

Librarians Telling Tales Podcast Transcript- Episode 13

Quick Look Booklist:

- **Section 1: Our Book Club Experiences**
 - *The Chocolate Touch* by Patrick Catling
 - Steph Harvey (author)
 - Katie Wood Ray (author)
- **Section 2: Why We Love Our Library Book Clubs**
 - *Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys
- **Section 3: Prescott Public Library Youth Book Clubs**
 - **Caldecott Books & Art for Kids (Grades K-2)**
 - *Mel Fell* by Corey Tabor
 - *Grand Canyon* by Jason Chin
 - *Bear Came Along* by Richard T. Morris, illustrated by LeUyen Pham
 - **Book Buddies Book Club (Grades 3-4)**
 - *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street* by Karina Yan Glaser
 - *The Dragon in the Sock Drawer* by Kate Klimo
 - **Inktastic Book Club (Grades 5-6)**
 - *Kiki's Delivery Service* by Eiko Kadono
 - *Trouble in the Stars* by Sarah Prineas
 - *Scary Stories for Young Foxes* by Christian McKay Heidicker
 - **Teen Books & Bites (Grades 7-12)**
 - *Merlin: The Lost Years* by T.A. Barron
 - *Scythe* by Neal Shusterman (*Arc of a Scythe* trilogy)

Transcript:

Musical Intro: "Uplifting 2463" by Twisterium from pixabay.com

(Description) Upbeat, piano and percussion. Music fades and plays under.

Jennifer: Hey, bookworms! Welcome to Librarians Telling Tales, where we introduce you to all the things we love about libraries: books, people, and making connections. I'm Jennifer.

Amy: I'm Amy.

Blair: I'm Blair.

Amy: In today's episode, we're going to chat about why we think book clubs are awesome and share some of the outstanding books we've read with our youth book clubs at the library.

(0:35) Music fades out

Section 1: Our Book Club Experiences

Blair: So, this is where I admit that I have only taken part in one book club ever that was like a formal book club before I came and started working here at the library. So I have informal book club

experience. I have a very tight knit group of friends and we kind of all like very similar books. One of us will read a book and then we'll be like: Here, you must read it. And then we'll read it, and then the next person will be like: Here, you must read it. And we pass the book in a circle. And then, of course, we have our informal meeting where we talk about it and share and gab, but I've not ever been part of like a formal book club. What about you guys? What are your experiences with book clubs? Are you, I know Jennifer, you do a lot of book clubs.

Jennifer: I do now, but in my growing up years, there was no book club. I was a book club of one, but the book club that is most fond to me outside of my library experiences, when my daughter, Hannah and I, when she was in third grade, we decided to have a mother-daughter book club. And she made these cute invitations and she invited her friends and their moms to come. And our first book was *The Chocolate Touch* (by Patrick Catling) and she and I put together a cute little book club discussion with an interactive activity. It's very sweet. And we did that for about a year and a half together.

Amy: How much chocolate at that first book club meeting?

Jennifer: A lot. We had hot chocolate. We had golden coin chocolates—that was part of a game that we did with the kids. But it was really sweet. And it's a special memory for my daughter and myself now.

Blair: That's lovely.

Amy: I also did not participate in any version of book club as a kid. I was in a, uh, educator book club when I was a teacher in Texas and every book club meeting, we would talk about two different things. So we'd read an educational, pedagogy-related book to improve our teaching or interacting with kids or what have you. And so we'd all read the same book. And then we'd also each read at least one other book for students in our middle school age range. And then, so we'd share those out too, so that we'd leave there with a list of cool books you can recommend to kids, but also that really cool talk about how this book by Steph Harvey or Katie Wood Ray could inspire our teaching or change what we're doing in our classrooms. And it was super cool.

Jennifer: And what made it fun because that's really what, why we do book clubs. Why did you enjoy that book club, Amy?

Amy: Well, one, the building of relationships was awesome. I was always hearing something new, hearing their different takes on what their students were up to. Like, I learned so much on the teacher side, but then I also left with at least eight books I could recommend.

Jennifer: When I was a teacher many, many years ago, I loved going to the English teacher conferences because I guess in a way it was like a book club because there were sessions, workshops where we just talked books. How to get kids excited about books and the up-and-coming new books. And it got me really excited so that I would take those books back to the classroom. But I think camaraderie is really wonderful in a book club. It brings like-minded readers together, book lovers together. That's one of the things I love about book club.

Blair: I guess I can kind of relate when I was in library school because when we were in our children's literature course, we weren't all reading the same books, but we were all responding to each other's comments about books that we had read. And so because of that, there was a really good opportunity. You can have a real discussion about the book and the content and that sort of thing. So that was nice.

Jennifer: Another thing I love about book club is you're with people who get excited about talking about characters and authors, like they're your best friends. You get to nerd out on these people who become real to you when you're reading. And it's a safe place to actually talk about that and not sound too weird.

Music Transition: “Ascending-marimba-notification” by Alexander from Orangefreesounds.com
(Description) Bright marimba scale.

(3:55) Section 2: Why We Love Our Library Book Clubs

Blair: I think my favorite experience that I had leading book club last year is that the kids, when they loved a book, they just wanted to tell everybody all the things that they loved about it. And it was really cool to see their insights, to hear them get in arguments about parts of the book with each other: “Well, that’s not what happened!” “Yes, it was!” “No, it’s not!” And it was so great to really see them engage with each other over the content. So it was a really awesome experience.

Amy: Yeah, definitely. I think too, that not always are the kids in our book clubs aware that they’re book lovers or book-minded and their parents have signed them up. Then you come to a book club and you’ve read a book that maybe you wouldn’t have chosen for yourself. But then you read it and you talk with other kids and you’re like, “Wow! Now I see a whole other perspective. I actually *did* like that,” or things of that nature. Especially in the younger groups of book clubs where the kids really aren’t identifying yet as true book lovers like we are as adults. I love to nerd out! Like, “I just read this book and it was so cool.” Or, “What did you recommend?” <laughter>

Jennifer: I love when we’re around the desk, even with other patrons and we’re talking about books and one of us will say, “Oh, I didn’t really like that book.” And we say, “Well, why, why didn’t you like that?” It’s a wonderful opportunity to really dig in. And I think that the kids are enjoying that too when they’re in book club. At least I know in teens. We read *Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys a few years ago, and there was one character that almost all of the teens did not like. And I said to them, “Well, that’s great because he was the villain and you didn’t like him. So the author did a really great job.” And then when we zoomed with her, they had a lot to tell her about why they didn’t like that character. And she was very impressed because she knew that she had crafted the perfect villain that the readers didn’t like. And that was a lot of fun. That was a great memory.

Amy: Absolutely!

Jennifer: I think another benefit of book club, too, is just the social aspect. Those who attend are able to express themselves. And we teach them, and we help them guide them, I guess, is a better word to be able to express themselves. And that it’s okay however they felt about the book—and if they didn’t like it or they liked it. And to respect how the other kids felt, too, about that particular book.

Blair: Because it is a powerful experience to learn what books speak to you, what your genre is, what your style is. And I think that’s what is really fun about being able to put together a book club is that you really can expand and explore what these kids enjoy based upon how we create the, for lack of a better word—syllabus—of our books. When we put them together, we’re deciding, oh, something with action, oh, something that has this, oh, something that has that. And you’re giving these kids an opportunity to explore. And that’s fun.

Amy: Yeah, that exposure piece. We—we’re giving kids access to titles and authors that they may not otherwise have met on their own. But I think, also, because of the Friends of the Library helping support our book clubs and buying those copies for each of our book club kiddos, their home libraries are expanding. So all the kids that were in book club last year, they each got nine books for their home library. And whether they loved them all or passed them on as a, “you can have this book” kind of moment, they had that access in their homes. And that’s, I think, huge too.

Jennifer: Yeah. Yay, Friends! I think that makes our library so unique in that we hand out books for our book clubs.

Blair: Yes, 100%, yeah.

Jennifer: It's a great benefit to belong to one of our book clubs.

Amy: For our listeners out there who may not know of our library or who may not have tried a youth book club, we do offer book clubs for all the different ages from kids in kindergarten through second grade—and that would be our Caldecott Books and Arts for Kids book club. Kids in third and fourth grade is our Book Buddies book Club. Kids in grades five and six is our Inktastic. And Teen Books and Bites is for grades seven through 12. So we have a nice variety and a good spread for those ages of kiddos that are school age.

Jennifer: And our book clubs have been around for a long time. And we have lots of experience and readability behind us.

Amy: And we've learned lessons, like kids sometimes don't want to read poetry in verse when they're in third grade. And so we've maybe stopped choosing a poetry in verse book for our book club.

Jennifer: Or we're very selective in our nonfiction for teens because they're very particular.

Amy: Making sure like a narrative structure...

Jennifer: Oh, yes!

Blair: And sometimes historical fiction for middle grade is a little heavy and we have to be really picky about which historical fiction we choose.

Jennifer: Right.

Music Transition: "Ascending-marimba-notification" by Alexander from Orangefreounds.com
(Description) *Bright marimba scale.*

(8:00) Section 3: Prescott Public Library Youth Book Clubs

Blair: I think Caldecott [Books and Art for Kids book club] is special because not only are they looking at the really cool artwork that are in some of these picture books for the youngest kids, the Prescott Art Docents do such a great job putting together ideas and concepts and how they discuss the art in the books. And it's really fun. And I was really excited because when they were trying to determine books that they were going to use this year, then I was like, *Mel Fell!* I mean, it's one of the brand-new Caldecott's, you have to include *Mel Fell*. And that one's by Corey Tabor. I know I've talked about it before, but I just love the format of it. I love the way that the book has to move as you read it and is engaging in the style of the illustration and the page to tell the story. And that is so cool. And I'm excited to see what they do for that one. I wanna see those projects!

Jennifer: I love *Grand Canyon* by Jason Chin. Not only because it's close to home, but Jason Chin's artwork is phenomenal. And I'm really interested too, in seeing what the Art Docents do to make that connection between these. This beautiful book about a natural wonder of the world, and being so close to home, and their art project.

Amy: Of this year's crop of Caldecott books for the book club, I do love *Bear Came Along* by Richard T. Morris with the illustrations by LeUyen Pham. And honestly, I didn't love the story to begin with, but the artwork just pulled me in. And then I've read it now, like probably 10 times to school groups. And I love

it more and more every time. Still the illustrations are the most powerful, like when they're on the precipice of that waterfall and it's just the water going down. It is so cool how she gave that perspective on the page. And they have a moment like in *Mel Fell* where you do transition from holding the book landscape to portrait or what have you, and then continue on 'cause that that waterfall drop is pretty far, pretty long way down. So it's a really cool piece. I think the illustrations, they are amazing and I'm excited to see too what they do there, but also the kids are gonna love it, I think.

Blair: Oh yeah.

Amy: I mean, it's just so adorable.

Jennifer: I love that book club because it is a great stepping-stone into what a book club is all about. And these kids get to do an art project and then they get the very beginning baby steps of how to talk about what you like about a book, beginning with those illustrations. And it really prepares them for the next book club. Let's talk about our book lineup.

Blair & Amy: Yeah!

Amy: Woot woot!

Jennifer: What're we excited about this year?

Blair: Yeah, Amy. I mean, if we're going in age order, you're up.

Amy: I'm up first. One of the books that I loved so much when I was reading it that I really, really, really hope the kids engage with on a similar level was *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street* by Karina Yan Glaser. And that's just got, I think, something for everyone. There's five siblings, their landlord has decided not to renew their family's lease, and the kids determine that they are going to change his mind. But in the doing, they have some missteps. And you actually learn the backstory of this landlord and why he has chosen not to renew their lease. And it is so poignant and moving, and I'm curious how the kids will respond and I really hope they love it, but I don't know.

Blair: I'm not gonna say that I kind of picked all of my books around this one book, but I totally did. So *Kiki's Delivery Service* by Eiko Kadono and anybody who has been alive for more than 25 years probably knows the movie, right? 'Cause it was a Studio Ghibli movie and it was super-duper popular. Second only, I think, to *Howl's Moving Castle* coming out of that studio. But that novel was Japanese, and it was not translated into English for the longest time. And it is just beautiful. It has the vibes in it that are classic. Yes, of course there's magic, but there's magic in an extraordinarily normal world. She's not very good at magic. And magic is extremely limited. All she can do is fly and she cannot even fly that well. But it's her problem solving. It's the way she makes friends and is creating a community for herself at 13. And it's so interesting and engaging, and I'm excited to have those conversations with them about that transitional age, that they are all very quickly approaching in the fifth and sixth grade years, and how they see her responsibility and how they see how she navigates the world. And I'm, I'm excited for that one. I think it's gonna be really interesting.

The other one that I'm super psyched about is sci-fi and I can't wait to do it. I've been recommending this book to everyone. I have to stop doing that. I have to stop recommending heavily all the books that I'm planning on using.

Amy: What is it?

Blair: But that one's *Trouble in the Stars* by Sarah Prineas. And I like it so much because the alien is a shapeshifting alien and he doesn't know who he is either. And so he has to figure out who he is while

he's shapeshifting. And it's, it's really cool. It's really fun adventure too. Um, I was going with adventure and action this year. Keep 'em engaged, keep 'em reading!

Amy: But it sounds like strong characters, too. So yeah, maybe a good blend of both.

Blair: I mean that's, that's how I write strong characters are how I write, and strong characters are how I read. And I feel like if we don't have strong characters, we might have a boring story.

Amy: True.

Jennifer: Well, speaking of recommending the book so much that it's not on the shelf, I think our brochures are so well done and exciting that I find myself handing them out to people who are not in our book club because they're such a good, recommended reads. That might lend itself to another problem too, with the book not being on the shelf. But I'll tell you a little bit about my books. I'm really excited about the selection this year. And I notice that I have a lot more fantasy on my list because over the years the teens have just wanted more fantasy and that hasn't always been my genre of choice, but I am learning to enjoy some fantasy books. So the one I'm looking most forward to is *Merlin: The Lost Years* by T.A. Barron. And I love origin stories and this is Merlin's origin story, long before he became a big person in King Arthur's life with the sword in the stone. This is where he came from. He lands on a shore and he's all alone. And he has no memory of where he came from and he's just a young toddler and it starts at that point and how he discovers himself and his abilities. And I think it's going to be a very exciting story for these teens with lots of elements of magic and fantasy. What about the books that surprised us, that the kids really liked that were unexpected treats for us?

Amy: At the end of book club, at the end of the season, I asked the kids, what was your favorite book for all these nine that we read, and we talk about the merits of the books. And the one winner a couple years back was *The Dragon in the Sock Drawer* by Kate Klimo. And it's good. It really is an interesting story. A boy and his cousin find a dragon's egg and there's a bad guy after the egg who wants to use the dragons blood to extend his lifespan. And there are five books in that series and they are always checking out. So kids do enjoy it, but the majority of them selected that as their number one read from that season, which really kind of surprised me.

Blair: The kids in my book club were pretty split as far as their favorites, but for me the best experience and my favorite moment was when we read *Scary Stories for Young Foxes* and we had Christian McKay Heidicker, the author, zoomed with us. And the detailed questions they asked him, the way that they conversed with him and were asking things that as the author, he couldn't even answer, truthfully. Like he's like, "I didn't think of it that way." They were so detailed and they were so interested in it. It was a really great moment for sure.

Jennifer: I took a gamble on the one that surprised me because in the past, Neal Shusterman has been pretty reliable. But I tried *Scythe* several years ago, and I am amazed how many kids loved this book about a futuristic community where there is no death. And so these scythes have to kill people to control the population. And I thought maybe it might be too violent for them. I always have to worry about the age, that seventh to 12th grade range of ages, are they ready for this? Is it too violent? Is it too emotional? But across the board, they all loved that book about this particular society and about two characters who were to be apprentice scythes and who really did not want to be that. It was prestigious, but not prestigious. And there's a rogue scythe who goes around and is killing people unprecedentedly and he has to be stopped. And the kids loved this book so much so that even now they're talking about it.

Amy: Oh wow.

Jennifer: And they love Neal Shusterman. It became a point to talk about what other books has Neal Shusterman written? And can we Zoom with him? Can we Skype with him? But he's unaffordable for us. He's such a good speaker and such a great author, but that book surprised me. And he took so long to write that trilogy. When the last book finally came out, kids were just exhausted from waiting for that book for so long, 'cause they were so eager. But it checked out immediately once it came in. But I was surprised. I thought it was a good book initially, but I didn't know if it would go over well with the whole group, but hands down, it did.

Amy: That's awesome.

Blair: And that was kind of how I felt about *Scary Stories* too, because truthfully that book, it's emotional. There's a lot of death in that book and it's all natural because we're talking about things that occur in the natural world. Spoiler alert the opening scene, there's rabies that kills almost all the Fox kits. And that's the very first scene. I was like, oh gosh, these kids are they gonna tap out? They were super engaged because you're really root for those two foxes. And I think that that led to why it was so popular.

Jennifer: And that's why we work so hard to really find those books that the kids are going to love and enjoy throughout our book club time.

Amy: Absolutely, so that they're actually wanting to read them, so they can then come to book club and want to talk about them.

Blair: Yes, I think it's such a fine art choosing those books. I mean, if I could count the number of books that I read and say, "No, not that one," until we find just the perfect thing that's going to engage everybody. 'Cause you've got so many different readers and different tastes.

Jennifer: I think it's going to be a great year.

Amy: Absolutely, I'm super excited.

Blair: Yes, totally.

Jennifer: We hope this episode inspires you to consider joining or starting a book club at the library or in your community.

Music Transition: "Ascending-marimba-notification" by Alexander from Orangefreesounds.com
(Description) *Bright marimba scale.*

Blair: This month, there were no Reader's Raves called in to us, but if you want to be a part of Reader's Rave in the future, call us at (928) 777-1490 and leave a message with your first name, your age, a book you love and what you love about it. We can't wait to hear from you.

Jennifer: Thank you for joining us today on Librarians Telling Tales. For a full list of the books shared in this episode, check the link in our podcast bio.

Amy: Don't forget to subscribe to catch our next episode where we talk about hidden gems: authors and books we love that are absolutely worth knowing about.

(17:58) Musical Outro: "Uplifting 2463" by Twisterium from pixabay.com
(Description) *Upbeat, piano and percussion. Music fades in and plays under.*

Blair: This podcast is supported by the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, a division of the Secretary of State, with federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. We would also like to thank the City of Prescott, Friends of the Prescott Public Library, and all our fabulous coworkers at Prescott Public Library.

Jennifer: Be sure to like and subscribe to Librarians Telling Tales. And until next time we'll see you in the library.

(Total Run Time 18:31)