



RAR 83 – Why Read Picture Books with Kids of All Ages?

Sarah: You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

Hey, hey, hey, Sarah Mackenzie here. You've got episode 83! We're back for 2018. We've got an awesome season 12 ahead—a great line up of podcast episodes and I'm really glad you're here. You can expect a brand new podcast episode every Tuesday. You'll be the very first to know about the new podcast episodes and some other really great free resources we're rolling out this year to help you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids. You want to join the email list to be the first to know and to make sure you don't miss a thing. Here's what happens when you join that email list: we immediately send you the Read-Aloud Revival book list. That's a book list that tens of thousands, almost a hundred thousand families trust. And, we're updating it all the time. To get it just head to ReadAloudRevival.com and pop your email in on the page there, or you can simply text the word BOOKS to the number 345345. So, head to ReadAloudRevival.com or text the word BOOKS to the number 345345. Well, today I am joined by the Read-Aloud Revival Community Director, Kortney Garrison, and the Read-Aloud Revival Podcast Manager, Kara Anderson, and we're going to be talking picture books. Picture books for all ages, so whether you have young kids or you have teens you want to stick around and listen to this whole episode. Now, during this conversation we mention a few things: we mention several online resources that we've found and we're going to link to those in the

Show Notes. So, to get to those links easily you just want to go to ReadAloudRevival.com/83, because this is episode 83. And, in addition to those links you'll also find all of the books because you know what we do on this podcast—we throw around titles like crazy. So, you don't want to have to jot all those down, we do that for you, and you can find those titles in the Show Notes as well. Without further ado, let's get into today's show.

Sarah: Kara and Kortney, thank you so much for joining me. I love it when we do podcasts together so I'm so glad you're here today.

Kortney: Oh, thank you.

Kara: Yeah, I'm excited, this is going to be so much fun.

Sarah: Actually, you know what, just for our listener's sake, I am going to point out each of your voices one at a time, so that they know who belongs to who, because sometimes that can be tricky on a podcast. So, Kortney, do you want to tell our listeners maybe where you live and how many kids you have?

Kortney: Sure. I live in Portland, Oregon, and I've got three kids and one cat.

Sarah: And, your kids are what ages?

Kortney: Let's see. 11, 8, and almost 5.

Sarah: Awesome. And, Kara, what about you?

Kara: I am in northern Illinois. I'm so close to the Wisconsin border I could practically touch it and I have two kids. They are 10 and 13, and we have two cats and a dog, and I always want more cats but that's another story.

Sarah: We passed by a car yesterday on our way home from an outing and you know those little decals people put on their cars where they have



the kids? So, they had two or three kids and nine cats. So, we were all trying to count: how many do they have? It's kind of funny. Awesome. And then for any new listeners here, I'm Sarah and I have six kids. My oldest is 16 and my youngest are 4 year old twins, so they kind of run the gamut of ages there. We have found, I think, in all of our families, how using picture books with older kids, with younger kids, with everybody together, or kids one or one can be a really special way to experience a book together. Kortney, you're the one who really lit me on fire for picture books. I think I had sort of prioritized middle grade novels and just chapter books in general over picture books 'til you got me all fired up about them again, and I know you've been using picture books a lot in your home school this year. So, do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

3:51 How Kortney Uses ABC Picture Books

Kortney: Sure. My youngest is almost 5 and we, kind of, take things slow so it's not a real kindergarten year, but he's eager to join in what's happening with everyone else, and so he likes to be a part of things. And, we have a very strong Morning Time rhythm where we are altogether and we sing songs and we memorize poetry, and Scripture, and do read-alouds. And, so adding in read-alouds for him into that Morning Time would be a really fun, seamless thing, and then he could be a part of our school, and we could still keep on with our rhythm. This is the second time that I've been through this program that I made up, called "ABC Picture Books" and I got the idea from Elizabeth Foss. She has a blog post called, *Could This Be a Story Book Year?* And it was her planning out a whole year of curriculum for a big

range of grades but only using picture books. Using picture books to talk about history, using picture books to talk about science, using picture books for the literature or the English portion/ grammar portion, and I just love that idea—it just sparked my imagination and really was something that I wanted to try. But, at the time that that post was written my kids were tiny and there was no way that we needed an entire curriculum or that her ideas exactly would work for us. And, so I knew I had to change it up to be something that would work for our family. And, so I used her pattern of using picture books, sort of, across the curriculum to guide what we were going to be doing, and I had a kindergartener that year, and so I did "ABC Picture Books"—let's read, each week, an author or an illustrator whose name begins with the letter of the alphabet that we're on that week. So, as we're doing our kindergarten work of learning the letters and their sounds we could add in picture books and that would be a fun thing to do. A is for Alike, who has written so many great books. We love her Greek myths book but we found this new-to-us book called, *Quiet in the Garden*. So, she has an entire collection of books that we had never ... we love her work but we had never found them. And, so there were things that were a surprise to us even though they were beloved authors. B is for Marion Dane Bauer, she wrote one of my favorite books called, *If You Were a Kitten* and it's about a baby being born. If you were a kitten this is how kittens are born but you traveled here under my heart. It's a beautiful, beautiful book. But, she has all of these animal books about animal babies being born, so that was a wonderful find. Let's see, E was for P. D. Eastman, and so we got *Go, Dog, Go!* and *Are You My Mother?* but then we found also *¡Corre,*



Perro, Corre! which is *Go, Dog, Go!* in Spanish, and my ...

Sarah: Oh, that's so fun!

Kortney: ... 11 year old is doing Spanish and so finding these easier readers that are super familiar but in the language that we're learning was so much fun.

Sarah: Does she take them both side by side and look at them?

Kortney: Especially with *Go, Dog, Go!* it's one that we almost have memorized anyways, and the vocabulary is pretty simple and it's very limited, and so it was very easy to see the one to one correspondences and be able to translate the books.

Sarah: That's awesome. And, so then you choose an author –when you choose an author to go with the letter, are you already pretty familiar with their body of work or are you as much surprised as your kids are?

7:48 Author Surprises

Kortney: Well, the first time that I did it I really had no ... there was no planning involved. I went to the library and I went to the picture book section and I went to the A's and whoever had a few books that were there on the shelf that's who we did that year. And, we found things that were a total surprise to us. EDITED: Kazuo Iwamura (the books are called *Hooray for Spring*, *Hooray for Summer*, etc). So, there are people that we know but then we also try to find books that we haven't read yet, and so, D was for Tomie de Paola and we ...

Sarah: Yay!

Kortney: ... supposed to only spend one week on Tomie but guess how many it took us?

Sarah: I don't know, but he deserved however many you gave him.

Kortney: It took us four weeks.

Sarah: Oh my gosh. I love it.

Kortney: It took us four times at reading Tomie books as anyone else just because there were so many of them and we were just getting books from the library that we didn't have on our shelf, so books that were new to us, and so it was wonderful. And the big hit of this time through was *Big Anthony and the Magic Ring* because there are all kinds of great songs to sing in this one.

Sarah: And *Big Anthony* has got to be one of the most lovable picture book characters ever.

Kortney: I loved hearing Tomie talk about him and how much affection Tomie has for Big Anthony. I love that.

Sarah: So, Kortney's talking about when Tomie came to Read-Aloud Revival premium membership in 2017. He came and met our kids on screen and answered their questions live. He's actually coming back in 2018, April 18 is actually Read-Aloud Revival and Tomie's day. So, he's coming back in 2018 to talk to us again and if you want to know more about that, you want to go to RARMembership.com, so you don't miss it, because Tomie is definitely worth not missing. And, your kids will love, love, love getting to see him live, talking about his books. So inspiring.

OK, so what I like about your ABC thing, Kortney, is that it gives a framework to, you're saying pick picture books but sometimes if we don't have any kind of a framework it feels a little



overwhelming because where do we start? So, I like that. You're saying, "This week we're going to pick one with an author that starts with the letter A..." you can go to the library to that section and, sort of, limits your possibilities which always makes things feel less overwhelming. So, this kind of reminds me of another framework that I've heard of recently. I think you're the one, actually, Kortney, who initially told me about it, which was the classroom book a day movement, I think, maybe started by Jillian Heise. Is that right?

Kortney: Yeah...

Sarah: Do you want to talk a little about that?

10:27 #Classroombookaday

Kortney: ... as I was doing research this summer, I was on Twitter, because that's where you do research, right? There was this great hashtag called #Classroombookaday, and all of these teachers, classroom teachers, were posting pictures of these grids of picture book covers. They had committed to reading, to taking class time, to read picture books aloud to their 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th graders, and then keeping track through the year and so they had this entire wall of pictures of the covers of picture books. It was just absolutely enthralling to look at. I haven't ... I wish I had that kind of a wall to do for our ABC Picture Books. I haven't collected the covers yet but I would love to do that. But you should definitely check out that hashtag because there are lots of inspiration there.

Sarah: Yeah, we'll put that in the Show Notes, too. #Classroombookaday because what I love about looking at that hashtag is you see teachers, sure of kindergarteners and second graders, and also teachers of middle schoolers,

you could do this with your high schoolers as well, reading a picture book a day. One of the things that I love about this idea is it covers so much ground, because when I read to my older kids who are 16, 14, and 12, and when I read a novel to them that's wonderful but we can only read a handful of those a year, if we're being really faithful to our read-aloud time, but picture books you can cover a really wide range of topics and stories, you get introduced to all these characters, and settings, because you can read an entire book in a day, right? And, Kara, you've long read picture books with your older kids, as well.

Kara: Yes, we have, and I'm glad that we've stuck with it, because one of the things I've realized is that my favorite part of reading books with my kids is discussing the books with my kids, and when you're reading a picture book you finish it that day, so you get to have a conversation that day. You don't have to wait until the very end of reading for a week and a half or two weeks or longer when you're reading a novel. So, we get to talk about all kinds of books that way, and we've planned some really fun unit studies around specific, I'll find a picture book and I'll think, 'Oh, that is really cool,' so then you go and grab more books at the library that are about that topic, and before you know it, you have a whole informal unit study about that topic, or we've had really good luck with some historical stuff, finding the books that Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple wrote together—some of them that have a mystery theme like *The Mary Celeste*, and *Roanoak*, and those kinds of books. It's such a great way to introduce a topic to your kids, and then we'll say, "Oh, there's more out there about Roanoak," and before you know it they're, sort of, lit up by reading this picture book because you've



just introduced it and just by putting it out there to them you say, “I think this is really cool, what do you think?” and then the next thing you know they’re going off and they’re exploring on their own and they’re finding videos and podcasts and everything else. So, it can really light a fire to read a really good picture book with your older kids when they’re capable of that independent study, too, a little bit.

Sarah: Well, actually, you saying that reminds me that when I interviewed Caroline Starr-Rose (and we can put the link to this episode we recently did with her as well in the Show Notes [ReadAloudRevival.com/71]) she’s a historical fiction writer of middle grade novels (one of my favorites) and she told me that her first step when she’s researching any new idea for a new book is to go to the library and to look at the picture books on that topic because it gives you a really overview, you can tell if you’re going to be interested in it, we’ve all finished a picture book like that, and think I want to know more either about that author or that topic, and that’s a really good way to just, sort of, get your kids really excited about digging into something on their own, or even to find out what interests them, because you can read a picture book a day and on the 10th day you find out your child really, really is interested in that David Macaulay *Castle* book and wants to know more about how castles were made, and that can start your child off on, sort of, a reading journey of their own, too.

Kortney: I have loved to start historical research with picture books in just that way, because a picture book, it’s going to have the same information that an encyclopedia entry has, except it’s going to have beautiful language, it’s going to have illustrations that help you expand on the ideas, it’s going to have all of the things

that really light that fire of imagination, and so it’s not just getting the dry facts, it’s also picture books provide a really neat entryway into those facts.

Sarah: In *The Read-Aloud Family* which is a new book coming out in March, there are book lists that I created in the very back of the book based on age range, and one of the things I really tried to do is make sure that there were some picture book recommendations even for the older kids. So, there are a few picture book recommendations in the 9-12 year old section and also in the teen section. But, when I was reading picture books for that, there are some really beautiful picture books that are actually not meant for younger kids but can be a really nice entryway into some hard topics. The one that comes to mind, first off, just right away, is *Show Way* by Jacqueline Woodson, which I know Kara, I think I first heard about that one from you, right?

Kara: I love that book. Yeah, I love that book.

Sarah: It’s so moving. It’s definitely not for young kids. It’s a heart-wrenching story about slavery but it’s so beautifully done, and the illustrations and the really lyric, of course, Jacqueline Woodson, is a master of lyrical, beautiful text, and so it’s a really wonderful picture book to experience with your teens, and on your own even together, and I think it, kind of, is an example of what you’re talking about. Of like, diving in to a new topic, or something that might be you want to dig in a little bit deeper on with a picture book. So, one of the things that I think Jillian Heise mentions about the #classroombookaday is, sort of, these myriad benefits you get from being able to cover so much ground by reading picture books constantly with your older kids. One of those, being the covering a lot of ground and being able to learn a



lot about new topics, and another one is, kind of, what you mentioned before, Kara, which is this opportunity for discussion, because you can talk about a book when it's done, pretty much every day you could have a discussion based on the book that you just read. What else, can you ladies remember anything else that she [Heise] has mentioned about being a benefit of reading a picture book every day with your kids regardless of their age?

16: 34 Benefits of a book a day

Kara: Sort of, expanding on the idea of discussion, I think she talked about critical reading and analysis of books, and so, when you're able to read more books you're able to compare more books and have these broader discussions about, 'OK, so this week we really have been reading about [this] kind of thing, how did this book address the topic versus this book? How did these illustrations, sort of, change the tone of the book a little bit compared to this different illustrator's take on it?' and it just allows you to really engage your kids in that kind of thinking about a book and how it tells the story and how an author decides to interpret things and so, it goes even beyond just a basic discussion of did you like it? You can really start to teach them those things that they will need later when they're called to, maybe, write about books that they've read, or really analyze a big novel.

Kortney: I love thinking about how the stories work. Just asking the question, "What does the main character want?" and asking that over a lot of different books. It really, sort of, makes it be almost automatic that kids are looking for that sort of thing. What does Big Anthony want? Well, he wants to be beautiful like Strega Nona, of

course. What does the little boy and all of the animals in *Quiet in the Garden*, what do they want? They want to find their special place in the garden. And, so just asking that question – it really is just a few seconds. It's not hard, you don't have to dig for these answers. And kids get to be in the habit of asking those questions and of reading with that in mind.

Sarah: And you know what? I really like that you mentioned that you don't have to dig to get those answers because I think that's one of the keys, is that we get intimidated by conversation or by asking questions because we think, 'I won't know how to dig out the right, I don't know how to think well enough to dig out the right answer,' but usually the best answer's the one that immediately comes to mind. It's just right on the surface.

Kortney: It's funny that you say that because one of the best parts of our conversations is I said, "What does Big Anthony want?" "Well, he wants to be beautiful like Strega Nona, of course," and I say, "Of course!" because that's the thing that comes right to my mind, but my kids don't always or ever necessarily agree with me, and that's our best conversations because they say, "Oh no, what he wants is to be able to sing and he wants to have that ring and be fancy" and so hearing their disagreement amongst all of us is really fun, too.

19:15 A Simple, Open-Ended Question

Sarah: Now, this wasn't with a picture book, this was with R. J. Polacco's wonderful book, *Wonder*, but when I was reading that one with my 14 year old, we actually read it independently and then came together to talk about it, and we were



asking each other that question of what did Auggie want? Our first reaction, both of us, was he wants to be like everyone else, and then immediately we stopped and went, “Woo, that’s not right, that’s not right.” So, then we sat there for a second and Allison said, “No, he wants to be accepted for who he is without having to change,” but we didn’t have to dig that far. It’s exactly like you said that little simple question really got us going from our initial reaction, going “wait, wait-hold on, that may not be quite right,” to a better conversation about something that was deeper and better than we had originally thought. And that’s what I love open-ended questions it that if you know where that conversation is going to go or you know the answer to it, that’s not an open-ended conversation, and that’s probably not going to lead to that rich discussion that you’re looking for. So, I just love that you can start a conversation with your kids and have no idea where it’s going to go, and see where it takes you. And Tomie de Paola’s picture books are so fantastic to ask that question, about what does this character want and why can’t that have it because there’s always so much humor about (not always, but there’s oftentimes) so much humor in his characters about what they want and why they can’t have it.

Kortney: And that’s really the heart of reading critically and doing literary analysis. Those are fancy words and they can be intimidating but they don’t need to be. It really can be as simple as seeing what the character wants and why they can’t have it, and how that moves the plot along.

Sarah: Well, get back to today’s episode in just a moment. But, I wanted to take a quick minute to make sure you know about *The Read-Aloud Family*. This is a new book I wrote just for you.

Here’s what I know: you will never, ever regret the time you spend reading to your kids. Connecting deeply with our families can be kind of difficult in our really busy and technology driven world but reading aloud is one of the best ways to be fully present with our kids even after they can read to themselves. In the new book, *The Read-Aloud Family* you’ll find the inspiration you need to start a read-aloud movement in your own home. You’ll discover how to prepare your kids for academic success, how to develop their empathy in compassion all through reading aloud, you’re going to learn how to find time to read-aloud in the midst of your really busy day (school, sports, dinner dishes – all those pressures on your time and attention—and you’ll learn how to choose books across a variety of sibling interests and ages. The best part is that you’ll discover how to make reading aloud the very best part of your family’s day. *The Read-Aloud Family* also offers age-appropriate book lists from infancy all the way through adolescence. So, from a toddler’s wonder to your teenager’s resistance you’re going to discover practical strategies to make reading aloud a meaningful family ritual. The book releases wherever books are sold, March 27, 2018, but if you order the book before March 27, you’re going to get some extra gifts and I’m so excited Zondervan let me do this because I made you a brand new video Master Class to show you how to choose books for your kids. So, you know that feeling when you walk into a library or a bookstore or maybe you’re cruising around online or something, and you don’t know if a book is worth your time or attention or your child’s time and attention? In this video Master Class you’re going to find out exactly which two characteristics make a book worth reading and you’ll find out the three question test I use to decide if a book deserves a place on my family’s



reading stack. So, order *The Read-Aloud Family* before March 27, 2018, to get a promo code to access that Master Class for free. I am thrilled Zondervan is letting me do that. Go to TheReadAloudFamily.com to grab your copy. I can't wait to get it in your hands.

23:19 Empathy and History

Kara: Another benefit that she talks about is helping kids learn about empathy and I think that that's so huge and through a picture book, a really good picture book, like you said, *Show Way* or *Last Stop on Market Street*, books like that that expose kids to these ideas in a way that's not too big or scary because it is a picture book so it's intended for children but it opens them up to these kinds of concepts and then seeing that not every family is like theirs and some families don't have money for food, so being able to expose kids to those ideas or what was the one that we did with the little girl in Denmark during World War II (I'm blanking on the name of ...)

Sarah: *Boxes for Katje* by Candace Fleming.

Kara: Yes, so in a book like that that teaches history but it also is showing empathy and it's showing the power of what one caring child can do. So, books like that are just so powerful and just because they also have gorgeous pictures and they're thin, they shouldn't be discounted they can be incredibly powerful for our kids.

Kortney: I think the one way that I see that working is in taking the big historical moments (American slavery, World War II) and making them very small and human; making them the size of a little girl who lives in the Midwest and her experience, because then this giant thing that we can, kind of, hold at arms length and say, "That was the past. That doesn't have anything to do

with me." *Show Way* is just another one that you understand that character, you feel that character, and it gets you in a way that you didn't expect.

Kara: Because you connect with the character, and then what was it during the Jane Yolen event? One of the little girls said, "I picture myself as the main character in your books." That's amazing that you can step into that character and so it's almost like our kids get to experience this different life, just for a minute, just for the 10 minutes that it takes to read a picture book, but they can feel that and they can experience that and I mean, that's just amazing.

25:43 Beautiful Art

Sarah: Well, I think this is so powerful, too, because then when they look at the people around them in their life, the people they walk by down the street, the people they see across the library, or the school yard, or the bus stop, or at the mall, and you realize that all of a sudden all these people have stories, and so in that way I think reading picture books helps our kids love people better because, and we realize too, this happens to me as an adult as well, we realize that everybody has this story, and that's not just a face that's a person who has this whole story and they have things that they want and reasons they can't have it, and they're trying to accomplish something with their life, and it just gives us this more powerful experience of humanity around us, I think. One of the things that picture books do, by nature, other books that don't have illustrations can't, is they expose us to beautiful art, which, I think to myself, if (I think this is kind of a hokey thing but I think this all the time) if Laura Ingalls Wilder had the access to gorgeous art like our children had all the time, we have literally the best artists of today making pictures



for picture books that our kids can look at in their laps—that’s amazing, right? And then, recently, I re-stumbled upon this book by MaryAnne Kohl. I don’t know if either of you have ever seen it, it’s called *Storybook Art*. OK, so I saw this book eons ago when my oldest daughter, who’s now 16 was a baby. It basically takes an artist, like Eric Carle, for example, and it tells you to read some books by Eric Carle and look at the pictures and then she has an art activity that goes along in his style, so your kids get practice at his style of art. I think she would be a fantastic person to have on the podcast actually, to talk about that. But, she’s got Ezra Jack Keats and Eric Carle, I don’t know if Tomie de Paola is in there or not, Molly Bang—some of these really great prolific children illustrators where your kids can, sort of, practice different illustrative techniques. So, if you have a child who maybe gets lit up by art or if you have a kid like mine who thinks she might want to be a picture book artist when she grows up, that book would be fantastic because you get to try on all these different techniques. We’ll put a link to that in the Show Notes. But, just the ability to be exposed to the amazing art that we can in picture books is a great gift that I think sometimes we take for granted.

Kara: I love that. My son would do that on his own with his favorite books. He’d learn to draw in the style of Calvin and Hobbs, and he’d learn to draw in the style of Charles Schultz, because he was so inspired by it, and he wanted those stories to continue beyond the books.

29:23 Books for Commitment-phobes?

Sarah: Well, one of the things that keeps me from starting a new read-aloud with my kids, especially when it comes to novels, is it feels sort

of like a commitment, right? If you look at a 200 or 300 page middle grade novel, at least I know it’s going to take us a while to get through it which is one of the things that’s so great about picture books is that you can start and finish them in a day. We talked about that a little bit. And, one of the things I really love to think about when I’m reading with my kids is that it feels like you’re not doing anything meaningful. If you have laundry spilling out of your hallway and dishes piled up in the sink and you’re out of milk and bread, and you’re behind on your homeschooling if you’re a homeschooling parent, or you’re supposed to be going to the school to do something for your kid’s classroom, everything feels kind of crazy—sitting down to read for 10 or 15 minutes feels like an easy thing to get off your list because there are a lot of other things happening, and there’s just a lot of other pressures. But, one of the things about reading is that it’s cumulative, so every time you read for 10 minutes with your kids it’s like building a beach one sand at a time and over time it makes this big difference. But, I think picture books can really help us with that because if you only have 10 or 15 minutes in your day picking up a picture book to read with your kids doesn’t require you to make the same kind of commitment that picking up *The Hobbit* and reading that with your kids, which is a heck of a commitment.

Kara: Sometimes I have the strategy, I call it The Filibuster where I just sit down and I just start reading and it’s like as long as I keep reading they’re there and they’re paying attention. You know how when everyone’s kind of like going off to do different things and you’re like, “no, no, just come back. Everybody just sit down, we’re going to start school, we’re really going to start school” and they don’t believe you so you just pull out a



book and I just keep reading it and just keep talking.

Sarah: I do that with my little kids when they're throwing major fits (not that my children ever do such a thing, but theoretically speaking, if they were to throw fits). I'll grab a picture book and I sit on the couch and then everyone just kind of calms down and listening, not if I say, "Who wants me to read a story?" that never works. But if you just sit down and just start reading they get sort of sucked in. And I always kick myself if I've only grabbed one picture book because at the end I think, 'I've just got to keep reading and everybody will stay calm' so I'll have to be (to one of my bigger kids) "Go grab me some more picture books so I can just one after another" ...

Kortney: And that's one of the best things about picture books is that it does create a little orbit of its own. It creates a way for us to be together. It draws us to the couch, even kids who are too big to sit on your lap, they end up hanging over the couch or climbing on things, and so that feeling, creating that feeling is one of the biggest gifts of picture books, I think.

Sarah: I do, too. One of my favorite things is when I'm sitting on the couch reading to my 5 and 4 year olds and I look up and I've got all these teenagers hanging over my shoulders because they wandered into the kitchen and happened to hear what I was reading and now they're sucked in and want to see the pictures. It's so great. One of the things, I don't know if we emphasize enough, is that sometimes we think that the chapter books or middle grade novels or Y books or whatever, are more sophisticated because of their language, but actually (think through this) a middle grade novel is usually written for an 8-12 year old child to read on their own. You can read those to your kids, they're

fantastic. But the language in a picture book is actually meant for an adult to read to a child, and so oftentimes the language and vocabulary and just the usage in those books is more complex and sophisticated than what we find in chapter books. So, if you find yourself tempted to think, 'I'm not sure if this counts because it's just a chapter book so it probably doesn't have the sophisticated language patterns that a middle grade novel does,' that's not actually true, right?

32:05 Rich Language

Kortney: Yeah, picture books are almost poetry oftentimes, and so it's really nice to have that exposure to beautiful language.

Kara: And how many picture book authors have been on the podcast or in Premium Membership that have talked about having to choose their words so carefully because they only have so many they can work with. So, the way that they're written, the language is really pored over and lots of decisions being made to make it the most powerful way that it can convey the message.

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. Which is why they're so delicious to read-aloud, too, because they've been so carefully crafted, for that purpose. So, we should talk briefly about some great places to get picture book recommendations. Kortney, I love that you just pick a letter of the alphabet and then people could do this, they could say we're going to do A this week and just go over to the library and look in your A's and just pick one of those authors or pick a bunch of different authors that start with A, and make that an A week. That's a great framework. Another place you can get recommendation is that at Read-Aloud Revival we have monthly picture book lists that are free



to download, and you can get all of those at RARBooklist.com, for free. We'll send that to you, and that will give a great list of some of our Read-Aloud Revival favorites all throughout the year. Where else are favorite picture books?

33:24 Favorite Resources

Kortney: Well, we mentioned Elizabeth Foss and she has a sister site called Serendipity and it hasn't been updated in many years and so the site itself is kind of wonky but it got so many recommendations and you can search on their site. It might take a little doing but there are great recommendations for science and history and geography read-alouds there.

Kara: And my friend, Cait, from My Little Poppies, does this thing in the morning she calls "Coffee and Books" and again, it's sort of like the filibuster strategy where it's like if you can just get everybody seated and start reading something good your day will keep going in a positive direction. So, just about every day on Instagram she shares whatever they're reading and she has great suggestions so I steal all of her ideas.

Sarah: Awesome. We'll put a link right to her Instagram account in the Show Notes as well so people can find that because that's one of my favorite places to find picture book recommendations, actually, is on other people's Instagram feeds.

34:24 Sarah's Challenge for You

Sarah: So, here is my challenge for our listeners. Make 2018 a picture book year in your home! You can do this in any way that fits your family. You can go really simple and head to the library once a week or once a month and pick up picture books based on the alphabet or you could talk to

your librarian to see what their favorites are. You can use our Read-Aloud Revival monthly picture book lists and just read from those—just go pick up all of February or all of March's picture book recommendations at your library and start reading those through the month. Just pick something off your shelf, if it's a hard time for you to get out and get new books, any picture book off your shelf, just grab it and start reading. One thing we have here at Read-Aloud Revival is a year-at-a-glance calendar that you can use to check off, well, we use it in two ways: one way is that anytime you read-aloud to your kids you can just check off the day and it's really fun to see all of those X's (I use an X when I check mine off) and I post it on my fridge and when I see, even if we're not reading aloud every single day at the end of the month I see quite a few X's on that month and that builds momentum. And, like I said, it's really hard to remember that those read-aloud sessions are so impactful because they don't necessarily feel like it in the moment but when you look back over months or a year at a time of all those X's you can kind of see what you're building. It's a way to visualize the impact that you're making on your kids even if it doesn't feel like it in the nitty-gritty daily grind. Another way that you can do that with this picture book challenge is to X off or highlight or color in the square on the calendar every day that you read a picture book, and this can be a picture book challenge that you take in your home to read more picture books with your kids. We'll put a link to that download, for free, that year-at-a-glance calendar you can just print it off, right in the Show Notes of today's show and that way you can just go grab it, and I would love to see if you start reading picture books with your kids I would love to see on Instagram or Facebook, tag those #readaloudrevival, take pictures of your calendars



and show us how often you're reading picture books with your kids. See if you can't read a picture book a day for the rest of 2018—that would be fantastic. Ladies, is there anything else to add to this podcast before we sign off?

Kortney: I don't know, I'm excited to get started. I mean, I love picture books and we have a good habit going, but even so, I'm even more inspired.

Kara: Me too, I just wrote a note that I'm going to try to strew a book a day with my kids, too.

Kortney: Oh, that's a great idea.

Sarah: OK, tell our listeners more about that in case they're not familiar with the concept of strewing.

Kara: Strewing is ... I think it's a term that comes from unschooling, but you don't have to be an unschooler to do it. And it's the idea of putting educational things in your child's path for them to discover and if they're interested in it to pursue and hopefully, have a whole little rabbit trail they go down from it. And, so right now what I do is I go to the library a lot and I pick out picture books for us to read but I don't have Kortney's system (which I love) but what happens is I get super overwhelmed when I go to the library because I just see everything so I just put everything in my bag or my two bags or my three bags (I'm baa baa black sheep, three bags full). And so, what happens is I have way too many books to actually share with my kids unless we're reading many a day so I thought it might be really nice, especially with some non-fiction picture books to leave one out for my kids each day just for them to peruse at their leisure. So, I'm excited to get started.

Sarah: And Kara, I've done that with that Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple book, *The Unsolved*

Mystery of the Mary Celeste because a book like that just laying around will capture your 12 year old's attention or your 14 year old's attention because they'll think what do you mean 'unsolved mystery'? A true unsolved mystery is what I think it's called on the cover. Strewing is just leaving books out for your kids to find on their own. We hear a lot at Read-Aloud Revival from parents who say their kids won't actually pick up books that they necessarily recommend or if mom hands them a book and says, "Read this," it's like an instant desire-killer on part of the kid to read it. And if that's you then strewing can be your friend because you can "accidentally" leave books out for your kids to discover on their own and if they find it just laying around and pick it up, it's now their idea and not yours, and that can make it appealing all on its own.

Kara: Exactly.

Sarah: Well, ladies, thank you so much for joining me today. This has been fantastic, and I am looking forward to an awesome 2018 reading picture books with my kids. I hope you are, too.

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.

Child1: My name is Lucy Taylor and I am 8 years old. I live in Russellville, Arkansas. My favorite book that my family read together is *The Trumpet and the Swan*. My favorite part was when Louis the swan stayed in a hotel.

Child2: My name is Lilly and I am 8 years old. I live in Russellville, Arkansas. My favorite book that my family read together is *The BFG*. My favorite part was when the Big Friendly Giant "RAH."



Child3: [Mom: what's your name?] Rowen. [Mom: Rowen. And, Rowen, how old are you?] 3 years old. [Mom: 3 years old. And where do you live?] Oklahoma. [Mom: Oklahoma. And what is your favorite book that I read to you?] I like you read *Caps for Sale*. [Mom: *Caps for Sale*? Oh, that's a good one. Why do you like it?] Because I like the monkeys in the book. [Mom: you like the monkeys in the book?] Yeah. [Mom: why do you like the monkeys in the book?] Because they're funny. [Mom: they're funny?] Yeah. [Mom: do you have another favorite book?] Uh-huh. [Mom: what book?] I can't decide yet. [Mom: you can't decide yet? There's so many of them?] Yeah. [Mom: well, let's go read some right now, ok?] Ok.

Child4: Hello, my name is Joey. I am 8 years old. My favorite book is *Henry and the Chalk Dragon* by Jennifer Trafton. It's just got everything that I like in it. It's hilarious. It's hilarious.

Child5: [Mom: what's your name?] **[**inaudible**]** [Mom: how old are you? 4. What's your favorite book?] *Laura and the Flamingo*. [Mom: *Laura and the Flamingo*. What do you like about that book?] I like it because a flamingo and Laura in it.

Child6: Hi, my name is Ben. I am 5 years old and my favorite book is **[**inaudible**]**. [Mom: *****?***** what do you like about that book?] Because he sneezed during a haircut. [Mom: oh, silly.]

Child7: Hi, my name is Rena and I live in Dallas, Texas, and my favorite book is *Beatrix Potter* because it has a lot different funny books and a couple of others, and I also like *The Green Ember*. [Mom: how old are you?] 9.

Child8: Hi. My name is Lilly. My favorite book is *How to Train Your Dragon*. I live in Texas. [Mom: how old are you?] 11.

Child9: Hi, my name is Kaley. I am almost 7 years old. We live in Colorado. My favorite book is *Amy Namey in Ace Reporter*. She is a reporter who makes newspapers and she spies and sees her **[**inaudible**]** named Taboo.

Child10: [Mom: what's your name?] Teagan. [Mom: how old are you, Teagan?] 5. [Mom: what's your favorite book?] *Magic Tree House* Books and *Mess Mess*. [Mom: why do you like *Magic Tree House* books?] Because they talk about two kids and places I've never been before.

Child11: [Mom: what's your name?] Ezra. [Mom: Ezra. Ezra, what's your favorite book?] *Dinosaurs*. [Mom: *Dinosaurs*. Do they like to clean their room? Yeah. And how old are you, Ezra?] 2. [Mom: 2.]

Child12: Hi, my name is Hannah. I'm 5 years old. Where I live? Kansas City, Kansas. My favorite book is *The Boxcar Children* and my favorite book of *The Boxcar Children* is *The Pumpkin Head Mystery* because I like when the pumpkin head floats around.

Child13: [Mom: what's your name?] Bethany. [Mom: how old are you?] 3. [Mom: where do you live?] Kansas City. And my favorite book is **[**inaudible**]**.

Child14: My name is Emery. I'm 8 years old. I live in Colorado. My favorite book is *Ellen Tebbits* by Beverly Cleary and I like the book *Ellen Tebbits* because she does ballet and I just like the book.

Sarah: That's it for today. Remember you can access all of the links and book titles and recommendations we mentioned during the program today at ReadAloudRevival.com/83. And, I hope you get a chance to pre-order *The Read-Aloud Family: Making meaningful and lasting connections with your kids*, the brand new



book that I wrote that I'm so excited to get into your hands. To pre-order that book so that you get the promo code to watch my new video Master Class for free, you want to go to TheReadAloudFamily.com. Alrighty, I'll be back in a week with another great episode. Thanks so much for joining me today. And, until next time, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.