

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Mini-Episode 18: Hidden Horrors

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Rachel. Leah, our other host, also has a few mini-episodes coming out this month while the library building is closed due to the current state of the world. If you're listening to this in the far future, leave a comment letting us know if the human race survived the Coronavirus outbreak. If you're listening to us in May 2020 or thereabouts, I'd just like to remind ya'll that OCPL offers a whole bunch of online services, like eMaterials, various databases, and ongoing reference services through voicemail and email. You can call 414 766-7900, email library@oakcreekwi.org, visit our website at oakcreeklibrary.org, and hit us up on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. If you are active on social media, we are pushing a lot of extra content on our Facebook page in particular @oakcreeklibrary. Back to the podcast, though, just a heads up that in these mini-episodes Leah and I are simply sharing our favorite things and go-to comforts, ranging from books to all other sorts of media. I have been looking into specific genres this month so, for this episode, let's get spooky with horror. Full disclosure, we're not going to get super spooky. Instead, I want to talk about a few classics and their modern iterations. Universal's movie monsters like Dracula and the Invisible Man? Mmmno. Remake upon remake of that one slasher flick? Guess again. I'm talkin' bout that old-school '90s flavor, listeners. I'm talking about Nickelodeon. Yeah. I'm talking about "Goosebumps" and Snick's "Are You Afraid of the Dark." For those unfamiliar, these TV series offer scary stories for kids. They are very much a product of their time, especially fashion-wise, but that's part of the charm. If you were a kid growing up in the '90s then you remember that your local library had a shelf or four dedicated to author R.L. Stine's "Goosebumps" books. The author penned over 60 titles in the span of five years, and there have been a lot of spin-off series since then, like "HorrorLand" and "SlappyWorld." And people love them to death: "Goosebumps" is the second-best selling book series in history, right after "Harry Potter." They're aimed at school-age kids, easy reads to help develop literacy and a love for storytelling. The TV show was a hit, too. I remember wanting to watch VHS recordings every day after getting home from grade school. "Are You Afraid of the Dark" is perhaps not as well known, but it actually premiered years before "Goosebumps" ever did. The premise for both anthology shows is similar: each episode is a new story, placing kids into scary or a surreal scenario. The only divergence from this formula is when "Goosebumps" has the occasional two-part story or when "Are You Afraid of the Dark" goes off the rails during its seventh season with a single arc spanning three nights. "Are You Afraid" also sandwiches each story with an appearance by the Midnight Society, a group of cool Canadian kids who gather around a fire in the woods to tell their scary stories in what could be described as a constant game of one-upmanship. Think along the lines of the "Twilight Zone" or "Beyond Belief" where hosts Rod Sterling and Jonathan Frakes, respectively, introduce each tale and, at the end, provide an ominous outro. I think this lends the Midnight Society an edge, making everything seem more real to the viewer. Plus, that's just so rad. What child doesn't want to be part of a secret club that sneaks out in the dead of night to meet up and potentially scare the crap out of their friends? You know what I was doing in the middle of the night when I was a kid? Sleeping, because you don't screw around on a school night, okay? These tales are so well loved by younger audiences even to this day because they usually present horror in a serious

enough way to give them the actual heebee-jeebees. Both shows make kids' real fears of monsters under the bed come to life, and while older audiences usually move on from those unfounded worries, for children those things are still pretty scary. Oftentimes the endings to these episodes are left open-ended, but everything still feels fairly low stakes enough for kiddos not to be left scarred by what they're watching. It's PG horror at its finest. Another reason behind my love for these shows is their theme music. I can't play the tunes here, obviously, since they are not in the public domain, but you can easily find recordings on YouTube, which I also recommend so that you can actually watch them. "Are You Afraid" uses some genuinely creepy visuals, and "Goosebumps" is so campy it hurts in the best possible way. Again, pure '90s gold. If you haven't seen these shows for yourself, I'd love to recommend a few episodes. For "Goosebumps," start out with "The Headless Ghost," "Let's Get Invisible," "The Girl Who Cried Monster," "The House of No Return," and "Shocker on Shock Street." If you don't mind total and utter goofiness, go for "Revenge of the Lawn Gnomes." I will say that while "Goosebumps" the TV show is based on Stine's book series, even the episodes that share exact titles with his written work tend to go in their own direction, which can be both good and bad depending on the story. If you think "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" might be more your jam, start with "The Tale of the Super Specs," "Midnight Madness," "The Shiny Red Bicycle," "Old Man Corcoran," and "Dead Man's Float." If you're just havin' a goof, watch "The Tale of the Prom Queen," "Ghastly Grinner," and "Vampire Town." For a watchalike, there's "R.L. Stine's The Haunting Hour." This show is an updated version of "Goosebumps," running from 2010 to 2014, but it stays very true to the original format. I would say it's about 25% spookier, though, so if your children have a hard time stomaching the other shows, then maybe hold off on "The Haunting Hour" for a few years. I, for one, like the scariest episodes best, so try "The Dead Body," "Catching Cold," "Dreamcatcher," and "Mascot." On the other side of the spectrum—meaning 'silly'—go for "Poof de Fromage" or the two-parter called "Grampires." So, how can you watch all of these? Well, Netflix and Amazon Prime stream some of them, but here at the library's we're all about free options. Hoopla currently has season three of "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" and a few seasons of "The Haunting Hour." Many Milwaukee County Public Libraries have season DVDs available for check out, so when we reopen you can place them on hold and have them sent to your local branch. A couple of Hollywood "Goosebumps" movies have come out in recent years, too, and we definitely have copies of those if you're interested. "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" actually released a revival series late last year, and that's already been picked up for a second season. I don't believe the revival is available on DVD yet, but keep an eye out. Okay, so, all of the episodes I just recommended are listed in our show notes. Remember that you can always reach us through Oak Creek Public Library's website or Facebook page with the #notyourmotherslibrary. Subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. Thank you for listening and, until next time, happy reading.

(Brief outro music)