



Season 5, Episode 9: Buried In Books + All Things Trigger Warnings

Mon, 9/26 • 56:07

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 don't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I am looking forward to some bookish therapy today.

Kaytee Cobb 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and I don't often reread, but when I do I pick books that make me sad a lot. This is episode number nine of season five, and we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:55

Ooh, Kaytee, are you going to tell us what you reread?

Kaytee Cobb 00:58

I did. I did a reread. It's my bookish moment. I'll tell you all about it. I have a lot of words.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:03

Okay. All right. Good. I'm very interested in because you do never reread. So that's, that's very interesting. Okay. So we will let you guys know, right up at the top that we are going to do a mini deep dive today on trigger warnings. What are they? Why do we care about them? Do we care about them? How do we do them? How do you find them? How does it affect your reading? All of that good stuff. So that is coming up later. But before we get into that, let's talk about our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, I can't wait any longer. What's your bookish moment?

Kaytee Cobb 01:37

Okay, so every once in a while I pull in our homeschool insanity here that we do, and this week, I'm going to say that we finished our first read aloud of the year and it was the remarkable journey of coyote sunrise by Dan Gemeinhart. And I knew that I wanted to read this book aloud to my kids. And I knew that when I read it to myself, many a couple of years ago, it was very poignant and touching, and I cried in the grocery store while I listened to the audiobook, but I was like, "That's fine. I can handle a read aloud where I cry". Meredith, this one has now taken over the top spot for the book that made mommy cry the most while she read aloud to us. It was so oh my gosh, this man just got me in my feels over and over and over again. So yesterday after we finished I made them write up a book report and not in the way that we think of it that went to school in the 80s and 90s. But in the way that I basically made them write a Currently Reading current read blurb for it. So I said, "Okay, you got to give the title and author. You got to say, 'Here's the setup', you got to give a little bit of the plot and then you have to say how you felt about it". So collectively, we all wrote a blurb for it. And then I'm putting it into their school year notebooks for the year so that at the end of the year, they can flip through all their current reads, which are the read alouds that we did together. And they will have that full blurb for each one that has a little plot, a little bit of a review, and a little bit about the the book itself in you know, kind of a single page format. And I'm very excited about it. So that's my bookish moment.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:11

I think that is a great, great idea, a great way to kind of bring all their reading together. And I think that reading something aloud is definitely the way to have it bring a lot of emotion. Right, like I think it's the hardest thing to do is to read something. What's that horrible picture book that I won't own? I refuse to own? I won't let...

Kaytee Cobb 03:35

I'll love you forever.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:37

Thank you. That one. I can flip through that in a bookstore and I'm fine. You ask me to read that aloud to my child or my grandchild? No. cannot do it. So yes, tears were warranted for for that one.

Kaytee Cobb 03:51

So many times, though. I mean, I was like, Well, I know that I'll cry at the end. But it was like chapter seven, Chapter 20 Chapter 22. Like just over and over again. They were like, oh, geez, here she goes again. It was bad.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:05

Oh Jeez. Oh, no. Okay. All right. Kaytee, my bookish moment of the week is where I need some bookish therapy because...

Kaytee Cobb 04:15

Excellent.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:16

I think I need to quit NetGalley. Thoughts on that. Oh, no, let me tell you a little bit more. So right. No. So I for the longest was not Netgalley, right? You know this because you you helped me and you know, get onto it at all. But then as our traffic grew and Kaytee you were like, you really should be on NetGalley because we you know have a pretty high approval rating. You can get some good stuff. And I was like, okay, so then I went on it and found that yeah, I Yeah, it's pretty easy to get a lot of Yeah. And so I started I started really going crazy on my downloads and my requests and then I started just like acting like an apocalypse was upon us and I was never going to be able to load anything into my Kindle again. And so I just I, I, I'm just gonna admit that I loaded up 72 books from Netgalley.

Kaytee Cobb 05:19

in like three months? You haven't even had it long.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:22

Yes, like, two things happened, neither of which are good. Number one, my feedback rating is a measly 20%. And I have to work to get it at 20%. That is they want 80% right? So that's... that ain't good. And I'm a real like, performance based individual, right. So that 20% is really itching at my desire to be the best at NetGalley. And clearly, right. Okay. So the second thing is, here's what I've learned Kaytee, and I think you have a handle on this. There's a lot of new books that come out, are coming out, that are not yet out, that are not good. Mm hmm. And I have read more mediocre or bad Kindle books in the past three months than I ever have in my lifetime. But I feel like I have to always be reading one. Because I feel like I need to get that that feedback rating up. And also, I have found a couple of really good one, like, I definitely have read some that are, you know, I've read some early that I am really excited to talk about. So what do you think I should do? Because the thing is that reading bad books makes all of us grumpy. We none of us like to read or even get a goodly amount into a bad book or book that doesn't work for us right now. But for us, it's even worse. Because if I, you know, I need books for the show. So I can't spend a lot of time spinning my wheels. So I'm feeling very frustrated.

Kaytee Cobb 07:00

I think there are, there are stages to being a NetGalley reader, and you're going through like the stages of grief, basically.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:08

I feel like that might be true. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 07:11

That's exactly what's happening, right. So I can tell you that when I go into my NetGalley account, and it's like, it's time to give feedback on these titles, I'm pretty good at staying up on the ones that I'm reading now, or that are coming up pretty soon. And there are there like maybe 15 at the bottom that I've had on NetGalley that I need to get feedback on for like, seven years, because I never wanted to read those books. I should never requested them in the first place. So what I do is going forward, I was very judicious. And I really like narrowed that down. And if there were books on there that I was interested in, but no longer felt like either I wanted to read them on my Kindle, or maybe I wanted to knock them out quickly, I would, now they're post release, right. So I would just grab them on audio from

a library, knock them out, go put in some feedback. And that would slowly bump that up. Because I did have a period of time when I was down to like 40%. And people were declining my request. And I was like, wait, I'm a podcaster How come you don't want me to read your book? And they're like, because you're garbage at reviewing them and actually coming back and giving us thoughts on them. So right, it was a personal goal for me as well. It was a journey that I had to go on.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:19

Okay, so I think probably what I need to do is just really have a come to Jesus with myself and pare down what I know I'm not going to read. And now here's my question for you. I think a lot of us use NetGalley, Kaytee, when you decide you're not going to read it, do you say in that galley, I'm not going to give feedback on this? Or do you just delete it and forget it?

Kaytee Cobb 08:44

I have done that a few times, but not very many. So I don't have data on how that affects your feedback ratio. I don't know if that then removes it from your denominator or your numerator and how that is divided after the fact. So I've only done it a couple times. And most of them the rest of them are just sitting there those the the 15 or 20 kind of books of shame from my startup with NetGalley that that was a little bit overboard, like you're talking about.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:13

Okay, so how do you decide what you are going to request? If because my problem is that a lot of these books seem like they're easy. They're seem like they're going to be great, but then they're not, some of them shockingly, not good, really bad. One of which I'm actually going to bring to the show because it's by a big name, author, and I have a lot of thoughts on that. Not today. I'm not gonna bring it today, but I will bring that to the show. But how do you decide what you are going to request?

Kaytee Cobb 09:42

I never browse NetGalley anymore. I only go on so for instance, just this past week I talked about Jackal by Erin Adams in an episode of Trope Thursday with Katie and Bunmi and I did request that title on NetGalley because it was something I had looked into, I had researched it, it had already been kind of promoted or talked about by Bill, book boyfriend Bill, An Unlikely Story. And so I so you know, it's pretty sure it was going to be a good fit for me. But I will not just go on and be like, Hey, are there any authors that I like on here? Is there anything I could read now? Like, I don't sit in the sandbox and play there. I only go in with one specific purpose.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:20

Okay, I think that's probably exactly what I need to do. Because I'm just absolutely drowning in galleys, and it's not helping. It's not helping anybody. And it's frustrating, right. So okay, yeah. I'm just making a note in real time here that I definitely that because Jackal that episode of Trope Thursday was so good. And I got several books from you and Bunmi that I was like, oh, that sounds excellent. Jackal was one of those. So, okay. All right. So let's talk about some of these current reads. Kaytee, what have you got first?

Kaytee Cobb 10:54

Okay, the first one I have is actually a Kindle read and it was a similar situation in that I used to be very excited about Amazon first reads, which is when you're a prime member at the beginning of the month, they have like six to 10 books that they give people for free to try and drum up some publicity, right? So I used to be very excited, I would load up my Kindle with all these free books and then I never read them, so I stopped doing that too. So this one is called *The Bennet Women* by Eden Appiah-Kubi. I picked it up more than a year ago, but finally actually read it this past summer when I wasn't sure what I wanted to read after finishing a galley on my Kindle, but it seemed like everybody else loved and I did not like very much so I was floundering a little bit. This one is a modern retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, as you might be able to tell from the title, but rather than focusing on the sisters and one family, we are going to Bennet house, the only all women's dorm at Longbourn University which is of course a made up place that is not real. These three close friends are all about to have an eventful year, and we get to follow along with their story. So this is a new adult novel, and that the friends we are following are in college kind of finishing up their senior years of college so thinking 22 ish for each of these three women. First we meet EJ who is Elizabeth right? She is an ambitious, Black engineering student and the RA or resident assistant for the dorm for Bennet house. Her bestie Jamie is newly out as trans. And Tessa, our third Musketeer is a Filipina astronomy major with guy trouble. Each of the three women recognizes Bennet house as home. They formed a very deep friendship like a found family almost along with some of the other ladies in the house. When EJ and Jamie meet Lee and Will, sparks fly between Jamie and Lee. But that means EJ and Will end up being kind of their double date third wheel situation, which is fine, except Will is kind of an a-hole. He's recently gone through a breakup with Hollywood starlet who was using him to raise her profile. And he just wants to keep his head down and get through school. He's an actor himself. And he is handsome with very nice abs, like his abs are a character in the story themselves. But again, he's an a-hole. The first meeting between EJ and Will he's like taking down her favorite diner and making fun of the dress she wore out that night. And he's just like digging himself in a hole. As the fall of their senior year turns to spring, EJ wants to set herself up for success. But Will is turning into a distraction and maybe more of one than he's worth. or so it seems. For this book, I really loved the intentional but chill diversity worked in throughout the novel. There's like I said, there's a Black woman, there's a trans woman, there's a Filipino woman, Will is Asian. There, I mean, we're all over the entire world with our characters in this novel. I loved the nods to *Pride and Prejudice* while totally updating the setting and the characters there. I liked the college timeline and the new adult protagonist because again, they're a little bit smarter and more well rounded than the teenagers in YA novels. But I felt it was at least 72 pages too long, not 72 I felt it was a mistake that's 70 pages

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:10

very specific how many pages

Kaytee Cobb 14:13

72 That extra two pages, we got to take those out. The middle strangely, was my favorite part. Unlike most of the books that we say this about the beginning and the end, both could have been tightened up a bit to make the story have a better flow. What I will say though, is that this book is rife with diversity without being depressing. There's a lot of joy in here in the characters lives and sometimes that's missing in our reading, especially when we're trying to incorporate more diversity because publishers

want books about diversity that show the struggles and the hardships and this one is joyful. There's plenty of real life. There's late night diner visits, preparing for college events and applying for internships. Overall I found it charming, but again, a bit too long. This was the Bennett women by Eden Appiah-Kubi

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:58

and this was this author's first book, right? That's how...

Kaytee Cobb 15:02

and so far only book still. Yeah, only book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:05

I was gonna ask that. Okay. All right, good. That sounds good. All right, so my first book Kaytee is one that came to me from a very trusted recommendation source, which is how I really honestly probably need to find my books. This is *Death in the Family* by Tessa Wegert. This came to me from Elizabeth Barnhill from *Fabled*. Here's the setup. 13 months before our book starts our lead character, former NYPD detective Shana Merchant, barely survived being attacked by a serial killer, as one does. So she needs a big huge change of pace and to get it she takes a job in her fiance's sleepy hometown in the Thousand Islands region of upstate New York. But a huge storm sweeps into Thousand Islands and Shana and her police partner Tim receive a call about a man on a private island who has gone missing. So Shannon and Tim travel to the very isolated island owned by the wealthy Sinclair family to question all the witnesses and try to find out what happened to this man. They arrived to find blood on the scene and a house full of Sinclair family and their friends. So basically, we have an island full of sketchy, rich people. Tim, the partner, the police partner immediately assumes that they're dealing with a guy who's just left the island of his own volition, but Shana is convinced from the start that a murder has taken place. As the storm intensifies, she sets about conducting interviews, and she quickly discovers that the Sinclair's and their guests are crawling with secrets. At this point, though, they are all trapped on the island by the storm and time is ticking down because if Shana's right, a killer is in their midst. And as the pressure mounts, so do the odds that someone else will die. All right, again, this one is this was a five star read for me. This is *locked room locked Island* at its best. It's so so very good. Elizabeth recommended it and she talks about it on *All Things Murderful*. As soon as she did, I was like madly ordering it because I just knew that this was going to be a hit. And it was. It has absolutely everything in it that I love. It is a literary mystery. This is smart writing. It has a great male female police partnership that is purely platonic. We're not messing around with any will they won't they among the policeman. It has a locked room plotline, which I like, although I may be getting to the end of how many more of these I want to read right now because we are getting a glut of them. It has rich people behaving very badly and the plot is complicated enough to be interesting, but not so much that it's convoluted or frustrating. And I loved the Shana Merchant character and was delighted to hear that this is already a four book series. I immediately as soon as I close the page on this one, but the next one, what I will say is if you read Lucy Foley's books and you loved their concept and their premises, but you hated the way that she executed on it, this book may be for you. That's actually probably a pretty good way to describe this that Tessa Wegert is like the thinking woman's Lucy Foley. If you loved Alice Feeney's *Daisy Darker* but you like the police procedural elements, which is missing in *Daisy Darker*, then this book will work wonderfully for you. This book is smart, as I said, but it is not gory, which I always try to

mention because it just doesn't happen very often, that you get really good quality crime fiction without there being a lot of blood and guts. This book is perfect for my murderous HSPs. The one thing I will say that I hate about this book is that I hate it's utterly forgettable title. I think they could have done better. Death in the Family, despite its double meaning just doesn't stick in your mind. I think they should have called it Death at Turn Island, and at least would have been more memorable. But that is a small quibble in what is a five star book. We need more smart mysteries like this one. And it is perfect for your fall reading. This is whether or not we like it Death in the Family by Tessa Wegert.

Kaytee Cobb 19:19

Perfect. I got some Lucy Foley vibes there. So I'm glad that you clarified that it is the thinking woman's Lucy Foley

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:35

Definitely. Definitely better written.

Kaytee Cobb 19:37

Okay, my second book this week is a little bit niche. But I'm going to talk about The Writing Revolution by Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler. I have already personally pressed this book into the hands of many teachers, homeschool and otherwise, so I want to share about it here as well. I know we have a lot of teachers in our audience. I know we have a number of homeschoolers and I know we have a lot of parents or people associated with kids in school. That's why I'm going to talk about it today. So here's a little backstory. Last year, I gave my two older kids standardized tests to see how I was doing as their teacher. And overall, they completely blew me out of the water, I was so amazed, they tested well above grade level, in every subject. In writing, though, they were just meeting standards for the grades that they're in, but not excelling in any way and that told me I needed to make sure to at least keep up what I was doing, but maybe focus a little more in that area, which is why we do testing, right. I contacted bookish friend Erin Wallace and asked her about her own writing programs, because she was just about to send her final students to regular school. So she offered to send me the book that she had used, which is this one, The Writing Revolution. She turned them into good writers with this book. So I accepted with pleasure, skip forward again to early August, when I knew I needed to get my butt in gear. And I'm reading this entire book in just a couple of days and using up multiple highlighters in the process like running out of ink in multiple highlighters. This whole book is a whole school approach rather than just a book for writing teachers, it brings writing instruction to every classroom and talks about how to apply it in math, science and history, as well as the places you'd traditionally expect to see it. What is so different about this method, you might be asking me, you're using content to create the exercises rather than having a separate writing curriculum that is disconnected from everything else your students are learning. They might do a because but so exercise about the combination of atoms and chemistry, or a colonel expansion activity about the ways that the Revolutionary War shaped the United States. The exercises that are recommended here are easy to implement, fun to execute and easy to adapt to different grade levels, which was really key for me, because I have a sixth grader, a fourth grader, a second grader, and a preschooler and all four of them sit around the table together with me, and I'm able to expand them for some grades and contract them for others in order to make it a really good fit for everyone. I wanted to bring this to the show because even if you aren't a homeschool teacher, or a traditional school teacher, these are not hard exercises to implement at home, even

around the dinner table if you've got a writer that's struggling in any way, heck, they make adult writing better, as well. I'm recommending this book for anyone who wants to write better themselves or wants to create some space for simple exercises at home, even around the dinner table to allow for the exploration of writing technique. It's really that effective and that simple. And I'm super grateful to Erin for sending me her copy of this book. It's *The Writing Revolution* by Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:41

Oh, I think that sounds really useful, especially because you like you said, you can use it for a large range age range of kids. So whether or not you're homeschooling, or you're just wanting to make sure that your kids your kids have the extra you know, that extra work outside of the class that I think that sounds really useful.

Kaytee Cobb 22:57

Yes, and it's very easy to apply for any number of teachers in any subject. So I think it was worth bringing to the show. Even if most people are gonna be like, Kaytee, I don't need a book about how to write. That's not useful.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:09

That's alright, that's why we have a fast forward button, which people are going to be using on my second book too, because it's also a little bit niche. I'm going to be talking about middle grade fairy tale, which this was one that I absolutely loved. I added it to my forever shelf. And I think it's perfect for fall reading. This is *The Silver Crown* by Robert C. O'Brien. Have you ever heard of this?

Kaytee Cobb 23:33

No. I have no idea what this is.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:36

So I hadn't either. So, here's the setup. Our lead character is Ellen. She awakens one morning with a mysterious silver crown on the pillow beside her. What magic power it possesses, she doesn't know. But the sudden changes in her life are unmistakable. Her house burns down, her family has disappeared. And a man in dark clothing is stalking her. So we ask ourselves can Ellen find her family? Can she use whatever power there is in this crown to win over these forces of darkness? And what evil force hides inside the mysterious castle in the woods? What a find Kaytee. So Robert C. O'Brien also wrote *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. And so I didn't know that he had another book and I didn't know that the other book is very much a fairy tale. So I had recently been thinking about when we had recorded the episode about books that kind of shaped us I talked about how my mom came into my class and taught *Mrs. Frisby*. One of the bookish friends mentioned that her favorite book of his was *The Silver Crown*, so I picked it up. And this is such a sweet fairy tale is written all the way back in 1968. And it has all the classic elements of a fairy tale that I love. It's got, of course, a newly orphaned girl. I love an orphan. It's got a mysterious man chasing her for equally mysterious reasons. It's got a magical crown, whose origins we don't understand and a long journey through a dark forest fraught with danger and full of loyalty and bravery. Because at the center of this book, we have the relationship between Ellen who's about 11 and her friend, the enigmatic and sweet Otto, and I love a sweet platonic

boy, girl friendship and stories like these really makes me smile, there's such an innocence to them and it's definitely true in this story. I will say big fat caveat is that the first couple chapters of this book were very jarring to me. It's not spoiling anything to tell you that poor Ellen, as I've already mentioned, has her house with her family in it burned down. Okay, this is like, very, very traumatic, and then again, not spoiling anything. In the second chapter, she happens. So she's walking away, kind of stumbling in a shocked way away from her house burning down and she's looking for a police officer to say like, my, that was my house, and my family was in it. And so she finds the security guard, and he's going to help her and then he while this is happening, he gets shot in the face. Kaytee, I was completely shocked by both of these occurrences because I thought I was reading a gentle fairy tale. From there, things proceed in a way that is still very exciting, but tracked a lot more closely to what I would expect in middle grade fairy tale fiction. But I do feel it incumbent upon me to say that those elements at the beginning and even later in the book were darker and scarier than I would want to say read aloud to my seven year old. So I really want to make sure that I'm clear about that. But that same story has all the elements that I would have loved as a 10 or 11 year old reader. It was a wonderful way to spend a few hours on a fall afternoon. And it has found its place, as I said, on my forever middle grade shelf. So it's really really lovely. It's a classic. This is *The Silver Crown* by Robert C. O'Brien.

Kaytee Cobb 27:24

That does sound interesting. I'm always I'm always shocked like that, too, when we get like some very exceptional violence in the beginning of a middle grade book where you're like, Wait, did I pick this up the wrong like part of the shelf? Am I unaware of what's going on here?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:38

Yeah, I was shocked.

Kaytee Cobb 27:40

That is shocking. But I'm glad you liked it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:42

I did. Alright, what's your third book?

Kaytee Cobb 27:44

Okay, my third book is memoir. And I can't wait to talk about it. It's *We Were Dreamers* by Simu Liu. Here's the surprising thing. This was one I only picked up because Katie Proctor told me it was good. Simu Liu, is one of Marvel's newest superheroes, Shang Chi. The subtitle of this book is *An Immigrant Superhero Origin Story*. Here's the setup. From a city in China to the Hollywood Hills Simu lets us into the good, the bad and the ugly of his life so far, and he's still young. This is kind of a messy middle memoir. He starts his memoir with a call to his parents telling them that he had just been cast as Marvel's first Asian superhero. Oh my gosh, I have goosebumps. It's not the conversation you expect from news that huge. So then we start to peel back the layers. When he was a wee little tot Simu Liu's parents left him in the care of his grandparents in order to try and build a future for themselves and eventually for him in Canada. The road to Canada is long and winding from China. You can't get there from here, right. But eventually he gets to join them in the land of maple syrup, and chronically nice people. But of course, it's not all sunshine and roses and maple syrup. See, most parents are under a

lot of stress as they try to get a shot their dreams, and that manifests in some pretty terrible ways. Not only do they hold him to impossibly high standards in his academics, but when those standards aren't met, there's both verbal and physical abuse lobbed his way. As a family, they have been separated for a long time. Simu didn't live with them until he was a full child no longer a baby. He lived with his grandparents that entire time. And they didn't live with each other for most of that time either. So none of them is really able to relate to the other person. And Simu eventually stops caring about their aspirations for him. Just out of college, he's laid off from his first job as an accountant, which is a total snooze fest and starts taking bit acting parts on Craigslist in order to make ends meet. That it turns out is where his heart starts to sing a new sound. And it's not one of white collar success and sitting behind a desk all day. It's one of making people feel something from his actions and words. The only thing that makes it possible for Simu's parents to identify with this new goal is that they were also willing to give up everything in order to chase the dream. Otherwise, he's a complete stranger to them. This memoir is so brutally honest, there are parts that are heartbreaking, while also ending on this exceptional high note of being cast and starring in the Marvel movie of his childhood dreams. What a ride it was. I was by turns bereft and laughing out loud. He narrates his own audiobook, and that makes you feel so much closer to his story. So even though I still haven't watched Shang Chi, I am glad to have met Simu and glad to have seen his dreams play out on the stage and on the screen. This is absolutely a must for famous people memoirs, even if you've never heard of them, which it turns out is total catnip for me. I don't have to know that famous person for me to really like hearing their story. So this was We Were Dreamers by Simu Liu.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:54

That sounds so great. I loved Shang Chi. He Simu Liu is V handsome, like he is very attractive, in addition to being all the other things. He is that yeah, I liked that movie a lot. I'm so glad that book was good. Okay. My third book is a book that I have been so excited to talk about because it was so good. And because of the way I found out about it. Alright, so first, let me tell you the book is called Curfew by Jayne Cowie. Kaytee, have I told you about this book?

Kaytee Cobb 31:30

I don't think so. I don't I the author doesn't even sound familiar to me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:33

Yeah, I'll bet it doesn't. It wasn't familiar to me either. Alright, here's the setup. In Curfew, our novel imagines a near future Britain in which women dominate workplaces, public spaces and government. The gender pay gap no longer exists and motherhood opens doors instead of closing them. Most importantly, most importantly, women are no longer afraid to walk home alone to cross a dark parking lot, or to catch the last train. Why is that? Because all men are electronically tagged and not allowed out after 7pm. This is called the curfew. In our story, we are following the lives of three women. Sara is a newly single mom who's rebuilt her life after her husband was sent to prison for breaking the curfew. Because they take this curfew very seriously, Kaytee. Men found even a moment late get three months in prison out of as a first offense. And if you have a second offense, you go to prison for 10 years. So this is key to know because the curfew is a very solid concept. Now Sarah's husband is about to be released. And Sarah is not expecting a happy reunion. Given that she's the reason that he was sent to prison. Her teenage daughter Cass is another character we're following. Cass hates living in a world

that restricts boys like her best friend Billy because Billy never hurt anyone. And Cass is determined to prove it is unfair. Somehow, Cass is by the way, by far my least favorite character, I wanted to smack her the entire novel. And then we have Helen, who is a teacher at the local school. Now Helen really wants to have a baby. So she's applied for what's called a Cohab certificate with her boyfriend, Tom. And she's terrified that they might not get said certificate, they have to be okayed to live together by a licensed therapist. This is one of the ways that they have really taken down the rates of domestic violence by making sure that you can't just move in with anyone you have to be proven to be a good and safe match to get your Cohab certificate. Well we know from page one that one of these three women has been violently murdered. And evidence will suggest that she died late at night. But the murderer can't have been a man, because the curfew tag is a solid alibi, isn't it? Oh my gosh, Kaytee, this book was so good. But I love how I found it a few weeks ago, one of our bookish friends put on the our Facebook group for Patreon subscribers this website which I'm actually going to talk about in more detail later on in the show, where you can go to this website it asks you what your three favorite authors are. I said Catherine Ryan Howard, Louise Penny, and Amor Towles and then it gives you an answer and all it says is the name of another author. That's all it gives you. And in this case, Jayne Cowie came up. It doesn't give you a link. It doesn't give you a book name. It doesn't give you anything. That's all it says. So I went and looked up this book looked her up and found out she only has one book out right now. This was her debut came out I believe in 2022, earlier this year, and I just I hit buy and immediately when I got it, I got so absolutely sucked in because you guys, if you love Catherine Ryan Howard, you are going to love this book. This is the closest comp I have found to Catherine Ryan Howard's fiction. So I want to say from the start, that the marketing of this book has it more focused on the dystopian elements of things, right? The kind of like this new world that we're living in where women, blah, blah, blah. The fact of the matter is, this is crime fiction. I would call it lightly dystopian crime fiction, if I was marketing it to be accurate. If you're going thinking that it's heavy on the dystopian element, I think you're going to be disappointed. The meat is an interesting plot point that starts at the discovery of the body and then goes back in time weaving in the different narratives of these women, one of whom you'll remember we already know, is dead, but we don't know which one. I read this book in two sittings. And I enjoyed it all the way through. It's propulsive. It's not overly long, and it is never boring. I did not love as I said, the point of view of the teenage daughter Cass, but her to the chapters in this book are so short, I was never with her for very long. I liked the element of the police detective, who also features in the story that guides us through in the same way that I liked that same thing in 56 Days by Catherine Ryan Howard. Overall, this is a very, very satisfying read. And it had Johnny and I talking about several different elements. In fact, if you love Catherine Ryan Howard, and you're in a book club, Curfew is the book for you, because it is a great book club book. You will have so much to talk about. And everyone in the book, everyone in the book club will have read it because it's that page turning. So this is Curfew by Jayne Cowie and Jane is J A Y N E. Cowie is C O W I E. We will put this link in the show notes.

Kaytee Cobb 36:51

That sounds incredible. And of course, you'll be linking the website that produced this magical algorithm for you as well. Right, Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:59

Absolutely. I'm going to talk a little more about it that end of the show for sure. Okay. Those are our six current reads. And so now, we are now going to segue into our deep dive, which is all about the concept of trigger warnings. And just in case somebody doesn't know what a trigger warning is, Kaytee, how would you define a trigger warning?

Kaytee Cobb 37:20

So I would say that there's there's a few things that can happen when we read a book, right? You could encounter a plot point that makes you roll your eyes or makes you want to throw the book or makes you uncomfortable, or you would you could encounter a trigger. And a trigger is something that like a trigger on a gun throws you backward into a situation that is really traumatizing for you. And that could be because you recently had someone die that you're close to. Or it could be because there's a assault in your past or something like that. But reading about it being in a story that features that plotline is going to really kind of harm you mentally in some way. And that so there's a difference between a trigger and a thing you don't like. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:04

Right, exactly. Something that is going to Yeah, just kind of make you feel like oh, this is not what I want to be reading about right now. It makes me feel bad in some way. Now, when I I'm just going to be completely transparent about this. When we first started podcasting, I don't think we thought much about trigger warnings. I know that I let me just say for myself, I didn't think much about it. And we started getting feedback really early on about, you know, people wanting trigger warnings. And the part where I want to be really honest, is that I was not as open to that feedback. I was not as sensitive to those issues as four years of podcasting and interacting with a lot of different readers has made me so I feel like this trigger warnings are a place that I feel like I've come around on. What do you, what what was your experience? Have you always felt like it was an important thing? How do you feel about trigger warnings?

Kaytee Cobb 39:08

No, I thankfully for me, I have very few bad things that I have to contend with in my life. And that is a place of enormous privilege. So I also did not think about trigger warnings when we started podcasting. I could have told you at the beginning of Currently Reading that these are things I don't like in books like infidelity. Is it a trigger? No, because it doesn't traumatize me in any way. It doesn't, like affect me viscerally. It's just something I don't enjoy reading about. The person that wrote us an email about this is named Darby, and she said that recently, she had a health scare that turned into a pretty serious trigger. It has to do with the C word. She didn't really want to write it but she had a skin cancer situation that resolved okay. And now it feels like every book has cancer in it. And that is really difficult for her to read about because it puts her right back into those exam rooms, waiting for results, not knowing how things were going to pan out for her. And personally, I don't have situations like that in my life, I still have both my parents around, I still have, you know, a loving husband, my kids are happy and healthy and well fed. All of those things have worked out okay for me. So it also wasn't something that was on my radar. And it has been through interactions with people that really care about reading well and deeply and also have something tough that they've had to deal with. And they're letting us into that

situation by saying, I need to know when something like this is happening inside a book. But then we have a hard white line to walk also.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:41

Right, because often a trigger warning is also potentially a spoiler. And we've you know that that is a true statement. And also, we've gotten feedback along those lines, too. So I definitely when I think about books to bring to the show, I don't go through and think about every possible trigger warning for the reasons that I I might not even recognize that something is being a trigger. And also, I don't want it to be spoiled, spoiled. But I do think about some of the the big ones, I would say we try to give trigger warnings, for some of the big ones, whether it's assault, you know, certain medical conditions, you know, something happening to a child, something happening to a child, something related to birth or infertility. You know, those are those are some just some of the bigger ones. And I know that we try to mention those where we can, but what I really, really think that this comes down to Kaytee, is that because of the fact that I were you or anybody talking publicly about a book, we'll never be able to know all the potential things that could trigger a person, right? Because there are it's so many and varied, that I think this once again, comes down to the thing that we talk about all the time, which is reader know thyself. And so I don't say that in a way that's like, oh, look, you know, you need to figure it out for yourself. What I mean is the only way for you to be kept safe for me to be kept safe on some of the things like I have, I have some triggers that don't trigger a lot of people. I have a specific flavor of health, anxiety, and anything related to not being able to breathe or heart and lung failure, heart surgery, those kinds of things. Since I was six years old, those are things that will trigger me to the point where it could put me into having some anxiety flares that are just uncomfortable, and I don't want to deal with right. But I at the same time know that there's no way that because it's not a trigger for most people, there's no way that that's going to be something that every person who talks about a book is going to mention like there's no way to make a course comprehensive list. And so, I know that if I see that in a blurb, or if I'm concerned that it might be a part of a plotline, I will go and read a little bit further. I think StoryGraph actually does a pretty good job on this front. And so that's what I would do for myself as a reader. I also don't like to read about certain kinds of infidelity, especially infidelity that occurs in a otherwise happy couple. That's my flavor of trigger around infidelity. And so again, not because it's happened to me, but because it just doesn't make me feel good. It puts me in a bad mood. And so I will read carefully a summary or a blurb or marketing material. And then I'll look on story graph and really see if those things are there. So I think when I thought about this, Kaytee, I thought we need to be careful of it. But we can never be fully complete. So if we can give the people the ability to find their way through those land mines in a way that works for them. I think that that's probably the biggest thing that we can do for for our listeners.

Kaytee Cobb 44:02

That is exactly where I landed when I was thinking about this issue. Meredith, I pulled up Children of Blood and Bone on StoryGraph, because it's been probably five or six years since I read it. So I don't have a lot of clear memories of it. So I could say like, oh, my gosh, this book is so great. And somebody could say does it have such and such trigger? And my answer is I have no idea. That was five years ago, I don't remember every moment of the of the story, right? So I pulled that title up. And it has something like 60 triggers listed in the graphic category, and many more for the moderate and minor categories. So it's easy to pull that page up and spoil the whole book for yourself. My tip here is that if

you want to know about one thing in particular, you pull up that page, you do Ctrl F on a PC, and I'm sure it's some other combination of keys on a Mac, and you can search the page and you can look for the one word or the combination of words that really bother you. So I pulled up infidelity. It was listed in moderate. I pulled up cancer and it was not listed in this book at all. And then I don't have to look through every single one and spoil the entire plot arc of this book for myself, and know exactly what's going to happen. But I still know if this is a book that I'm going to be able to handle based on what level each of those triggers is listed in. And there's even author approved triggers for some books on StoryGraph. So this is a really useful resource for anybody that is like on the fence about a title because they're not sure. That is my my big tip: StoryGraph. CTRL. F for whatever thing you're really worried about.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:30

Absolutely. That is a really smart thing to do. I also want to say that this is, you know, a few weeks ago, I was talking about how Oh, I can't stand it when people go on the bookish friends group or other big groups online, and like, I'm not liking this book. Should I continue? Well, one thing that I do think is a really useful way to use a book group that you're in, is to say, I'm interested in X book title, right. But I am triggered by x trigger, does this factor in? Has anyone read it recently enough to know, does this factor and I think that that's another way if you're in a book group regularly, that that's a really valid question. You do need to ask for people who've read it recently. Because like you said, Kaytee, sometimes you can, you can forget certain elements of things. But I think that that's a really valid question to ask, too. But, I mean, the reality is, we just we need to know ourselves as readers in so many ways. And we need to know what are the things that we really, really, really want to step around. And also, I think it's important to know that we go through seasons, where things are very triggering for us. And it might not, it might be that way, forever for you, but it might not be I know, I've said many times, when I had Devon in the first several years after I had my first child, I read only cozy mysteries for a really long time, because anything scary or violent or heavy in the world, felt triggering to me, because I was feeling vulnerable as a new mom. Now, 27 years later, I don't have that same feeling. Those same things aren't triggering for me. So So triggers can ebb and flow, know where you are now, if you're in a particular season, where you need to be protective of certain things, that there are places that you can go to check it out. But we have to each protect our, you know, protect ourselves in that way, I think.

Kaytee Cobb 47:23

Yeah, I agree. And I want to say one more time that when there's a very central element to the plot that is on those triggers list regularly, we are conscious, and we try and bring that to the show so that nobody's getting blindsided. But anytime that plot element is a spoiler, we aren't going to just say, please go seek out trigger warnings for this book. Because there's, there's no way that we want to spoil it for the other 25,000 people listening, and we don't know what your trigger is in the first place. Right. So each reader has to decide for themselves. And we'll continue to do that. Because it is important to both of us to make sure that you're prepared for whatever book we're trying to talk to you about. But we don't want to mess up the experience for anyone else either.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:07

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Okay. Well, we would love to know what you guys think about trigger warnings about the best ways that people who do talk about books publicly, like what are the best ways that we can communicate those things to you? How do you do you have any other tips and tricks for navigating those things for yourself? We would love to know and we'll put up a Instagram post about that and we can all have that discussion. I think that would be great. All right, Kaytee, let's visit the fountain. What kind of garden are you in the mood for today?

Kaytee Cobb 48:39

This week, because we have construction going on at our house, all I want is a very clean modern fountain that has no dust around it. It doesn't even have plants around it. It is like it is like three square boxes sitting on top of each other that just have a trickle of water because I want I want clean and organized space right now. And I don't have that in my house. So that's where I have to go in my mind right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:03

All right, well, at my library in California, we had a bookish kind of sculpture that was also a fountain that I've been thinking about that particular that particular fountain for a while because it was just really beautiful and bronze and bookish and I loved it and burbling

Kaytee Cobb 49:19

bronze and bookish and burbling alliteration for the win.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:23

All right. Okay, Kaytee, what is your wish that you're going to be making at that very clean, tidy fountain?

Kaytee Cobb 49:30

Okay, Meredith, my wish this week is I wish for a subscription book box that comes with foods that match the story. So I want an immersive reading experience that makes it possible for me to taste some of the items in a food heavy story. For example, when reading Legends and Lattes, I would have really liked to be able to just pop a cinnamon roll in the microwave, and brew up a steaming cup of joe. While reading Still Life by Louise Penny, I'd like to get a scone from Olivier's bistro have it already on hand. Sourdough by Robin Sloan, I want to come with a small loaf of sourdough, that I can smear with butter while I'm eating. Love and Saffron might include the makings for tacos or garlicky buttery mussels. This accomplishes two things in my head. First, it prevents my book subscription titles from sitting on the shelf. It has some kind of food in it that needs to be eaten. So I can't just let it sit there for three years while I consider whether or not I'm going to read that book or not. Second, it prevents me from turning into a hangry B word while I'm reading a book that has vivid food descriptions in it. We kill two birds with one stone here, if you will, if someone wants to make this specific book subscription box happen, I will sign up first. I will be there and you can mail me yummy treats and tasty novels. That's what I want. Ping splash.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:49

Ping splash. I think that's a great wish Kaytee. Might I suggest one way that you might actually be able to make that happen in real life, because I think the likelihood as much as we want, there are a lot of business reasons why that would be a difficult thing to accomplish. But what if you create a small book club or a buddy read, where you either send things to each other that are related to the book that you're reading, or you read the book, and then you decide like, oh, tonight we're going to you know, we're going to, we're in the middle of Love and Saffron we're going to make I got this great recipe for LA street tacos with like the crema and all of the good stuff. So we're going to make that together and just sort of experience that while we're reading the book. So I think you, Roxanna and I did this when we were reading The Eighth Life, we read, we drink the most delicious hot chocolate, because chocolate featured in that book. And so I think that that, you know, we know that you can do that with a book club. But you could do it with a buddy read too. And that can be really fun.

Kaytee Cobb 51:56

I like it. See, the problem that I run into is that I don't have those things on hand. So then I mid story. And I'm like, How come all of you are useless? And nobody brought me tacos? How rude are you that you didn't realize I was gonna need those while I was reading this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:11

Well, you definitely have to do a little bit of planning. But with Instacart and DoorDash. I feel like it's it's pretty easy to do for at most addresses. So all right, my wish. My wish is that everybody goes and gives a try to one of my favorite places to waste time on the internet. And that is gnod.com. This is the website that I told you where one of our bookish friends put it into our bookish friends Facebook group and I started messing with it. And that's how I found out about Jayne Cowie. Gnod is spelled G N O D. We will link this but that stands for the global network of discovery. And they have, they have a couple of different projects. Okay. And one of them is related to music, which of course I'm not interested in at all. But some other people might be, but they have literature. So this is what you're looking for. Within that they have two projects, one is called discover. That's what I described to you. You tell them your three favorite authors, it spits out an author name, but you have to go and do some research on I kind of love that like, like, just take this name and go element of things like it's very analog, right fortune cookie. Yeah, it's just very like, just the facts, ma'am. But then they also have something called the literature map, which is very fun to play with. So you name one of your favorite authors. And then it kind of pops up with this moving map of a bunch of other authors and the ones that are hovering closest to your author that you've identified are the ones that might be a really good fit for you. And the ones that are further away, like our might, you know, might be further away. So it's just two places that you can play around online. And again, use your independent bookstore to go research the authors that it gives you play around with it, see what it does for you see if you discover this is gnod.com. gnod.com

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:13

That sounds so fun. I can picture myself losing many hours of productivity on this website.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:39

Yeah, this is one of the things I've told you that I often have like three to five minutes before my next meeting. And so this is one of my I have a list of things that I'm allowed to do for those three to five

minutes. This is one of the things that I'm allowed to do is to play with not just a little bit so I really wish that everyone would go play with it and see what you think so ping, Splash. Splash. There's our wishes. All right, Kaytee. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 54:57

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:00

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

Kaytee Cobb 55:10

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:16

And we've talked a lot today about being a bookish friend. You become an official bookish friend by joining us on [Patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com) for \$5 a month. You get all the community that we've described, and you also get the Indie Press List. You get Kaytee's new Trope Thursday, and All Things Murderful in addition to other fun content. 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 55:45

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:50

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

Kaytee Cobb 55:53

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:55

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:56

Happy reading Meredith