

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Mini-Episode 2: Community

(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, one of your co-hosts, the other being Leah who is recording a separate episode as we practice social distancing. Because, yeah, Coronavirus is making its way across the world, and it's smart to do what you can to limit the spread. As the library building is closed, and since our in-person programs are canceled for a while, Leah and I plan to publish some mini-episodes of the podcast to try and keep you entertained during self-quarantine. We decided to keep things simple and just talk about different books, movies, music, and other media that we enjoy. I'm looking at these things as my go-to comforts during times of stress, and hopefully you'll either connect with some of our selections or find new favorites. In her episode, the one that was released just prior to this one, Leah discusses all things-pandemic, which is much more current than what I've got, but hey, I'm okay being the wacky, off-the-wall one in this partnership. I'm just going to jump in with my first pick, which is a TV series. I, very unsurprisingly, watch a lot of shows, although these days it's exclusively through online streaming services or my DVD collection, the latter of which will someday either become completely obsolete or succumb to disc rot. Look it up, cuz it's depressing. But in the instance of the show I'm about to talk about, I actually have every season on both DVD and Blu-ray...because I needed that sweet, sweet HD quality. I just rewatched all 110 episodes for the fifth time. What could be worth all that effort, you might be wondering? Well, my friends, let me tell you about a little show called "Community." Running from September 2009 to June 2015, this comedy show started on NBC and then moved to Yahoo! Screen for its sixth and final season. It revolves around eight students at Greendale Community College, all of them screw-ups in some way or another. There's also the college's Dean, and the insane Spanish teacher-cum-student-cum-air vent dweller-cum security officer-cum insane dictator-cum-Changnesiac-cum math teacher-cum actor, Senior Chang. There are some other characters who drop in and out depending on the season, but the main eight are the heart of everything. And I mean that, because even though "Community" is a comedy, it's...a lot more. It's hard to quantify and difficult to describe because the bulk of the series is built around meta-humor, references to pop culture, homages to film, and TV tropes. Comedy is something that has to be experienced, so it's probably dumb that I decided to bring it up for the purposes of this podcast, but really my intention is just to convince you to watch the show and fall in love with it yourself. "Community" is so amazing because of the combined talents of everyone who contributed to its making. It was created by Dan Harmon, who is best known for "Rick and Morty," an Adult Swim cartoon that everyone periodically goes insane over. Harmon is an interesting person, and a self-destructive genius who was actually fired from "Community" after season three, then hired back after season four. He also had some sort of rivalry going on with Chevy Chase, who played one of the main characters on "Community." Talk about drama. But it's clear that Harmon is an enormously gifted writer, and his cult following is, if nothing else, justified. He was aided by a team of writers, and the actors who brought the Greendale students to life are also hugely important. I mean, they had Donald Glover—AKA Childish Gambino—as a series regular. That is insane. Which reminds me: if you haven't seen Glover's own TV series, "Atlanta," the pandemic-pocalypse is the perfect time to get with the program. But back to "Community." John Oliver, Keith David, and Jonathan Banks had semi-regular

roles. Other name-drops include John Goodman, Kevin Corrigan, Michael Kenneth Williams, Brie Larson, LeVar Burton, Betty White—just check the show’s IMDb page and get blown away. And yeah, they had famous people as guest stars, big deal, a lot of shows do. What matters is that they were all great. Their appearances weren’t obtuse or uncalled for—they were written in in a way that worked, and they don’t take the spotlight because the spotlight is on the story about these misfits goofing off and growing together in a dysfunctional study group at a terrible college that has occasional paintball tournaments and is home to a pen-stealing monkey. My explaining that doesn’t do the slightest bit of justice to how the story is portrayed episode-to-episode, and it’s not for lack of trying. Just take this quote from Wy-ki-pee-dye-ah. And no, that’s not a mispronunciation, it’s a reference. “While sitcoms are often underrepresented in the academic study of television, *Community* is an exception. More specifically, television critics and scholars often reference *Community* when discussing semiotics—or, the study of signs—in television and film. Television itself does not convey meaning, but rather viewers construct meaning based on recognizable signs and references, so a complex show like *Community* is rich with potential analysis. Some critics have claimed that the show itself is about semiotics. Mordecai Knode of Tor.com suggests the show is ‘about the tropes of every single genre, it is about the cinematic language and the shared culture we all bring piecemeal to the table when we sit down as audiences.’ Dan Harmon fills each episode with signs and references in order for the audience to deconstruct and construct their own meaning, even going so far as to break the fourth wall to give viewers a wink and a nod to the show’s complexity. Fans of *Community* require a ‘certain level of rhetorical and interpretive skill’ to pick up on these layers.” So, there you go. It’s difficult to explain because it isn’t difficult, actually, it’s impossible. I just took the easy way out, and no one can blame me for it. Booyah. Despite being incredible and clever and everything that people love, “*Community*” didn’t have the best ratings when it was airing, and it faced a lot of struggles before being cancelled. However, there’s still hope for a movie, and there was actually some recent movement on that front before Coronavirus started ramping up, so thanks for destroying what few dreams I had left, you freaking virus. A handful of Milwaukee County Libraries have copies of “*Community*” available in their collections, so once we all open again I recommend you check them out. The show is also available on both Amazon Prime and Hulu—at least for the moment. Because the show is so unique, I’m not really able to recommend any view-alikes, but you’d probably also enjoy “*The Office*,” “*Parks & Recreation*,” and “*Arrested Development*.” Oh, and “*Rick and Morty*”, as mentioned earlier. That’s the end of the minisode. Hopefully you enjoyed it and will keep an eye on the podcast feed for upcoming episodes, which we plan to release bi-weekly...but no promises. Check the show notes for links ‘n’ such. 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 for listening to my rambling, and until next time, happy reading slash watching because we’re not exclusively about books anymore and we never really were bye!

(Brief outro music)