

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Mini-Episode 12: Webtoons

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I am your host, Rachel. The other host, Leah, has uploaded a separate mini-episode because at time of recording we are working from home as part of Wisconsin's Safer at Home order. If you are also practicing social distancing, first of all—good on ya. Second of all, let us keep you company during this prolonged period of isolation. It's really not that different to what I normally do, so it's not been difficult for me. Other than the pervasive threat of danger that I feel in the face of a global pandemic boasting an ever-rising death toll. Plus, the grocery store has been out of my favorite brand of toothpaste for, like, a week. Anyway, we're here presenting some of our favorite things, or go-to comforts for when everyone in the world is just a little on edge. You already know that the library has loads of online resources—you should know that, anyway, because we've been promoting databases like crazy both here on the podcast and across OCPL's social media platforms. If you are somehow unaware of this fact, then visit our website at oakcreeklibrary.org for immediate access. My point is that there are a lot of other free resources for you out there on the Interwebz. For instance, a site called Project Gutenberg allows you to download formatted books that are in the public domain. Archive of our Own quenches your thirst for fanfiction. If you don't mind ads, the streaming radio station Pandora will let you listen to free tunes. The options are endless and a quick click away using your favorite search engine. Today, I'm going to talk about a resource called Webtoon. I only discovered it about half a year ago, looking for some free comics to read and stumbling onto the app. Published by Naver Corporation, Webtoon itself is available on Android and iOS devices. But, what the heck even is a webtoon? Well, simply put...they're digital comics. South Korea has print comics called manhwas—think along the same lines as a Japanese manga, which, to us Americans, are equivalent to graphic novels. To paraphrase my old friend Wikipedia, Webtoons have become so popular in recent years that the amount of material published in webtoon form has now reached an equal amount as that published offline. The app I'm talking about has a great user interface, allowing you to easily browse a ginormous collection. There are three things to note about these comics. Firstly, they are published episodically in a long, vertical strip so that they can be read more easily on handheld devices like smartphones and tablets. Secondly, unlike print manwas which are pretty much exclusively printed in black and white, webtoons tend to be in full color. Thirdly, some webtoons feature their own soundtracks and, occasionally, animations. It's pretty cool. Now, it's worth mentioning that the Webtoon app is free, and you never have to pay to read. However, it does offer in-app purchases in the form of coins. Say you're speed-reading a comic and suddenly reach the last episode, and you just can't wait to read the next installment. Some creators offer the ability to exchange those coins for early access. I myself am guilty of spending...uh, wait. Let me check my history...oh. I'm...I'm not proud of that amount. (sniffs) Let's just say it's more than \$10, less than \$50. Look, I never do microtransactions apart from on this single app, okay? Plus, I get a lot of freebies by filling out surveys. So, stop judging me, alright? I consume media just like anybody else! But, yeah, most of what I read is free, and it could easily remain that way if I exercised patience. But sometimes you get so caught up in the story that the idea of having to wait X amount of days for more is just enough to drive you out of your mind. Or, at least, enough to make you exchange actual moanies

for...I guess, cryptocurrency? Is that cryptocurrency? Uh, maybe not. Anywho, webtoons are on the rise in Western culture, so expect to see more of them. The app I'm talking about has a bunch of translated comics available, too, so you can read everything in English. And the content isn't all coming from South Korea, either. International artists publish their own work on a regular schedule. Nowadays, over 10 million people use the platform on a daily basis. Don't have a smart phone? That isn't an issue, because it also works in-browser on your PC. Give it a try. If you're looking for recommendations on which toons to start with, I have a few. I really had to limit myself when making this list, and I will run through each title as quickly as I can. Number one: "The Devil is a Handsome Man." This was my gateway into Webtoon. The art is my favorite thing ever. Period. The story is mysterious in nature, and is currently on hiatus, but there are over 70 episodes to keep you going in the interim. Number two: "Shiloh." This is another one where the art is just stunning. There are super creepy shadow monsters out in a wasteland, buddy cops, and a ragtag group of killers. Honestly, I don't know how that formula could be improved upon. Number three: "Lore Olympus." Based on the myth of Hades and Persephone, this webtoon is a lot fluffier than the other two mentioned, but it also deals with some darker emotional stuff. Number four: "House of Stars." This webtoon has actually been concluded, but it's always worth a read. Rooted in fairytales and brought to life with some amazing art, you'll be hooked from episode one. Number five: "Purple Hyacinth." You know what? These all look amazing, so just take that as a given. "Purple Hyacinth" is about an officer who can always tell when people are lying. She aligns with a murderous assassin, and the ship doth sail onward from there. Number six: "Spirit Fingers." Much more lighthearted, this cute comic encourages inner growth and confidence. Number seven: "Varsity Noir." I saved this one for last because it's the one that has nowhere near as many followers as the others but probably deserves some of the most. Have you ever seen the movie "Brick?" It's like an old-timey detective film set in a modern-day high school. "Varsity Noir" is kind of like that, but with more realistic characters. Those were my top picks. I'm happy to recommend more, so reach out through the library's website or Facebook page. You can use the #notyourmotherslibrary. Subscribe and rate this podcast if you like what you hear, and check this episode's show notes for a list of stuff—mostly, what I just talked about. Thank you for listening and, until next time, happy reading.

(Brief outro music)