

## Teachin' Books Holiday Special 2020

[Music: "Homer Said" by [Dyalla Swain](#)]

### Jessica McDonald (Jess) 0:10

Hey! This is Teachin' Books, a podcast all about the ways people teach, learn, and work with literature. And I said I wasn't going to be back until 2021, but here I am to give you a silly, fun, hopefully entertaining holiday episode. I have been bugging a couple of family members of mine, my mom and my cousin, to come on the podcast and chat with me. In fact, I believe we used the term "shoot the shit" in our correspondence about this episode, leading up to it. And that's really what we did for this holiday episode, and we had some loose topics that we talked about, including, you know, big topics like family and books and reading and the holidays and parenting, but we kind of just shared some memories and chatted away quite emotionally because we hadn't video chatted together, throughout all of this social distancing time. And the end result is something that makes me feel very warm and joyful and makes me really remember the warmth that comes from family at this time -- from all sorts of family members, I just happened to have two on this podcast today, on this episode.

So I'm not really going to say much more than that, I will just, I'm not even going to record an outro for this episode. This is a special holiday episode and I'm trying to keep the labor pretty low as well because I am trying to take a bit of a break from work. So, you won't hear from me at the end of the episode. But I hope that you will enjoy this lovely, warm, affectionate conversation between me, my mom Kathy, and my cousin Whitney, about, once again, the general topics of family, books, reading, the holidays, parenting, and all sorts of fun things like that. I hope you enjoy and I hope you have, and have been having a safe and warm and restful holiday season.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

### Jess 2:43

I usually ask folks to introduce themselves first, so that listeners will know who they're listening to, so Whitney, who are you?

### Whitney 2:53

I'm Whitney, I'm Jessica's cousin. I grew up in Edmonton, which is Treaty Six territory with Jessica, and her mom, and I have very fond memories of going to their house and my Aunty Kathy babysitting me. And then there was a very sad day, when they moved to Saskatchewan. But, yeah, happy that we're all talking together.

**Jess 3:24**

You started on a sad note and now like mom and I are both tearing up. But that's okay.

**Whitney 3:30**

Yeah, well it's a love note.

**Jess 3:33**

And I want mom to introduce herself too but I will say, listeners, this is the first time we are Zooming all together, all three of us, since COVID so it has already been emotional. So keep that in mind.

Mom, who are you?

**Kathy 3:48**

Okay, my name is Kathy. I'm the very proud, proud mom of Jessica -- and yes I'm crying, haven't seen her for a while -- a very, very proud Aunty for Whitney. I love you guys and you guys are amazing women, love you.

**Jess 4:09**

As you can hear, we are all emotional and love each other a lot and definitely don't Zoom enough that's what we've already decided I think is that we need to we need to Zoom once in a while so that it doesn't you know we're overcome with emotion right now. So I asked you two on to talk about some general topics and we don't really have much of a plan but I thought it would be fun to do a family special and my, my topics were essentially books, memories, parenting, and... I'm not really sure what else. I don't know what we're going to talk about but I guess we'll see as this, this goes on. What's on your guys's mind? What did you want to talk about today?

**Kathy 4:53**

Well, I'll start.

**Jess 4:55**

Yeah, please.

**Kathy 4:59**

I'll start about you -- like me parenting, if that's okay?

**Jess 5:02**

Sure, great. I would love to know that about that stuff.

**Kathy 5:06**

Well, ever since you were little, you loved books. I think you loved books all your life. But when you were little, you never ever, you always came up to me with the book in your hands to sit on my lap and me to read to you, and you were such an early reader you learned to read so young. I remember telling you about "when two vowels walk together, the first one says its name," not always, but obviously in kids' books, it worked. And you've always loved books, you've loved books. I don't know, just you guys are amazing. I don't know what to say, I'm sorry.

**Jess 5:44**

No that's actually that's exactly what I wanted to ask you, or maybe talk about was like one of my foundational memories and also something that I feel like is like a claim to fame for me which is actually a little bit embarrassing because it's so long ago was that you taught me how to read -- it wasn't me teaching myself how to read it was you teaching me how to read before I think I even got to kindergarten -- so that when I was in kindergarten I remember, or maybe tell me if I'm remembering this wrong but I do remember my teacher, like calling me up in front of the class and like getting me to read like a picture book or something like that to the rest of the class and they didn't know how to read. So, why, mom, did you teach like you taught me how to read so young! Was that was that important to you at the time?

**Kathy 6:32**

At the time, it was so important to you, as a baby. I can't even tell you how much you loved books you were just it was always wanted to hear, you wanted to listen. It was so amazing, and in kindergarten when you took over the class and showed them, but the teacher gave the little stick to you and you took over the whole class, I knew you were gonna be a teacher, and you've always loved books. It was important to me because it was our time together. And that was so important always, but you just loved it, you loved it so much. So yeah.

**Jess 7:10**

And Whitney I was just thinking about how you just said that you, I don't know how much you wanted to say about this, but you're a newer parent -- is that correct to say, a newer parent? Okay. And you were just saying that you, you kind of had to pull Karama away sort of unhappily from his books, is that correct? I'm just wondering how you how you're feeling about books as a new parent, if that's... Yeah. How do you feel about books as somebody who's new to this whole parenting adventure?

**Whitney 7:43**

So, yeah, just to clarify, I have been a parent almost a year. And I remember exploring a bookstore, a couple bookstores, before becoming a parent, before COVID, which was nice. And I just remember feeling so disappointed and angry because all the books that I found were so they were just of white people, and they were just have these, these families that always had a dad, always had a mom, always had a brother, and always had a sister. Even the animals -- I would pick up an animal book, and the animal book would have a brother and sister, and two parents of a man and a woman and I, I, yeah, I just think I just remember being infuriated. I don't want to put this on a negative note I mean books can be amazing but I, I'm learning how to be a, you know, a white mother to a Black child with a Black father, and it's... Yeah, there's lots to learn. And I think even you had a white child you should be learning the same things, well obviously. It's just...

**Jess 9:03**

So do you feel like one of your main struggles or challenges or just concerns as a parent has been like kind of curating your, the books that you let into Karama's life? Or trying to pick, ones that align with the values you have, or?

**Whitney 9:19**

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I think, cuz my mom asked, she saved all these books from my childhood and she's like okay here pick these books for Karama and, you know, there was some that had, you know, some little bits of diversity in them, of course, but you know most of them were very white. And I also... You know I want him to see other types of families, too, it's not just about the color of your skin. It's also we have close friends that are single moms with a single daughter, you know, and you don't see single parent books either. And, Yeah, I think I just want to make sure that he gets to see a lot of different people and faces.

**Kathy 10:04**

Oh my god, that is so beautiful. And that's another reason I love you girls, like it's so amazing. You guys have taught me. And you guys believe in what I believe in, in fairness and caring and giving and, come on

people, care about each other, you guys, right? And it's from you two I learned so much. I learned from you two.

**Jess 10:28**

And I will I was going to actually throw a similar question to you which is that, obviously you raised me and I'm a big reader, I have this podcast about books that you might have heard of -- you're on it right now -- and you also raised Kristi my sister who's a huge reader and was a huge reader her whole life as well. So, did you ever have some of those same kind of concerns about what you let in, let us buy? Or what you let into our lives as books, or was it kind of just like giving us the freedom or how did you approach that, mom?

**Kathy 10:58**

I don't think I ever gave you the freedom to choose whatever you wanted, I don't think. I've always believed in the beliefs you guys do. I didn't have as much support as I needed to believe this but I believed it on my own and I hope that I have given that part to you. Like I hope I had some part of this as how you guys, or how you Jessica are the way you are. I hope.

**Jess 11:28**

Were you a reader, like growing up, did you read a lot?

**Kathy 11:32**

Not reading but as, but more about what Whitney was talking about. I hope I had part of the way we can care about people and act with people and how the world should be but isn't.

**Jess 11:46**

Yes, I think you definitely do it. I think COVID, too, the COVID timeline has for me, as your daughter, made that even more pronounced because I see the way that you approach COVID, and the injustices around COVID-19 with such belief in helping those who are most affected by it, helping those who are made most marginalized by COVID, helping those or looking out for those who are, you know, sick and dying and that and those who are most affected by this time. So yes I think you definitely had an impact But: were you a reader? That's what I wanted to know. Did you... I don't actually know this about you, were you did you grow up a reader?

**Kathy 12:26**

Actually I did. And my favorite book was The Black Stallion.

**Jess 12:29**

What?

**Kathy 12:31**

I know, you didn't even know that, right?

**Jess 12:33**

No! I'm writing it down so I can read it. But what is that book?

**Kathy 12:39**

It's about a horse. Yes, it was -- well, obviously. But when I was young, and it was my favorite book, and Where the Red Fern Grows was my favourite book. But when I had children, it was all about you guys. So I had no time. It was all about taking care of you guys and making sure everything was okay and going to work and, yeah.

**Jess 13:03**

Yeah, yeah. And I wanted to ask that to Whitney and I didn't even realize that of course that would apply to you, where I imagine Whitney since being since becoming a parent, your own relationship to reading probably has changed in some way?

**Whitney 13:18**

I think I definitely don't have time to read, like Aunty Kathy's saying. I don't have time to read the books that I want to read, but I've found this new fun, and with kids' books I think a lot of the kids, the stories that we're getting they have a lot of cute, you know there's some funny bits and then there's moral stories and they, they kind of teach you again as an adult that I don't know, the world isn't so bad, because sometimes I think we get caught up in thinking that everything's a mess. And, yeah, so these books have been quite calming I think, and fun and it's not like he understands them right now but they've been fun for us, I feel like we're the ones that are enjoying them right now.

**Jess 14:06**

Okay, I have two things I wanna ask coming off of that: one of them. I remember, or recall that Karama doesn't have the most positive reactions to every book he encounters. I seem to remember watching a video of him reading a particular book that he like was bawling at every time you opened it. Did you want to tell that story or?

**Whitney 14:28**

Well, just to put it out there, he was in a bad mood, but usually when he's in a bad mood, you can bring him to a book and it'll cheer him up. So, my brother studied physics and math and he really wants Karama to be, you know, all knowledgeable in these areas. And so he bought him all these Physics for Babies books, and I'm not sure who wrote them, but they're very, very boring. And I think, because there's no fun pictures in there like there's one one book. I can't remember if General Relativity or something and there's a ball, and every page just has the same ball, the same color ball. Some one page the ball's gone for some reason, some physics reason, it's this.. There's just there there's nothing in the book, and. But, I mean, I'm learning about general relativity. You know he needs a book full of colors or faces or people or something right? And, I think. Yeah, so I he was really mad one day and so we gave him. I wanted to take a video of him looking at this book for my brother anyway. And we hadn't expected that he would start really getting mad and crying. And so I was telling my partner to turn off the video because this is, I don't want to send this to my brother I want to send it a positive video of him reading the books he bought. But then he just kept recording because he thought it was hilarious. And then, the more we read, the more angrier Karama got and then. And so then I decided halfway through I couldn't handle it anymore because he was flailing all over me. And he must have been like six months old or something, and then I found his favorite book I just picked it up and it's called the Little Green Sheep, and he just calmed down instantly.

**Jess 16:23**

I remember that part of the video, it's like an instant switch.

**Whitney 16:27**

Yeah, and then I sent it to my brother and he was, I think his words were that he was offended.

**Jess 16:33**

I love that story though because, and I love...

**Kathy 16:35**

Yeah, Landon, love you!

**Jess 16:39**

We're gonna keep that in! It was an example of how even kids before maybe they are like reading children, they are still like reacting to what's on the page, even if it's in a visual way or if it's like visual interest or if it... And just like adults their reading habits are like affected by their moods. Like if it's if Karama's not in a good mood then he's not gonna like that book. Well, same for me, right? Like it's just such a microcosm of how reading actually is for adults, but exemplified in this like really funny beautiful video, story that you that you shared with me. So you said his favorite book is something called The Little Sheep?

**Whitney 17:19**

I think it's called The Little Green Sheep. It's an Australian book.

**Jess 17:24**

And I was gonna ask if you had any recommendations because you did say that like you are coming to, you're coming to parenting as somebody who's like finding good things from the children's books that you're reading, or like somebody who is taking comfort in what you're reading, so I was just wondering if you had any recommendations or specific books that you wanted to highlight.

**Whitney 17:44**

Um, you know I'm still learning as I go. Right. And I'm just trying to... no I think I could probably provide you a list that you could add to your podcast.

**Jess 17:54**

Yes.

**Whitney 17:55**

But the his first favorite book was called is called The Little Green Sheep, but I think one of the reasons... it's all about different sheep. And there's like the, it's very good for when kids are trying to learn how to read because it's here's the blue sheep, here's the red sheep, here's the cloud sheepm so it's repeating the same words over and over again so you're, you're learning those words, but I do actions to the words. So when we come to the wind sheep, I blow in his face and that's his favourite. There's also the

near sheep and the far sheep, so when the near sheep comes I bring the book close to his nose and then then I pull the book really really far away when it's the far sheep, and I can't remember there's a music one and I make some music sounds. So I think I try to make them more involved, I guess. And so I think that's also why he really likes that book.

But but one of his other favorite books right now is Humans of New York, which is a book of different faces of people and he just loves looking at faces, and I'm sure every, every child is different, so this is just him, but it's great for us because we get to enjoy different all this photography around New York, and all the different stories from the different people there. So, yeah, I don't think you have to limit a kid to children's books.

**Jess 19:19**

Yes I think that's true too and like your example about how you kind of perform the book a little bit and that becomes like even more of a bonding experience it seems like, from my perspective, reminds me of how, growing up, my mom would always like later like even when I was just like older getting older, you would always try to or sometimes like read the same books that I would. Like I don't even know if you remember this but you read at least, you read most of the Harry Potter series I think I think you even started reading, reading this Twilight series, do you remember that with the vampire?, You did, you started reading that one and so it became almost like a bonding experience reading because yeah you you, I think you picked those books up after I started reading them.

**Kathy 20:05**

Yes, and I loved them. And can we talk about Harry Potter school?

**Jess 20:10**

Okay, what do you want to say about Harry Potter school? What is that?

**Kathy 20:16**

You loved it. And you spend one whole day preparing Harry Potter school for me and Kristi to join. And we spent, I think you spent eight hours out of one day preparing and we spent me and Kristi probably six hours of the next day, being in Hogwarts school. And you had the most amazing things happening. We did potions in the kitchen. You had your mask for the bank where he goes, we had to wear the hat and see where we go. I was a Gryffindor. But at the end, I was a Slytherin.

**Jess 20:58**

First of all, I do not... I don't think it was six hours, but I will have to get Kristi to fact check this

**Kathy 21:07**

It was,, it was! At least six hours. We were so tired, but you worked so hard, you had the mask and everything, you did everything. You had us in the kitchen with potions, I don't know if you used oregano or what you used, but, yeah,

**Jess 21:24**

Oh my God, I know we we always bring up that memory as like a traumatic memory from everyone's past, it's like I wasn't happy because nobody was doing Hogwarts right, you guys weren't happy because it was too long and too boring or whenever else, or I was probably way too controlling like, first you need to go to Gringotts and then you need to do this and...

**Kathy 21:46**

Oh my god, once you did that.. It was so cool.

**Jess 21:49**

And Harry Potter was a huge part of my childhood and I just re-read it, I might have mentioned this on the podcast before, but it's really strange coming back to that series which I know Whitney was also a part of your life growing up because your mom is the one who bought me the first three books at the very beginning yeah.

And then actually Whitney I don't know if you remember this, but one time when you came to visit in Saskatoon, you and Landon and I would do Harry Potter quizzes. So I don't know how many of the books were out by then, like, I don't remember which time this was, but we would do like "what chapter is this from?" and the quizzes were that intense! Like we would sit around, you, me, and Landon, and read like a, maybe a quarter of a paragraph and then be like "what's the name of the chapter?" or like other questions like that.

**Whitney 22:33**

I do, I actually remember this! Oh my god. You know I used to pay my brother because my brother, I can't remember... he was younger than us right and I really wanted to share the Harry Potter experience with him when I was reading them as a young kid, and I remember I had to pay him in chocolate bars

just so he would sit and I would read the books, and I'm like, "okay, you get two squares of this if we just listen to this chapter, okay? Listen."

**Jess 23:03**

That's like such a sad, sweet story that like, you're actually the one doing the labor of reading, like to him, but you have to pay him for you to do that labor.

**Whitney 23:15**

I know sounds like male-female relationships.

**Jess 23:19**

Did you end up you finished the series and everything right like you were you're you finished it? Okay. Are you still a fan, or how did your relationship to Harry Potter change? because I don't think we've really talked about Harry Potter, maybe in recent memory or in years.

**Whitney 23:33**

I haven't read them since I was a kid or I think I might have read, re-read them. I read reread them when I was younger, but I don't know the... I don't know the politics behind them right now, like I know JK Rowling has had some issues of transphobia and stuff. And I'm not sure, when you look at Harry Potter in a critique, like, I mean, you probably know this more than I do, because you've re-read read them how, like... I don't know, is there problems?

**Jess 24:07**

Yes. Definitely, yeah. But yeah like it's like that tension between still loving the series for a lot of reasons and then of course, huge problems in terms of gender, race, class like every big category of identity has huge problems with those books. But other other folks that are much smarter than I am, have you know talked about that and detailed that and that sort of thing. But I re-read them this year and I still loved a lot of it for what it for what it was and, yeah. Yeah.

**Whitney 24:36**

Yeah I was thinking about just reading kids as they, or reading books as a kid. I remember reading Little House on the Prairie, and this was a big for me and this. I haven't looked at it since I was what 10. But I, I've read how horrible they were, you know, and how racist they were and but it's all about you know where you grow up, too, right? Like these are the books of the prairies and the farms and the white

people and the settlers here. So how, like how would you read these books or would you read these books to your kids? Like say like even with Harry Potter would you read it and then you try to talk about the issues afterwards or?

**Jess 25:27**

That is a question and I feel like I don't know if you can see it, or no you probably can't but I actually have the entire Little House series over here somewhere too, and I totally. Yeah, of course, since becoming an adult, I've, I've heard all about and read all about all of the pressing and crucial problems with those books but like you said, it's like part of the prairie mythology almost when you grow up on the prairies and when you're a white settler that you learn that those books are... like that you learn to love those books almost. It's just a settler colonial narrative in most ways right? But then it's also like you grow up, especially as a white settler on the prairies, being like, it's a beloved book because it's like part of the prairie colonial mythology, that sort of thing, this sort of homesteading and pioneering and that sort of thing that's actually really gross once you once you unpack it, but but it's part of the mythology that a lot of folks find a lot of comfort and like a lot of comfort in and a lot of, like, love it in a lot of ways. So.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

**Jess 26:35**

Let me see here. Okay, here's a question I had for both of you. I had the question of, we've been sort of talking about, mom, what you thought about reading and parenting and Whitney what you're thinking about right now as you think about parenting and reading, but like is it even important to raise a reader? Is that something that's actually that really matters, or does it not matter? Because you grew up a reader Whitney, and mom you raised a couple of people who are readers, but is this something that matters to you?

**Kathy 27:08**

It does to me. Absolutely. The more you read the more you know, and the more you learn about the world, about racism, everything, the way the whole world is going, you need to read. That's all I got.

**Jess 27:26**

What about you, Whitney?

**Whitney 27:28**

Yeah, I feel, I feel the same I think you really do it allows you access, potentially, to have conversations with authors, just about a different way of thinking or a different way of living. I think it can teach you how to be empathetic. I'm not an expert in this, but I think I do think that it's a very important or it's a very powerful foundation to have. If you know, instead of, I think, thinking right now just on social media platforms, like instead of just reading the title of something and coming to a conclusion it's really important to read the whole thing. But I'm not an expert on this. I'm sure there are very, like, you need all kinds of people in the world, and I don't know.

**Jess 28:32**

Don't say you're not an expert because that's exactly what I'm asking about is like what are your thoughts about as, as you come into parenthood like what are your thoughts about this? Because, of course, I feel like as a reader myself, as somebody whose professional life is devoted to books, a lot of the time, I'm enthusiastic about reading in a way that makes me think it would be great if everyone read, but I also know that reading isn't neutrally good and it can even perpetuate harms -- like it's kind of like what you were saying earlier, Whitney, about the kinds of books that you read and like representation issues, and if you're always reading books with the same narrative and the same troubling narrative, then that doesn't necessarily make reading a good, or a good thing right? So yeah I think it's more complicated and you're saying that it's more complicated than that too but I think I share your enthusiasm for reading as like, maybe a method of social change or a method of like expansion or something like that. But you're right that there are experts on this and I'm not that expert either. I'm just talking out of my ass a little bit.

**Whitney 29:36**

Yeah, I think, I don't know, I think it's a gateway that almost can open up your mind, but like you said it can narrow your mind as well. But I don't I would like to argue that even if you are in that narrow space, because I grew up in a narrow space of the books that were available to me at the time, and I expanded afterwards.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

**Jess 30:12**

So what did you guys want to talk about? Do you have any things to share or any memories? Like I wrote down a couple of memories that I have already talked about, oh actually no I didn't talk about this one. Do you guys remember this? It's called The Cobweb Christmas.

**Kathy 30:26**

Oh my goodness. Yes!

**Jess 30:29**

Yes. Okay, so it is from Aunty Brenda who by the way, listeners is Whitney's mom. And it's from Christmas 1995, which I was actually surprised at because I thought it was a little bit more recent than that but yes I, this was my kind of last memory that I had written down about like our family and reading and it's not even like our family read this book together, *The Cobweb Christmas*, but it's just something that I remember getting from Aunty Brenda and Aunty Brenda's family, including you Whitney, on Christmas I guess in 1995 as it says, and reading quite often. And this year, I happen to set up a tree for the first time in a few years -- I haven't been really enthused about -- yes, finally! -- I haven't been enthused about Christmas lately. So I finally set up my tree and I found the little spider ornament that came with this book and I found the book and I re-read it and it was like, I, I, like I got emotional almost reading, so it all came flooding back to me.

I don't know if you remember the plot of it, but that also was compelling to me because it's essentially like this old lady who always sweeps the spiders out of her house every Christmas and cleans up really nice. And then one year the spiders get in, and they end up making like these cobwebs over her Christmas tree and the Santa Claus figure like turns those cobwebs into like this really pretty looking material, and then every Christmas after that I guess she doesn't sweep away all the spiders, so she lets them into her home a little bit or she keeps them or allows them to be there. And I was like, That's such a nice metaphor! Like I just thought it was so sweet that our family has this book that was given to everybody, and that it's really about like bringing in creatures that you want to sweep away, and like kind of making room for them and like even the scary spiders, like actually bringing them into your celebration of Christmas or into your home, I was just like, that's the sweetest story ever and I didn't, I didn't remember that. Like I don't know if you remember that plot but I had no idea till I re-read it this year.

**Whitney 32:28**

No, no I didn't remember that at all. Yeah, my mom, my mom made those spiders I remember her beading them

**Jess 32:35**

What? Did she really?

**Whitney 32:38**

Yeah the gold those gold spiders, she made them, yeah.

**Jess 32:41**

Wow. I can't believe that because I thought it was like something from like Peoples or something like that. That's so wild. Okay, sorry mom, go ahead.

**Kathy 32:49**

No, just the memory of when Whitney and Solomon came here for Christmas.

**Whitney 32:54**

Any specific memory?

**Kathy 32:57**

All of it! Like the reggae, the music, the cooking everything. Like, oh, the ghost, helping Solomon go up the stairs to bed -- do you remember? Ask him. Everything, like everything, just special. The talks, oh my goodness we talked so much, all of us. Talk, talk, talk. I love talking. I love hearing what you guys feel. I love all that. And I thank you. Great memory and we're gonna do it again, after COVID right? We will. With Karama, right?

**Whitney 33:40**

Yeah! Yeah. He's a bit of a handful but yes, we'll bring lots of books to calm him down

**Kathy 33:48**

And Jess, I was gonna say what is your favorite Christmas memory ever?

**Jess 33:55**

Oh. Oh, hmm, I have to think. I don't know if I can like pinpoint one I can just pick it I can just pinpoint like patterns, like there was like several years in a row where you and I, so many of my Christmas memories revolve around food. So, It would be like us making like different weird appetizers and like deviled eggs with cauliflower one time and like sausage plates and just like tons of frozen appetizers that we would make, I mean we still have been doing that, even recently, but that's the thing that I think like

sticks out in my head the most is like all the food and the appetizers and not really the Christmas traditional meal because, at least for you and I, mom we don't get as excited about that but we always got excited about the appetizer nights, and that sort of thing.

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[Music: "Homer Said"]

### **Jess 34:50**

Sorry, I was just gonna say you have a complicated feelings about Christmas right? Am I correct in saying that?

### **Whitney 34:56**

Yeah, yeah. I've always, not always, but don't really like the crazy amount of gift buying and just a lot of I don't know, the word that comes to my mind is greed, that sounds bad but it just seems like just too much food, too many gifts, too much, just an overindulgence -- maybe that's the word -- and i think that i mean that's an overindulgence for people that have a lot of privilege.

I think my favorite memories are spending time with with family. Like coming to Saskatchewan will always, always remember that and yeah and then growing up I think my favorite was just all the cousins getting together that was always the best part and I remember when people like what after, when you guys went left to Saskatchewan and we didn't see you as often and then the older cousins got married and they were doing their own thing, I just remember being so sad because they were so quiet afterwards,

### **Kathy 36:10**

I agree. Great, memory, when you came here and. Yeah, I agree, Christmas can be greed, everything. But the most important thing it's family. It's fairly.

### **Jess 36:26**

Okay, you guys are making me look like a huge dick because I was like "woo I love the food." You guys are so sweet, you're like, "family is what matters, the people!"

**Kathy 36:37**

Oh you know Christmas Eve appetizers all the way, right?

**Jess 36:43**

Good yes I'm glad we get that honesty out of you.

**Whitney 36:51**

You know, Aunty Kathy was the only one that she really, really, I think, respected and understood my anger towards the season. And I remember for a couple of years, she would phone and whatever day it was, like say Christmas was on a Saturday, she'd always phone to say Merry Christmas to everyone, but as soon as I came on the phone, she'd be like, "Happy Saturday. How's your Saturday?" Like she'd just pretend that it wasn't it wasn't any other it was just a regular day. Oh, it just meant so much it was, so nice.

**Jess 37:25**

Good job, mom.

Yeah. So I don't have anything else on my list but is there other other things that you guys wanted to bring up questions or topics or memories or things to share?

**Whitney 37:39**

I know the only thing I can think of, but maybe this can be a separate podcast is I've, I've been very lucky to be able to you know go to some other countries, and spend some time in some of their schools and in three places in particular, in Uganda, Nepal, and the Philippines. I always made sure to explore their school libraries and see the children's books. And, and it was, it was always so devastating, because the books were so Western and... And then when we talk about like what did you read when you grew up when you grow up. You know a lot of, when we talk about Little House on the Prairie and even in Harry Potter as well, I think you know that's really part of where we grew up these books are you can kind of identify I mean, I guess there's no Hogwarts around here, but you know, it's still a very, like you said, I don't know it's a still has a very Western white narrative, I think, and Little House on the Prairie is very much being on the prairies and the farmlands, the settler stories, and so you know we read these books that are very much about being a white settler.

And when I go to these other places, you know, they're rea, they have Little House on the Prairie in their library which, you know, it's good to have books from all around the world but all these books get donated from Western countries, you know, and they just like... these are books that people are

throwing away or getting rid of and then you know you have people in very very different environments, reading about it where their main books that they're reading are all about white people and snow and farms and Western farms. And it's you know it's very, there's not a lot of books that it's very specific in their language and in their culture and. Anyway, I think that's a whole different topic.

**Jess 39:57**

No, I mean well yes we should definitely talk about that, maybe in the future but I think that's so important to what we've already been talking about like how as you grow up the libraries around you, the offerings of books around you, shape you. And if all of those things are telling kind of the same story and it's not really a story that makes sense to you and your context, then that becomes like troubling, and even just thinking about us being raised here on the prairies, reading, a certain kind of story over and over again, kind of like a certain kind of narrative, that's prioritized that also shapes us in ways that are not always positive. But then you can always resist and I guess there's, there's so many complications to this that make that a better a topic for a whole nother conversation, your, I think it applies to -- no but it applies to everything we've said, so I think it's so... about how readers are shaped through their lives and through the libraries around them and through the offerings around them and even what you said earlier about all the shops that you go to that have certain children's books and like what what's offered to us as readers has such an impact on us. So that's why publishing is so important and publishing protocols and publishing efforts are really important to pay attention to as well.

**Whitney 41:12**

But even like I guess. I remember, Solomon and I would go to the library and we would pick out a book for Karama. And we they put books in front of us that like that had a black child on them or whatever and some of them would be quote unquote, you know "in Africa," and it was about a little girl going to get water and how difficult it is to get water and then he Solomon would get really annoyed because it's like okay this, what Africa is this? This is, and he'd read and it would be a white author that's written this book about her experience of somewhere, she went in Africa and how, like how you know how these stories are like who's writing these stories? And how they represent certain parts of the world. It's not just also about the story. Yeah, it's very complicated.

**Jess 42:09**

Yeah, totally. Author authorship as well. Like I don't know if this is a phrase that goes outside of young adult literature, but I know in YA literature, they call that like Own Voices stories where people from a particular community are actually writing about themselves -- like folks who grew up in the foster system actually writing about foster children instead of random people writing about the foster child system, that sort of thing. So Own Voices I guess is a term that folks use in publishing, but this idea that it's not just about like the story told but also the, the authorship and identity and that sort of thing.

Um, mom? What are your last thoughts? What do you want to.. what do you want to leave with or what do you want to say at the end of our recording here?

**Kathy 42:56**

Mm hmm. I'm just thinking that I love you so much. I love Whitney so much, I can't wait, I hope, when this is over we can do some Zoom with the family still. And I just miss you a lot. And yeah, just miss you a lot.

**Jess 43:18**

Awww. I love you too.

**Kathy 43:20**

And one day we'll all be together.

**Jess 43:23**

Mmhmm. Yes. How about you, Whitney? Do you have any last things to add?

**Whitney 43:28**

Well I think it's... I think what Aunty Kathy said, I think it's just nice to be together and I think about all the stories that we've shared and it's a lot of them are about how books have brought family together, whether or not it's inspired your imagination to create a Hogwarts, then you had a family Hogwarts day, even now it's a strong memory and

**Jess 43:52**

Um, that was almost a family breakup. That was very close to a family breakup so I'm not sure if that was an example of unity but you're totally right I think I think that's the theme here is the, the reading and the books bringing us together.

**Whitney 44:09**

And like, like, my parents, the like Karama just loves to sit on their lap and they just read and read and read. Just, I think everyone's... You create a certain bond I think and now we're all talking about it which is nice. What about your final thoughts Jess?

**Jess 44:32**

Okay, um, my final thoughts are just that... Yeah, that I'm so pleased to talk to you two and I love reminiscing and I do think that that's something that, you know, thinking about books leads me to thinking about family and people and relationships, and thinking about family leads me to thinking about books, so I think that's something that I really liked about this conversation is it reminded me about my roots. My roots in, like, where I started reading, how I started reading, it's all influenced by family -- by mom teaching me to read before I was even in Kindergarten, by Aunty Brenda buying the three Harry Potter books and me getting obsessed with reading from there, doing quizzes with Whitney and Landon on those Harry Potter books, and all the other memories along the way.

[Music: "Homer Said"]

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