land for you or not. And so sometimes it's just the experience of writing from that country may be different and not what you expect, which is fine. But sometimes the books are genuinely, you know, not for me. So I go by, I look at Goodreads ratings. But often, the rating doesn't really tell me very much. I look at the reviews. And I look at the four star reviews. And I look at the three star reviews and the two star reviews. And often, you know, the reviews will tell me something whether the review itself tells me something if people didn't like it, because there wasn't enough action in it. Okay, well, I know that's not something I'm concerned with, right? Like I'm looking at, right? Is this a real telling from this country? And then I will pick it up based on that.

Kaytee Cobb 46:12

Interesting. Okay, so you don't have this long term goal to have read something from every country and you are slowly, you know, filling in a printed map of the world?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 46:22

Oh, my God, no, that sounds amazing. But so stressful, that like, there's no way. I don't even have a percentage or something. I just kind of if I find a book, if I hear about a book, I'm instantly gravitating there, so I will I will pick it up. But no, I mean, ideally, maybe one day in my life, I would go there, but that just sounds very stressful. I have nothing like that now. But wouldn't it be great to have like a six foot map in your house where you could call a rain or put a pushpin upon every country you've read from? That does sound amazing?

Kaytee Cobb 46:53

It does. And I say this as I sip my coffee out of my planned reader mug this morning, which does say I love reading on a theme, a monthly TBR. And I'm the boss of me. So if I, if I wanted to make that happen, I feel like I totally could. I feel like I could just say, you know, this year, I'm going to read the world. And that's my primary goal in my reading life. And it would make for a very rich and interesting reading life. Although I do feel like I would, I would run into exactly what you're talking about here, which is not being able to find books that fit what I want to read at the time. Yeah, and getting stuck.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 47:30

And that's why I don't hold it too tightly. To be honest. I think in my head, I would have loved to do that. And in fact, when I first you know, started hearing about Own Voices books, I said, I'm going to read only Own Voices books, like never again, and I've read a lot of white male authors, I've done my English degree. And it really started stressing me out to be honest, because I'd hear about recommendations or I'm an I'm a mood reader, right? So I'd start something, and they'd be like, but this isn't what I want to read all but I should read it and you know, should kills all reading, right? So it was it was really tough. So then when I decided that I wanted to read books from other countries, I was like, Okay, let me not hold it this tightly. Let me just say that I'm open to these and as I'm going to, I'm going to try to find new sources of them. Like I'm going to actively try to find different recommendations, and

I'm going to research them, and I'm going to, you know, see what I can find. But I'm not going to put any sort of goal about how many I want to read, I'm not going to do a map of the country and say I want to read these in these in these because sometimes, you know, it's the mood you're in. And also sometimes you are open to maybe different narrative tellings. And sometimes you just want like a linear traditional story to just fill, you know, that's what you need at that moment. So I also want to be conscious, like, you know, I'm weaving these in through other maybe summer blockbusters or other things I have on my backless pics. And I read them as they make sense. And they usually honestly add a lot more that way. It's like trying to a delicacy that you haven't had and then going back to your macaroni and cheese and then picking it up again. It just tastes fresher that way.

Kaytee Cobb 49:02

Interesting. Okay, so I have another question about this for you. We both live in very large geographic countries, right from the east coast of Canada, to the west coast of Canada is, what 3000 miles or so. I mean, it's huge. Because, right, it's some number of kilometers. And the same thing here with the United States. I've always lived on the west coast, so there's a whole different culture around the East Coast of the US, the southern quarter of the US. Do you intentionally try to read further afield in your own country or how does Canadian reading stack up for you as far as your stats for the year ago?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 49:47

Oh, God, I love that question. So good and kind of I will say I you know, I wish I had given thought to this because it's such a great question. I will say I do the Canadian experiences is very wide and varied just like it is in the US, and Canlit, it's really great. And I feel like it doesn't get enough, you know, profile, even sometimes in Canada itself. So like our east coast, the maritimers have a very specific defined culture, that's amazing and that you don't necessarily hear of because population wise, it's a smaller part of the country, a very small part of the country. Quebec obviously is its own separate, you know, they call it a distinct society, you know, just even just their values, their culture, their language is very different. The Prairies, so Canada is very split up as well. And I do find, though, that CBC does a great job of bringing a lot of these books to life. So you know, Canada Reads, for example, is a great way to get books geographically, but also, you know, just the distinct cultures in Canada, and some of the some of the issues. So, you know, a lot of First Nations issues, Indigenous peoples, there's a lot of focus now on telling those stories that there hasn't been in the past. And so reading some of those stories really, really, is powerful, too. So I do try to bring that into my reading, probably, honestly, not as much as I would like. But I do try to read and I and also I like to read, you know, often these books that you read from other countries or even from your own country, they're sometimes about, okay, that experience and how hard that experience was, or the trauma of that experience. And I sometimes like to read just about the joy of what it's like living in these places, not because I don't want to read about hard things. But because I sometimes feel like that is overlooked in telling that experience, you sometimes miss all the amazing things about this culture, or this region, or this people that sometimes, you know, you really want to learn about and are really important to learn about. So sometimes I tried to vary my reading like that, too. So I'm reading Yes, like a deeper, heavier book, but then I'm reading a lighter book that's talking about the joy of being from a certain area as well.

Kaytee Cobb 51:55

Okay, that's, that's a new life goal for me, I want to curate where I want somebody else to do it actually, a list of books from all over the world that are about the joy of living in a certain place that aren't just about the difficult because I will say like you just mentioned Arundhati Roy, and I read The Ministry of Utmost Happiness about a month and a half ago and I felt like I was depressed the whole way through. It was such a hard read. Everybody's life story was so difficult. In that book, it just, it's called The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. I felt like false advertising. It just gutted me.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 52:33

Right. And, and those people, those cultures have joyful stories, you know, they want to share them like they, they live there, because it's a joyful place. And there's lots of lovely things. So, you know, I'm reading right now a book called Lallan Sweets, which is by Srishti Chaudhary, which you know, is about it's actually like a rom com set in Siaka, which is like a little, a little seaside village in India. And she is working at this sweet store, her grandfather's sweet store called Lallan Sweets, and he decides he's going to you know, he's retiring, he's going to give it to one of his three grandchildren. She's one of them, and he says, but in order to inherit the store, you need to find the secret to our ladoos. So ladoos is like they're like little Indian sweets that are really, really delicious. And everybody in this town calls the ones from Lallan Sweets "Lallan ke Ladoo". They're like they're famous for them. They have some magical ingredients. So he sends Tara, which is the girl's name, and her two cousins off on this jaunt across India to find the secret ingredient for these ladoos. And she goes out on a motorcycle with her grade school crush and they go to find you know what the secret ingredients is. So you know, sometimes you just want like a light story and it's filled with like, 90 songs. It's set in the 90s. It's filled with 90 songs and old Bollywood movies from that time. And I loved reading when I looked at the reviews, they were mostly from people living in India saying this was a really fun book. And it reminded me a lot of things and I thought, you know, this will be a great way to just sort of dig into something. It's like, it's like when you go to a new land. And you're like, I don't want to go to the tourist Lonely Planet. You know where

Kaytee Cobb 54:13

the TripAdvisor top 10 Yeah,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 54:15

exactly right. I want to go to like the one the locals go to. So I look for the local reviews Goodreads and see what they say and be like, okay, they liked it. Okay, I'm gonna try this one and see how it goes. So I do find sometimes those books are under the radar, but they're just so fun. And they give you a different perspective on the country too.

Kaytee Cobb 54:31

I love it. I think that's such a great way to add some breadth to our own reading lives. And I thank you for taking the time to think through it even vocally on mic with me here today and help us all process what this might look like for ourselves,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 54:47

of course, and I will just say a couple of things just for people who are looking, you know, like I didn't really talk about how do I find these books? And I feel like that's important for people. So I will say you know, a great a couple of great resources for me So First BookRiot, the website is really great for that they have you know, those top 10 lists, they do a really good job of finding them there. I used to listen to the podcast Get Booked, which is on hiatus now but has like 400 past episodes where they did a really great job of diving into books that weren't always, you know, on the radar. And then I find in Goodreads when I find a book like this, like, for example, in sweets or a book, you know, setting in a different country. If you scroll down, and Goodreads it has a decent readers also enjoyed section where you can find books and that algorithm isn't run by what's most popular. It's just other ones that people have enjoyed. And often I find books there that are off the radar that are written in that country too. So that's really helpful. The Strong Sense of Place podcast by David Humphries and Melissa Jewel, when is their great one, they do a good job of bringing those those reads to the forefront. And then you know, as I said, CBC is great for that. They talk not just Canadian books, but books from all over and it has a CBC has a certain radio show called The Next Chapter, which does feature new Canadian authors talking about their books, and they have an episode every season called The Mystery Book Panel, where they have three Canadian booksellers mystery booksellers come in and talk about their favorite mysteries. So those are really fun ways to sort of, you know, explore this reading, but not make it a big academic exercise. And then just pick up the ones you find you that call to you.

Kaytee Cobb 56:23

Perfect, great list of resources for us in the show notes for this episode, then, thanks, Roxanna.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 56:28

Thank you, this is so fun to talk about.

Kaytee Cobb 56:31

Alright, so now we get to get into the fountain, which means we are inviting you into your perfect garden. At the very center is a fountain. It can be whatever type of fountain you like. Roxanna, what kind of fountain do you picture in your garden?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 56:47

Well, I will say I love those trickling garden fountains in those beautiful gardens where you just hear like the sound of the of the water just trickling down and they're always in beautiful gardens that I would never be able to maintain. I would kill them. But in my mind's eye. It's a beautiful, lush sort of English garden with this fountain.

Kaytee Cobb 57:06

Yes, somebody else maintains my garden and my fountain also. I cannot be in charge of keeping all those things alive. So you walk up to your fountain, you get your coin ready. And Roxanna, why don't you start us out with making a wish for your fountain?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 57:22

Sure. Okay. So here I am coming up to my fountain, I'm going to throw in my coin. Ping. Not as good as Meredith's ping, but I'm trying here.

Kaytee Cobb 57:31

It has to splash.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 57:33

It has to splash. Oh splash... Yes, yes, there it goes into the fountain now. I see it. And I'm going to bring a wish that I've had for a while that has finally actually come true. So you know, as we just talked about, I've been reading off the beaten path, all these books in different countries. And because of that I've become really interested in world maps. So I know Meredith talked about this too, with her Atlas a little while ago, you know, I will say off the top, I'm super spatially directionally challenged. But I love maps, you know. I love them for their beauty. Yes. But I also love them for how beautiful and efficient they are in delivering information. And, and they really root me in a story. But what I've wished for for a long time is a map that can tell me a little bit about the history of a place so you know, as I'm reading these books, often they mentioned big events in this country that I you know, don't know about. So if I'm or don't know enough about. So if I'm reading a book that talks about the opium wars between Britain and China, or partition in India, or the Korean War, you know, I'd love to have a map that could give me an overview of what actually happened, what the effects were on the country and the people. Basically what I want is one of those old school Encyclopedia Britannica is where I could like, you know, when I was a kid, I would sit on the couch and pull on those huge books into my lap and turn to a random page and like read and kind of just get immersed in two pages of this magical world. And guess what? I have found just, I'm so excited, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 59:10

Tell us all about it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 59:12

So that's my wish coming true. It's called this book is called The History of the World Map by Map. And it's by DK and the Smithsonian Institution. So this book is a marvel this again, you know, as you guys were talking, you and Meredith, were talking about coffee table books and how to use them. This is a beautiful heavy coffee table book that consists of 140 maps, alongside stunning pictures and informative timelines that really give you kind of an overview of what happened in a region and really bring history to life around that world. So they talk about the battle. They'll show you want the map where that battle happened, then they'll show you the next step. And this is where this happens. So you can kind of situate it to you know, sometimes when you're reading they talk about cities that are close together in a country and you can't really, you don't really have a mental map for that. This brings it up. So, you know, I look at it now all the time, I can look up the colonisation and independence of countries in Africa, I can look up the Mughal rain in India, I can look at the Vietnam War. And it's really invaluable for rooting me in a place in time, and giving me just enough context to understand. So this is not going to go super deep. It's not like reading, you know, another nonfiction book about that country. But it gives me what I need to know, and is a great overview to route me in that book. And then I can always read more afterwards, it's so much fun to flip through. And it just made me realize how much of world history

I actually didn't have a good enough grasp of. And so this is when you can just keep on your dining room table. And as you're having a cup of tea stop, you know, read two or three pages, and then, you know, or one page, just focus on one page, because there's so much information packed on it, and then come back to another time or if you're reading a book, and you want to pause and flip to that part. You can read that and then come back to it. It's been really, really great.

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:03

That sounds excellent. It sounds like something perfect for my homeschool shelf as well. So I'm gonna have to find a copy for myself. Okay, I am approaching my fountain. And this week, I will wish that I could keep better track of books coming to the screen. So this past week, my husband and I started watching the Sandman on Netflix. It's based on the book by Neil Gaiman. It's dark and atmospheric and a little bit creepy. And I've read a number of Neil Gaiman titles I loved Stardust, I pressed it on the show. I've read Coraline, American Gods, talked about Norse Mythology last summer on the show. The Graveyard Book was excellent. So not just one or two, I've read quite a bit of Neil Gaiman. But I haven't read The Sandman. If I had a better way to keep track of these things coming forward towards the screen or maybe if I cared more, I would have read the book prior to the Netflix show releasing. So now I'm an animal, and I'm just watching the show, willy nilly without having read any book. And that's fine. It's totally fine. Reader, you are allowed to watch the show without having read the books. I also watched Bridgerton without having read any Bridgerton. It's okay to do that. But why isn't it easier to do? This as an author I like, one that I've read many of his books, and then this big show is coming to the screen and I had no idea until you know the day before it showed up on Netflix. So if you listen or have a good system for this message me and let me know how you keep track of what's coming up on the screen that you've already read or that you want to get to before it comes because I would like to have something to compare it to. And I don't yet so this is my demerit for myself my wish into the fountain that I would keep better track of books coming to the screen, and I will throw my coin in with a ping splash.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:02:57

But you know, that's such a such a great wish, Kaytee, because you're so right, like, are you supposed to follow every author and every streaming service for them to announce like what, how and who? How would you compile that? Like why why does that have to be on you? Like they want to market the book. Right? That's that is now leading to the series. So you'd think there would be an easy way or some sort of app that would kind of give you notifications or something I bet you some readers listening to this right now saying, oh my god Kaytee needs to know about and you will be flooded with I hope interesting solutions because this is a common reader problem. And I'm with you, I would love to see at least have the option. I may not always read the book like Bridgerton I didn't but I would love to have the option so I could if I wanted to and and know about it before it comes out.

Kaytee Cobb 1:03:43

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

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:03:55

And you can find me Roxanna at @Roxannatheplanner on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 1:03:59

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

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:04:08

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

Kaytee Cobb 1:04:15

And if you really want to help us become a patron it's just five bucks a month. That helps keep the show ad free and helps us create content that you love. You can also shout us out on social media. All of those make a huge difference and are being able to find our perfect audience.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:04:30

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

Kaytee Cobb 1:04:35

Until next week, may your coffee be hot,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:04:38

and your book be unputdownable.

Kaytee Cobb 1:04:39

Happy reading Roxanna,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:04:41

Happy reading Kaytee