Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 59: Oh My Gourd, It's Fall!

(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.

Mary: And I'm Mary

Rachel: It's fall—arguably the best season of them all! Hey, that rhymed. Ahh. Leaves crunching underfoot. The smell of pumpkin spice wafting through a coffee shop drive-thru window. Longer nights spent watching reruns of old cartoons into the wee hours of the morning. So cozy. So good. Today, we are bringing you books that evoke images of autumn. This season might be short, but we can draw out the enjoyment with these autumn-some recommendations. Mm. Mary?

Mary: Boo. I'm in total agreement with you. I wait the whole year for fall. I'm taking us all to the foggy hills of Jane Austin's "Pride and Prejudice" first. It's a classic for a reason! As soon as the air gets chilly, I head to my bookshelf and I check in with Ms. Elizabeth Bennet and all the other Ms. Bennets—

Rachel: (chuckles)

Mary: —and their quiet but exciting life in the English countryside. Although the timeline in this novel covers all the seasons, the scene on the misty moors is the backdrop that sticks with me. When Mr. Bingly, his sister, and his extremely wealthy friend Mr. Darcy rent the large manor house near the Bennet family, it presents an incredible opportunity for the sisters to be married off and save the family's estate. But, of course, it isn't that simple. We have issues of class, of education, of differences between men and women, pride, and—you guessed it—prejudice!

Rachel: (laughs demurely)

Mary: It's a tale of sisterhood, of friendship, enemies to lovers, and of a simpler life. If you prefer to watch the movie to really see the ambiance for yourself, my favorite version of this is

the 2005 film starring Kiera Knightly and Matthew MacFadyen. The spirit and vibe of the film authentically represents what Jane Austin has written about in a way contemporary audiences can heartily enjoy. If you've already read and watched this—in my opinion—fall classic, a great next read is "Pride and Premeditation: A Jane Austen Murder Mystery" by Tirzah Price. This darker retelling "reimagines the iconic settings, characters, and romances in a thrilling and high-stakes whodunit. When a scandalous murder shocks London's high society, seventeen-year-old aspiring lawyer Lizzie Bennet seizes the opportunity to prove herself, despite the interference of Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, the stern young heir to the prestigious firm Pemberley Associates. Convinced the authorities have imprisoned the wrong person, Lizzie vows to solve the murder on her own. But as the case—and her feelings for Darcy—become more complicated, Lizzie discovers that her dream job could make her happy, but it might also get her killed." Murder mystery? Romance? A story we already love? Sign me up!

Rachel: This recommendation takes me way back, because I read it during middle school mother-daughter book club. Aw. Wholesome, yeah? I specifically remember the mom who picked it apologizing to the other parents on discussion day because she had 'no idea it was so mature'. While it isn't middle schooler-oriented, "The Night Country" by Stewart O'Nan isn't inappropriate for younger readers, either. At least, not in my opinion. There aren't horrendously graphic scenes or anything like that, but it is tragic and takes some mental maturity to get through from start to finish. "One year following their deaths in a late-night car accident, teenagers Danielle, Marco, and Christopher return, in spirit, to the sleepy New England suburb of Avon. Over the course of the evening, the three will drift into and out of the lives of those who knew and were affected by them. None is more affected than Tim, survivor of the crash, who plots a grisly act of remembrance, and Brooks, the well-intentioned police officer who first discovered the crash and whose life has changed in startling ways since." This is absolutely a ghost story, but it hones in on emotion instead of the supernatural aspect. There are those who didn't make it. There are survivors. There are guilty parties. Some are alive, some are dead, and all of them will make your heart ache. O'Nan is a grounded writer who shares deep insight into the way people think. That's even true for the teenaged characters, a demographic which I've found a lot of authors struggle to accurately portray. A solid readalike

that has more ghosts from the past is “Dark Tides” by Chris Ewan. “When Claire Cooper was eight years old her mother mysteriously vanished during Hop-tu-naa, [a Celtic Welsh] Halloween. At fourteen, Claire is still struggling to come to terms with her disappearance when she's befriended by a group of five teenagers who mark every Hop-tu-naa by performing dares. But Claire's arrival begins to alter the group's dynamic until one year a prank goes terribly wrong, changing all their futures and tearing the friends apart. Six years later, one of the friends is killed on Hop-tu-naa in an apparent accident. But Claire, now a police officer, has her doubts. Is a single footprint found near the body a deliberate taunt? As another Hop-tu-naa dawns, bringing with it another death and another footprint, Claire becomes convinced that somebody is seeking vengeance. But who? And which of the friends might be next? If she's to stop a killer and unlock the dark secrets of her past, Claire must confront her deepest fears, before it's too late.” Tell me that doesn’t sound amazing!

Mary: My next pick is a YA dark academia novel: “The Chandler Legacies” by Abdi Nazemian. “The Chandler Legacies tells the story of five teenagers who get to be part of The Circle, a writing group where lifelong friends are made. But these teens haven't exactly revealed everything about themselves, including their deepest secrets. Even though we love to romanticize boarding schools, there are far deeper, horrifying things hidden inside their walls. These five teens share their world through writing, their lives in the New England boarding school, and the friendships and enemies they make along the way.” "Beth is a ‘townie’ who returns to her sophomore year after having endured a year of tension with her roommate, Sarah. But Sarah knows [that] there's more to that story. ‘Spence’ is the privileged daughter of New York City elites, who is reeling from the realization that her family name shielded her from the same fate as Sarah. Ramin arrives at Chandler as a transfer student to escape the dangers of being gay in Iran, only to suffer brutal hazing under the guise of tradition in the boys' dorms. And Freddy is the senior who's no longer sure of his future but knows he has to stand up to his friends after what happened to Ramin. Their professor tells them to write their truths. But is the truth enough to change the long-standing culture of abuse at Chandler? And can their friendship survive the fallout?” This is a novel about some difficult topics, but it is absolutely worth the read. The New England fall backdrop is an added bonus to this page-turner. An adult

read alike is “The Maidens” by Alex Michaelides. “Edward Fosca is a murderer. [Protagonist] Mariana is certain. But Fosca is untouchable. A handsome and charismatic Greek Tragedy professor at Cambridge University, Fosca is adored by staff and students alike—particularly by the members of a secret society of female students known as The Maidens. Mariana Andros is a brilliant but troubled group therapist who becomes fixated on The Maidens when one member, a friend of Mariana’s niece Zoe, is found murdered in Cambridge. Mariana, who was once herself a student at the university, quickly suspects that behind the idyllic beauty of the spires and turrets, and beneath the ancient traditions, lies something sinister. And she becomes convinced…despite his alibi, Edward Fosca is guilty of the murder. But why would the professor target one of his students? And why does he keep returning to the rites of Persephone, the maiden, and her journey to the underworld? When another body is found, Mariana’s obsession with proving Fosca’s guilt spirals out of control, threatening to destroy her credibility as well as her closest relationships. But Mariana is determined to stop this killer, even if it costs her everything—including her own life.”

Rachel: My next recommendation is a first for me, I think, because it is not the first but the fifth in a series. “Nine Liars” hails from the “Truly Devious” universe imagined by the popular young adult author Maureen Johnson, but it can be read as a standalone if you don’t feel like committing to the whole shebang. Allow me to set the scene: “Senior year at Ellingham Academy for Stevie Bell isn’t going well. Her boyfriend, David, is studying in London. Her friends are obsessed with college applications. With the cold case of the century solved, Stevie is adrift. There is nothing to distract her from the questions pinging around her brain—questions about college, love, and life in general. Relief comes when David invites Stevie and her friends to join him for study abroad, and his new friend Izzy introduces her to a double-murder cold case. In 1995, nine friends from Cambridge University went to a country house and played a drunken game of hide-and-seek. Two were found in the woodshed the next day, murdered with an ax. The case was assumed to be a burglary gone wrong, but one of the remaining seven saw something she can’t explain. This was no break-in. Someone’s lying about what happened in the woodshed. Seven suspects. Two murders. One killer still playing a deadly game.” So, why recommend “Nine Liars?” One, it takes place during the fall. Two, murder most foul is definitely

more enjoyable at this specific time of year. Three, English academia is…like, year-round fall with knitted fingerless gloves, a thermos of coffee, and more classical literature than you can shake a stick at. If you consume British TV drama like “Inspector Morse” or “Midsomer Murders,” then trust me, you’ll get a kick out of this. Plus, there are at least four other titles ready to read, so get hooked already! Go on, get thee to a library.

Mary: We’re heading back to New York City in the fall with my next recommendation, “Sweetbitter” by Stephanie Danler. “Newly arrived in New York, twenty-two-year-old Tess lands a job as a ‘backwaiter’ at a celebrated downtown Manhattan restaurant. What follows is the story of her education: in champagne and [drugs], love and lust, dive bars and fine dining rooms, as she learns to navigate the chaotic, enchanting, punishing life she has chosen. As her appetites awaken—for food and wine, but also for knowledge, experience, and belonging—Tess finds herself helplessly drawn into a darkly alluring love triangle. [You’ll find] the nonstop and high-adrenaline world of the restaurant industry [as well as] the infinite possibilities, the unbearable beauty, and the fragility and brutality of being young in New York.” If you like the coming of age amidst chaos and the transformation aspects of this novel, I would highly recommend heading next to the Minnesota wilderness with William Kent Krueger’s “This Tender Land.” “In the summer of 1932, on the banks of Minnesota's Gilead River, the Lincoln Indian Training School is a pitiless place where Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to Odie O’Banion, a lively orphan boy whose exploits constantly earn him the superintendent’s wrath. Odie and his brother, Albert, are the only white faces among the hundreds of Native American children at the school. After committing a terrible crime, Odie and Albert are forced to flee for their lives along with their best friend, Mose, a mute young man of Sioux heritage. Out of pity, they also take with them a brokenhearted little girl named Emmy. Together, they steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi in search for a place to call home. Over the course of one unforgettable summer, these four orphans journey into the unknown, crossing paths with others who are adrift, from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds.” Think of a modern-day Tom Sawyer with much more to the story.

Rachel: My final recommendation is “The October Country.” Published in 1955, this short story collection features nineteen tales by renowned author Ray Bradbury. Rather than showcase his perhaps more famous science fiction writing, however, this compilation is more realistic and horrific, if you know what I mean. “A man becomes convinced his skeleton is out to ruin him and consults an unorthodox specialist. A couple staying in a small Mexican town comes across a cemetery which holds a shocking policy regarding the interred whose families cannot pay. A man revisits his childhood home and recalls a friend who drowned in a lake during childhood.” These are a mere handful of plots that will have you shivering under the covers with your flashlight turned up to full brightness. One of my favorites is “The Scythe,” which is about a farmer who begins to notice that the wheat in the surrounding fields is strange. I won’t spoil it, but we all know of a pretty famous symbolic figure who wields a sharp blade to cull the living, now don’t we? I know one of the other tales—“The Jar”—was turned into an episode of “The Alfred Hitchcock Hour” during the 1960s, so my guess is that other such shows like, maybe, the “Twilight Zone” drew inspiration from Mr. Bradbury. For a watchalike TV series offering a creeping sensation of dread during the chill autumn night, I recommend “Over the Garden Wall.” The vague IMDb blurb simply reads, “Two brothers find themselves lost in a mysterious land and try to find their way home.” Accurate, but there is a hidden depth to this cartoon. First aired in 2014, “Over the Garden Wall” became an instant cult classic with character voices performed by Elijah Wood, Melanie Lynskey, Christopher Lloyd, Tim Curry, John Cleese, Fred Stoller, and more. Do yourself a favor and stream this one; it will become your seasonal re-watch for years to come.

Mary: That’s all, listeners. Next month we’ll be releasing an end-of-the-year blooper reel where you can laugh at us messing up so badly it hurts.

Rachel: Very cringe. Not demure.

Mary: Otherwise, we’ll be back in the new year with more episodes. You can check the show notes for a list everything Rachel and I just talked about. Remember to subscribe to Not Your Mother’s Library, write a review, or message us directly on the Oak Creek Public Library website or Facebook page. Until next time, happy reading.

Rachel and Mary: Bye!

(Brief outro music)