

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 1: Reader's Choice

(Brief intro music)

Melody: Hi, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library. I'm Melody.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Melody: And we are librarians here at Oak Creek Public Library, and we are going to be talking about books we've been reading and some of our favorite, reading, watching, and listening recommendations every month. So, we're just going to give you a little bit of background about ourselves and the library here. Rachel, do you want to start off?

Rachel: Sure! I used to volunteer back at the Cudahy Family Library back when I was what is known as a 'teeny-bopper', back in the day. Then as an undergrad at Alverno, I interned there doing some archival work, and now I'm at Oak Creek. I started out as a Tech Help volunteer a couple summers ago while studying for my master's.

Melody: Where did you go for your master's?

Rachel: That was UWM, yeah.

Melody: Me, too.

Rachel: UW-Milwaukee, for those who aren't initiated.

Melody: Yes!

Rachel: I was then hired as a page, and an intern for about a year, and now I am a full-on, full-time reference librarian.

Melody: That's awesome. So did you...after you graduated, did you start off full-time right away or did you have a period of time where you were part-time?

Rachel: Well, I graduated in May, and I didn't start full-time until this year, so there was this nice little grace period where I still got to build up some part-time work and get used to the schedule.

Melody: That's nice. So I...I went to...my undergrad, I studied English. I was an English major.

Rachel: Same here.

Melody: I wasn't planning on being a librarian at all. So, I took a couple years trying to find work in the English field, which did not work out.

Rachel: (gasps) It didn't! Surprise, surprise.

Melody: (laughs) So if you're going to undergrad for your English degree, maybe have a backup plan. So, then, you know, after a couple years I decided to pursue my master's and become a librarian. So, I went to UWM, and I think my second semester I started working at a small library—Palmyra. Yeah, so, I was

doing part-time, and then I...after, like, immediately after I graduated with my graduate degree, I started a second part-time job at the library in South Milwaukee, and then I started here. This is my first full-time library position, which I'm very excited about. So, I actually started here this month, so I'm just a few weeks in.

Rachel: Welcome her to the team, everyone.

Melody: Thank you! Yeah, so, I'm really happy to be here. This is a really beautiful library.

Rachel: It really is, yeah.

Melody: It's been really great so far. So, we are—if you're not familiar with where we're located—we are located in Drexel Town Square. This is a new-ish building?

Rachel: Yeah, it's kind of emerged as the downtown Oak Creek area. This building is only about three years old, at this point.

Melody: The area is really progressing quite a lot, too.

Rachel: Definitely. Lots of construction.

Melody: Yes, but it's a really fun and hip place to be.

Rachel: I would say so.

Melody: Yeah! It's a really nice location. So, we'll be talking about, you know, things that we like to read, and we'll probably be having some guests from the area or from the library in the future.

Rachel: For sure.

Melody: We'll also talk about some digital resources that you can get, so keep your ear out for that. Should we get started?

Rachel: Sounds good!

Melody: So, this month we're just going to be talking about books that we've been reading lately. We'll try to do some themes in future months but, just to start off, we'll just be doing some reader's choice. I will get started. I'm going to talk about "Girl, Wash Your Face."

Rachel: Great title.

Melody: Yes, it is! Have you heard of this at all?

Rachel: I haven't.

Melody: Okay. So, it's written by Rachel Hollis. It was published in February of last year. And she...it's definitely, like, your typical self-help, empowerment, women...stand up and, you know, for yourselves.

Rachel: Sure. We all need that sometimes.

Melody: Right. So, it definitely has that feel. The author...each chapter, she talks about lies that women believe, and she kind of counteracts those lies. So, some of the ones that kind of stuck out to me were: 'I'm not good enough', or 'I'm better than you', 'I'm defined by my weight', or—I'm not a mom, but—I

don't know how to be a mom' is one of the titles which, even though I'm not a parent, the idea that women compare themselves to each other and feel like they're never measuring up resonated with me, for sure. If you look this book up on Goodreads, there are very mixed reviews.

Rachel: Okay. Always makes things interesting.

Melody: The author of this book is...I mean, she is kind of, like, your typical, middle-class white woman, so I think that's where some of the negative reviews are coming from.

Rachel: Understandable, for sure.

Melody: Yes, and I think it really just depends on where you are in life and if you...if this is the kind of thing that you need to hear or not. I'm sure you've heard of the 'first world problems' terminology.

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Melody: That's kind of what this is addressing. But some people, I mean when I read this...I'm not a self-help reader at all, but when I read this, you know, I've been going through some changes in my life, and this came at just the right time for me.

Rachel: Nice.

Melody: So, you know, you can take it with a grain of salt, and if you think this is not for you, avoid it. But I think it was really, a really good read, and she has a second book coming out in March, and it's called "Girl, Stop Apologizing."

Rachel: Oh, do you plan on reading it?

Melody: I probably will. And I actually listened to this on Hoopla Digital, which is a resource that you have with your library card, so you can go to that website and check out this book for free. It's available right away. There is a hold list on it still, if you request it at the library. So yeah, that's...it was a really good listen.

Rachel: That is something, I think, that people—a lot of our patrons—don't realize. We're not just a physical collection. We do have a lot of free online databases.

Melody: Right, especially with spring break coming up and people going on vacations, check out Hoopla and Libby are the two places here you can listen to audiobooks while you're travelling, for free.

Rachel: And Libby also has eBooks, so if you're more into reading rather than listening, then go for it.

Melody: Yeah. So what have you been reading, Rachel?

Rachel: I recently read "Descender" Volumes one through three—so, that's a graphic novel—by author Jeff Lemire and Dustin Nguyen. It's a science fiction, apocalyptic, cosmic odyssey graphic novel series. So, it was limited. It only has six volumes, and the last one released late 2018, but there is going to be a follow-up series called "Ascender" coming out this April. At least hopefully, if they're coming out on time. The concept is that a robot child named Tim 21 wakes up on a deserted planet years after these humungous, mysterious beings known as 'harvesters' decimate some parts of the universe. So, Tim 21 was originally bought as a companion robot for a young boy named Andy, so after he wakes up he

decides to go and find him. But, as young space explorers often do, he gets into a lot of trouble on the way.

Melody: Can I ask—is he called Tim 21 because he’s number 21?

Rachel: Indeed. It’s, like, a set of Tims, and he’s the latest in a long line.

Melody: Gotcha. The iPhone 10, or...

Rachel: (laughs) Yeah, if you want to compare an AI to that, sure!

Melody: (laughs) Right, it’s kind of close.

Rachel: Definitely, I can see that. But because the harvesters are robots, all of robotkind is now being hunted by humans and other alien species who kind of blame them for their losses. Which...where have we seen that before, I wonder? What got me interested in this series in the first place was...well, my husband, because he bought the original three graphic novels just because the art is incredible. Dustin Nguyen—he did all the sketching, coloring, and painting for the series himself, which alone is impressive, right? But his style is also fairly unique. It looks...it’s watercolor, which you don’t see a lot of in this format. At least, I haven’t.

Melody: Yeah, I...when you told me you were going to be talking about this, I just looked a little bit at it, and saw a couple of the images, and it seems like you could really just get lost in this read.

Rachel: Mhm. I mean, each panel is a piece of art, really, which sounds really corny to say, but it’s true in this case. And then the story captured me, especially the direction it takes in volume three. So, first volumes handle the daunting task of worldbuilding, introducing characters, creating story arcs, everything, okay? So, I always looks at those as I do pilot episodes of a TV show. You have to cut the creators some slack, right? Because they have to cram a lot in there!

Melody: There’s a lot of setup that has to happen.

Rachel: It’s true. And that can sometimes throw off an intended tone. I didn’t think it was too bad in this series. I mean, I wanted to keep reading, so. That said, I didn’t enjoy volume two as much. I thought the pacing was a little slow, and we’re introduced to a faction of the robot uprising called ‘the hardwire’ which is a little stereotypical, if you can count a robot uprising as being stereotypical, I don’t know.

Melody: In the scifi world, I would say yeah.

Rachel: I mean, we’ve seen that before. But, I don’t know, volume three, called “Singularities,” is my favorite so far. I’m glad I stuck around.

Melody: So it’s worth sticking through it?

Rachel: Oh, definitely. Definitely. This volume...each chapter goes into each character’s backstory a little bit, so we get some depth for each character, and the histories are really powerful. I can’t wait to read the last three installments of the series.

Melody: Is the main robot—Tim 21, the main character—is he likable?

Rachel: Definitely., I mean, that is something that I like most about this series. I mean, as a whole, it's reminiscent of themes that we've seen a lot in scifi. The whole, 'Does artificial life count as real life?' Philip K. Dick explored that in "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" probably more popularly known as "Blade Runner."

Melody: Okay.

Rachel: Okay?

Melody: I've heard of that. (laughs)

Rachel: Yes. And Masamune Shirow in his manga "Ghost in the Shell" explored very similar things. But in "Descender," the interesting thing is that this is from the perspective of a kid. I mean, he's a robot, but for all intents and purposes he's a child, and I really like that fresh take on it.

Melody: Yeah, that is really fascinating, and even though it's explored a lot, I think there's a reason it is, because it's such a difficult concept, there's no black and white there, either.

Rachel: It's fascinating, right?

Melody: Back and forth, and 'Who am I, really?' I actually have plans to see "Alita" tonight. Which I think is probably going to have some similar themes.

Rachel: Oh, nice! You'll have to tell me how it is. She's like, kind of, a preteen/teenager?

Melody: She is, and I think she's AI, or at least, like, partially...

Rachel: Cyborg, or something. In the trailers that's what I can tell.

Melody: It might be based in anime, too. I'm not sure.

Rachel: I think it is, yeah, but I haven't read it for myself.

Melody: Yeah, so that should be interesting. So, do you think you're going to read the next three?

Rachel: I've already ordered them. (laughs) Yeah, I mean, I want to also talk about "Saga" as a readalike which, I don't know if you've heard of that graphic novel series—

Melody: I haven't.

Rachel: It's very similar. It's by Brian K. Vaughn and Fiona Staples. There's a character in "Descender" called captain Telsa who I think is super similar to Saga's Alana. And I'm happy to report we have all of "Saga" here at Oak Creek Library. It's available to checkout.

Melody: Oh, hey, come check it out!

Rachel: Yes! "Descender" isn't quite yet, but I am looking into ordering that. As people may know, we are part of the Milwaukee County System, so other libraries in the system do have these graphic novels available. So, if you want to put a hold on it, we can have it sent to your favorite local library, and you can pick it up there.

Melody: Yeah, so you still have access to it.

Rachell: Absolutely, yeah, and—as you were mentioning earlier—we do have those databases. “Descender” is also available in digital format on Hoopla. The best part about this database is that there are no waitlists, users are limited to six items at a time.

Melody: Yeah, you can check out six things per month.

Rachel: Per month! Okay, but I think that’s a pretty fair tradeoff.

Melody: It is, and because you also have the option of Libby—so, there are two separate databases, they both have eBooks and audiobooks—so, if something is available on both, you know, depending on whether you want to wait or not, you can save those six Hoopla checkouts for things that you don’t want to wait for.

Rachel: Very good point.

Melody: It’s a really nice system and setup that we have access to both.

Rachel: We both use it all the time, so...

Melody: I do, yes, I love Hoopla. That sounds really interesting. I’ve read a couple graphic novels, and I do enjoy reading them, but when I have free reading time I don’t usually pick them up. I think part of it is because I feel like I need to read quickly, and you really have to take your time with graphic novels because...

Rachel: It’s not just the written word, it’s art.

Melody: Yeah, and the artwork is, like, eighty percent of the story, anyway.

Rachel: Yeah, it’s a fair chunk. (laughs)

Melody: But that does sound like a really good series to dive into.

Rachel: I definitely recommend it.

Melody: All right, so, the last book we’re going to talk about is called “Where’d You Go, Bernadette?” by Maria Semple.

Rachel: This one I have heard of!

Melody: Okay! I recently finished this, and you may have heard of it because there’s a movie coming out in...I think it might be March or possibly May. I think it’s a month that starts with an ‘M’. (laughs) It’s coming out soon. The movie has Cate Blanchett in it.

Rachel: (gasps) Well, I will definitely be seeing it, then.

Melody: Have you seen the movie trailer at all?

Rachel: I have, yeah.

Melody: So, I saw the trailer not knowing about the book, and not having read the book, and was intrigued, so then I read the book itself. So, the concept of the story is that this woman, Bernadette, she lives in Seattle with her husband who works for Microsoft and their teenage daughter, and she...Bernadette is very much a recluse, so she’s...she’s not going out in public, she’s not going out for

dinner, they, like, order takeout and take it home all the time. She does go and pick up her daughter from school, but she stays in the car and keeps her sunglasses on. So she's kind of a quirky, interesting character, she also has a really sharp sense of humor. It's fun to read about her even though her seclusion might be...put you off a little bit but...I would say she's a likeable character. Their teenage daughter got straight A's, I think, in school, and she wants to go to Antarctica as, like, her reward for doing well in school.

Rachel: Good choice.

Melody: (laughs) So her parents are not that thrilled about it, but the daughter is really pushing it, so they plan this trip to Antarctica and, all of a sudden, Bernadette disappears.

Rachel: Dun, dun, dun!

Melody: Yeah. (laughs) And we have to figure out what happened. This is...even though the story sounds a little like heavy material, this is a really light and fun read. So, it's very quirky, and if...I would say, if you're feeling like you're kind of stuck in a rut in your reading, go to this book, because it's a totally different feel. The narration is really interesting. So, the story is told through emails from Bernadette to her personal assistant, through letters between people, notes from, like, the principal of the school to the parents.

Rachel: Nice.

Melody: And then we also get some first-person narration from Bernadette's daughter, but that's it.

Rachel: I love it when authors mix up the format like that. It's great.

Melody: Yes! It's a really, really fun way to read this story, the character's are really interesting. It's kind of like...I don't know if you've read any Jane Austen?

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Melody: So, those characters are sometimes ridiculous and crazy and quirky.

Rachel: "Sometimes?"

Melody: (laughs) Right? But they're really fun. So that's what I feel about this book, too. Some of the characters are kind of ridiculous and obnoxious, but it's fun to read about them and what they're getting up to. So, I definitely recommend this book, too. And, if you can, I would check it out and read it before you see the movie, but...

Rachel: That's usually my advice, too. Read before you watch. But each to their own!

Melody: Right, yeah. And who knows how the movie adaptation is going to turn out? Based on the trailer it seems pretty accurate.

Rachel: And it is Cate Blanchett, so...

Melody: Yeah, it's got to be good, right?

Rachel: Hail to the queen.

Melody: She is! Yeah, so, I would recommend that, you can check that out at the library, or it's on OverDrive—or Libby, which is the app that OverDrive made. So, those are all of our books that we're talking about this month, and I will put a list of all of the books and titles in the show notes, so if anything caught your eye you can check that out in the show notes. And next month we are going to be talking about some steampunk.

Rachel: Indeed. Looking forward to that already.

Melody: Yeah, that should be interesting. That will be a little bit new for me.

Rachel: Same! I haven't read much from that genre.

Melody: Yeah, so that should be fun. And we would also love to hear what you're reading and what you think of the podcast, so you can rate and review the podcast, and you can also use the #notyourmotherslibrary. So, thanks for listening, and happy reading!

Melody and Rachel: Bye!

(Brief outro music)