



RAR 99 – Meet Lola Dutch! (She is just too much!)

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.

Well, hello, hello, Sarah Mackenzie here. You've got episode 99 of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. We are inching our way to 100, aren't we? Today, I get to introduce you to one of my brand new favorite picture books and you'll get to hear from the husband and wife author/illustrator team—excited about that. Episode 100's coming in two weeks and it's a very special episode with the author of *The Penderwicks series*, Jeannie Birdsall. So, that one you're not going to want to miss. Just some really good shows to round up and finish up season 12 of the podcast. After our 100th episode we'll be taking about six weeks off and then we'll be back with season 13 and another excellent lineup of shows. If you have not seen our Show Notes you want to go check those out. You can do that for today's show by visiting ReadAloudRevival.com/99, and what you'll find there are the best takeaways and key points from the podcast, you'll find complete transcripts—seriously—you can access complete transcripts for every episode of the podcast. You can also find a time stamped listener guide, so if there's something one of the guests that you heard said or that you heard on the podcast and you want to remember you will probably find a little cue in that listener guide that will help you hop around so you don't have to re-listen to the whole thing. Or, if you're short on time and you just want to listen to a snippet that's a good place to go, too. Just head to the Show Notes,

ReadAloudRevival.com/99 for today's Show Notes to get all of that for free.

Well, Kenneth and Sarah Jane Wright, I am so happy to have you here on the Read-Aloud Revival, welcome to the show.

2:16 A FABULOUS dust jacket

Sarah Jane: Thank you for having us.

Kenneth: Happy to be here.

Sarah: OK, so I'm really excited. I have to tell you the first time I saw your new book *Lola Dutch* I had received it in the mail and I saw it briefly when it was after dinner, you know, the total after-dinner craziness mayhem. I had ripped open a few packages, I saw the cover, and I thought, 'Oh yeah, we're reading that at bedtime tonight – see what that's all about!' So, I read it to – I have six kids from 16 all the way down to 4 – but the 6 year old and the twin 4 year olds, I always do their bedtime story together and so I read *Lola Dutch* to them, twice in a row. First, I read the whole thing and then they each get to pick a book, so then the next twin wanted to read the book again. And, so we read it again, and then I realized that when I took off the jacket of the book it just kept getting better because on the jacket of this book – and listeners, I can't show this to you because this is a podcast – but, if you go to the Show Notes for this episode I'll put a picture up. If you look at the book jacket there's actually little cut-out paper dolls of Lola Dutch and Bear, and the jacket when you flip it over is a background scene you can play with your figures on, which is genius. I mean, who's idea was that?

Sarah Jane: It was actually my idea as an illustrator and we just thought, 'Has this ever been done before?' And we did our research and our research, and our publishing house was at



first a little bit curious, I mean, they'd never done this before, they'd never heard of this before ...

Kenneth: Well, their initial idea was to just make a poster, you know, just put something on the back there...

Sarah: Yeah.

Kenneth: ... but we had a better idea.

Sarah Jane: Yeah, so it was our idea. *Lola Dutch* (and we'll get into this) is curious about everything and incredibly creative so we just figured how could this book just go back on the shelf? After you read it you want to ... you have that same energy as *Lola Dutch* has, and so we wanted to make sure kids could have a creative experience after finishing the last sentence and so we decided to turn the book itself into a creative experience.

Sarah: It's so brilliant. I never know what to do with book jackets, but as soon as I saw that I thought, 'OK, this is brilliant!'

Sarah Jane: Right?! And with six kids you totally understand. I used to have a draw in my nightstand full of just dust covers...

Sarah: I know exactly because ...

Sarah Jane: ... because with four kids ...

Sarah: ...you can't throw them away but what are you going to do with them?

Sarah Jane: ... so, I told my publishing company, I said, "Look, most parents are just either storing these, throwing them away, or getting rid of them, or they're getting ruined. So, if it's going to get ruined in three months, let's give them an experience to have in the meantime.

Kenneth: Let's have some fun before it's ripped to shreds.

Sarah: So good! I just heard someone told me that they use their dust covers as wrapping paper for gifts. And I thought, 'oh, that's really smart, I might have to start.' I have a lot of wrapping paper then because I have a huge crateful of dust jackets, but I wouldn't do it with *Lola Dutch* because that one the kids play with all the time. And it kind of makes me want to buy a separate copy for each of my kids so they have their own set.

Sarah Jane: Oh fun. And, as a little plug-in, we actually went back and forth, I don't know—two or three times, I'm not really sure—because in order for it to be dollhouse play experience we actually had to come up with very sturdy thick paper and so we actually went through several rounds of prototypes to make sure it wasn't flimsy. And so yeah, it wouldn't be very good wrapping paper but most other covers would.

Kenneth: Now the Show Notes at the bottom we could put as well that on Sarah [Jane]'s website there are printables where you can print out the characters as well, so if you lose *Lola* or *Bear* (I can't imagine kids would ever lose paper characters ever!)

Sarah: Never, of course not.

Kenneth: ... you can always print them out. You can tell we're parents—we thought this through.

Sarah: That's so funny. That is brilliant, because of course, a parent would think that through because that's what I thought too, like how long until they all start crying over ...

Kenneth: ... *Lola's* leg getting ripped off ... it's OK, you can print another one, it's OK.

Sarah Jane: I actually, I just have to say this, because as parents we can all understand, I actually had a reader Instagram message me a



video of her 3 year old daughter crying because Lola had gotten lost. We're talking, this is 24 hours after they got their book. And, I said, "Oh, don't worry, you just go to LolaDutch.com and you print out another one." And the parent was like, "Oh my goodness, this is wonderful. You seriously just solved my biggest parenting crisis."

6:32 Meet the Wrights

Sarah: Exactly. Oh my gosh. That's so good! OK, I'm getting ahead of myself because before we get into *Lola Dutch* I know our listeners are going to want to hear about you and who you are. Tell us a little bit about your family.

Kenneth: OK, so I was raised in California and Sarah's from D.C., and we met at college out here in Utah. We were both musical theatre majors, believe it or not, so we got to know each other directing musicals together and doing acting and theatre classes together, so right from the get-go when we met each other we were in collaborative endeavors, plays, skits, scenes, everything. And then three and a half years later we just decided to keep the party going and we got married, and now we have four kids; we've got a 13 year old, a 12 year old, an 8 year old, and a 4 year old.

Sarah Jane: So, to kind of follow up with that, I'm an artist and an illustrator and I launched my own website selling my own products, SarahJaneStudios.com, initially I started my freelance business as an illustrator and as a designer to eventually teach myself how to be a children's book illustrator and author, but I initially started to get Kenneth through grad school, so I was a top selling artist on Etsy for several years, and soon I got into the textile industry so I actually design fabric as a licensed designer with

Mike Miller Fabrics—so many people know me from the fabric world, but then, Kenneth actually left the stage, you know, we decided that didn't really work with family life ...

Kenneth: ... I just changed stages.

Sarah: Exactly.

Sarah Jane: Actually, he teaches junior high school, so he teaches junior high, he's storytelling every day, he's a history teacher, and I'm illustrating every day, and so for the past few years we're like, 'Wouldn't it just make sense to be an author/illustrator duo?' and *Lola Dutch* really was born from our philosophies in parenting, our experience with stage and theatre and storytelling...

Kenneth: ... and just working with a lot of kids in school. Both kids who are just incredibly gifted and bright and then kids who have just certain challenges and struggles and yeah, just something that really came from a very genuine place.

Sarah Jane: So, he's a fulltime school teacher. I'm a fulltime mom of four kids and run a fulltime business illustrating and designing books and fabric.

Sarah: OK, there's so many questions now bubbling up from what you just said. So, you've known you wanted to illustrate books for a long time then, it sounds like, Sarah?

Sarah Jane: Yeah. I mean, if you want to really get technical, we're talking third grade. Third grade I knew I was going to be a children's book author and illustrator.

Kenneth: She actually has the journal—it's written down.



8:58 Collaborating on Lola

Sarah: Oh, you still have it! Oh my gosh, I can't even stand it, I love it so much. OK, and so then, this book—did one of you write it and one of you illustrate it? Or was it more collaborative all the way through or how did that ... what was that like?

Kenneth: This one was very collaborative. The drawing came first, so I'll have Sarah tell you about it—the character came first.

Sarah Jane: So, in some ways it's a toss-up about what came first. So, how we work as author/illustrator—I'll just, kind of, answer your question simply first. Kenneth is much more of a storyteller and I'm obviously the illustrator and so, for instance, I'm going to jump ahead a little bit, the second *Lola Dutch* book, the third *Lola Dutch* book, which are all coming out, very much Kenneth did most of the writing and I did all the illustrating. The first book, though, like with any book series, you're laying the groundwork for an entire world, and so the first book was really hard to tell. I can't even remember who did what when it comes to the first book. But, I will tell you that the idea for the story really came from our parenting. I'm sure you can relate, Sarah, that having six kids, like, sometimes you fall on the couch at the end of the day and me and Ken would just be like, 'This is just so much!'

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Sarah Jane: You know what I mean? We use this phrase with our kids all the time because they are creative, my husband and I are very creative, and we emphasize creativity at our home, so this phrase – this is just too much – was a running phrase, and *Lola Dutch* just, kind of, stemmed from that. Now, the actual nitty-gritty of how we

did the story, I actually came up with an illustration, just for my shop of this girl and bear that maybe some of your readers maybe even have having in their room, like it's a very popular art print, and it actually has drawn the attention of other possible collaborations that we ended up not pursuing and we decided to just write a story about this character. So, the phrase is a little bit much, having an over-the-top creativity child and the premise of the book was really very collaborative.

10:56 Lola's companions

Sarah: Part of what you love so much when you're reading the book is at one point she says she's just bursting with ideas. And I just fell in love with her. I mean, she's impossible not to love, and bear's expressions and ... so the characters in the book, you've got Bear, you've got Pig, (I'm trying to remember them all) ...

Kenneth: Gator, Crane.

Sarah Jane: Basically, there's Lola as a main character, Bear as her caretaker, and then she really has three sidekicks, Gator, Crane, and Pig.

Sarah: And, how did you come up with those animals, or animals as characters?

Sarah Jane: Do you really want to know the real reason? Honestly, I was sitting down and I just had this image in my imagination and I just drew a picture. And it really had honestly nothing to do with any intention of writing a story but I needed a medium size animal, a little animal, and a big animal. And they just intuitively, kind of, mind-to-paper were born, really.

Kenneth: She thought in pictures. And it just composition-wise looked good but then, of course, once I saw the pictures I was saying,



“Sarah, who is this girl? Like, there’s a story here.” And, Sarah was trying to form it up and trying to get it to take shape and it wasn’t quite working so she handed it off to me and I wrote out a couple of drafts and went back to her and then after several alliterations back and forth we had a story and a character that we were just really starting to fall in love and we felt like it had some momentum behind it, and we threw it out to our agent who loved it, and we threw it out to the publishers and they took it with open arms. So, we were ecstatic.

Sarah Jane: And, really quick, back to your question about the three characters, I do want to say that intuitively I knew Lola’s personality was so big and when I illustrated her and I drew her, and as we were talking about this I just, kind of, felt like she needs three imaginary friends (or whatever you want to call them) that are really an extension of her. Like, Gator, Crane, and Pig are her friends, they’re her family, but they’re also an extension of her, and with a personality that big I needed her to have more, I don’t know, like hands. Does that make sense?

Sarah: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Kenneth: Collaborators, co-conspirators in her plots.

13:15 Giving kids creative courage

Sarah: Well, and they’re perfect for that because they just seem to go along, except for Bear who’s always a little bit worried, but they seem to go along right with her big, fantastical dreams and plans. So you said your kids are all creative and creativity’s a value in your home. And I can sense that in the book that it feels like a story that makes us remember how important it is for us to

have fingers in a lot of different pots, and just let our ideas run wild. Is that what you were trying to do? Something like that?

Kenneth: Yeah, to let kids have the courage to do that. Kids, when they’re small, they tend to just want to try stuff and try new things, and if the parents just get out of the way and give them the encouragement they’ll do that of their own volition. We notice some kids as they started to get a little bit older they started to lose a little bit of that drive, so *Lola Dutch*, in some ways, was made to give encouragement and give a pat on the back to the kids that are still enthusiastic and still on fire, and still curious about the world, and just say, ‘Look, here’s somebody just like you, and we love it, and we need more people like you.’ And at the same time we also have a son who’s a little more on the timid side and he is curious but he’s worried about messing up, or he’s worried about making too much of a mess, and so we also wrote *Lola Dutch* for all those kids who maybe need a little bit of encouragement to try new things and to just be brave and bold and it’s OK if things break and don’t turn out right. You know, wake up tomorrow and let’s have another amazing day and try it again.

14:44 A series!!

Sarah: So, you’ve already alluded to having more ... that was one of the questions I was going to ask, because the first time I read it this is a series, this has to be a series, we have to have more Lola. We need more Lola Dutch in our lives. So, can you tell us anything about that?

Sarah Jane: Sure, so the first book was very much setting the ground work and, you know, we even had some early reviewers allude to the fact that maybe the plot wasn’t exactly what they



were expecting from a stand-alone book, but that was exactly on purpose; that we wanted to really establish personality, we wanted to establish philosophy of living, and the second and third books are very much more tied to a specific theme, so I think we could say the second book, I think it's already out there in the world somewhere; the second book is *Lola Dutch: When I Grow Up*. So Lola has the same type of kind of freak out from just having too many ideas but this one is tied to her specific problem of not knowing what she wants to be when she grows up because every time she gets a hold of a book she gets so many ideas, and she wants to be everything, and she wants to learn about everything, so the book is fun and funny.

Kenneth: You can't relate from trying to do too many things. You don't know what that's like?

Sarah: Yeah, exactly. As you're saying this, I'm like, see, this is why I loved *Lola Dutch*, because I read the book and I thought, 'Oh, this is a book about me.'

Kenneth: You're just like, "I just want to do ALL the things!"

Sarah: Exactly.

Sarah Jane: And going back to that, I don't want to sidetrack too much, but I think it's interesting because we wrote *Lola Dutch* from very specific personal experience, I mean, I wrote it from my own perspective of a child: I was *Lola Dutch*, my husband was *Lola Dutch*.

Kenneth: How I was raised.

Sarah Jane: But, also our oldest child was very much *Lola Dutch*. If we were to pick a child it would be our oldest who really struggled with fitting in with the world because she was so curious and was so passionate, and often her

friends weren't really that type, and we wanted to give her a friend. But I will say, but what I wanted to say about the subsequent books is that so many of the readers so far have said, "Oh my goodness, I relate to her so much." And, I think it's because we all have that in us. So, the second book and the third book really go through those scenarios that I think we've all found ourselves in: not knowing what to be when we grow up. And, then the third book goes into other situations where most people can relate.

Sarah: Well, and then as we get older and we, sort of, lose touch with that creative, whimsical side of ourselves, I think that's something that the adults who are reading *Lola Dutch* to their children will light up with, because they'll recognize that there is a *Lola Dutch* inside of them. This feels familiar. That's right, I forgot who this was. You know?

Sarah Jane: And I think what's fun for the adult's reading is most adults have said, "*Lola Dutch* is me. And *Bear* is me." Because I think as adults ...

Sarah: Yes!

Sarah Jane: ... even the most creative of us, I mean, Kenneth and I are pretty creative, but both of us have had several moments of being *Bear*. "Wait, I don't know if I can take this today? I don't know if I can make a mess in the kitchen. This is just too much." So, we find ourselves as adults, I think, relating to both.

17:30 The Read-Aloud Family

Sarah: We'll get back to today's episode in just a moment. But, I wanted to take a minute to make sure you know that the brand new book, *The Read-Aloud Family: Making Meaningful and Lasting Connections with Your Kids* is available now. This is a brand new book I wrote just for you



because I know that you'll never regret the time you spend reading aloud with your kids. Also know that connecting deeply with our families can be really difficult in our busy, technology-driven, loud world, right? Reading aloud is one of the best ways to be fully present with our kids even after they can read themselves. In the book, *The Read-Aloud Family* you're going to find the inspiration you need to start your read-aloud movement in your own home. You'll discover how to prepare your kids for academic success and develop their empathy and compassion through books. You'll find out how you can find time to read-aloud even in the midst of your busiest days with school, and sports, and dinner dishes. You'll learn how to choose books across a variety of sibling interests and ages, and you'll learn how to make reading aloud the very best part of your family's day. *The Read-Aloud Family* offers some age-appropriate book lists. I've read every single book from cover to cover that's in this book and there are almost 400 recommendations, I believe, at last count; from a toddler's wonder to a teenager's resistance you're going to find practical strategies and the book recommendations to match so that you can make reading aloud a meaningful family ritual in your home. I believe reading aloud not only has the power to change your family it has the power to change the world. The book's available now wherever books are sold, or you can head right to TheReadAloudFamily.com to grab your copy today.

19:16 First experiences

Kenneth: As a parent the beautiful thing is all of a sudden you have these kids who have never had these first experiences before. They've never sat down and they've never made chocolate chip

cookies from scratch before and you get to be there with them and have, sort of, this vicarious first experience again with them. And this we see when Lola dives into new books and new interests and Bear gets to come along for the ride and by the end he's smiling because he's realizing that he's caught up in the magic of newness and discovery again.

Sarah: I love it. I just love it. Do you have a publication date for the next *Lola Dutch* books, or are those not in yet?

Sarah Jane: Yeah, I'm pretty sure the second book, I'm pretty sure they're all coming out pretty close to the same time. So, the first book came out January 30th of 2018, the second book will come out January 30th of 2019, and then the third book, I believe, is scheduled for a Valentine's Day release, which I don't even know what that is, but it's pretty much going to be the following year.

Kenneth: 2020.

Sarah: Yeah, OK. So, one new book a year, basically, is how that works?

Sarah Jane: Yeah.

20:33 The process of making a book

Sarah: And on those new books, you said that Kenneth pretty much wrote the books and then you illustrated, so that's after this world has been created, because you basically created this new world with the first book. One of the questions we get from a lot of kids who are listening to the podcast is how long does it take (because we have a lot of blossoming young writers and illustrators)? Can you talk to the kids a little bit about what that is like for you, that process of



writing and illustrating and maybe how long it takes?

Sarah Jane: Yes. We usually, just for the sake of a simple answer we usually say about a year. And the reason is because once you get working with a publisher there are a lot of different aspects that maybe you're not considering as just the author or as just the illustrator, so the actual art takes a certain amount of time, the actual writing takes a certain amount of time, but then you also have to consider all the back and forth edits between your editor, and the back and forth art checks between the art director, and then there's the actual time of it getting printed, so that's even longer if you consider that. The first book we wrote and sketched out in about four months before we handed it to our agent, and then from that point on, it took maybe another four to six months to actually perfect it to the point of a finished product. So, we usually say about a year.

Kenneth: Which is always interesting to say because if you're actually calculating hours verses days or months this isn't the only thing you're doing.

Sarah: Yeah, right.

Kenneth: So many other things. So, there's some days where you're hitting it very intensely and Sarah and I will actually we'll schedule times where we'll go away for three days and we will get more done in those three days just working intensely together than we do in three months, or Sarah jokes sometimes three years, when we're just able to get away as a couple. But it's delightful, we just love working together, and honestly, we wish we could just do it more.

Sarah: Do you ever (this is probably not a nice question for me to ask you in front of each other) ...

Sarah Jane: Do we ever disagree? Is that your question?

Sarah: Yeah. Do you ever look at it, Ken, do you ever look at her pictures and say, "No, that's not right." Or Sarah, do you read something he wrote and say, "That's not going to work."

Kenneth: You know what's interesting is because we both come from the theatre world we're used to working on a creative process and getting critiqued. Both of us came from a situation where we'd sit down, a director would give you feedback, and you'd take adjustments, so we're very open with each other, but we're also naturally kind people, and so ...

Sarah: That helps.

Kenneth: ... I wouldn't ever say anything mean because that's just not who I am, especially not to Sarah, and she would never do that to me back. So, if there's something that's just not working then we articulate it, we try to work our way around it, and there are times when we realize we are just too tired to be working on [this] right now, and we just need to come back to it another day.

Sarah Jane: Yeah, I mean, we're always putting our marriage first. I think writing and illustrating together, as a couple, I mean, if you have a pretty fun marriage and pretty great marriage, gosh, go for it. If you struggle in the communication department I'd say work on that first because communication is so key, but kind of like Kenneth said, coming from the theatre world at the end of the day, it's not about Kenneth and it's not about me, and it's not about our egos, it's about creating something outside of ourselves, it really is excellent. And, so we can look at it and say, "That's a really good idea." There have actually been times when I'll say, "That's a really good



idea but you know what, I'm not really good at illustrating bla-bla-bla. What if we had the same concept but it was an illustration of [this]." Or, sometimes he'll say, "Ah, maybe we need a little more action on this page, [this] is more of what I was thinking." And so ...

Kenneth: And sometimes too, I'll look at her picture and all of a sudden there's just this little sparkle in the eye of one character, or a little way she's drawing a gesture, and I'd say, "You know what? What I wrote, my word, that doesn't work anymore, so I go back and I revise the text because the feeling of what she drew was better." So, there's no ego over who gets their way, it's about which one really ends up working and both of us want that, and there's a lot of give and take back and forth and respect for the other's craft.

24:17 Naming Lola

Sarah: Who named her? Or, did you do that together? Or, how did her name come about?

Sarah Jane: We did that together. So, the "is a little bit much" was a phrase we'd had for several years and at one point, actually, the first draft of the story that Kenneth wrote was actually, Lola was the girl and Dutch was the Bear ...

Kenneth: Yeah, I still have the first version – they were separate.

Sarah: Ah, interesting.

Sarah Jane: I actually have those folders still in my computer. I still have a Lola and Dutch.

Kenneth: Lola and Dutch.

Sarah: Oh, interesting.

Sarah Jane: It rhymes so well. And the family name, her last name "Dutch" is actually, my

husband and I really love our family histories and we actually don't have any family history in common, any family lines, but we actually found a long time ago one single family line that we're both connected to and that family line was Dutch, and so ...

Kenneth: And we know there's a Parisian feel to it and we came across the name Lola and it just worked beautifully.

Sarah Jane: Yeah, it just worked beautifully. So, really the name came from that phrase "is a little bit much" and there's not that much that rhymes with Dutch.

Kenneth: There's ...

Sarah: Yeah.

Kenneth: ... slim pickings when you're trying to find a last name that rhymes with "much."

Sarah: It's pretty great, but also, when you look at the cover, I mean, it almost is that there is no other name that could quite fit her, so you guys just did perfect with that.

Sarah Jane: That's how we felt, too.

Sarah: Yeah.

25:46 Julia Child

Sarah: Have you guys seen Kyo Maclear's book, *Julia Child*? Her picture book?

Sarah Jane: I have. In fact, I think we own it. The illustrator is ...

Sarah: Oh, Julie Morstad. My kids who love *Lola Dutch* also really love *Julia Child* and there's like a similar spirit to those books, I think.

Sarah Jane: Do you know what's interesting? That's funny that you mention it, I actually haven't pointed this out to anybody yet, so on that third



or fourth page when she's bursting into the kitchen with a big idea for breakfast, we actually wanted to put Julia Child on the book she was reading because Julia embodied that spirit, but the publisher's felt that Julia Child was still too much of a modern icon and we wanted to keep it classic. So, it says "French Cuisine" on that third page. But, the kitchen, actually, not a 100% because it's not Julia Child's kitchen but I actually chose the color of her cabinets based on Julia Child's kitchen.

Sarah: Oh, that is so funny!

Sarah Jane: So, there's a slight nod to Julia Child, very slight.

Sarah: I love it.

Sarah Jane: It's great you pointed that out though, because yes, when we kind of were thinking of different characters that would embody each phase that she goes through, through her art history phase, and architecture phase, and cooking phase, Julia Child was our inspiration.

Kenneth: She gave that inspiration to people all over the world where you say, "You can learn French cuisine. Why not? Here's the book, you have a kitchen, go figure it out."

27:28 Book surprises

Sarah: Exactly. Exactly. It's that spirit of trying new things and just, sort of, letting your ideas run wild and seeing where they take you. And that's what I love about *Lola Dutch* is they get her a little out of sorts, which is also very true, to what real life feels like for those of us who end up having a lot of ideas and trying to run with them. So there's so much to love about this book. One final question: what surprised you most about

sending this book out into the world now that it's had lots of readers and you've been talking to readers at bookstores and on podcasts, what surprised you most?

Kenneth: I think one of the things that just shocked me right from the get-go is we went to one of our very first book events, it was at Kepler's in the Bay Area which we just love, and we're standing there and a whole group of kids are all coming in and parents are coming in, then I look over and there's this little girl dressed up as Lola Dutch. She's got the skirt, she's got the shirt, she's got the little Peter Pan collar and the bow...

Sarah Jane: Her mom had made it at nap time.

Sarah: Ohhh.

Kenneth: And I just looked at this little girl dressed up as this character that we created and I'm realizing that she now has a life of her own.

Sarah: Yes.

Kenneth: You craft this inside of your own mind, inside your studio, and then you send it out into the world and what I've really been so happy about is I first thought I was sending out a character that needed to make a statement and, sort of, teach something, but I'm realizing she actually doesn't need to teach anything because so many people are coming back to me saying, "I am her. I am her. I am just like that." And, so I think what she's doing is giving permission and encouragement that we're all kind of like each other in this way, and it's helping people who are kind of like Lola Dutch just to find each other and give each other support and say like, "Go, get a stack of books, go figure out how to do it."

Sarah: Yeah, yeah. She's not yours any more, basically. You sent her out into the world and now she's taken on a life of her own.



Kenneth: That was me, but Sarah, what do you think?

Sarah Jane: I think I was going to say the same thing that how many people have identified with this character that, really for us, felt like a fifth child and we very much created Lola Dutch from a very ...

Kenneth: Feels like a [****inaudible****].

Sarah Jane: ... yeah, feels like a fifth child, but we created this character from such a real, honest, and I think this is a tip maybe that I can give to any aspiring authors or illustrators too, that when you create from a real, authentic, honest place, that's usually when you're going to get the most universal appeal, and that's the irony—is that you feel like you're creating something so specific, possibly even niche, or something that is personal to you, but when you create from that personal space that's what all of humanity grasps onto—is that personal nature of this character. So, I was surprised by how many people said, "I'm Lola Dutch," because when we wrote it I was Lola Dutch, you know?

Sarah: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. That's the beauty of it, I think, too is that we all feel a little more like each other and it's always helpful for us to find familiar and similar things in each other because it helps us all love each other a little more.

Kenneth: We need to know we're not alone.

Sarah: That's right. That's exactly right. OK, at LolaDutch.com you guys have a resources page where you can get those paper puppets – I'm lookin' at 'em right now because I'm going to print those off as soon as we hang up the phone. You've got a Lola Dutch coloring page and a book hunt challenge. So, listeners, you can go to LolaDutch.com to get those resources. Is there

anywhere else our listeners should find you online?

Sarah Jane: You're also welcome to go to SarahJaneStudios.com because I do have my own shop with products. We actually have lapel pins and we have fine art prints signed that people can purchase to hang on the wall. We're also going to be having a Lola Dutch doll come out by Merrymakers which will be available on Amazon or SarahJaneStudios.com. So, go to LolaDutch.com or SarahJaneStudios.com, and you're set.

Sarah: Oh my goodness. I have a little girl who will flip about that doll. We're going to have one of those in our house, I'm sure. Thank you Kenneth and Sarah Jane, this has been a complete treat. Thank you so much for joining me.

Sarah Jane: Thank you.

Kenneth: Thanks, Sarah.

31:15 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.

Child1: Hello, my name is Noble Davis. I live in Concord, North Carolina. I am 6 years old. My favorite book is *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* and the best part about it is the part when they burn down Fred's two sheds. [mom: and, then what do they get?] Free donuts.

Child2: [mom: what's your name?] Christian Davis and I am 9 years old, and I live in Concord, North Carolina. My favorite book is *Bulfinch's Mythology*. My favorite part about it is when Zeus sends down girls as a punishment for boys.



Child3: My name is Judah Davis. I am 10 years old and I come from North Carolina. My favorite book is *Anne of Green Gables*. What I like about it is that I like her imagination and how she imagined things. And my favorite part is when she breaks her slate over Gilbert Blythe's head.

Child4: My name is Phineas Caleb Davis. I live in Concord, North Carolina, and I'm 12 years old. My favorite book is *The Hobbit* and my favorite thing about it are the riddles when Bilbo is down riddling with Gollum and when Bilbo is talking to Smaug.

Child5: My name is Corbin Davis. I am 13 years old and my favorite book is *The Wednesday Wars*. And one of the things I like about it is how he reads Shakespeare and memorizes it and uses a bunch of curses from *The Tempest* and stuff like that. And my favorite part is when the rats were chasing him around.

Child6: My name is Harrison Davis. I am 15 years old. My favorite book is *Three Men in a Boat* by Jerome K. Jerome, and my favorite part is probably when they're trying to open the pineapple tin.

Child7: My name is Merrin. I'm 7 years old. I live in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and my favorite book that my mom has read to me is *Heidi* and my favorite part is when Heidi brings the kittens in the house and scares Miss Rottenmeier. And, my favorite book I've read myself is *Mr. [**inaudible**]*.

Child8: My name is Hudson and I'm 5 years old and I live in Stillwater, Oklahoma. My favorite book is *Snip Snap!: What's That?* And my favorite part is when they say, "You bet there, Roy."

Child9: [mom: what's your name?] Benjamin. [mom: Benjamin, how old are you?] Three [mom: you're two.] Two. [Mom: what's your favorite

book?] *Owl* ... [mom: that's right, and she came ... *Owl Babies*].

Child10: Hi, my name's Magdalene and I'm 5 years old, and I live in Twin Falls, Idaho. My favorite book is *The Mermaid's Purse* by Patricia Polacco, and I think it's the best where she gives out books that are hers and she lets other people read it, and one book she read, that one book saved a farmer's sheep.

Child11: Hi, my name is Lucy and I'm 3 years old and we live in Idaho. And my book is *All Better*. [mom: by Osborne Books.]

Child12: Hi, my name is Drew. I live in Las Vegas, Nevada, and I'm 8 years old. My favorite book is *This is My Home, This is My School* by Jonathan Bean. And the reason why I like it is because it's like our family and because there is a part where the teacher gets tired from doing a lot of stuff, and I read it backwards so it was really funny.

Child13: Hi, my name is Natalie. I'm 11 years old. I live in Las Vegas, Nevada, and my favorite book is *Wings of Fire*. It's a book series and I like it because there's lots of fantasy and there are different types of dragons in it, and it's just pretty funny what they say sometimes.

Child14: Hi, my name is Corrie, and I'm 7 years old, I live in California, and my favorite book is *Rapunzel and the Lost Lagoon* by Leila Howland. And I like it because there's a ton of mystery.

Child15: Hi, my name is Taylor, I'm 12 years old, and I live in California. My favorite book that's been read-aloud to me is *The Green Ember* by S. D. Smith, and I like it because it's full of adventure and suspense.

Child16: [mom: what's your name?] Micah. [mom: Micah. And, how old are you?] 3. [Mom: 3. And where do you live?] California. [mom:



California]. [mom: and what's your favorite ?] *Big Book of Big Trucks* by Megan Cullis and Mike Byrne. And why is that your favorite book? Because it has big trucks. [mom: because it has big trucks.]

Child17: Hi, I'm MJ and I'm 6 years old and I from Miami, Florida, and my favorite book is a series of *Narnia* because there's a lot of action and I love listening to audio books and books because I don't really like reading and making cards for people, and my favorite thing is that my mom, she was a little girl because her Daddy used to read them to her, and what I like about it is my first favorite is *The Last Battle*, it's the last book of the whole series of *Narnia*, and I like listening to audio books and actual books and this is the end. Bye.

Child18: Hello, my name is Annabelle. And I'm from Miami, Florida. My favorite book is *Alice in Wonderland*. It's nice to read a book. And mommy is to read it, and ... [mom: what's your favorite part in the book?] My favorite part is when he gets lost and a cat comes. That's my favorite part. [mom: and how old are you Annabelle?] I am 5. [mom: OK, is that it?] The end.

Child19: Hi, my name is Solomon. [mom: how old are you, Solomon?] 3. [mom: and, what's your favorite book, little buddy?] *Little Blue Truck*. [mom: and what do you like about that book?] The light ups. [mom: does it light up at the end?] Uh huh. [mom: anything else you like about the book?] Love this part. [mom: what is it?] It's the Christmas trees. [mom: the Christmas trees?] And the little blue truck. [mom: and the little blue truck.] Let me look at it? [mom: OK, OK, they can't see it, though, OK? Is there anything else you want to say about *The Little Blue Truck*?] I want to show it to you. [mom: but they can't see

it, though, buddy] I got it last Christmas and I want my mommy to read it to you.

Sarah: Thank you so much, kids. I love hearing your book recommendations. That's it for this episode. Hey, it's going to be two weeks before we come at ya with episode 100. It's going to be worth waiting for, waiting that one extra week. We usually release new episodes of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast every Tuesday but we're going to make you wait two weeks this time. It'll be worth it because we're talking to the author of *The Penderwicks* which is a New York Times Best Selling series, and of course, the first book won a national book award. We're talking to Jeannie Birdsall who created *The Penderwicks series*. It's worth the wait. It's coming at you on Tuesday, May 15. If you don't get email updates when new episodes are live, what are you waiting for? You want those! So, head to ReadAloudRevival.com, pop your email into the page there. It's also a good idea to subscribe in your podcast app, so whether you're listening in your iPhone podcast app or to a Stitcher app in Overcast or whatever app you're using to listen to your podcast, hit subscribe next to Read-Aloud Revival and that way you won't miss episodes when they show up there. So, we'll see you in two weeks with episode 100. In the meantime, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.