

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 46: All Together Now

(Brief intro music)

Mary: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Mary.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Mary: It's that time of year again: our Summer Reading Challenge opened on June tenth and goes through August twelfth. Patrons of all ages can join us as we read 'All Together Now'. Participants who read for at least ten hours will receive a prize—while supplies last—and have their name added to the window mural overlooking Drexel Town Square.

Rachel: You'll also want to check the library's events calendar to stay up to date on all of the fun activities that will keep you and your family busy this summer. A link is provided in the show notes, and today's special guest will give us some more details about what's coming up on the calendar. Welcome to the podcast, Meagan!

Meagan: Hello!

Rachel: Before we dive in, care to tell our listeners about yourself?

Meagan: Yes, hello. Thank you for inviting me. I am so excited to be here on the podcast. I am one of the Youth Services Librarians here, and you might recognize my face if you've ever been to a Baby Story Time or a Family Fun event. I also often frequent the reference desk in the children's room. There are so many fun programs planned for the library this summer, so I will try to succinctly talk about as many as I can. We will, of course, have our usual line up of Story Times: Monday evenings are for Music and Movement, Tuesday mornings are for our babies, and Wednesday mornings are for our toddlers. We will also host Story Times at a few Saturday Farmers Markets on July eighth, August twelfth, and September ninth. And we will have a very exciting Fire Safety Story Time on Wednesday July twelfth which will feature a real, live fire truck!

Rachel: Very cool.

Meagan: Woo! (laughs) Our STEAM Labs will keep kid's brains buzzing on Monday afternoons, and there will be Drop-in Lego Challenges and Sensory Play Times on various Tuesdays. On Wednesday, kiddoes will be able to create some messy art and check out some book-themed parties. Do we have any "The Bad Guys" or "InvestiGators" fans out there?

Rachel: I love "The Bad Guys!" (laughs)

Meagan: Yeah! Family Fun events will offer hands-on excitement early Thursday afternoons with themes such as Music Together, Mario, and Survivor. And later on Thursday afternoons for those going into middle school we will have some excellent programs such as Off-key Karaoke, Pet Portraits, and an Anime Meetup. All of this and more specifics like the ages programs are geared toward, whether or not you need to register, and times are available on that event calendar Rachel mentioned, and we have really handy flyers you can always pick up from any of our service desks.

Rachel: Mary and I are very happy to have you here with us!

Meagan: Thanks!

Rachel: Because this year's Summer Reading theme is 'All Together Now', we have recommendations about books that feature friendship, family, and teamwork. I'd like to get us started with "Haikyu!!" a manga series created by Haruichi Furudate. Look: I don't care about sports. But I do watch anime! We've got "Yuri!! On Ice" figure skating, "Blue Lock" soccer, "Slam Dunk" basketball, and countless others. If it's a sport, take the bet that there is already an anime for it. "Haikyu!!" is the most popular volleyball-centric anime at the moment, based on a manga rated for teens that the Oak Creek Library just so happens to carry the first few volumes of. Join Shoyo Hinata on his quest to become the best volleyball player of all time! Although Shoyo is rather short, he can jump high. And I mean really high; higher than all of his classmates. Still, Shoyo keeps getting defeated during important matches against the so-called 'King of the Court,' Tobio Kageyama, to the point that Shoyo declares Tobio his nemesis. The

problem here is that once these boys enter high school, they end up on the same volleyball team. More like drama kings of the court, if you know what I'm sayin'.

Mary and Meagan: (laugh)

Rachel: This manga features an ensemble cast, and many of the characters besides our two leads get full arcs of their own. It also contains all the earmarks of your usual high school-set shōnen comics, including training camps, a beach episode, insane names for sports tricks, and all of that other good stuff. It's a fun story about learning to work alongside your peers. For a readalike series with a similar vibe, I recommend "My Hero Academia." It's the same basic premise—training as a team—but insert superpowers, heroes, and villains.

Mary: My recommendations for today are going to emphasize how important your friends can be during the gritty parts of life or when you're in a sticky situation. Rachel hit this already with her first picks, but when we get to the grimy parts of being a teen or new adult it's important to have influences around you that match your values. "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" by Stephen Chbosky is comprised of letters written by the main character, Charlie, while he navigates high school life. "More intimate than a diary, Charlie's letters are singular and unique, hilarious and devastating. We may not know where he lives. We may not know to whom he is writing. All we know is the world he shares. Caught between trying to live his life and trying to run from it puts him on a strange course through uncharted territory. The world of first dates, mixed tapes, family dramas and new friends. The world of sex, drugs, and The Rocky Horror Picture Show, when all one requires is that the perfect song on that perfect drive to feel infinite." That was an excerpt from the back cover.

Rachel and Meagan: (laugh)

Mary: "Perks of Being a Wallflower" is also a movie. It came out in 2012 and stars Emma Watson—

Rachel: Ooog!

Mary: —Logan Lerman, and Ezra Miller—

Rachel: Eew.

Meagan: (sound of discontent)

Mary: —among others. Another amazing book that has the same vibe is one of my personal favorite books, “Looking for Alaska” by John Green. If you read his other works, this one is different. It’s based on the author’s own time in boarding school and follows Miles as he arrives at his new school, forced to make new friends. It’s smart, cool, and heartbreaking. Miles is used to safe and boring. When he becomes immersed in the new environment of Culver Creek Boarding School, he finds adventure and the most interesting girl he has ever met. This book is split into two parts: Before and After. This is a book that you have to experience on your own. I almost don’t want to say anything more because I wish that I could blind read it again. For all of you that will take this recommendation to heart and read the book for the first time, just know I’m jealous of you.

Meagan: There are so many books that fit the theme that I’m excited to share!

Rachel: (laughs)

Meagan: My first recommendations are going to be picture books that highlight the importance of community and friendship and all the good that can happen when we come together. My first one is “Our Little Kitchen” by Jillian Tamaki. This is a lively picture book that showcases the creation of a meal for a neighborhood using whatever is on hand with teamwork and flexibility. There is a lot of energy and excellent cooking sounds and images that get busier and busier as it gets closer and closer to meal time, and then the images and text slow as people slurp and savor the delicious meal together.

Rachel: You’re making me really hungry. (laughs)

Meagan: I know, these books do that! Um, if you want more books that will both make you hungry and pull your heartstrings a bit, check out “Thank you, Omu!” by Oge Mora and “Hot Pot Night” by Vincent Chen. And, because I can never get enough picture books, I have another recommendation titled “Friends Beyond Measure” by Lalena Fisher. It’s subtitle is “A Story Told with Infographics,” and it is through fun charts and graphs that we learn about Ana and

Harwin's friendship as they weather Harwin's family's big move. The accurate portrait of friendship and the unique format is what really piqued my interest. Another book with a fun format is "A New Friend" by Lucy Menzies and Maddy Vian. This is actually two books in one with the pages opening from the center.

Rachel: Ooh!

Meagan: So, you could just read one story at a time or open both sides and read the stories together. Readers get to see two different perspectives of the aftermath of a move. Mae is excited to meet the new kid who's going to start at her school, and Joe is the new kid who is nervous about starting at that new school. It is a really sweet tale told with a fun and interesting design.

Rachel: My next recommendation is the young adult thriller called "#NoEscape" written by Gretchen McNeil. When I think about teamwork, my mind flies to the idea of an escape room! For those who don't know what that is, a select group of people—usually family or friends—are locked in a room full of clues that they must solve in order to get out. There's a time limit, so accomplishing the goal all but forces you to communicate and cooperate. "#NoEscape" twists this concept with a real-life survival element. "Escape-Capades, Ltd. is part of the wildly popular 'escape room' trend. When Persey, along with five other teens, enters the latest game, they're competing for a grand cash prize. But while most escape rooms are about teamwork and collaboration, this one is all about being cut-throat—literally. When contestants start being killed off, Persey must solve a series of bizarre and gruesome puzzles, riddles, and games to make it out alive. She uncovers secrets about each contestant along the way, learning they're all mysteriously related...and someone is out for vengeance." Scary, right? It's like the cult classic "Cube" but for a much younger audience.

Meagan: Yes, I totally thought about that when I was reading this.

Rachel: (laughs) I think there is an entire genre of horror movies like that to satiate your bloodthirst, but I especially enjoyed this book's closed-room mystery style. It's a little campy, but not as bad as what you usually get with Hollywood. "#NoEscape" is a prequel entry in the

"#MurderTrending" series, so I recommend reading this first if you have an interest in McNeil's other books.

Mary: That's funny that you should recommend thrillers and horror, because do you know what I have? That's right. Horror.

Rachel: (laughs)

Mary: As Rachel said, nothing requires more teamwork than getting out of a terrifying situation. In my next two recommendations, the main characters would get nowhere without their friends and partners. In "The Twisted Ones" by T. Kingfisher, the neighbors Foxy, a 60 something ex-hippy, and Tomas, her superstitious housemate, are vital to the story. When Melissa—or Mouse as she's called—arrives at her "mean as a snake" deceased grandmother's house to clear out the hoarder's mess, she uncovers a journal written by her late step-grandfather. In it, there were passages that read, "Too dangerous to sleep in the woods anymore. They've got my scent now..." and "I made faces like the faces on the rocks...". In Mouse's words, "If [my dog] Bongo had been scared of the house, I might have left...Bongo thought the place was grand. There were things to sniff."

Rachel and Meagan: (laugh)

Mary: But then, while out in the woods, things started to click into place. Maybe her grandma's late husband wasn't writing nonsense. Without Foxy's help, Mouse would never have stood a chance against what lurks in the woods. If you love the relationship between Foxy and Mouse, T. Kingfisher also has a book called "The Hollow Places" that has a wonderful friendship between the main character Kara and her new-found friend who works at the coffee shop in the same building, Simon. Their banter is fantastic, and their friendship is so relatable. He also is her partner in crime in exploring an anomaly in the building that leads to a crazy discovery! A readalike is "The Lost Village" by Camilla Sten, translated by Alexandra Fleming. A team of documentarians head to an abandoned village in Sweden trying to understand what happened. One day, it was a normal, bustling, small, remote village. The next, it was empty and its people disappeared. After setting up and exploring for their documentary, some weird things start to happen: Was there a person standing in front of their van in the dark? Did they just hear

footsteps on the floor above them in an abandoned church? Some of the members of the film crew have secrets of their own, as well. The story flips between a woman who lived in the village in the lead up to its ruin and the present-day film crew. It highlights the importance of relationships and rebuilding friendships. It also shows how fragile relationships can be—even family bonds. I couldn't put any of these titles down.

Meagan: Summer always makes me think of scary stories around a campfire, so I also jumped on the scary bandwagon!

Rachel: Mwahahaha.

Meagan: Well, this actually might be, uh, spookier and more mythical than a true a thriller, but I think it will be a page-turner. I haven't actually read it yet, but I am excited to get my hands on "Hamra and the Jungle of Memories" by Hanna Alkaf. The inside cover excerpt reads, "On Hamra's thirteenth birthday, she receives nothing but endless nagging and yet another errand to run in the Langkawi jungle that looms behind her home. No one has remembered her special day. And so, stifled and angry, Hamra ignores something she shouldn't: the rules of the jungle. Always ask permission before you enter. Hamra walks boldy in. Never take what isn't yours. Hamra finds the most perfect jambu and picks it. Of course, rules exist for a reason, and soon an enormous weretiger is stalking her dreams, demanding payment for her crimes—or her entire family will suffer. With her almost-best friend Ilyas by her side, Hamra embarks on a quest deep into the jungle to set things right." The Kirkus Review of this book reports that it is "A retelling of 'Little Red Riding Hood' that manages to both feel distinctly Malaysian and capture and interrogate contemporary concerns." I'm excited for the family, the friendship, the mental transportation to a part of the world I've never been to, and new-to-me folktale creatures that I'm sure will take some teamwork and courage to overcome.

Rachel: That's all, listeners. We hope that you that enjoyed this episode. Mary and I will be back with even more reading recommendations after the show's regular summertime hiatus, so look forward to that. Please check out the show notes for a list of everything we just talked about. Remember to subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. As always, you can

reach us through the Oak Creek Public Library website or Facebook page by sending messages to @OakCreekLibrary. Until next time, happy reading.

Meagan, Mary, and Rachel: Bye!

(Brief outro music)

Mary: You can tell you do Story Time.

Meagan and Rachel: (laugh)

Rachel: It's true, you have a very nice voice for it.

Meagan: Thank you.

Mary: So enunciative [sic]. Is that a word? Enunciative? No.

Meagan: I mean it...

Mary: You enunciate great.

Meagan: I know...I know what you mean.

Rachel, Mary, and Meagan: (laugh)

Mary: You talk real good.

Rachel and Meagan: (laugh)

Meagan: So good.