

EPISODE **49**

# Why We Should All Be Reading Aloud to Children

Guest: Rebecca Bellingham

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## Meet Rebecca Bellingham



Rebecca Bellingham has studied education and teaching literature extensively, earning a Master's Degree from the Shady Hills School's Teacher Training Course in partnership with Lesley University, a Master's Degree in Literacy Specialization from Columbia University Teacher's College, and a B.A. from Brown University.

She lives with her family in San Diego.

## In This Episode

Sarah and Rebecca talk about the gifts of reading aloud—what it offers our children academically and the connection it fosters.

Rebecca shares about the wonderful conversations that can come from sharing stories—even conversations about difficult topics. And Rebecca offers her best tips for adding a little dramatic flare to your read-alouds!

## The Listening Guide

**Use this guide to skip to parts that most interest you, or listen to the entire podcast.**

- 2:40 Introducing Rebecca Bellingham
- 4:00 A little more about Rebecca
- 5:00 Overwhelming enthusiasm
- 10:00 Reading for pleasure
- 14:30 The theater of reading aloud
- 16:30 Reading aloud to older children
- 19:00 Having difficult conversations around books
- 21:00 The connection between reading aloud and theater
- 25:00 Rebecca's tips
- 36:00 Let the kids speak

Real readers think as they read and they wonder and they ask questions and they connect things back with what they read before. - Rebecca Bellingham



## Quotes and Questions

### \* An entry point into the world of story

“It’s a special thing to have that intimate moment with kids where you are sharing a story together and you’re giving them an entry point into the world of story.”

Sometimes, the intimacy of reading aloud can get obscured by our busy schedules. Let’s commit to slowing down enough to really enjoy the moments of connection that reading aloud brings.

### \* An opportunity to take part

“It’s hard work to read. And so you’re giving them an opportunity to take part in a story that might be more difficult than they can read on their own independently.”

There can be quite a big gap between when our children learn basic decoding skills and when they become fluent readers. This is the perfect time to take advantage of reading aloud. The benefits are rich—important conversations, deeper connections, creative thinking. But Rebecca also mentions that even after our kids become fluent readers, we can still read books that are a little beyond their level if we read aloud together.

### \* Helping kids get swept away

“When you read it with expression and your voice kind of speeds up when it gets exciting and it slows down when something powerful, or important, or a turning point’s happening, just doing that gives kids a sense of what it feels like to be swept away.... And, I think the other big piece is to almost make it visible to your kids. When a character reaches for something, reach for it. When a character, you know, touches his heart, touch your heart. Do the little things that they’re doing. Again, little physical gestures that help kids see it just a bit more.”

Way back in [Episode 4](#) [Jim Weiss](#) offered his best advice for reading in character. Adding in Rebecca’s advice to actually embody the reading will make the story all the more present to your child.

### \* Modeling powerful reading

“When powerful readers read, they’re thinking, they’re feeling, they’re wondering, they’re asking questions. So you can have interactive experience with read aloud where you kind of pause, and you model some of your own thinking. And then you also invite kids in to talk about what they’re thinking and feeling and wondering.”

This sort of thinking is often invisible to fluent readers. Have you tried actively modeling your thinking while reading? Just remembering to pause can be enough! Then you can maybe ask what they think is coming next or if a character should have acted in that way. Ask your own questions out loud and invite your children into the conversation.

## Show Notes

### Books from today's episode:

- [Charlotte's Web](#)
- [Wonder](#)
- [Number the Stars](#)
- [The Magician's Elephant](#)
- [The One and Only Ivan](#)
- [The Read-Aloud Handbook](#)
- [Because of Winn Dixie](#)
- [Home of the Brave](#)
- [The Prairie Thief](#)
- [Fox and Crow are Not Friends](#)
- [Inch and Roly Make a Wish](#)
- [The Crossover](#)

### Other links from today's show:

- [Rebecca's amazing TEDx Talk](#)
- [Pam Barnhill's post: My Mama Won't Talk Funny: Exciting Read-Alouds Without Character Voices](#)
- [The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency \(audiobook\)](#)
- [The RAR Booklist](#) (Get audio and Librivox recommendations here too!)

To find more resources to help you build your family culture around books, visit [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com).