



## RAR #45: Our Favorite Picture Books

You're listening to the Read Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that inspires you to build your family culture around books.

Hello, hello! Sarah Mackenzie here. I'm your host for the Read Aloud Revival podcast. You've got episode 45. Today is a fun show. I've brought along the whole Read Aloud Revival team to chat about picture books. We talked about how we use them, which ones we love best, and why we think picture books can be even more powerful than longer text like chapter books, novels, even the classics when it comes to giving our kids what we know they all need - accurate and highly sophisticated language patterns into the ear. We chat about using picture books with older kids and oh my goodness! Don't even try to write down all the book recommendations we sling around. You will never be able to keep up. All you have to do is go to [readaloudrevival.com](http://readaloudrevival.com) and look for episode 45 and you'll find the show notes there. We've linked up every book and link and article we chat about on today's show. You don't want to miss them.

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**Sarah:** Today, I've got the whole Read Aloud Revival team with me and we want to talk about

picture books. Do you think picture books are only for your littlest kids? Well, we're going to challenge that today and I think it's going to be a lot of fun. So let me introduce to you to the Read Aloud Revival team just in case you haven't met them before. They're awesome. Kortney is our community director here at RAR. She's the one you hear back from when you write into the Read Aloud Revival and she's also the one that keeps me from wandering off into the weeds and getting lost so we can actually get this podcast to you on time. Hey Kortney, how are you?

**Kortney:** I've been doing fine this morning.

**Sarah:** Awesome. So you can find Kortney at her blog One Deep Drawer at [kortneygarrison.com](http://kortneygarrison.com) and I will put a link to that in the show notes, wonderful blog. And of course you can always find her at the Read Aloud Revival forum or anywhere around the Read Aloud Revival. The other team member we have today is Kara, who's our podcast manager. Hey Kara, how are you?

**Kara:** Hi! I'm good.

**Sarah:** So Kara is the one who books our awesome podcast guests and creates the questions for our interviews. She writes at Quill and Camera, which is at [quillandcamera.wordpress.com](http://quillandcamera.wordpress.com). I'll put a link to that in the show notes as well. So that's the team Kortney Garrison and Kara Anderson and myself. And today, we're going to chat about picture books. But first, before we do that, Why don't you ladies tell us a little bit about your family? Kortney, do you want to start?

## 3:00 A little about our families

**Kortney:** Sure. I've got three kids, a 9-year old, a 6-year old, and a 3-year old. And we live in the pacific northwest and we love picture books.



**Sarah:** What do you know? Yes we do. Actually, when I don't mention them enough, you start getting on my case, like "Hey, what's all these chapter books?" You know it's funny because I tend to lean toward choosing a chapter book. Even when my kids were little, I would find myself leaning toward that but yeah, you always reign me back in. Like, "Hey, you're missing a whole lot of goodness here by skipping all those picture books."

**Kortney:** Well I think we think of picture books as something for little kids, something that you grab the kid who can sit on your lap and you read picture book together. And you think maybe now that they can't sit down on my lap, we're done with picture books. But yeah, like you said, hopefully we'll change your mind.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I'm looking forward to this conversation. I'm pretty sure you'll change all of our minds here. Okay Kara, tell us a little about your family.

**Kara:** Well, I have two kids. They're nine and twelve, newly nine and newly twelve. And so they're a little bit older but we still really enjoy picture books. And we like to use them a lot in our homeschool to sort of introduce new things or just to have a cozy minute to share together.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I love what you say online about picture books your family shares together. I think it's a really good example of how you can use picture books with older kids and engage everybody. So we'll get into that this morning too. I think that will be great.

## 4:30 Andrew Pudewa and the importance of beautiful language

One thing I remember is that from our very first episode of the podcast, Andrew Pudewa in Episode 1 told us about the many benefits of reading aloud. But one of the main things he says that's so important about children hearing beautiful language. He says it's so important for them to have accurate and highly sophisticated language patterns coming in through their ear. Beautiful language that comes in through their ear makes a huge difference in their ability to read well, to write well, and to communicate. And he makes this beautiful case for it in episode 1. So if you're listening to this and you haven't heard episode 1 yet, it is by far the most downloaded episode of all the Read Aloud Revival podcasts. You should go listen to that one but not until we're done talking to you. We think picture books do that like nothing else and we're going to talk about that today because picture books are short and the authors of picture books have very limited amount of text to use and so because of that, every word is so carefully selected.

We recently did an author event at the Read Aloud Revival, an author access event with Anne Ursu and she was talking about how picture book text is masterpiece because the authors have to be very masterful in their use of language and nothing is inside of a picture book that hasn't been carefully chosen and put there own purpose. So I think picture books in some ways may do that accurate and highly sophisticated language pattern stuff, a little bit better than other books. So that is exciting to me. And they're so accessible so I know when I'm overwhelmed with life and I feel like reading aloud gets cut from my



schedule because I'm too overwhelmed. I have too many other things going on. Picking up a picture book and sitting down to read it feels a lot like a quicker, there's such a lower barrier to entry than picking up a whole chapter book and feeling like this is a commitment. I have to read this thing all the way to the end. So Kara, tell me about what using picture books looks like for you in your home because your kids are 9 and 12, that's right?

## 6:21 The art of strewing

**Kara:** Yeah, they are. They're 9 and 12 and so what I do is I strew picture books. A term that kind of comes from unschooling, where we have this really cute little coffee table in our living room and just about every week, I'd go online. I put a couple of books on hold at the library and I just put them out on a coffee table and just leave them there. And then when my kids wake up in the morning and they're a little sleepy and groggy. There's like a little place to curl up. And you know they can be all kinds of things. They can be really short picture books. They can be those more involved ones like Welcome to the Museum series, like Animalium, the Maps book, those that have a lot of detail, The Way Things Work. That one, we actually just bought it because my son just spent hours curled up with that one. So I also use them sometimes to introduce a subject. We've started talking a little bit about the election and so we found a book Grace for President, sweet picture book but when you're talking about language, I don't know if it's beautiful language but it's certainly like valuable language, the campaign process, electoral votes, they're hearing all those things and they're seeing it in a way that's a little more approachable than if

I were to read something kind of dry from a textbook or something.

**Sarah:** Yeah, how likely would your kids be to pick up a textbook that you put on like Civics or American government on the coffee table? And they might too but they might through a picture book on. We have Eileen Christelow's Vote! picture book and some other picture books on the elections too that I got swimming around the house right now too.

**Kara:** Yeah, because they'll hear a word like constituents, what does that mean? And then when they can see it in this book, and it's really sweetly illustrated and then it's about a little girl running for class president so it's just a little bit more applicable to their lives I think.

**Sarah:** Yeah I do too. So okay you told me that you ran across the book about The Mary Celeste or have you seen the book yet or you just ordered it?

**Kara:** No, I just ordered it. It hasn't come in yet but I had heard a podcast and sometimes that will happen too where I'll just hear something and I'm like I really want to talk to my kids about this but the podcast or the book I'm reading or whatever is just a little bit beyond what I feel comfortable either reading aloud or handing to them to read on their own. So yeah, I heard about The Mary Celeste which was a ghost ship in the late 1800's and it just fascinated me so I went online and then I found it's called The Mary Celeste: An Unsolved Mystery from History. I mean how can that pull a kid right in. And it's by Jane Yolen and she writes beautiful books.

## 9:00 Jane Yolen!

**Sarah:** I know Jane Yolen is just yeah...



**Kara:** Owl Moon and yeah, she's amazing. So I knew it was going to be good. So I was like getting it in the Amazon cart.

**Sarah:** I love that Jane Yolen is so, like her writing is so diverse within picture books. Isn't she the one who wrote like the Dinosaurs Say Good Night?

**Kara:** Yes. That whole series.

**Sarah:** I would love those.

**Kortney:** Yeah, we love them.

**Sarah:** Yeah, and then like beautiful poetry and then she writes a little bit about Greek mythology I think. There's such a wide spread. We have that Mary Celeste book on our shelf. I don't think we've ever read it but I know I picked it out at a book sale, one of those things where you look at it and go, I think I should probably own that. And usually when I find a favorite author I just think well I need to own everything. So I just grabbed it from that used books even if I don't know about that particular book. But now I need to go down and dig it out for my kids. You mentioned it. Like yeah, that does sound awesome.

## 9:50 The interplay between words and pictures

**Kortney:** We have mentioned that picture books have reliable patterns of language like Andrew Pudewa suggests. But for me, it's the illustrations that really kind of put picture books in their own class. It definitely, the words are almost poetry. They're so carefully chosen and they're in just the right place. But it's the interplay for me between the words and the illustrations so that the illustrations become another language that you can participate in. It's not your ear that's hearing this language, it's your eye. But there often

hidden details or the pictures don't quite match up to what the text says. And so there's the sophisticated reading that's happening even if before your kids know how to read but that's something, that's one of those places where I think picture books, a lot of times, are written with parents or older kids in mind because there are things that younger children wouldn't really necessarily pick up on those sorts of ironies or discrepancies or just richness between the pictures and the words. And so those are really neat places where picture books I think have an advantage over merely text.

**Sarah:** What you get I think is you get multiple voices especially if there's a different author and illustrator because when we had Jonathan Bean at the author access event, he kind of shocked everybody by saying that when he writes some picture books and illustrates them but he's also just an illustrator for some books that are written by others. When that happens, he said that he doesn't have any interchanges with the author of the book at all until it's completely done. For the most part, he gets the manuscript and he illustrates it. So he reads it and then he makes it his own through the illustrations. So he adds a different dimension to it through the illustrations without consulting with the author. And it made so much sense when he described why that is. He said, "It's not like I'm sitting there over the author's shoulder whispering to them like don't do that, make him say this, say it this way." So they both take this piece of work and then they'd add their own voice. It makes it so much richer than I think it could be on its own in a lot of cases. And so...

**Kortney:** I think you're right.

**Sarah:** And then even when it's written and illustrated by the same person, there's a depth



there that some things only unfold through the illustrations that you wouldn't get if you were just reading the text and skipping the illustrations entirely.

## 12:30 What's twaddle?

**Kara:** Yeah, and when I first started homeschooling, I remember hearing this word twaddle. And I thought oh I don't know what that is exactly. But it was easy for me to figure out with picture books. The ones with the really beautiful illustrations, those were the ones that felt good to read to my kids and share with my kids and to give them that beauty through books, when they would pull one off the shelf it was maybe a cartoon character from TV, it was pretty clear to see that those illustrations didn't have that same power as like you were talking about sometimes there's something hidden like the Jan Brett books.

**Sarah:** I was just going to mention her, yes.

**Kara:** You know, and those little panels and oh my goodness and we still pull those like her winter ones like The Hat and The Mitten and all those. We still pull those out every winter because there's still so much where you can just curl up and discover something new in those little panels and then one of my kids, I remember, figured out that some of the panels give you a preview of what's coming next. And that was like, that was huge because it was like, "Oh, I bet this is going to happen." And they just thought it was so neat.

**Kortney:** And that's such an important skill to figure out what's going to happen next stopping in a book. And you can do that obviously in chapter books too. But asking what's coming next, what do you think is going to happen?

What's this character going to do? What are the consequences of what they're going to do?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I can't think of actually a better way to introduce the concept of foreshadowing than to pull out a Jan Brett book and let them see it through illustrations before they try and do it with the text of a book.. And it's so much fun. And then do you ladies remember, Jonathan Bean mentioned in one of his books, there's like a picture of a bug or something in every single picture? Am I getting that right?

**Kortney:** This Is My Home, This Is My School.

**Sarah:** Okay.

**Kara:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's the mantis or something, right?

**Kortney:** The katydid.

## 14:00 Reading picture books with the whole family

**Sarah:** The katydid. Okay, yeah and when he told me that I had never noticed it before but now of course everytime we read it, everyone's on the hunt for the katydid. There's just fun things like that you can't do with language that you can do with beautiful, beautiful illustrations. Okay so, one of the other things that I love about picture books is that it brings, well, what happens a lot of time in my house since my kids are 14, 12, 10, and then 4 and the twins are 2. I've got this huge spread. So I'll sit down to read to the toddlers from a picture book and then I'll look up and all my toddlers have run off to go pull all the toilet paper out of the bathroom and stuff things down the...But I'll look up and all my kids will be there. This happened recently with the book, Press Here by Herve Tullet. Have you ladies seen that book?



**Both:** Yes, yes.

**Sarah:** And that's always so much fun. Of course there was like no story to this book but it does not matter. It is so much fun. All of my big kids. It was like I was on the third page and my toddlers actually didn't run off that time. They were engaged. But my big kids and my husband had all surrounded and had to see what was going to happen. When you shook the book to the left and you know, so it was so much fun. We'll put a link to that in the show notes. That's a fun book. But even with a Jan Brett book, I'll often find that my toddlers kind of wander around and they're listening and kind of checking back in. But my big kids were totally pulled in by it. So Kortney, do you notice that in your home between your toddler and your older kids.

**Kortney:** Oh yeah. I think as they kind of cycle through books, so books that we read with the 9-year old now the toddler is getting a chance at them. But the 9-year old now, number 1, can read the text and so her memories of it on top of now she can read it, so I find her often after we've read them, after the pile of books is just sitting on the couch, then sometime later in the day she grabs one and she's curled up and investigating the pictures and getting the inside jokes and things like that now. So that's really fun to see.

**Sarah:** Yeah, my 10-year old on his school checklist everyday is read for 15 minutes to the toddlers. He always starts reading to the toddlers but about 10 minutes into it, the toddlers are nowhere to be found and he's still sitting there reading those things loud, looking at all the pictures and just like totally digging it.

**Kortney:** Right, totally immersed in it.

**Sarah:** Yeah, plus those picture books from there, they remember from their younger years. They're like old companions or old friends and so they have this kind of, oh I don't know, connection to them.

**Kortney:** I think the connection, they can remember wistfully, sitting on the couch and reading this books and now they get to do it with the little ones. And so it really makes their relationship deep and loving as they get to see the little ones see what happens when you shake the book to the left.

## 16:30 The storybook year

**Sarah:** Okay, so let's talk about Elizabeth Foss's Storybook Year, because we had Elizabeth Foss on for episode 36, is that right and she talked about reading aloud through advent and Christmas which was a favorite of our community. The podcast was a favorite of everybody. So inspiring. I remember getting off the phone call with her for that interview and we were so jazzed up about reading aloud to this season. She also has this beautiful post called Could It Be a Storybook Year? And we'll make sure we'll link to this in the show notes. It's a fabulous post on how she uses picture books as the basis for her entire curriculum really when homeschooling her kids. Do either of you want to pipe in on that a bit?

**Kortney:** It's a post that I should just have bookmarked in my regular bookmarks because I go back to it frequently. I love how she talks about picture books and what they've meant to her over the years. But then, that she has like some premise that you could really build an entire curriculum through picture books. She has a website also call Serendipity that we can link to



and it hasn't been updated recently but it's a treasure trove of book recommendations and in the sidebar you can find a list of science baskets and so on the topics of apples or bees or honey or electricity, there's a collection of 10 or 15 books on each topic that you can then go find at your library or at the bookstore and stack up, like Kara was saying, on the coffee table, when you start the electricity segment of your science studies. It's just a wonderful, wonderful treasure of a post.

**Kara:** I borrowed from that post for some co-op classes I was teaching. It was just like instant unit study for the kids.

## 18:20 Creative narration

**Kortney:** Exactly. And at the end, there's a long list of creative narration questions. And so it's sort of the next thing that you can do. You read the picture book and like you were saying Sarah, maybe your toddlers kind of wander off and that's the end of it for them but with big kids, what else can you do? Well, you can find the place on the map or you can get all of your stuffed animals dressed up as characters and play the story. You can write a letter to the author. Her list is just absolutely extensive. And you can find the ones that are applicable, interesting to your kids and applicable to the specific book.

**Sarah:** Okay, so this reminds a lot of something we're doing here at the Read Aloud Revival which is creating some whole family book club kits. I'm so excited about these. Our first one came out recently. We released these to members and the first one's on Boxes for Katje by Candace Fleming. Oh my goodness! I just love this picture book. And one of the things I love most about it is because when I read it which Kortney sent it to

me and she sent me message and said, "Oh my goodness! If you have not read this book yet, you have to read it." Instantly, when I read Boxes for Katje, I thought oh my word, this is a perfect example of a picture book that can draw in everybody at their different ages and everybody gets. There's this Charlotte Mason quote which I don't have at the tip of my tongue but it's beautiful quote about how education is like spreading a feast and we don't even want to but we can't spoon feed our children everything they need to know and we don't want to do that because that's not true education. But as parents or teachers or just the primary caregivers of our children, we can spread this feast of ideas for our children through books and everybody can take what they're fit for. So you can read a picture book and your youngest children will take something different than your 14-year old but with a book like Boxes for Katje, everyone is going to be moved. The story is, do either of you want to summarize it for our listeners?

**Kara:** Kortney does.

## 20:15 One small, little gesture

**Kortney:** Sure, I do. I do. Boxes for Katje is about a set of letters that went back and forth between a girl in America and a girl in Holland after World War II. So after World War II, there was scarcity and people in Holland were living on the bare necessities and people in America heard about this and got boxes together for just random Dutch kids. And when Katje, the girl in Holland, received her box, she wrote a thank you letter back and so what went from being an anonymous good deed, a true relationship flowered between the two girls, the girl in America and the girl in Holland. And it's a true story. It's based on a true story. It's Candace



Fleming's mom who was the little girl in America. So that piece of it just really knocks it out of the park for me.

**Kara:** Yeah, and the sharing. She shares with everyone in her little town and then in America they hear about this so then they start sending more. And it's such a beautiful tale of what can happen with just one small little gesture. And then it just built and built and built, and became this beautiful thing.

## 22:00 Inside the Whole Family Book Club Kit

**Sarah:** So ladies, why don't you tell me about what you put inside there? What's inside the book club kit?

**Kara:** Oh we've got ideas for just talking about it together, dinnertime, conversation starters. We've got food. Oh my goodness, there's so many neat ideas from that book because chocolate was so scarce and they send chocolate to Katje and she opens it up and they all described just the taste of even a bite of chocolate and as a total chocoholic, I'm like I can't imagine going a day without chocolate, these people have gone for so long. So recipes with chocolate and cheese and some of the things are like if you're going to have a party and invite your friends over and you co-op families or whoever. They are things that you can wake up that morning and do which is kind of nice too because we're all busy.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I like that idea. I love the fact that they are really super simple. The small things that we could do when times are really busy and you're crunched but you still want to celebrate the book of it together, you still want to take it one step further. And there's also things you can do when you're feeling like you have a little more

energy or your whole family really falls in love with the book and you really want to make a big memory around it.

**Kortney:** Yeah, and I think a really neat thing about it is it's not a checklist, like one more thing to do. First you do this and then you do this and you're not going to be complete until you do this. It's really something like you were saying, everyone can take where they are and what fits their family and I think what you said is really true, Sarah, that there are some books that really grab us and that really becomes linchpin books for our families. And not every book is like that. But when we find those books, it's worth celebrating them and it's worth talking about them and it's worth revisiting them.

**Kara:** Well and sometimes in our families, we can feel like there's this pressure to read a book and create a whole thing around it. In some books, that works really well with like Boxes for Katje, it's just begging to have activities and discussion and everything or like I'm thinking How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World.

**Sarah:** I love that book.

**Kara:** I know. And it's so great and it's just natural that you're just going to want to do more with it when you repeat it. And then sometimes there's just those books you read and you want to just read them and love them. You don't have to do much beyond that.

## 24:00 Activities to extend a book

**Kortney:** I remember when my 9-year old was little and we found Blueberries for Sal for the first time. And I was so excited and if you Google Blueberries for Sal, so many different activities come up. And we loved the book and we loved blueberries and so I printed out some templates



to make bears. like some brown circles of construction paper and it was perfect for my two almost three-year old and I was so excited and we loved this book and she had no interest at all in gluing those circles down. And I was like, was I going to force her to complete the assignment. Because we've had this wonderful experience with this book. Or was I just going to glue the circles myself or

**Sarah:** That's what have I done with my first, I'm just saying!

**Kara:** You can hang it up and put your name and your age!

**Kortney:** Like Kara said, like I felt like there was something more I needed to be doing.

**Sarah:** Looking back, do you wish you can tell yourself just love the story and not take it a step further? What's your thoughts looking back on that?

**Kortney:** I think, obviously, don't make the kid glue down the circles if they're not interested. And I think it's perfectly fine because a lot of times they're really excited to glue down circles or to draw a bear. And those things happen organically. But it's really great for the mama to have some things in her back pocket, some ideas to just say hey, what about this. But to do it with a really light touch so that it's not an assignment but it's something that can add richness and another layer of complexity to our experience.

**Sarah:** That's perfect way to describe it. We as Five in a Row, my older kids when they were young and I'm planning to use it to give it to my younger kids because I love it, but this time I think I'll have a lighter touch when I use it. I think when I used it the first time, I felt like I have to read the book, I have to cover all these different

areas. I've got to cover the whole geography thing and I've got to do the art. Well really I think I would love to use Five in a Row again. For those of you who are listening and are not familiar, Five in a Row is a homeschool curriculum written by Steve and Jane Lambert based on picture books, some of the best picture books. And basically, the premise is that you read the picture book everyday for five days in a row that's why it's called Five in a Row and after that you read the same picture book. After you read that book each day, there's a different activity that you do to extend it. And the activities are actually very lovely in the book. They're wonderful. My problem is I had used it like we have to check all these boxes. We have to do everything in the chapter. And so when I use it again with my younger ones, I'm going to consider it more of like a feast like Jane and Steve are spreading a feast before me and now we get to take whatever we're fit for. But I think their picture book selections in Five in a Row are fantastic.

**Kortney:** You better schedule a time for your big kids to be involved too because I bet they're going to migrate into the room where you guys are doing Five in a Row and we're gone at two.

**Sarah:** I have a feeling that's true. Kara, did you use Five in a Row too?

**Kara:** We did and we loved it and we still have so many good memories around so many of those books. Like Cranberry Thanksgiving, we still make the cranberry bread every year at Thanksgiving. It's like a special thing. If I were to try to take a year off, I think it's going to be like, "Thanksgiving is cancelled!"

**Kortney:** I didn't realize that was a Five in a Row book Kara because we do it but you had mentioned it in the forums in membership and so



I immediately put it on hold and of course we had to make the cranberry bread too and so...

**Kara:** And it's a really good recipe as long as you leave out the raisins in my opinion.

**Kortney:** Always leave out the raisins.

**Sarah:** Wait! What the heck with you people? You're crazy.

**Kara:** And you know the thing is too, Sarah, like what you're saying is so true. When I had first started that with my little guy, I felt like, "I only have five days." I looked at the wrong way. I looked at it as I only have five days to do all these activities and create all these things to gather with him and everything. And luckily, something at some point shifted and I realized, no we have five days to spend together just loving this book and enjoying this book and if all we do today is sit down and read and laugh at it, the funny parts and point to the little ducklings and whatever, that's okay. So yeah, I definitely wish I could go back. I loved what you said Kortney, light touch.

**Sarah:** I know. I do too. I think the internet is funny because there are so many ideas so you could google Five in a Row, The Story About Ping and you will come up with like a million different blogs of ideas for how to extend The Story About Ping which is awesome if that's the way that fires you up and your kids are totally into it. But I think it's also okay just to read The Story About Ping for five days in a row because really, that's how the books become companions for your child. It's just by sharing them leisurely with them. Not like we've got to get done with the book because we have that activity, we have decided the thing to do. And I don't think that's the spirit that Five in a Row was written in at all, this sort of taskmaster list. I don't know I've never talked to Jane or

Steve. We should probably have them on the podcast.

**Kortney:** Yes you should.

**Kara:** We should work on that.

**Sarah:** Yeah, get on that Kara, would you?

**Kara:** I will. You know, really good books I think are enough when your kids are teeny-tiny. Again, time machine. I wish I had that time machine to go back and just whisper in my ear really good books. And the books for Five in a Row are so carefully chosen. They're beautiful language. They're beautiful illustrations. There's classics. There's more modern ones. But you can tell that so much....

**Sarah:** Your consideration.

**Kara:** Yeah, and there's so careful intention that went into choosing each one of those books that I think they're kind of enough and then the other stuff is just the fun extras.

## 30:20 Really homeschooling

**Sarah:** Especially for those moms who want to... I remember with my first one, she's really wanting to do something. I wanted to do something schoolish so the activities in Five in a Row are really a great way to kind of satisfy that mama drive to be like no, we're really homeschooling now, in a gentle and really pleasurable...

**Kara:** Yes. That's a big thing early on. You want it to feel real and you want your kids to feel like it's real so you feel like you want to start having activities and things but reading is real. I mean sharing those books together. We still have picture books that are just I find my son who's 12 curled up with our Curious George treasury because Curious George was one of this best



pals when he was little, reading those books. And what you said Kortney about organically, things will happen if you give time and space around the book. He wrote sequels to all the Curious George books because he loved them and they were a part of his world so it just naturally happened. I didn't have to do anything. I didn't have to pull out paper. I didn't have to set him up and say today we're going to do a sequel to Curious George and I'm completely biased but I think they were very good books for four and five and six year old.

**Kortney:** I mean Sarah said that the books became companions for her children and I think that's what we want. That's the deep family culture that we're striving to build is building relationships with books and one way that that's happened for us is finding picture books of chapter books that we're reading so even though my kids are older and they can sit through longer sections of reading and we can sustain a story over time, picture books of the same stories often again just lend a richness and another way to approach the same story, another way to visit this companion, this old friend. We really like the picture book of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* that's illustrated by Tudor Humphries. And so those illustrations sort of, it doesn't close anything down instead of make it, this is what the witch looks like. But I said, Oh could the white witch look like this? And it helps us to revisit the story that we're reading in the longer chapter books and we really love the *My First Little House* books too that tell the stories of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books. Those books again, a lot of them are illustrated by Renee Graf but she based her illustrations on the Garth Williams illustrations. So they're just very familiar but they're different. And so it's another lens through which to experience

the same story. And now this time through, we were just reading *Farmer Boy* with the older two and the toddler had all of the *Farmer Boy*, *My First Little House* books. And so he has got Almanzo on the brain too and he's got his cows out and he's teaching them how to be big grown up oxen.

**Sarah:** I love that because I think sometimes we worry that books that are created for younger children based on a picture book for example like *The Little House* picture books that are based on the real *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, like you said, they don't close our children off to them. They actually open it up. They actually open up that whole world of the Ingalls family to our youngest kids and actually give it another dimension for our older kids rather than dumbing it down or taking it down a notch. That's not actually a really well-done picture books do at all.

**Kortney:** Yeah, and they're not created equal. You're not always going to find the perfect match but in those two cases for your family, it's been a really fun way to widen our experience.

## 33:50 Some of our favorites

**Sarah:** So let's talk about our favorites. What are some of you favorite picture books that you've... do we have another hour or... I saw the look on both of your faces when I said that, like oh! Okay so we already talked about *Owl Moon*. but Jane Yolen is an absolute favorite around here. She is just a masterful picture book writer. We should try and get her on too. That might be a really big project. I see Kara making notes, yeah!

**Kara:** I am. Guilty. I am.

**Sarah:** But her books are favorites around her as well as Jan Brett which we've already mentioned



her as well and she comes out with a new book every year and boy, I'm telling you. That lady does not slow down and her books do not suffer for it either. She is a master and every single time she comes out with another book, I am dumbfounded at how beautiful and rich they are year after year after year.

**Kortney:** We just got Jan Brett's *Beauty and the Beast* and Kara was saying often there's foreshadowing in the side panels and in *Beauty and the Beast*, it's actually I don't know what the opposite of foreshadowing is. It's showing what there are tapestries hanging in the Beast's castle and it shows what the people look like before the enchantment. So now they're all turned into animals but you can see that the footmen used to be this dapper little man instead of a little monkey. So it's a neat twist on the Jan Brett foreshadowing.

**Sarah:** I was googling it to see if I could come up with the word that's the opposite of foreshadowing but it's not coming up quick enough. I was going to sound so smart. Okay, one of you mentioned the *Maple Hill Farm* books.

**Kara:** Yes. Oh I love those. It's those books that you build memories around. We can still say to each other, "And his father was potato who disappeared" and then all of us will start rolling and laughing. And we still read them. And they're pretty good-sized books. They have a lot of illustrations, a lot of words and stuff but they're just comforting and they just feel like a big bowl of macaroni and cheese.

**Sarah:** That's good. Well then you know thought when your kids stumble across that book in their adulthood, it's going to instantly take them back to their happiest childhood memories.

**Kara:** Yeah, that's one of them I can't throw away. I don't throw books away. That's not what I meant. But when you give books away or when you part with them, that's one that I just have to hold on to because I want to have my grandkids on my lap someday reading that book and say, I used to read this to your mom. I used to read this to your dad. I get very sentimental about picture books.

**Sarah:** It's hard not to. I think as mothers too because they bring us back to when we first started reading them or maybe to our own childhood if there's favorites there too. I love the books by Barbara Cooney so *Ms. Rumphius* is oh my goodness I could read that a million times and also *Roxaboxen* which Barbara Cooney illustrated and it was written by Alice McLerran. That's another one that I just love.

**Kortney:** What about the *Emily Dickinson* Barbara Cooney. Do you guys know that one? It might just be called *Emily*. I didn't look it up.

**Sarah:** Oh yes I have seen that one. I do like that one a lot. We don't own it but we should because I have an *Emily Dickinson* nut in my fourteen-year old.

**Kortney:** That's why I mentioned it.

**Sarah:** That's right.

**Kara:** And Sarah, you had mentioned, what book was it that your family was reading and everyone was laughing and they were so into it, the...

**Sarah:** *Press Here*?

**Kara:** *Press Here*, funny picture books. Those are big for us too. *The Day the Crayons Quit* is hilarious.

**Sarah:** I've seen it but I actually haven't read it.



**Kara:** Yeah, I think sometimes the librarians look at me a little funny because I go in to pick up this stack of picture books and I have a child that's almost as tall as me and my daughter with me and they're like, "Do you have another child that you never bring to the library?" You know, books like that and Mac Barnett's books, like Extra Yarn and Sam and Dave Dig a Hole.

**Sarah:** I don't think I've seen those. Okay.

**Kara:** Yeah, and then there's the other one that I think it came out last year, it's The Book with No Pictures.

**Sarah:** I keep hearing about this one.

**Kortney:** By B.J. Novak.

**Kara:** Yes, so good. No pictures. So does it count?

**Sarah:** I don't know.

**Kortney:** Sarah, have you mentioned Yummy, Yucky?

**Sarah:** Oh my goodness, those are so funny. Every time that I say that those are funny, somebody tells me they're not really funny, they're kind of rude. I think they're so funny like my gut is going to pop every time I read them and I read them all the time. But like "no, no, yes, yes or the yummy yucky booger burger" Oh my gosh! I think those ones are so funny.

**Kortney:** I don't know if I should admit this but the one that's in high rotation at my house is the Toot book.

**Sarah:** I don't have that one but I saw it the other day on Amazon.

**Kortney:** Yes, it's great actually. It is really funny.

**Kara:** My son put it on hold at the library under my account as a joke. We read it anyway because it's funny.

**Sarah:** Yes. Leslie Patricelli.

**Kara:** I'm going to bring that up at his wedding. No, not really.

**Kortney:** Well, I heard that the toddler walking around saying, "Pee-ew." My husband reads the book so he's getting that rich language.

**Sarah:** Oh yeah, exactly. Yes. I'm trying to think of another book that we just read that we thought was so funny. What was it? Oh N.D. Wilson's Hello Ninja is really funny. Do you have either of your read that one?

**Kara:** Yeah.

**Kortney:** No. I don't know that one.

**Sarah:** Okay, it's a board book and my toddlers could recite the whole thing for you pretty much but I just think it's hilarious. It's the pictures that really make it funny because the expression on the little ninja's face... it's totally this picture book about a ninja who's really just a little child who's dressed up like a ninja and ninja's chop. Ninjas like to belly flop. And then you've got like ninjas prance, ninjas dance, ninjas train the king of France and you've got the little boy ninja like trying to train his cat to be the king of France. It's just funny. You've got to pick that up and read it. It's a good one.

**Kara:** We need to do a whole thing about board books because oh there are so many. There are so many that I still love and that's really silly because my kids are supposed to be way beyond board books but I ask them both when we're getting ready for this, what are the books that I



should talk about and they said the Sandra Boynton books.

**Sarah:** Oh my goodness! Of course, they're like the epitome of funny.

**Kara:** Yes. They're so good and I could still recite them and I'm thinking like I should have other things in that brain space by now. But...

**Sarah:** It's taken. It's taken.

**Kara:** And technically, the Carl books. Did you guys read those?

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Kara:** I mean those are wordless. They're picture books but also board books but those are huge favorites because we just talk about them and it was really nice because as, well two reasons. One, sometimes, you just feel like you can't read another book. Maybe it's just me but sometimes it's kind of like, oh I can't read one more book. So you don't. So you grab one of those off the shelf and you talk about them together and I just realized that it set us up for learning how to talk with each other about books which there's been a huge payoff later in homeschooling that started with, them being babies, reading those little Carl books.

**Sarah:** I love that. One of my favorite wordless books is Good Night, Gorilla and I love that you can just pull your toddler or your preschooler onto your lap and if you're tired you can just sit there and drink your coffee and say you read this one to me and oh boy can they because the pictures in that book just lend for a great story no matter who's telling it. And the author is not telling it except through her pictures which is really unique and wonderful.

**Kara:** The book Hug is like that too. It's that Kevin Henkes? No, it's Jez Arburough. I think it's got three words in the whole book but it's just so sweet. But it has lots of animals so it's so easy to sit down with a toddler and have them again those times when you just kind of want to drink your coffee and have them sit. What does the lion say? What's the elephant doing? Kids love that book because it's packed with animals. And well, I won't give away the ending. Everybody should go read it. It's really good.

**Sarah:** Okay, other favorites.

**Kortney:** Well I've got to mention All The World's a Stage and I don't even know, it's a book about Shakespeare and this is one of those times when you can draw in your big kids when you're doing Shakespeare studies. Picture books are great way to get plot summary, characters down main conflicts. You can do all of that so easily with picture books and then when you approach the real text with your big kids, they've already got this rich foundation of knowledge. So the book is called All the World's a Stage. I don't know who the author is because we don't read the book. It has kind of silly rhyming text but it's illustrated by Anita Lobel.

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's by Rebecca Piatt Davidson.

**Kortney:** So Anita Lobel is Arnold Lobel's wife. Arnold Lobel of Frog and Toad. And she's also an illustrator and this book is so fabulous. Every page is a different Shakespeare play and so she has an entire page and it really gives you almost all the characters and the major plot points in one page and so it's a great way to get a handle on a play and what's happening and who the characters are and how they relate to each other and who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. I just love it.



**Sarah:** I'm buying it right now. Keep talking. I literally just hit "Place your order."

**Kortney:** That's how me and Kara do it when we're doing show notes.

**Kara:** Yes, it's terrible.

**Kortney:** We have our Amazon...

**Sarah:** So I keep hearing people who write in and they say, "I have to stop listening to your podcast or my husband is never going to... My Amazon cart is exploding."

**Kortney:** Yeah, guilty as charged.

**Sarah:** You know, when we air this podcast, I think it will be just after Ken Ludwig has taught his "How to Introduce Your Kids to Shakespeare" workshop and we have a list of best, well, this is the funny part about podcasting because we're recording this so far in advance. We're making right now a list of the best books to introduce your kids to Shakespeare, retellings and picture books so we'll make sure All the The World's a Stage is on that list and we'll have a link to that in the show notes as well. So perfect. You know what other book we love is...well, I really like picture books that rhyme and I know some people that kind of grates on them. I love reading rhyming picture books so I love Nancy Shaw's Sheep in a Jeep books. They're so funny. And I also love Nancy White Carlstrom's Jesse Bear books, like Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? and she's the same one who wrote Jamberry which people might be more familiar with. We like her stuff too. Wait! She's not the one who did Jamberry, is she? Bruce Degen. Why am I so confused? Hang on a second. I know why because Bruce Degen illustrated Jesse Bear. I'm like, wait a second. I always thought that was the

same person. Okay, same illustrator. That makes sense.

**Kara:** When you said Jamberry, it reminded me of Each Peach Pear Plum. Oh I love that little book. We have this really good family friend who through her career, she was the first, second, and third grade teacher and she retired and she gave us all of her picture books. And that was one of them that was in there and there was so much gold in there. It was like somebody dropped off just a bag of happiness. I think seriously that week was like we're going to read Jan books. That we did the entire week for homeschooling and we just had a blast. It was so good.

**Sarah:** That's fun. I love it when I stumble across either used bookstore or a garage sale where the person who's running it have like really good taste in books and I'm always like, oh my gosh, I'll be right back I have to go to the bank and get more cash because I'm going to buy your entire table full of stuff right here. So you can tell within like a second. "Oh my goodness! There's a lot of good stuff right here."

**Kara:** I'm glad that happens to other people. My heart starts racing. I have to get one there. We went to one where two teachers were retiring and I felt like okay I'm just going to buy all my curriculum now.

**Kortney:** That's a good way to think about it because then your budget gets a little bit wider than just the normal...

**Sarah:** Okay, and then the other favorites in our house are the Paul Galdone fairy tales. Are you both familiar with those?

**Both:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Yeah, those are my favorite. We have a few of them but I've been trying to collect the



whole set for Clara, my four-year old who loves them so every time there's a holiday or birthday, she reads another one and it's getting to be quite the collection. And I love them. I love the illustrations. I love the way the stories are told.

**Kortney:** Yeah, I think they are perfect first introduction to those fairy tale stories.

**Sarah:** Yeah, me too. And then of course, *The Seven Silly Eaters* is a total favorite around here by Mary Ann Hoberman. I think that book is so hilarious. The illustrations, the text, and of course I have a gazillion children so I think this book is like impossibly funny and there's twins. It's just so funny. All my kids. It's one of those books where everybody crowds around and the illustrations by Marla Frazee are hysterically funny. And talk about a book where the illustrations lend a whole another hilarious dimension to the book. That's a really good example of one of those really well-done picture books.

**Kara:** I had mentioned Kevin Henkes but he wrote *Owen* and *Chrysanthemum* and all those little books. Those are really sweet too. My kids like those a lot. Of course I have an *Owen* so that's how I discovered him but...

**Sarah:** Have either of you seen this newer book *Waiting?* I think it's called *Waiting*.

**Kortney:** No, I've heard about it but I haven't read it.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I haven't either but I keep hearing about it so I need to get my hands on it.

**Kara:** My daughter went through a whole phase last year of *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* or *Pig a Pancake*, all of those. We have these really cool program at our library where you can read to a

therapy dog and every week, she brought one of those books to read because they like them.

**Sarah:** I love that program. We don't have that in our local library, I don't think. But the library used to work at years ago, we had it.

**Kortney:** You used to work at a library.

**Sarah:** I did.

**Kortney:** Oh I didn't know this. Ooh wonderful! I love it.

**Sarah:** My husband, when I got that job was like, you don't really think of like an extrovert or a talkative person working in the library and he's like "Don't you think that could be a problem?" It was on occasion but for the most part it was just great. Yeah, it was wonderful. I worked at a library for I guess almost three years. Awesome. I mean talk about great conversationalist library, working with librarians is so much fun because you always know you're going to need to go to work and talk about books. It's just awesome.

**Kortney:** It's kind of like here.

**Both:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Well, this has been so much fun. Thank you ladies for carving out some of your Saturday to come chat with me. I knew this would be fun to talk about picture books. I'm hoping our listeners are inspired to pick up a picture book with their kids today no matter what their age.

**Kortney:** Thank you so much for having us.

**Kara:** Yes, thanks. It had been a lot of fun.

**Sarah:** Okay, so for our listeners. First of all, you can always get our show notes. You can get the links and books that we've talked about today by going to [readaloudrevival.com](http://readaloudrevival.com) and clicking on Episode...



**Kortney:** 45

**Sarah:** Perfect. You read my mind. You must have seen the headlights look on my face. I don't know what episode this is. Episode 45. Perfect. Also, we have created a brand new read aloud book list and it has all of our favorite picture books as well as favorite books in other categories like our best classic literature, best fantasy, best board books, best middle grade novels, books for kids in large families, best audio books. And these are books that have been specifically chosen for the read aloud ability, which I'm deciding is an official word. That is books that are written with a specific penchant for being read aloud that they are that beautiful highly sophisticated language or at least the kind of fun memory-making kind of books that you want to be reading aloud with your kids. So you can get access to that book list for free. Head to [rarbooklist.com](http://rarbooklist.com).

## 50:30 Let the Kids Speak

Now it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read aloud to them.

**Diego:** My name is Diego. And I am 10 years old and I am from the state of Minnesota. My favorite book is Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH. I like it because it's very exciting.

**Jamie:** My name is Jamie. I'm 5 years old and I like Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed because I like it. The monkeys are jumping on the bed and all of them get hurt. And then the mama jumps on the bed.

**Child 3:** Monkeys Jumping on the Bed because mama's jumping on the bed.

**Mother:** Yeah, and were the little monkeys jumping on the bed too?

**Child 3:** Uh-hm.

**Mother:** Is that funny?

**Child 3:** Yeah.

**Mother:** And what's your name?

**Child 3:** Liza.

**Mother:** Elaiah. And where are you from?

**Child 3:** Minnesota.

**Mother:** Yeah, and how old are you?

**Child 3:** Four.

**Mother:** You're four. No. You're two!

**Child 3:** Two.

**Mother:** You're two.

**Child 4:** My name is...and I'm 8 years old. I'm from Minnesota. My favorite book is Flasel because it has a pet coon. It's very special. But what is strange that my dad catches and kills coons.

**Laura:** My name is Laura and I'm 9 years old and I live in New York. My favorite read aloud book is The Mysterious Benedict Society. And I like it because there's a lot of mystery. Each chapter is a cliffhanger and there's a lot of adventure and that's why I like The Mysterious Benedict Society.

**Mother 2:** What's your name?

**Tanner:** Tanner.

**Mother 2:** And Tanner, where do you live?

**Child 6:** Idaho.

**Mother 2:** Good. And what's your favorite story?

**Child 6:** The Book with No Pictures.



**Mother 2:** And why do you like that story?

**Child 6:** Because it's funny.

**Mother 2:** What makes it funny?

**Child 6:** Because of the funny words.

**Mother 2:** All the funny words in it?

**Child 6:** Yeah.

**Ashled:** Hi! My name is Ashled and I live in Idaho. I'm 10 years old and my favorite book is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. What I like about it is that it takes a while for Charlie to find the ticket to go to the chocolate factory and that there's a lot of adventure and there's a sequel.

**Evelyn:** My name is Evelyn and I live in Colorado and my favorite book is Chronicles of Narnia and I like the part where the Beaver invites the kids to their den and it's really funny because the wolves come in.

**Sarah:** Thank you so much kids. I always love hearing the books that you suggest and I even heard a couple of you suggest books we talked about during the show today which is fun. Remember you can get the links to books we've mentioned in the podcast, articles, the whole nine yards from this episode, go to [readaloudrevival.com](http://readaloudrevival.com). Look for episode 45. And that's super quick access to all the books we mentioned. Also, if you need a really good book list, the Read Aloud Revival has a brand new free book list and we mentioned it during the show. You can get yours at [rarbooklist.com](http://rarbooklist.com). Alright, that's it folks. Until next time, go build your family culture around books.