

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL



Episode 129: RAR #129: Jim Weiss: Storytime with Jim Weiss (and how to read aloud better!)

- Jim Weiss: [00:00](#) I'm going to paraphrase. This is not verbatim but he said, "If you want your child to be more brilliant, read them fairytales. More brilliant, more fairytales."
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:10](#) That's the best.
- Jim Weiss: [00:11](#) This is coming from Einstein.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:25](#) 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.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:42](#) Hello, hello. Sarah Mackenzie here. You've got episode 129 of the Read Aloud Revival Podcast. Today is a special episode kind of day. We've got Jim Weiss back on the Podcast. Now his voice is going to be familiar to a lot of you. Whether you've heard him sing Stone Soup, listened to him tell you the story of the world ... maybe you've heard his brand new Bible stories or any of the classics he's read. He's a master story teller behind audio recordings that many of us know and love. You can find them at jimweiss.com and we'll put a link of course in the show notes. The show notes will be at readaloudrevival.com/129. Since 1989, Jim has produced award winning audio recordings for kids that bring classic literature, mythical tales, history, all of it just to life. In addition to his recording fabulous stories, he also gives live performances in libraries, stores, schools, community events all over the world. He's even performed at the White House. Jim has joined us on the podcast before, but it was four years ago when the Read Aloud Revival was just a little baby podcast. So we are thrilled to have him back.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [01:53](#) Now he gave us a little something special for this episode. Jim has generously allowed us to air a couple of his stories for your kids here on the podcast. I'm really excited about it. So usually, I answer a listener question here at the top of the episode, but instead of doing a listener question this time. I'm going to play for you Jim Weiss's Stone Soup. This is one selection, one part of the four stories that are on Jim's recording called Fairy Tale Favorites in Story and Song. So that's going to come next, then after that, you're going to hear my conversation with Jim. Then after that, usually we do Let The Kids Speak, where of course we have kids call in and tell us their favorite books. We all love that part of the podcast right? We're going to get another story from Jim at the end, so

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instead of Let The Kids Speak today, you're going to get to hear part of his Sherlock Holmes recording. So as you can see, it is indeed a special episode.

Sarah Mackenzie: [02:52](#)

Without further ado I would like to present Jim Weiss, telling us the story of Stone Soup. Please know that these stories shared on the Read Aloud Revival Podcast are copyright James Weiss.

Jim Weiss: [03:22](#)

Stone Soup. It was the son of the village blacksmith who first saw the soldiers appearing over the top of the hill and he went running up the main street yelling, "Soldiers. Soldiers are coming." Well before he could say, "Where did everybody go?" The villagers had disappeared from the streets. You see, there had been other groups of soldiers who had returned from the war and they had come through this village and taken what they wanted from the poor villagers. The villagers were now afraid that there was going to be more thievery in their streets and so they went into hiding. But what of the dozen soldiers coming down the hill? They were weary, they were dusty, and they were hungry. Their leader was a tall red-haired Irishman, Sergeant O'Hara and he looked ahead and he turned to his Corporal, the Scotsman McFee and he said, "Sure now jack, there's nobody on the streets down there. Looks like we're entering another one of these friendly villages, we are." And he laughed.

Jim Weiss: [04:24](#)

He looked back over his shoulder to see the other soldiers behind him and at the rear of the long line was the hugest man you've ever seen who single handedly was pulling the cooking wagon. All the soldiers slowly made their way down the hillside and into the town square. Well they all turned toward the cooking wagon and as they gathered outside, the door swung open, and there framed in the doorway of the cooking wagon was their wiry little cook. "Private Howard Higgenbottom reporting for duty sir. You of need of me services?" And he strutted down the two steps. "Indeed I do Private Higgenbottom. It seems that the lads here are a wee bit hungry." "Just one little problem." "And what would that be Higgenbottom?" "We're fresh out of food."

Jim Weiss: [05:14](#)

Well the soldiers were plenty upset but Sergeant O'Hara called them all together in a tight little circle and this is what he said to them. "Now my lads, we've all had our share of violence and fighting in this war and we've all come through it all right. All we need is enough food to

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get us home now. But there's not going to be any rough stuff. We've got to use our brains, we do. A little trick will do it." And he stood up and announced loudly. Loudly enough so he knew the villagers would hear it. "It seems to me this is the perfect occasion for a big brew of stone soup." "Stone soup!" shouted the soldiers and they started to jump up and down in excitement and the villagers, hiding behind their locked doors turned to one another and said, "Stone soup? Stone soup? What's stone? I never. What is so and so? I never heard of stone soup. Did you? No I never heard of stone soup."

Jim Weiss: [06:10](#)

Then little Private Higgenbottom clapped his hands for attention and he said, "Now fellas. You're all wasting time here. You've got to scour the neighborhood for the very best soup stones you can get me. Hurry up. And you, Big John." And he turned to the huge man who had carried the cooking wagon into town. "Hurry up Big John. Start a fire and fill the kettle with some water." Well, the villagers now began to peek through their shutters. "Soup stones?" They said. "Soup stones?" The soldiers were so excited, they began to sing a little song. One of them produced a banjo from somewhere and this is how the song went.

Jim Weiss: [08:03](#)

By now the soldiers were gathering back around the cooking wagon and the cattle, carrying a wide assortment of stones. Big ones, little ones, all colors and shapes. Private Higgenbottom, looking very important, strolled up and down the line of the soldiers and carefully inspected each stone presented to him. "No, no, no." He said, "This ain't no soup stone at all, at all." Then he looked at the next one, "Oh yes. There's a regular beauty. This one goes straight into the pot Big John." And the huge man dropped it into the water. At last he came to the soldier who was holding a large stone with many colors on it. Higgenbottom's eyes grew wide and he got a big grin and he said, "Look at this one. She's the Mona Lisa of soup stones. Oh fellas. You can stop your looking now. With this one in the pot, we're going to have us the best batch of stone soup you ever did taste." And he gently took the soup stone and personally dropped it into the kettle where it made a loud splash.

Jim Weiss: [09:11](#)

Then all of the soldiers gathered around and watched the steam rise. About a half hour later, Private Higgenbottom stuck a spoon in and stirred it around and then he took a little taste. "My my, she's getting pretty tasty, she is. But

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she's missing something. Oh of course I know what it is. Well too bad. We're missing onions and I don't know I'm going to make this soup perfect without them onions." Now, in the third house on the left in that little village lived old Ms. Snodgrass and she was quite a cook. She could hear him complaining about the lack of onions. She knew there was nothing worse for a really good cook than to be in the middle of cooking your best recipe, only to find you were missing an important ingredient. She finally took pity on him. Still, she was afraid of going out to see the soldiers, so she compromised. She grabbed a bunch of onions from her pantry, opened the front door, threw the onions out on her front step and slammed the door shut. It all happened so quickly, no one could see it. No one that is except Sergeant O'Hara who was very quick himself.

Jim Weiss: [10:22](#)

With a wide grin, he strolled up the street, picked up the onions from the step, bowed a low sweeping bow to the closed door and he said, "Madam, 'tis a fine thing you've done. A crowned and a glorious gesture. Let me assure you, these onions will not go to waste. Not a big of it. They're going straight into the finest batch of stone soup ever to be tasted in these parts." And he took the onions back and two minutes later they went into the kettle. Now another half hour went by and again, Private Higgenbottom tasted the soup and he turned to his huge assistant, "Big John, here you take a taste." John stuck in a huge spoon, stirred it around and took a little taste. At last the huge man said, "Beef. Beef. It needs beef." "Aw sure and that's a pity too," said Sergeant O'Hara, "We ain't had no beef for the last three days."

Jim Weiss: [11:19](#)

Now, behind their locked door and shuttered window were the Mayor and his wife, both of whom were wonderful cooks. And it just so happens that they were always competing with old Ms. Snodgrass as to who was the best cook in the village and the Mayor turned to his wife and said, "Listen, if this soup is as good as those soldiers say, I'm not going to have that Snodgrass woman claiming it was her onions that made it so. We've got plenty of beef back in our pantry and I'm going to give it to those soldiers." Then he opened the door and walked down those steps and along the street, straight along to Sergeant O'Hara carrying the beef. He cleared his throat and he said, "On behalf of our entire community and my wife and myself, I should like to present you with this beef." "By any chance," asked Sargent O'Hara, who knew

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this type exactly, "By any chance, might you be the Mayor of this booming metropolis?" "I am indeed the Mayor." "Oh it is a fine village you've got here, Your Honor. Thanks so much for your generous offer of the beef and why don't you pull up a chair and join us? There's going to be plenty of stone soup at the end for everybody."

Jim Weiss: [12:33](#)

Soon the Mayor's wife came out and sat down with them and then one by one the villagers came out of their hiding places because now they could see that the soldiers really posed no threat at all. Every few minutes, Big John or Private Higgenbottom would sample the soup and say, "How could I make some stone soup without bacon?" "I think a little celery. A little celery would be real helpful too." And each time, one of the villagers would jump up and say, "I've got some celery." Or "I've got some bacon." And run back home and in two minutes be back with that missing ingredient. It all went into the big black pot. At last, Private Higgenbottom took one last taste. His eyes grew dreamy and he said, "Coo, she's a blooming masterpiece she is. She's all ready. Everybody get a bowl." And they did. He served every one of the soldiers and every one of the villagers. "Mm." They all agreed this was the best thing they had ever tasted.

Jim Weiss: [13:43](#)

They all finished the bowls. They all had seconds and some of them even had thirds. But because the kettle was so big and so deep, there was still some stone soup left over. And this, Private Higgenbottom distributed among all the villagers. The Mayor turned to the Sergeant and said, "That's a very generous thing for you to there but Sergeant, don't you want to take that stone soup with you?" "Well, human nature being what it is." Said O'Hara, I do believe we can get some more stone soup in the next village and O'Hara turned and winked at his Corporal. Meanwhile old Ms. Snodgrass had taken aside Private Higgenbottom and she said, "The recipe. Can't you give me the recipe?" "Oh Ms. it ain't no secret. Now that you've got some stone soup in your bowl at home, all you got to do is heat it up and add a little bit more of the ingredients that you all so generously contributed this time. Long as you got that little bit of the first batch, you'll always have some stone soup."

Jim Weiss: [14:48](#)

So at last, the soldiers, no longer hungry, left the village. The villagers all gathered out and waved and cheered them on. The last thing that they could see was the cooking wagon going over the crest of the hill. The air

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carried back to them the voices of the soldiers singing their song.

- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:13](#) Well Jim Weiss, welcome back to the Read Aloud Revival.
- Jim Weiss: [15:18](#) Thank you so much Sarah, and I just want to say at the beginning, I was so inspired by our last talk that for the last four years, I've been reading aloud. Thank you.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:28](#) We're delighted to have you back. One of the things I wanted to ask you right here at the top of our time together is what you might say to parents who are worried that they're not any good at reading aloud. Because of course for any of us who have heard your audio recordings or a really good audio book narration, sometimes we go to sit and read to our kids we think, "I am not any good at this." So I would love to hear your thoughts for any parents who worry about that.
- Jim Weiss: [15:53](#) Well the first thing is you're probably better than you know. Nobody sounds good to themselves. At the beginning of this, I have the vision that when Meryl Streep's daughters were kids, they probably said to her, "Oh mom, do we have to do this again?" when she started reading to them. Or probably, almost certainly at some point while she was reading aloud they said, "That's not the same voice you used the other night for that character." That one hits all of us. The main thing is this, the absolutely foundational thing to remember is this, that not only are you reading the content of whatever the story is or the history maybe, when you are reading aloud to your kids, you're doing so much more at that same time and that doesn't have anything to do with how well you got a particular voice or something. What matters is that you are sharing a story, sharing learning, just sharing time together as a parent with a child. Those moments, your kids will remember and even if they don't remember the content of everything you read to them or tell to them, they will always remember that element of it. What you're trying to do above and beyond in handing over particular data or information or a story or a bit of history is you're just trying to turn your child onto learning. That you're doing right off.
- Jim Weiss: [17:16](#) You're already at least half way to your goal just when you sit down and start. As far as actual skills go, everybody does this differently. Now Sarah, you've heard a lot of my recordings over the years and some of them

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are filled with many different character voices as well as my own voice as narrator. But some of them less so. The particular story just doesn't seem to demand it as much. I don't have to come up with really vivid distinctive character voices in a few of these stories. So don't worry about that stuff. If it doesn't come naturally to you, I'll give you a few tips, but just do it the way it works for you and don't try to sound like somebody you just listened to on an audio book. Those people remember get to go back and correct it if they don't get it right the first time. We don't have that luxury when we read to our kids.

Sarah Mackenzie: [18:11](#)

What you just said kind of reminds me. I've been thinking a lot lately about reading aloud as an act of love. Really it's an act of love to sit down and share a story. To pause all of your schedule. To stop everything else you're doing and just sit in a story with your child.

Jim Weiss: [18:26](#)

I think it's one of the reasons that a lot of people will have a story time that is really bracketed beginning and end. I mean you can tell a story any time. You can tell a story in the car. In fact, it's a good place to do 'cause you have a captive audience.

Sarah Mackenzie: [18:41](#)

That's right.

Jim Weiss: [18:43](#)

Of course that's if you're not listening to one of my recordings. Cough, cough, cough. But the fact is, you can do it any time, but in regard to what you were just saying, if there's a specific thing you can do to begin and end official story time, it's a fine thing to do. If you make up a little rhyme let's say, it has to do with stories that you and your kids can say together at the beginning and maybe at the end. After you've done that a few times, when you start to say that rhyme, just watch your child and see what happens, 'cause he or she is just going to drop right into story mode. You're going to see a change in their body and in their face. Because oh it's story time now. You can do it with a little poem, you can find yourself a pretty rock with some colors on it maybe or quartz crystal or something and put it up on a shelf and when it's officially story time, take the rock down and set it down in front of your child and say, "Okay. It's story time."

Sarah Mackenzie: [19:47](#)

Oh yeah.

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- Jim Weiss: [19:47](#) And share the story. When you're done say, "Time to put away the story stone." And move on to whatever's next in the day. Some people get themselves rain stick or tambourine or a little chime. Something for the beginning and the end. You don't have to do that but it's kind of a neat way to make the time of story that much more important and that much more noticeable. So you get your child into the mode. Now, you have heard me say this before Sarah so I apologize for repeating but not everybody who's listening has heard me say this. I always feel there are basically two rules to this and only two rules. Everything else you get to decide for yourself. But the two things that you absolutely have to do whether you're reading out loud or telling it in your own words. These are the two things. The first thing is that you should only be telling stories or reading stories aloud that you like yourself because people can tell, consciously or not if you're not into it and if you're not into it and you start reading it to your child she's not going to be into it either. Chances are.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [20:55](#) Yeah.
- Jim Weiss: [20:56](#) She's going to pick up on your energy. Where as, if you start to read me a story that you love, I can tell and I get excited because you're excited and you've got a much better chance of carrying that child into that wonderful place also. The second thing to think about is to think about two whom am I telling this or reading this? Which opens up a whole lot of things for parents who are readers. First of all there are some stories you might want to share with your son or your daughter but you say, "See there's this one thing that's kind of scary." Or "There's one thing that I'm uncomfortable reading." But you know what? You're not doing a disservice to the author or the piece by rewording that one piece to fit your child. What you're doing, 'cause otherwise the kids not going to get the story anyway. Tell the story and when you get to that one piece, give yourself permission to reword it to soften it. Get rid of any graphic violence or anything like that. It's okay.
- Jim Weiss: [21:55](#) I can tell the same story any number of ways, depending on who it is that I'm talking to. If it's a three year old, a ten year old, a high school age, or somebody my own age. Those of us who walk the earth when dinosaurs roamed. You can give yourself permission to do that. You're a translator of the material to your child. It's okay. Just as

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it's okay if you see confusion on her face to stop for a second and say, "Do you know what that means?" Or "Do you understand?" That's perfectly okay.

Sarah Mackenzie: [22:28](#)

I love this because it really speaks to me of the difference of just reading the words on the page and telling a story which is one of the things that I love about your recordings is that they always feel like they are told stories. You are the living vessel that is sharing the story with me. Not just the words on the page. Which I think is also, as much as I do absolutely love audio books and audio recordings. One of the special things about sharing a story with your child coming from you, the parent, is that you're that living vessel for your child and you can watch their reaction just like you just said, and see if they're completely lost. There's been a lot of times where I've been reading with my kids and look up and realize, oh yeah they have no idea what's going on. So then you can kind of stop and go, okay let's see. It adds this living element to story telling that you do so well.

Jim Weiss: [23:16](#)

It's okay to even restate something if you see that confusion coming out on your child's face. If you don't want to, you don't even have to break character. You can just restate it in your own words, still in character if you want. If I'm telling a Sherlock Holmes story, and you know I do a lot of those. I love those characters.

Sarah Mackenzie: [23:35](#)

Yes.

Jim Weiss: [23:36](#)

If I'm telling it live and I look out and I see that something Sherlock Holmes just said to Dr. Watson seems to be confusing somebody, I won't stop and become Jim Weiss to paraphrase it. I'll just have Holmes say to Watson, "Or to put it another way Watson." And I'll say it in my own words and clarify it that way.

Sarah Mackenzie: [23:57](#)

That's so good 'cause then it doesn't pull your child out of the story right?

Jim Weiss: [24:00](#)

Yeah it keeps him or her in the story. Or you can have the other character to whom this one was speaking ask about it. Like Watson could say, "I beg your pardon Holmes but I don't quite understand." "Well let me put it another way then." Either way whether it's the character who was speaking or the other one asking that character, it gives you a chance to say it another way. Some other things that I think of are this. When you're telling stories, well

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you have enough kids that you know this Sarah, you've [inaudible 00:24:29] to this. You're telling a story and your child gets really excited and starts interrupting with thoughts or better yet they'll say, "Yeah and that's when they." And they start jumping ahead in the story. Which is particularly annoying if their little sister or brother is sitting there who doesn't know story yet and you're leading up to that place and your older one spills the beans.

Sarah Mackenzie: [24:52](#)

Yeah exactly.

Jim Weiss: [24:54](#)

My grandfather used to have a lovely way of dealing with that because at times I was that excited child who would jump in and grandpa used to ... he would stop and he would look at me and he would arch his eyebrow. He was a world-class eye brow archer, my grandfather. He would arch his eyebrow and he would ask, "Who's telling this story?" Which is Grandpa's way of saying, "Shh, don't jump in here." You know?

Sarah Mackenzie: [25:23](#)

Yeah.

Jim Weiss: [25:24](#)

I knew what it meant and I would hold off for the next ten minutes at least. On the one hand, you don't want to stop somebody who's enthused, but on the other hand, there is something to be said for building the story without jumping into it too often. Now that doesn't mean you can't take some questions or some interruptions but sometimes it's possible after one or two of those to say, "You know what? Why don't you hold on with these other questions 'cause I think you're going to get this in the course of this story. Then if you still have a question at the end, we can talk about it. Unless this really has to get answered right now honey. In which case, okay." That kind of adds the frame work for the child. It's also by the way of the umpteen things that happen simultaneously when we're sharing stories. One of those things is your child is learning how to listen and how to be an audience. I've been in places where some kids, even some adults don't seem to know how to act during a live performance. This is one of the things you're passing along too without saying so.

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:29](#)

Right.

Jim Weiss: [26:29](#)

It's one of the things that you're passing along too. [music 00:26:33] I'm working on something right now that

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involves Albert Einstein. The story of Albert Einstein and he talks about that a lot. Here's Einstein and he's saying imagination is much more important than facts. He said, "I never followed what would seem to be a logical path in arriving in any of my major discoveries. I imagined them all and went from there."

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:09](#)

I think there's a quote I know I've heard and I don't know if it's properly attributed to Einstein or not. Something about him saying if you want your child to be mathematically and scientifically minded then you should read them fairytales. Does that come from him? Do you know?

Jim Weiss: [27:24](#)

Yeah he said, I'm going to paraphrase. This is not verbatim but he said, "If you want your child to be more brilliant, read them fairytales. More brilliant, more fairytales."

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:35](#)

That's the best.

Jim Weiss: [27:36](#)

And this is coming from Einstein. I would also say to a lot of parents on a practical level, if you find that you're good at changing character voices, great. At least with your main characters. One of our pleasures on our jimweiss.com website is the notes that I usually hand out to people when I'm doing a teaching conference kind of a situation.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:01](#)

Oh yeah.

Jim Weiss: [28:01](#)

Where I'm teaching how to tell stories. One of those sections is called your vocal palate and it talks about things you can do to differentiate one character from another and they're really simple things. We just don't think of them consciously. The one that most people think of is, I'm going to give this character a high voice and this one a lower voice and that may be all you need to do, but you could also play with speed between different characters or volume. There's just a half dozen simple things you can do, just enough to differentiate one voice from another. Now if you find there's a teller or a reader that that is too difficult for you, you can't do that and also just plain get the story across, don't do it. Just read the voice and maybe try a little bit to change the voice or feel free to add, *said Irene, asked John*.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:53](#)

Yes, yeah okay.

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- Jim Weiss: [28:55](#) You know?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [28:56](#) I mean I notice that I actually do that when I'm reading allowed and I am using voices. Sometimes I edit those out. You know I edit out the said so and so because they already know that because I changed the voice. But it never even occurred to me that of course if you're not using voices, you can add that as necessary. Yeah.
- Jim Weiss: [29:12](#) Yeah again you're translating this material and you want it to be clearer. That's perfectly okay. What you said you do, is a logical thing is to get rid of the he said she said stuff a lot if you're reading allowed and using voices. I still will throw in one of those every few minutes, just to reinforce it or if it's dialogue that's going rapidly back and forth between a couple of characters, it helps to say, *said Irene* every so often.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [29:40](#) Yes.
- Jim Weiss: [29:40](#) Just to help them keep it clear.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [29:43](#) Yeah well I like that. You've said that twice now which makes me really like, I want to stop there for a second 'cause you said, "to make things clear" and I just had a light bulb moment because I thought, oh yeah that's what we're trying to do when you're telling your child a story, whether you're reading it or you're just telling them something, clarity is always of utmost importance. That's the goal. Whatever you can do to make it more clearer.
- Jim Weiss: [30:03](#) Absolutely. That's why I said you should think about to whom am I telling this because there are going to be different things you're going to have to call on for an older child. They won't need quite as much clarification perhaps as a younger child might in terms of that kind of thing.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [30:23](#) Would you be able to give us kind of an example of what you mean by like how you can modulate or change your voice just by going faster or slower or the different changes you just mentioned?
- Jim Weiss: [30:30](#) Sure. On the very first of my history recordings, Galileo and The Stargazers, I told the stories of seven great geniuses of Science over the course of nearly 2,000 years and one of them is the story of Issac Newton. Newton was a painfully shy man. To say stage fright is a vast

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understatement. He was very shy. He didn't like notoriety and of course he was a school teacher for a living. Standing in front of an audience, so to speak and talking. One of the scenes in the recording, he has figured out his three laws of motion, and he's figured out how gravity works. He's the first person who has and he accidentally mentions it to one of his friends, the great astronomer Edmund Halley. You know Halley's comet. When I had the two of them talking, I have Halley louder and in this case, because he doesn't have a whole lot to say, I give him a little gravel in his voice too. I wouldn't do this so much for a main character 'cause it could hurt your throat, but somebody that just has a few sentences to say every so often the way Halley does, that's fine.

- Jim Weiss: [31:41](#) But when Newton comes in, I get softer and gentler and higher and a little bit slower because he's so thoughtful about what he's saying. He's still a loud enough voice that you can hear it. You don't have to strain. But every time you go from Halley to Newton, you're reminded this man is shy, this man is thoughtful about everything he says, and I don't have to keep saying it. It's right there in the voice. If I'm ... you know my version of The Tortoise and The Hare.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [32:12](#) Yes.
- Jim Weiss: [32:13](#) In that one, I carry it to real extremes you know. The Tortoise speaks really slowly and he has a low voice too. The Hare is super fast, 'cause the Hare is moving fast. He's moving here. He's moving there. He's a here and there kind of a hare and every time you go from one of them to the other one, the contrast is so comical, which is one of the great things about that particular story.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [32:42](#) Yeah.
- Jim Weiss: [32:43](#) You don't have to go to that extreme the way I did with The Tortoise and The Hare but any of those things would be enough.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [32:50](#) One question I've heard a few times: I don't know if you'll have an answer to this or not but I'm curious. A few people have told me they'll get vocal strain where they actually either lose their voice or they'll have pain from reading aloud so much with their kids. Is there anything they can do for that?

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- Jim Weiss: [33:04](#) Yeah there are a couple of things. The first one sounds funny, but it's valuable. I tell anybody who has to talk a lot during her day or his day whether it's a parent or a courtroom attorney or a teacher. Find a local voice teacher and go to the person just for a couple of lessons. Say to the person, "Can you teach me how to breathe and show me some scales?" Because before I go on and perform or before I go into the studio to record, I warm up. In my case I sing because I trained as a singer but you don't even have to be able to carry a tune. All you're looking for is ways to get most of the support coming from your diaphragm instead of in your throat. 'Cause if you do it from your throat, yeah you're going to be exhausted and your throat will go bad. If you warm up a little, fine.
- Jim Weiss: [33:53](#) Secondly, and again this seems obvious, but people don't do it. Schedule those activities. Find out when you're comfortable talking. I don't usually record early in the morning. My voice really opens up late in the morning and into the afternoon and then I can record for hours. Just hours. Once it's really going. So I don't record at 8:30 in the morning, unless it's an emergency on a deadline kind of a thing, I don't do it. Think about when during the day am I going to be less tired and more physically able to do this and schedule that activity at 1:00 in the afternoon or 11:00 in the morning, instead of waiting until 4:00 to do it when you and your throat are already tired. It seems so obvious and we don't even think about it but that's something in your control.
- Jim Weiss: [34:40](#) The third thing I would say is this, all the old things actually work. Chicken soup, hot tea and honey. Don't do dairy just before you're going to read a lot and most of all, don't eat any chocolate 'cause they goop up your throat and you have to work a lot harder just to get the sound out and you'll hurt your throat and exhaust yourself. The last thing about that I guess... I said earlier when I was talking about Edmund Halley and Issac Newton, don't give your main character with too much gravel in it because you're going to definitely raunch up your throat. That's the technical terms. That's a Shakespearian term right? Think about this stuff. You have control over that. All of those factors. If your voice starts to go say, "you know what? My voice is starting to go. Let's pick up on this tomorrow and let's go do something else." There's nothing wrong with that.

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- Sarah Mackenzie: [35:31](#) Or switching to audio. Right?
- Jim Weiss: [35:41](#) It goes without saying. Anyone would know that.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [35:41](#) Oh Jim this has been such a delight. Thank you so much for carving out part of your weekend to spend with us, we really appreciate it.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [35:56](#) Well I hope you enjoyed that interview with Jim Weiss. Now not only is he sharing Stone Soup with us, he also wanted to share one of his Sherlock Holmes stories, so next you'll get to hear this Mazarin Stone. This is from his collection of Sherlock Holmes for children. We'll put a link to the rest of it in the show notes if your kids enjoy these audio recordings, they will love other recordings by Jim Weiss and he has a ton of them. Again, you can get them right from his website going to Jim Weiss, that's W-E-I-S-S .com or you can just head to the show notes for this episode, which is readaloudrevival.com/129. Here we go.
- Jim Weiss: [36:38](#) The great detective Sherlock Holmes and his faithful friend, Dr. John Watson are probably the most famous fictional characters ever created from the mind of a human being. The author who made them up Arthur Conan Doyle, was himself a medical doctor who grew bored waiting for patients to come to his office and filled his time by writing stories, and what stories they were. In the end, these mysteries featuring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson made their creator world famous and very wealthy. I invite you to join me now in London in the 1890s.
- Jim Weiss: [37:19](#) A horse drawn carriage makes it's way through the narrow streets. The chiming of the great clock cuts through the deep, swirling fog. Mystery is everywhere about you. Quick the games a foot. This looks like a case for Sherlock Holmes. The Adventure of The Mazarin Stone.
- Jim Weiss: [37:45](#) Dr. John Watson, now a married man, was visiting his friend Sherlock Holmes at the rooms they once had shared at 221 B Baker Street. The landlady, Mrs. Hudson had let the doctor in. "Hm. The chemical test tubes. The violin case leaning in the corner. The scientific charts along the wall and the pipe tobacco still stored in the Persian slipper. Dreadful habit. Well the place appears basically unchanged Ms. Hudson. Instead of Holmes' eccentricities. You said he's been out all night? Must be in the midst of case." "And he won't touch a bite doctor,"

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replied Mrs. Hudson. "When will you be pleased to dine? I ask him. And he says to me, 'Seven thirty on the day after tomorrow.' Oh I'm dreadfully worried about him." "What are all these new curtains around the room?" "Oh he had me put them up about three days ago. Oh look there's something rather amusing behind this one. See?" "Good heavens. Oh. It's only a wax figure. Oh it looks exactly like Holmes. Quite remarkable. Except it'd sit still longer. I think I'll have a closer look."

Jim Weiss: [38:53](#)

Dr. Watson approached the wax dummy that sat before the closed window. Just then the door opened and in walked Sherlock Holmes himself. "Stop Watson." "What?" "Don't go near that window." "Why Holmes. Good to see you. Unexpectedly as always." "Mrs. Hudson, that will be all." "Will you be having dinner tonight Mr. Holmes?" "Not tonight Mrs. Hudson." After Mrs. Hudson had left, Dr. Watson ask Holmes, "Now what's this business about staying away from the window? Why the wax figure?" "It's there to throw a profile shadow on the shade. You see situated in the window across the street, there is a gentleman with a noiseless air gun and I rather fancy he's going to try to blow my head off this evening." "What?" "Yes and I'd rather him blow the head off of a wax figure than my own. This head is much too valuable don't you think?" "What's this all about Holmes?" "It is about the Mazarin Stone."

Jim Weiss: [39:51](#)

Holmes explained that there had been an amazing jewel robbery. Thieves had made off with a famous diamond called the Mazarin Stone, which belonged to the Queen. The special police had been called in from the headquarters at Scotland Yard, but even they could do nothing. Now the British Government was counting on Holmes to find the thieves and the stolen jewel. So far, Holmes had identified the leader of the thieves. "The fellow of whom I speak is Count Von Hergel." "The big game hunter?" "And gambler and man about town and thief and a murder and a black mailer. Now there's another fellow in the game too. Sam Martin." "What? The former heavy weight boxing champion?" "Yes. You may have seen him when you came in. He's in lounging in the shadows across the street Watson. Keeping an eye on me." "Well can't you have them arrested if you know they did it?" "It's no good. I could have them arrested, but I don't know the location of the stolen crown jewel. I want the stone. I've been shadowing the Count in disguise over the last several days, hoping he would lead me to it, but I

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followed him to the work shop of this fellow that makes these noiseless weapons. That's why I supposed the rifle is now in the window opposite and at any moment, the bullet might come through the glass."

Jim Weiss: [41:11](#)

Just then, in came the landlady Mrs. Hudson to announce that a gentleman wanted to see Mr. Holmes. It was Count Von Hergel. "The man himself. I told you Watson. He has colossal nerve. Now be a good fellow and go down the back stairway, straight to Scotland Yard. Find Inspector Lastrod or Gregory or whoever is on duty and bring them back here, with some other officers of course." "Nonsense Holmes. Do you think I am going to leave you here alone with this fellow? He wants to kill you." "Yes. But he's bearding a different kind of animal in his den this time. I'm much more dangerous than he." "Well I don't like this Holmes but I'll do it." Dr. Watson left to get the police. Then Sherlock Holmes told the landlady, "Now Mrs. Hudson, do go down and show Count Von Hergel and then just skip across the street if you don't mind. You'll find a large, rather ugly faced fellow standing in the shadows. A Mr. Sam Martin. Do ask him to join us."

Jim Weiss: [42:13](#)

After Mrs. Hudson left, the detective turned and went into his own bedroom, leaving the door open just a crack. A few moments later, his dangerous enemy Count Von Hergel entered, the count saw the back of the wax dummy which looked so much like Holmes and he drew a pistol from beneath his coat. The count said, "Turn around Holmes. I have my revolver drawn. I want you to see this coming." Then Holmes smiling, came out from his bedroom with his own gun aimed at the Count. "Nonsense my dear Count, you'll be wasting a bullet." "What?" "That is only a wax figurine." "It is amazing." "I'm glad you like it. I had it built especially for you. But why are you here?" "I am here to demand that you stop having your agents follow me." "I've had no agents following you."

Jim Weiss: [43:09](#)

"What the [inaudible 00:43:10] yesterday?" "That was yours truly in disguise, as was the old woman today." "But why bother following me Holmes?" "I want the diamond. You may as well tell me where it is. I know all about you. I know about the train robbery in Switzerland. I know about the murder of Minnie Wanderer. I know about the black mail of the Countess and in this case, I have the cab drivers who took you to the robbery and who drove you away." "I've even found Sanders who refused to cut the stone up for you afterwards. He has talked Count Von

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Hergel. So you see, I have all the proof that I need." "If you really have all this proof, why have you not arrested me?"

Jim Weiss: [43:53](#)

Before Holmes could answer the door opened. In walked Count Von Hergel's partner, the huge muscular boxer, Sam Martin. "Hey. What's this all about?" "Ah, good evening Mr. Martin. I'm glad you've joined us. I was just giving the Count a choice. The two of you may return the stolen diamond, or go to prison for 20 years. Don't move Mr. Martin. I have my revolver drawn and aimed your way. Now you gentleman have several minutes to decide. I will go into the other room for that length of time. I need to practice my violin playing anyway." Still holding his revolver in one hand, Holmes picked up his violin case and went into his bedroom, shutting the door behind him. A few moments later, the sound of his violin could be heard through the shut door. The two thieves drew together.

Jim Weiss: [44:42](#)

"What's this all about Von Hergel? You think he really has the pitch on us?" "I'm afraid he has all the evidenced, but we have the trump card. I still have the Mazarin Stone. He will not arrest us until he has the stone itself." "What are we going to do. Do you think we can really talk here? Do you think he's listening?" "How can he be? We saw him go in to the other room and don't you hear that violin playing?" "I guess all these curtains in here are making me nervous. I thought I heard a noise over there, gah look at him." "It's only a wax dummy Martin. Listen, we have little time. Here is what we must do." Count Von Hergel told Sam that with Holmes on their trail, they had to get the stolen jewel out of the country at once. Then the Count said that he actually had the stone with him in a secret pocket." "Here let me see it one more time please?" "Here, come over by the window where there's a little more light."

Jim Weiss: [45:47](#)

The Count held the shining diamond in the palm of his hand. He and Martin stared at it as they moved towards the window. That's when the wax dummy of Sherlock Holmes suddenly leaped to it's feet and grabbed the diamond from the astonished Count. "Thank you Count, I'll just take that." "No Martin, don't make me shoot." "How ever? I thought you was in the bedroom and this was only a dummy?" "I neglected to mention that there's a second door into this room from behind that curtain. I simply took the place of my wax friend until you so conveniently strolled by me with the stone in your

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outstretched hand Count." "What about that violin music?"
"Yes. A recording. These new fangled gramophones are quite wonderful, don't you think?"

Jim Weiss: [46:31](#)

Just then the faithful Dr. Watson burst through the door, followed by a group of policeman. "Holmes are you all ... oh." "Good evening Inspector. Thank you Watson. Yes. I'm quite all right. Here we have Count Von Hergel and Sam Martin and all the evidence we need. The Mazarin Stone. Good evening gentlemen. I shall see you in Scotland Yard tomorrow." As the police left with their handcuffed prisoners, Holmes turned to his friend and said, "Now Watson, if you would be so kind just to ring for Mrs. Hudson. Will you care to join me for dinner? Suddenly, I'm quite famished."

Sarah Mackenzie: [47:23](#)

Thank you again Jim Weiss for generously sharing your stories and your time with us. We are so grateful. Remember you can get links to everything we've talked about today in the show at the show notes. Those are at readaloudrevival.com/129. You'll find links to where you can find Jim's audio recordings and a whole host of other goodies, including the Read Aloud Revival book list. If you haven't grabbed the book list, what are you waiting for? Head to readaloudrevival.com to grab that book list for free and you'll always have a great book at your finger tips. That's it for this week. We'll be back in two weeks with another episode of the Podcast. Until then, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books. [music 00:48:11]