

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Episode 14: Mother's Day Reads

(Brief intro music)

Leah: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Leah, one of your hosts. Rachel is also virtually here. This month, guys...this month we need to tweak the title a little bit, because we're celebrating Mother's Day! This episode will be all about our mothers' favorite books, which means that for Rachel and I, this is our mother's library.

Rachel: Hi, everyone. It's Rachel. As Leah pointed out, we are here to celebrate Mother's Day. This year, the national holiday takes place on Sunday, May 10th, so be sure to create an artistic portrait out of noodles before that date hits. You know what else makes a great gift? Books! My mum is a mystery enthusiast. Give her a murder to solve, and she'll be at her most content. She is actually in the process of writing her own series of cozies. For those who aren't as familiar with what that means, cozies are a mystery subgenre. They focus more on the story, setting, and characters surrounding a whodunit than an in-depth criminal procedure or graphic depictions of violence. Think of M.C. Beaton's "Agatha Raisin" or the TV show "Murder, She Wrote." I've read the first few novels in mum's series, which are currently on the road to publication, and they are flat-out really good. I realize that as her daughter I am partial, but I also used to be a copyeditor and have read some genuinely awful manuscripts, so I'm betting that experience balances out my bias. Just want to say: I'm proud of you, mum, especially as an up-and-coming author. They say that the best way to become a great writer is to read. A lot. Like, all the time. And mum does, that's for sure, but she also has a few favorites. As an avid library patron, she's checked out and devoured every installment of author Louise Penny's "Chief Inspector Armand Gamache" series. For her birthday a few months ago, my husband and I actually bought her the full set so that she can reread each title to her heart's content. The first novel, "Still Life," was published in 2005 with subsequent stories coming out pretty much every year since then. Right now there are 15 full-length novels plus a novella, a sixteenth novel on the horizon, and a TV movie starring Nathaniel Parker as the titular Inspector. So, as you can guess, it's popular. Penny has been nominated for—and won—a multitude of awards for her books. If you ever pick up a copy of one of them, you'll immediately notice the rich writing style and compelling narrative. Taking place in the fictional town of Three Pines in Quebec, Canada, these murder mysteries are top tier. Readers tend to see cozies relying upon a protagonist with a funny personality quirk, physical trait, ownership of a haunted coffee shop, or a psychic cat. Yeah, apparently that's a thing. But Penny grounds her work in reality, and one of the reasons it is so renowned is because she pays close attention to character development instead centering the plot around wacky-yet-ultimately-formulaic scenarios that so many other writers in the genre turn to. She treats her audience as though they're smart enough to see beyond cheap twists, and that goes a long way, at least for me. The murders in Three Pines are tragic and always treated with decorum. That's a far cry from the usual gimmicks you might be used to seeing in TV shows or movies. So, if you're interested in a more mature collection of whodunits, follow in the footsteps of Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. Mum is also a huge Agatha Christie fan. Her favorite detective is Hercule Poirot, Christie's longest running character who has appeared in over 30 novels, 50 short stories, and a couple of plays. Good ol' Aggie is a veteran mystery writer, perhaps only paralleled by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, or Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. You might

have heard of Christie's other sleuth, Miss Marple, or the team Tommy and Tuppance. Mum revealed to me that she could never choose a favorite story because they're all so good, but she does highly recommend the British drama series "Poirot," starring David Suchet. I, too, think Suchet embodies the Belgian detective to a T. But what's so great about Christie's work? Well, she's known as the Queen of Crime. Apart from devouring the intricate mysteries, mum says that she loves the fact that they're set during a different era. Christie was most creative as a writer during the 1920s through to 1960s, and her stories are mired in those times. Mum and I actually had the good fortune of being able to visit Christie's estate in Devon, England. Greenway is a beautifully kept time capsule, and you can easily see it for yourself in an episode of the "Poirot" series I mentioned earlier: watch "Dead Man's Folly" for an exclusive look. If you're already a fan of Christie's work, you might also enjoy Kerry Greenwood's "Phryne Fisher" series. Phryne is an aristocratic lady detective living in Melbourne, Australia during the roaring '20s. There's a TV adaptation called "Miss Fisher" that mum and I both binge on the regular. You might also like Colin Dexter's "Inspector Morse" series. For that coveted old-timey feel, watch "Endeavor." As a prequel, it follows Morse's early career as a detective constable in 1960s Oxford. Of course, my mum reads things other than mysteries, too. Her all-time favorite book is "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" by Annie Dillard. It's a creative nonfiction classic, really, detailing a year in the narrator's life as she explores the natural world in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. Dillard based the essay on her own collection of journals, bringing up concepts like solitude, faith, and theodicy. It has been likened to Thoreau's "Walden," and Dillard herself is considered a Transcendentalist. "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" is very introspective and reflective. I would go so far as to call it beautiful. I even remember my mum telling me about it when I was a child. Thanks, mum, for the good memories. That's the end of my mother's day best reads. All of the authors I just mentioned have their work available online through OverDrive and the Libby app. Most Milwaukee County Public Libraries have physical copies available, too. And remember: if one library in the system doesn't have a copy on hand, you can always put it on hold and have it sent over. Ask a librarian for help, or place any title on hold yourself by logging into your CountyCat account. Now, bring us home, Leah!

Leah: Wow, Rachel!! I had no idea that your mom was an up-and-coming author. That's really cool! My mom also really enjoys mysteries and has named several in her list, so I'll start with those. She took the time to give me really nice writeups on each of these books, and I want to stay as true to them as I can, so I'll basically just be changing the writing to third person. Now, onto the books! She had a hard time picking her favorite mystery writer, so there are a few on the list. "Death Qualified" by Kate Wilhelm introduces her favorite character, lawyer Barbara Holloway: a strong competent woman who provides unique insight into what defense attorneys do and why. Set in Oregon, Barbara has struggled with her ambiguity about practicing law, and in other books in the series she continues to evolve and develop professionally and personally. My mom's second favorite writer is Jacqueline Winspear. "Maisie Dobbs" is the first book in a series and was recommended by a friend. It begins in the setting of World War I in England and the series continues through the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Maisie is a bright young lady who is placed in service at an English manor at age 13 by her grieving father. She gives us a look at class structure as it existed then and how it changed with time. People help her to realize her potential, and when the war breaks out she is thrust into nursing at the frontlines. Love stories along with the loss of friends and patients are interwoven to show us what it must have been like to live in England during the war and in the aftermath. She becomes a highly skilled private investigator. My mom describes it as "keeping her spellbound and anxious to read the next book in the series." Finally, her beloved and reread "Sherlock Holmes" stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. She was pleased to find a new author taking

up the threads of the story and writing a series of books on what else could have happened in the lives of Sherlock and Watson. Laurie R. King authored “The Beekeeper’s Apprentice” and launched the “Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes” collection. This first book has Sherlock meeting Mary Russell, who he realizes is great at investigative work, and a collaboration and friendship develops. There is a bit of zen running through the story surrounding Sherlock’s hobby of beekeeping and how that informs his thinking and philosophy. Great detective puzzle stories too, of course. Now, listeners, if you’ve caught mini-episode 5, where I—Leah—discuss my favorite movies, you might remember that I really like movies based on Michael Crichton books. It tracks that I would also enjoy his writing, and I guess the apple doesn’t fall too far from the tree. Next on my mom’s list is “Micro” by Michael Crichton. She read it a couple years ago, but the imagery has stayed with her. Crichton weaves together human fears about emerging technology, or micro bots, with a good detective story and throws in a look at the Hawaiian jungle from the point of view of miniaturized scientists trying to stay alive. Like most of Crichton’s books, it is believable as a worst case scenario because he researches his subject so intricately. She said it reminded her of being a kid playing in the grass and bushes, getting down on the level of bugs and seeing the world entirely differently. Crichton turns the tables and the food chain upside down. Great book. Her final pick is “Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet” by Jamie Ford. She doesn’t usually read books from the bestsellers’ list, but the cover of this book intrigued her. She’s read many good books about the experiences of those who survived the Holocaust and those who fought in the European theatre. This book takes you back to the 1940s: the music, lifestyles, the politics, and the attitudes that white America had back then. It shocked her over and over in portraying the truth of what was done to those of Japanese descent: the loss of their businesses, belongings, lives and relationships, safety, and ultimately their freedom. Underneath that, this the author tells a love story and lets us peek at old antiques and belongings stored at a storage center. If any of my mom’s picks piqued your interest, they are all offered as OverDrive reads. Some also have an audiobook. I can’t guarantee they’re available, but you can always put them on hold. Some of the titles are available in one format or another on Hoopla, as well. Hoopla titles are always available, and as of right now, through May, you get an extra four checkouts, meaning a total of eight checkouts a month. That brings us to the end of this episode, and listeners, I hope you’ve enjoyed this peek into our moms’ favorite reads. I know I personally appreciated the opportunity to chat with my mom about her favorite books. Let us know on Facebook what some of your moms’ favorite reads were! Be sure to use the #notyourmotherslibrary. If you like what you hear, please rate the podcast and subscribe. Thanks so much for listening. We’ll catch you for another episode in June with more mini-episodes along the way, and until then, happy reading! Bye!

(Brief outro music)