

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Mini-Episode 1: The Ghost Map

(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, your newest co-host alongside Rachel. We were brainstorming different ways that we could keep providing library services to our community during this pandemic situation, and putting out a few extra episodes of the podcast came up. I can't make any promises that we'll keep it up after the pandemic passes, so please relish it while it's happening! We thought we'd highlight different books, TV shows, or just things that make us happy. It'll be a little all over the place, but enjoy this peek into our favorite things. Basically, Rachel and I will just be separately recording episodes of things that we really enjoy. My first selection will be dedicated to a book that changed my life. Okay, maybe that's a little bit melodramatic. It certainly changed my reading taste, though. I want to talk about "The Ghost Map" by Steven Johnson. The full title is actually "The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World." Which perhaps is a little too on the nose for our current pandemic situation, but it does have a happy ending of the epidemic being resolved, for lack of a better term. The book is a National Bestseller, a New York Times Notable Book, and an Entertainment Weekly Best Book of the Year. It came out in 2007 and first caught my eye in about 2012. I was working at my very first library job at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. As a new employee, I was perusing our bookshelves to get a feel for our collection so that I could help students better. My eye caught and held on this title which seemed so out of place on the shelf. It wasn't near any other ghost story type books. What the heck was it doing there? So, I picked it up, and read the back. I was hooked, and I'd like to read it for you, too. Straight from the publisher: "It's the summer of 1854, and London is just emerging as one of the first modern cities in the world. But lacking the infrastructure—garbage removal, clean water, sewers—necessary to support its rapidly expanding population, the city has become the perfect breeding ground for a terrifying disease no one knows how to cure. As the cholera outbreak takes hold, a physician and a local curate are spurred to action—and ultimately solve the most pressing medical riddle of their time. In a triumph of multidisciplinary thinking, Johnson illuminates the intertwined histories of the spread of disease, the rise of cities, and the nature of scientific inquiry, offering both a riveting history and a powerful explanation of how it shaped the world we live in." Does that give you an idea of why it's so on the nose? The author, Steven Johnson, does a fantastic job of guiding you through the process that Dr. Snow—our hero and protagonist—takes to stem the tide of the cholera outbreak in London. He writes in such an engaging way; it makes you feel like you're right there with Dr. Snow making those discoveries. A real life medical thriller that you can hold in your hands. Let me give you a little historical context: at this time in London in 1848, disease theory was really split between contagionists and miasmatisers. Our Dr. Snow was a contagionist who believed that disease was spread from person to person. Now, in scientific hindsight, we know how cholera was spread, but in 1848 miasmatisers thought that bad air—or 'miasma'—was to blame. Miasma was considered to be a poisonous vapor or mist filled with particles that caused illnesses. In fact, this was the commonly held theory by doctors, by public health officials, by everybody. Dr. Snow gathered enough evidence by charting out where cases had developed to suggest one simple change: see, he noticed that cases were clustered around one center point. I won't spoil what that is in case you don't

know how cholera was spread and want to find out from the book, but his work was absolutely critical in slowing the spread of the disease. And personally, I'm really glad that we've largely moved past the 'disease is spread by miasma' theory. With our current pandemic, COVID-19, where would outbreak numbers be if we didn't understand that the virus is passed through respiratory spread? That we need to cover our coughs and sneezes and wash our hands often? Not to mention the practice of social distancing; if you're far from me, I can't catch your virus and vice versa. If you're interested in reading this book, I'd like to note that we do have a copy of the book on our shelves here at the Oak Creek Library. But more importantly, during our current pandemic situation, you can get the eBook or eAudiobook from our OverDrive service! We have a few copies of each, and you might get lucky! This book really opened my eyes to the world of nonfiction. I think it was one of the first ones I voluntarily read. Now I read all kinds of true crime, travel adventure, medical history, and military history. I'd like to mention a few readalike books to "The Ghost Map" just in case it's checked out. The main subjects of this book are nonfiction medical history. There are many options on OverDrive that fall under these categories, but here are just a few of them. My apologies in advance if I butcher any names. The first book I'd like to mention is called "The Emperor of All Maladies," which is about cancer, or also "The Gene," which is about our genes, and to be clear, not like the denim kind. They're both written by Siddhartha Mukherjee. The next book is "Rabid," which is about rabies, by Bill Wasik followed by "Pale Rider," which is about the Spanish flu, by Laura Spinney. And finally, "Dr. Mütter's Marvels," which is more of a biography about Dr. Mütter who revolutionized modern medicine, written by Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz. This is by no means a comprehensive list but is definitely a starting point if you're interested in medical history. These also might not be the best picks to read if you're looking for escapism from the current pandemic situation. Maybe the next mini-episode will hold that for you guys. I'd like to plug our OverDrive service here. We do have a collection of about 400 'Always Available' classics, and they are—as the title suggests—always available. Included in that collection is Louisa May Alcott's "Hospital Sketches." This book is described as a "collection [that] includes several essays, letters, and other pieces that outline Alcott's experiences serving to the needs of the war wounded. It's a fascinating account that will enthrall Civil War buffs or those with an interest in the history of medical practice." If I was going to select some of TV shows or movies that sort of go along with this topic, my top pick would have to be "Botched," which airs on the E! Entertainment network. I like seeing the process the doctors use to consult, plan, and execute surgeries, and seeing the final results is pretty satisfying, too. It can be a bit outlandish at times, but I recognize that it's set in Hollywood and that's just bound to happen. If you want a dramatic, fiction version of this, you could check out "Nip/Tuck." It's not currently in production any more, and I'm not entirely sure where you can stream it, but the library system does have some copies that you could get once we're open again. If you can't handle the surgery aspect of these shows, which I know some people can't, I would also recommend shows like "Scrubs," "Grey's Anatomy," "The Good Doctor," "Chicago Med," and so on. This list could get quite long, as the topic lends itself very well to medical dramas. I'm going to list a couple of movies that go along with this topic. The first one is "Carriers"—came out in 2009. There is also "Contagion," which came out in 2011. "12 Monkeys," which we're taking all the way back to 1995, and "Pandemic," which came out in 2016. Oh, and how could I forget "Outbreak?" That came out in 1995. And that's the end of our episode. I hope this provided a little entertainment for you. All the books and shows and movies I talked about will be in our show notes. Subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. You can reach us through the library's website or the Facebook page. Be sure to use the #notyourmotherslibrary. Thanks so much for listening and, until next time, happy reading!

(Brief outro music)