



WSIRN Episode 200: Changing reading lives, one week at a time

Hosted by Anne Bogel, with producer Brenna Frederick

[CHEERFUL INTRO MUSIC]

[00:00:05]

ANNE: Hey readers. I'm Anne Bogel, and this is What Should I Read Next? Episode 200.

Welcome to the show that's dedicated to answering the question that plagues every reader: What should I read next?

We don't get bossy on this show: What we WILL do here is give you the information you need to choose your next read. Every week we'll talk all things books and reading and do a little literary matchmaking with one guest. Or today, we'll talk about what happened after I did that literary matchmaking.

Readers, each week for the past 2 and a half PLUS years I've talked to a reader (or sometimes two) and suggested three and sometimes more (because I cannot help myself) books that they should read next. This is our 200th episode which means I've recommended well over 600 books.

Today's milestone is the perfect opportunity to take a moment and look back, so my producer Brenna and I spent time catching up with past guests to see which recommendations landed, which flopped, and how they're thinking differently about their reading lives post-What Should I Read Next. It turns out the titles I picked weren't always winners, but something had changed by the time our conversation was over. Some guests approached their bookshelves with fresh eyes, some overcame their genre fears, and some realized that stepping out of their comfort zone just wasn't what they were interested in — and finally felt at peace with the decision.

Before we get started, I want you to know to keep an eye out on social media this week — we have all sorts of fun things planned to celebrate #200, like livestreams and Q&As over on Instagram, where we are @whatshouldireadnext. One way you can participate is with this fun challenge we are doing, inviting you to find and share your What Should I Read Next Book Twin. Readers, every readers' taste is different and with 200 episodes to choose from, it's highly

likely someone whose taste matches your own, or at least gets awfully close, has been on the show. Have you found them yet? We want to know. Let me know on Twitter or Instagram by sharing the episode or a favorite clip with the hashtag #BookTwin. And if you haven't found your #BookTwin yet, consider sampling through our archives! All 200 episodes are totally individual, totally evergreen, and can be listened to in any order.

And now, here's Brenna, and 10 of our bookish and readerly friends... Let's get to it...

Brenna, welcome to the show.

[00:02:30]

BRENNNA: Hello. Always good to be here.

ANNE: We have a big day today.

BRENNNA: We do. So many years in the making.

ANNE: 200 episodes, we started, I believe on January 12th, 2016 and now in August 2019, 200 episodes in, here we are. We've just had a few episodes that didn't run on Tuesdays [BRENNNA LAUGHS] and we've skipped about, what, like three Tuesdays? In four years.

BRENNNA: Yes. And we made up for every single week that we took off with Kid Week, which was a couple falls ago. One episode every single day for the week. We'll never do that again. [ANNE LAUGHS] But I think it more than evens us out.

ANNE: I think you're right. Kid Week was pretty great where we talked to Gretchen Rubin and the Baby Sitter's Club Club and Jenny Williams and Sarah McKenzie.

BRENNNA: It was a really good time. Now is actually, if you haven't heard that, or you haven't heard it in a while, now's a really good time to relisten. I feel like it's a great beginning of the school year set of episodes to listen to.

ANNE: It really is. And that's whether you have children in your life or if you've ever been a child.

BRENNNA: Yeah, we have a whole episode from that week that was Gretchen Rubin talking about reading children's books as an adult because you just enjoy them.

ANNE: So we have covered a lot of ground in 200 episodes.

BRENNNA: It's actually kinda staggering if I think back on the last three years. How many topics we've covered. How many different kinds of people we've gotten to meet, and of course you don't hear me meeting them on the show. Behind the scenes, it's been really fun making connections with all these readers all across the world actually. And I wanted to ask you what

changes you've seen in your own life since the show went on the air, and how are you looking at the show differently now, 200 episodes in?

[00:04:12]

ANNE: That's a big question, Brenna. [BRENNNA LAUGHS] In some ways, I feel the same about the show as I did in the beginning. And that is, I just thought it'd be really interesting to dig into the specifics of people's reading lives, and one of my core beliefs in everything I do, when you talk about reading and books, that's a shortcut to talk about the things that really matter in life. So I thought that by talking to listeners about the books they read, those they enjoy and those they don't, we could get a glimpse into who they are as a person that goes beyond what kind of books they like to read. And that continues to be true. I don't think I understood the extent of it, though. I will say that talking to readers every week for the past three and a half plus years, I've really gained such an appreciation for how much common ground we have as readers, but also all the different ways you can be a reader in the world, and I've really enjoyed both aspects of that. Both what we share in common and what we don't. I think both sides of that are really fun.

BRENNNA: Yeah. That's really been illustrated over the last few years. Like, we have guests from, like Liberty Hardy who reads 500+ books a year to a reader like very recently, Andeep, who reads maybe 10 or 12, I think, he said. What we're doing today is having a couple of conversations with past guests about, sure, what books they did or didn't read from your recommendations, but also things that changed in their lives after the show. And one of the through lines in these conversations that I noticed was after the show, after all the comments, after going to the bookstore and talking about people about your picks, they found community in a more profound way. I think that's just really beautiful. I'm very emotional about this episode. I must say. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: That's because when you talk about books and reading, you talk about what really matters in life, Brenna.

BRENNNA: Yes.

ANNE: I'm really ... Surprised might be overstating it. But I didn't expect that to be such a consistent theme with our past guests, but of course, I'm thrilled to hear that.

BRENNNA: We had eight conversations and they all varied from 15 minutes to 45 minutes because my schedule's not quite as tight as yours, so I may have pushed it on a few of these. [ANNE LAUGHS] Doing the math, you know, even just eight 15-minute conversations would totally blow past our regular show length, so we're sharing snippets and those listeners who are part of our Patreon community, you're going to get to hear the full-length version of these conversations.

ANNE: So if you're always up for more book talk, you know what to do.

[00:06:47]

BRENNA: Yes. There's several hours more What Should I Read Next audio on Patreon waiting for you if the past 200 episodes has not been enough.

Okay, I think let's just jump into our past guests. The first conversation was one you had with Adam Verner from episode 31 in July, 2016. The first year that the show was on the air.

[00:07:12]

ANNE: Something that I really enjoyed talking to about in episode 31 was your career as an audiobook narrator. When we spoke last time, you were getting ready to perform your first Danielle Steel novel.

ADAM: That was one of the few occasions where they — the publisher — flew me into their studios in Michigan to record, and we actually had to record the whole thing twice because they wanted to do the regular version but also an abridged version. I didn't know this about abridgements, they don't do it much anymore. It wasn't just cutting out chapters and you know, making it shorter, they were literally taking out words from sentences, just sentences here and there. There was no way to just edit the audio into a shorter version. We had to just record the whole thing twice, so it was a whole week of recording. The book was called *The Award*, set in World War II France, so that was a lot of fun.

ANNE: I would have never guessed that is how they do it.

ADAM: Yeah. Yeah. It was surprising. And it was also surprising to see that even minor plot points were changed, I guess, to accommodate the shorter timeline then within the world of the book. Yeah, it was very strange. It was almost like two different books with the same general overarching plot. I guess they used to do it a lot more back in the day when they were trying to fit stuff on the cassette tapes, but now, with digital files, they don't care. They just do the whole book, no matter how long it is. So it might have been Ms. Steel's request herself, I'm not sure, that there be two different versions.

ANNE: I had no idea. Now do you remember the books we talked about when you came on What Should I Read Next?

ADAM: I'm pretty sure. There was one title I couldn't quite remember. You had recommended *The End of the Affair* Graham Greene, *The Perfect Storm* Sebastian Junger, and then the third one is the one that I didn't read [LAUGHS] which is why I can't remember the title.

ANNE: I still think you'd really like it. It's Susan Howatch's Starbridge series, and the first book is *Glittering Images*.

[00:08:50]

ADAM: To be honest, it is still on my Goodreads to-read list and I still intend to look at it, but of the three recommended, that was the one I was like, oh, this is really strange.

ANNE: So we can't say that it bombed yet. Though it still really could in the future.

ADAM: It could. I will shoot you an email [ANNE LAUGHS] when I get around to it and let you know if you're responsible for a big bomb in my reading career.

ANNE: I would love to hear all about it. [ADAM LAUGHS] So what did you think about the other two you read?

ADAM: Both good reads. Graham Greene was interesting because he'd always been on my radar. *The End of The Affair* was tough because there were moments in sections of writing that I thought were brilliant and I was just amazed at ... I was like wow, this is really good writing, but as a whole, I think the plot just didn't interest me as much so the book as a whole just didn't grip me. You know, I don't know if I would have stuck with it and it didn't lead me to want to pick up a bunch of other Graham Greene, even though I'd technically recognized as wow this guy's a great writer. *The Perfect Storm*, that's probably the one I liked the best. I just bought another one of his books called *Fire*, a group of essays about fire, so more of his books are going to be on my to-read list soon because he's kinda nature writing in his journalism. I really appreciate him.

ANNE: Well I'm glad you were inspired to pick up more Sebastian Junger books.

ADAM: Yeah.

ANNE: And that's interesting about the Graham Greene. I remember I told you that I listened to Colin Firth read me the audio version.

ADAM: Yeah.

ANNE: And you had opinions about that. [ADAM LAUGHS] Celebrity narrators.

ADAM: [SIGHS] It's ... [ANNE LAUGHS] It's complicated.

ANNE: Yes, that was it exactly. [BOTH LAUGH]

ADAM: It's complicated. I mean, I guess if it comes down to it, if you had to pin me down, I'd say whatever brings more people to audiobooks is a win, but on the other hand, you know, I think of myself as a working class narrator. I mean, I'm not a TV or film celebrity. A lot of the best top shelf books, these publishers are like, how can we sell even more books? Let's higher a

celebrity. A lot of that kinda gets quote unquote taken away from us to some extent. There's also enough work to go around for everyone, so it doesn't matter too much in the long run.

[00:10:42]

ANNE: Adam, when your episode air, how did your friends and family respond?

ADAM: They liked it. It's funny because there's been a lot of crossover, I think, because my wife Leslie is a writer and so many of her friends listen to your show that in the last three years, I've heard more kinda chatter through her because her friends will be like, I just heard this guy on a podcast and his last name is Verner, you know, is that your husband? Or like my particular crowd of people, actor-type people, aren't as much of your audience, so I didn't hear much from them. But it's like all through my ... Like every other week, I felt like Leslie was like, so-and-so heard you on the podcast. So-and-so has these other questions for you. [ANNE LAUGHS]

[00:11:20]

ANNE: It was so fun to talk to Adam again and our Patreon crowd will hear the whole story, but after we recorded our episode the first time, we started talking about geography. We put together that my husband, Will, and his wife, Leslie, were resident advisors together in college like a million years ago. And then last summer, we bumped into them at a peach stand in Clinton, Alabama, a story that if you listen to the original, floater teaser episode of One Great Book, you already heard. I mean, reading brings people together.

BRENNA: Ultimate What Should I Read Next small-world moment.

ANNE: And we've heard about a lot of What Should I Read Next small-world moments over the years.

BRENNA: I love hearing about the abridged audiobooks. That's so interesting to me, and whenever I hear of Danielle Steel, I have two distinct memories. One is my grandma because she had like a wall of romance novels across from a wall of *Star Trek* novels. Also I remember my very first job, which was at a warehouse bookstore and we constantly had Danielle Steel coming in. Probably more than any other author. She is prolific.

ANNE: She has written so many books. Also, I think I read something just this past year about how she has a lot of kids, too.

BRENNA: So there was a profile on her and I don't remember where it was, but it was one of the best articles I read this year. Was about Danielle Steel, her house, and her work. From that profile, it would not surprise me if it actually was her specific request that it be two separate audiobooks. It was a really good write up. I'll try to find it for the show notes.

ANNE: You know, something I have learned over our 200 episodes of What Should I Read Next is that our readers and listeners love to know how the books they love get made. They love a

good behind-the-scenes sneak peek, and that's one of the reasons why it was so fun to talk to Adam, is he could tell you about how audiobooks, which are continuing to boom, more and more listeners are listening to them, than were listening to them back when I recorded for the first time with Adam in July 2016; and just to hear how audiobooks work from the production end was really fascinating. I still think he loves Susan Howatch. I'm just going to keep saying it. I know Leslie's friends are listening.

[00:13:29]

BRENNA: My fingers are crossed that he reads it. I want to hear about that because that book sounds like something I would enjoy, so I want to hear more people talk about it so I can decide. [LAUGHS]

The next conversation was one I had with Ashley and Brent from episode 155, which recorded in October 2018 and they were just so much fun. I love Ashley and Brent, so let's roll that tape.

[00:13:54]

BRENNA: My burning question is Brent, have you gotten your own audible account yet?

BRENT: No. Of course not. [BRENNA LAUGHS] This one's working fine.

BRENNA: So the titles Anne recommended for you during your episode were *Unsheltered* by Barbara Kingsolver, *Before The Fallout* by Diana Preston, *The Ghost Map* by Steven Johnson, and *The Mercury 13* by Martha Ackmann. You've got four titles, bonus thrown in there. What worked? What didn't? What were your thoughts?

BRENT: I am halfway through *Mercury 13*. I then put it down and picked up *Ghost Map* after Ashley had read that one. Then I stopped and put that one down [BRENNA LAUGHS] and then read another one she handed me called *Dark Matter*, and got completely through it. [LAUGHS]

BRENNA: Well that's impressive because, like, nonfiction is your wheelhouse, but the one you ended up finishing was fiction.

BRENT: Correct.

BRENNA: Did you get bored with the *Mercury 13* and *The Ghost Map* or was it just the wrong time?

BRENT: I was getting a little bored with it, and after Ashley was describing *Ghost Map* to me, I said okay, I'll stop 'cause I kinda know the story behind *Mercury 13*, you know, started reading *Ghost Map* and then got involved with other stuff going on at home and like I said, I put it down, and she brought over *Dark Matter*. That was one that was hard to put down and got through it quickly. I think, Ashley, you were impressed I got through it that quick.

[00:15:16]

ASHLEY: I was. It was, like, less than a week which is a record for you. And you-you tend to book hop anyway.

BRENNA: Did either of you try *Unsheltered*?

ASHLEY: I read *Unsheltered*. I loved it, and then I hated it, and then I couldn't decide.

BRENNA: Interesting.

ASHLEY: Yeah. And so I've read it pretty quickly after the episode. I think, I mean, I grabbed it ... It was the first one I picked out of the list, and it was one of those books ... It was really interesting. It had a lot going on. It'd be great for a book club to discuss because there's just so many things that I'm not quite sure how I feel about some of these characters. I don't know if I like them or not. I don't like them. Some of the decisions they made, I could relate to their decision making process, but then I wouldn't have made the same decision that they made.

BRENNA: Do you think you'll try it, Brent, or if you just ruled it out?

BRENT: No, I think I'll try it. [LAUGHS]

ASHLEY: [LAUGHS] I think Mom said she wanted to read it too, 'cause I gave it-I gave it to Mom. I don't know if she's cracked - Mom doesn't usually read fiction, but-

BRENT: No, she has not read that one, no.

ASHLEY: But she said she wanted to at one point, so maybe at Christmas we'll have a family book discussion. [LAUGHS]

BRENNA: So, wait, Ashley, neither of your parents reads fiction much.

ASHLEY: Not really, no.

BRENNA: That's so interesting. Where did you come from? [LAUGHS]

ASHLEY: I am a rebel without a cause. [ALL LAUGH] I'm revolting against my childhood and my upbringing.

BRENNA: Did you look at the comments at all on your episode, and did you pick up any more book recommendations from them? 'Cause I know lots of people drop additional titles.

[00:16:40]

ASHLEY: I read every comment and added every book to a list in my GoodReads, and lots of stuff I was already familiar with. Lots of brand new stuff. And I can't remember if I shared that with you, Dad, but we basically had 100 more recommendations.

BRENT: Wow.

ASHLEY: [LAUGHS] Cue the overwhelm.

BRENT: And need for retirement. [BRENNNA LAUGHS]

[00:17:03]

ANNE: Oh, it's so fun to hear them again. And now I'm ready to check in and see what the whole family decided to do next about Barbara Kingsolver.

BRENNNA: I know. It really killed me to cut that clip down. We had, I think, like a 20-minute conversation. I mean, it was just a great time. They're really funny.

ANNE: Like every reader I talk to, it was such a joy to talk to them. But not like every reader I've talked to, I got to meet Ashley when I was on book tour, which was so fun. And actually she makes a cameo in my next book that comes out in March, *Don't Overthink It*, 'cause I just had to consulate her on a little project I knew she was working on-

BRENNNA: Ah.

ANNE: That I thought would be appropriate. So I'm just basically making excuses to keep talking to Ashley and Brent. [BRENNNA LAUGHS]

BRENNNA: Our next clip is my conversation with Traci Thomas from episode 162 and that was December last year. And Traci had a different reaction to your recommendations from her than any of the other past guests.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] I'm scared. Should I be scared?

BRENNNA: No. Let's listen in. [BOTH LAUGH]

[00:18:02]

BRENNNA: I already know from emailing with you that this is going to be a little different from our other catch ups because you haven't read any of the recommendations.

TRACI: Okay, I'm such a bad student, please don't hate me. [LAUGHS]

[00:18:14]

BRENNA: You're not in trouble! But what happened? [LAUGHS]

TRACI: I just read so much for my show and since being on What Should I Read Next, it's just, like, been great. The show's grown a lot 'cause when I was on, it was in December and we started in April, and since then, like the last seven, eight months, it's just been crazy in, like, the best way. Like I've been able to interview all these authors, but what happens for me is if I know that I have someone who's going to be coming to my house to do the show, I feel like I should read their book. And so I have every intention of reading Anne's recommendations, and then ... I'm like oh no.

BRENNA: Sabotaged by your own success.

TRACI: Yeah, it's a great problem to have, but it means that I read less things that I really want to be reading for fun, and I'm reading more my assigned reading.

BRENNA: So with that influx of people listening to the show and I assume, like, following on social media, have you've found any instagrammers that share your taste? 'Cause I remember you talking about how-

TRACI: Yes.

BRENNA: You have?

TRACI: Oh, my God, so many. After the episode came out, I got so many messages like on social media. I read like a dad, too! [LAUGHS] And I'm, you know, myself. I should probably like reclaim the way that I read as just I read like a woman who likes nonfiction [BRENNA LAUGHS] but I also kinda like saying I'm a dad-reader, like it's funny.

BRENNA: People know what it means.

TRACI: People totally know what it means. And I've also had a lot of people reach out and be like, you do read like my dad. What should I get him for father's day? [BOTH LAUGH] Which I think is like kinda fun. Even on the comments of, like, the post for the episode, people were saying, oh my God, I'm so excited you had Traci on because I didn't know other people read like me and I'm not alone.

BRENNA: That's your next show idea, is just a recommendation podcast for people to buy gifts for their dads.

TRACI: [LAUGHS] Trademark it.

[00:20:06]

BRENNA: When Anne was recommending books to you, she did focus on nonfiction because we know that's, like, your wheelhouse. Have you've had any luck with fiction?

TRACI: I read *Miracle Creek* by Angie Kim. It's like a court room drama meets literary fiction and it's really good. It's like a murder trial, so there's something going on and you're trying to figure out who did it, but it's not like total thriller, like what's going to happen next? It's like kinda a mix. So I really liked that.

BRENNA: Maybe we'll get to hear from you in the future if you ever actually do read the recommendations. No pressure!

TRACI: Totally.

BRENNA: No pressure.

TRACI: I have the Vincent Bugliosi. I can see it from where I'm sitting right now. My husband and I have been together for nine years this fall. We got the book within the first eight months of knowing each other. Like I've had this book for so long. It's traveled with me from New York City, two apartments in New York City, an apartment in LA, and now our house now. Like I have the book, and I've kept it because I want to read it.

BRENNA: [LAUGHS] Well, you definitely have time before episode 300 to read it before your, like, 10th wedding anniversary. [BOTH LAUGH]

[00:21:13]

ANNE: That was so fun to hear her voice again. On What Should I Read Next, not just on her The Stacks Pod. I do like how Traci highlighted a truth that I have come to understand really is a truth of the reading life, and that is, when it comes to a question of taste or a strange reading quirk, or an unpopular opinion, whatever it is, it is never just you. And I love how so many people discovered that by hearing Traci and oh my gosh, I love your idea of a book recommendation podcast.

BRENNA: [LAUGHS] That's one of my favorite things to look for in the comments after each episode releases, is like what was the most quote unquote unpopular opinion that was mentioned in this show? I want to go see everybody who is agreeing because it happens every time.

ANNE: Yes! And I'm looking at the books I recommended to her again and I think Traci would love them, and I want her to read them right now. And also, I can see that one of her favorites was *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which I talked to Traci and I thought I've been meaning to read this for years, I need to read it immediately. I have still not read that, so, Traci, I feel your pain.

[00:22:15]

BRENNA: We're even. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: But I'm making a note right now. I'm going to get it from the library, I'm going to check it out, and maybe this time I'll actually read it. I mean, I told Traci this. I've done that a couple of times. It's a big, hefty book, and I want to give it the attention and the time I think it deserves and that kind of attitude doesn't necessarily make reading the books actually happen.

BRENNA: If any listeners are big nonfiction readers like Traci, I did talk to her kinda at length about a couple other books that she's been reading. I asked her for some nonfiction recommendations, and those will be available on the Patreon feed as well.

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BRENNA: So, our next clip is from your conversation, Anne, with Natalie from episode 173.

ANNE: Oh, it was so fun to talk to her again. Here goes.

[00:24:23]

NATALIE: I did read a few of the books that you suggested. They were great. They were challenging a little bit. Then I just got caught up in someone's summer reading, maybe her name is Modern Mrs. Darcy, and I've been reading. [ANNE LAUGHS] I've just been going to town on all of those books, and so I feel like you're bringing me back to my goal for this year of reading longer books and books that have been on my bookshelf for a while. So I'm going to give myself a little break and, you know, enjoy the summer reading.

ANNE: Right, 'cause I just ruined it all with the summer reading guide. [NATALIE LAUGHS] 'Cause those are new and I don't think any of them are the length that you said you wanted to read in February when you came on the show. And I'm glad it's providing a little seasonal balance for you.

NATALIE: This was a good reminder that I love goals, so I need to kinda refocus. So I read *A Prayer for Owen Meany* first. So many of my friends that I really respect, they love this book. I did not love it. I struggled with it. Sometimes I struggle if a book, or if something is given super high expectations. It just kinda sloughed along a little bit for me and I think I got annoyed with Owen Meany. [ANNE LAUGHS] I couldn't find him an endearing character.

ANNE: Don't you wish that we could double-blind these books? 'Cause I frequently think, what would I think about that book if I had read it on audio the first time? Before I knew the story, and what would I think about that book if I read it in a different format? And what would my 30-year-old self think about this book if she hadn't read it when she was 17? Ugh. I ... If somebody can come up with that system, I would totally be on board. Because I'm wondering what would you have thought if you didn't have really high expectations when you went in?

NATALIE: I do compare it though. I've read *Beach Music* in my 20s and my 30s. Now in my 40s, and I still love that book. I also recognize though there's other books by John Irving that I want to look into. I want to explore. So it's not like I'm anti-him as an author or two of the bookies I've really respect and they read a ton. I think they were a little appalled that I didn't like the book. [BOTH LAUGH] But that's what reading is all about.

ANNE: I don't think that high expectations are going to destroy a pinnacle reading experience. If something is going to be one of the best books you've ever read, you're still going to think it's amazing even if people have told you, hey, this is a pretty great. I think it can turn an okay reading experience into a disappointing one because expectations do matter a lot, but I'm so glad you read this because you told me "I've been wanting to read this. I've been feeling like I should read this." And Natalie, you read it, and now you know. And it's not taunting you from the bookshelf and you can move on.

NATALIE: Yeah.

[00:27:06]

ANNE: So high-fives on completing that very long book. [NATALIE LAUGHS] And I hope some good conversations have come from your reaction even though, or actually probably because it surprised your bookies.

NATALIE: I totally agree, and I have another friend who is not an avid reader at all. She loves this book, and so she and I have been trying to find a time we can sit down and talk about it. So it's just interesting. You know, that's - that's the great opportunity of opening a book. You never know.

ANNE: You never know. Sometimes I wish we did. But most of the time, I love that about the reading life.

[00:27:37]

BRENNA: I love that point that you talked about with Natalie about mood reading and reading books at the wrong or the right time. That's such a big thing in my reading life. I know there's so many books that I like one moment, but if I were to read it six months later, I don't think I would have enjoyed it.

ANNE: Oh, that's definitely happened to me. Or I've started reading a book in a certain location and thought, oh, this could be perfect for me, but not here and not now.

BRENNA: Mm-hmm.

ANNE: Whether that's for content or just the place my brain is in or how much focus I feel like I have at the moment. Natalie said something else that I find really interesting, and that I've heard from a lot of listeners. And that's how people just didn't understand her reaction to a certain book. So my working theory is that people who read a ton of books completely understand how readers can have very different reactions to the same book. But readers who don't read quite as much, I think, have a very difficult time grasping how someone they love might not love the same book they love, which leads to conversations like [GASPS] you're one of my best friends. How can you not love one of my favorite books? And I just find that dynamic really interesting. And I ... My ears definitely perked up when Natalie started talking about it. And of course when it comes to the reading life, it's never just you. Natalie, you are not the only one who's had conversations like that.

BRENNA: So do you think it's a situation where, like, the stakes are higher 'cause you're putting your eggs in fewer book baskets? [ANNE LAUGHS] So that basket is very precious.

ANNE: Yes. I do think it has to do with the allocation of the bookish eggs.

BRENNA: What a title. The allocation of the bookish eggs. [BOTH LAUGH]

[00:29:14]

ANNE: I do think that's interesting, and you know, it gets to one of the reasons that I love what we do here on What Should I Read Next. We have a huge number of titles that have been guests' loves, and guests' not-at-all-loved books, and you know what I think is really interesting? This happened a lot over the years is we'll have a guest come on and share three books they love, one book they don't, and what they're reading now, and we get emails and messages every week that say oh, that book that wasn't for that reader? It's totally for me. I'm reading that next. My hope through What Should I Read Next is that we can help put more of the right books into the hands of the right readers.

BRENNA: It seems to me what it comes down to in the end is the experience with the book. It's not like gotcha catch them all necessarily. You're having an experience. I had a conversation with Ashley Gossens from episode 163 who was on the show in December of last year. She had the alpine trails book club where they go out and have experiences based on things that happen to characters or what was written about in nonfiction in the books they read together. And I got some updates from her about some of the adventures they've gone on since the show aired.

ANNE: Oh. Well I can't wait to hear.

[00:30:32]

ASHLEY: The first one I read was *Harry's Trees*. I was kinda worried about this one, I'm going to be honest because it started out ... The first couple of chapters were reminding me a lot of *A Man Called Ove*, which is my hated book. [LAUGHS] But then there's a little girl and a mom who come into the story and I think those female characters really made me fall in love with this book. And along with the fact that it's set in Pennsylvania, which is my home state.

Oh, so funny story. When the episode aired, my sister actually texted me and she was like, hey, I heard you on this podcast. And I was like, huh, how did you know about that? And I didn't know that she actually listens to the podcast, [LAUGHS] which was really funny. And she really wanted to read *Harry's Trees*. After I read it, I-I sent it to her and she read it, and she just loved it. It was really fun to share that book with her. And the other ones, I have not finished yet. I have to admit, [BRENNA LAUGHS] but I did start reading the *Overstory*. I got through like the first two chapters and I was just like oh my gosh, this is going to be an amazing book and I need to set aside like a couple days to just lay in bed and read this book because it's just one of those that really sucks you in, and the language is beautiful, and I just really wanted to soak this one in and really spend some time with it, so I'm normally the kind of person who reads like ten books at a time. [LAUGHS] So it's hard for me [BRENNA LAUGHS] to kinda take the time to just focus on one book. And I feel like this one really warrants that extra time and care. I think I just need to take like a sick day or something and just let myself read it. [LAUGHS]

BRENNA: Did you pick up any books that someone recommended in the comments section?

[00:32:18]

ASHLEY: That was like my favorite part about this was that I wasn't expecting to get so many awesome recommendations from listeners. But there was one that got mentioned a lot and it was called *The Wild Trees*. I admit I haven't gotten to it yet but it's definitely higher on my list now.

BRENNA: How about your alpine trails book club? I know everybody was just so enamored. Have you gotten any new members since the show aired? What books have you been reading?

ASHLEY: Did get some more people joining our facebook group for the book club and it's really nice to hear from people who, you know, they can't come to our in-person meetings but some people read along with us and it's really fun to hear from them. We actually just had our July meeting last weekend, and we went to Cascade Pass, which is just this gorgeous hike in the north Cascades. It's an old Native American trail that's been around for, like, thousands of years and the book that we read was *On Trails* by Robert Moore, and it's really kind've a philosophical book about you know why trails exist and how they come to be. And he talks a lot about Native American trails and how a lot of them are actually, you know, roads now because they're just really good routes. [LAUGHS] So that was really fun.

We also read *The Nature Fix* which talks a lot about the health benefits you get from being in nature. We actually went backpacking for that one and, you know, I encouraged everybody to use all of their senses while we hiked and make sure they stop and look at things and smell things and taste things and really just feel what's going on while we're hiking. And we spent some time meditating and really just taking advantage of all those great things nature gives to you.

[00:34:09]

ANNE: That was so fun to hear Ashley again. I feel a little bit like we should be commiserating because she's doing the same thing to *The Overstory* that I'm doing to *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which is waiting for a good time to read it. Taking a sick day to read a book, I mean, that is a serious readerly commitment. Also I hope she does read *The Wild Trees*. That is a book that I just love. You know, I actually thought about recommending it to Tara Anderson when I recorded my episode with her, but one of the reasons I didn't was I recommended it to Tim Gardner way back in episode number 26.

BRENNA: Oh, wow.

ANNE: It's such a fascinating book. And I just love that she and her sister bonded over books and reading and *Harry's Trees*. That is so fun.

BRENNA: Speaking of people in our guest lives listening to the show without their knowledge, the next couple of conversations we're gonna roll one after another are Phimy and Erika from episode 169 which ran earlier this year in January. Erika had an experience with a coworker that made me honestly very anxious. [LAUGHS] But it's a great story.

[00:35:12]

ANNE: [LAUGHS] What's going to happen?

BRENNA: Well you're going to have to wait to find out. Let's roll.

[00:35:18]

PHIMY: We have a totally democratic process and that was really fun to be able to share that process through the What Should I Read Next episode and our members loved it, and we selected *A Place For Us* by Fatima Mirza. Definitely felt like really different and special book club meeting. Erika did like an informal poll so far that's been like everyone's top book that they've read since our one and half year book club existence.

BRENNA: Oh, that's amazing. [PHIMY LAUGHS] What do you think resonated with everybody during the voting process? Before they'd read the book, what do you think made it such a winner?

PHIMY: You know, that's a great question. Not only is the voting process like democratic, it's like completely open to anyone who follows us. Like you don't really have to be a member and so friends and family can vote, people who are choosing to read along can vote. When you hear about the goals of our book club and what our membership makeup is like and what we've been reading lately, it just made sense for us to read a book about, like, a uniquely American, Immigrant-American family and a book that really dissects like the behind-the-scenes and the intimate internal processes of each character has or that you the reader gets to kinda experience when you're reading through the book, and I think, maybe ... Anne does such a great job kinda breaking down that book and it just felt timely and the cover is beautiful.

BRENNA: It is. What was your book club's response to the episode?

PHIMY: They were like, oh, of course you two would get together and nerd out [BRENNA LAUGHS] and also find a book podcast to kinda talk about all these things. 'Cause a lot of our members it was their first time hearing about the What Should I Read Next podcast. I mean, we also make the promise, we had pre-selected like two different books to read, and we told everyone this was going to be something special. We have to do like a unique poll to see what we're going to read next based on this episode and yeah, the response from our book club was really sweet.

BRENNA: Did you get any new members? I was wondering about that.

PHIMY: Yeah, we did. We did. We got a lot of new members. I mean, a lot of folks follow us online which I think is great to kinda have introverted bookworms who maybe live really close by or in LA or maybe not and they just kinda want to read along or get book recommendations and participate in that way, and I think that's totally cool and sweet as well. But we also got a lot of

new in-person, you know, IRL members coming to our meetings and that was ... That's been really fun and it's a sweet like kinda organic process. And it's been really nice.

[00:37:29]

BRENNA: So speaking of responses to the episode, how about your husband Ryan's response because he nominated you [PHIMY LAUGHS] without your knowledge.

PHIMY: Yes! I know! I know. You know what, after that, I mean, first of all, that just makes me think of like ... My mother-in-law was just so proud of him. [BOTH LAUGH] She was just like I think everyone got like ... Their hearts were fluttering. Most of our close friends are like that kinda made sense but I think our like wider, kinda ... And our family members were like, they just thought it was the sweetest thing ever and they loved it. [BRENNA LAUGHS] Yeah. It was just really funny. And he's so supportive. I mean, he shared it out to his folks that he works with and kinda like community art stuff that he's involved with, and folks were just like, what, I didn't know Ryan had this romantic side to him.

BRENNA: [LAUGHS] Aww.

PHIMY: And somebody else was just like, oh, this is better than watching like a K-Drama. [BRENNA LAUGHS] You know, like a Korean Drama. I just felt like I was swooning over you guys.

[00:38:38]

BRENNA: So we know that you read *A Place For Us* and it was a big hit. Did you read any of her other picks on your own?

ERIKA: I did. I did. [BRENNA GASPS] I went out and bought like every single book she recommended because I just wanted to be prepped. I mean, I have all the other books totally on my TBR pile waiting, but the only other book I read from that list was *Strange Weather in Tokyo* and it was like atmospheric, which I was totally in the mood for that that time. And I really liked it. It was definitely quirky and slow moving. I think at first I had some reservations 'cause of the age difference between the characters.

BRENNA: Yes.

ERIKA: And so I was like, okay, I'm feeling pretty challenged, but I really liked the writing and I liked the mood that it set. Like kinda these sweet moments that the character shared together and it made the relationship feel more sacred and ultimately, I really do like the book and it's really sweet.

BRENNA: Erika, your episode with Phimy was one of my favorites-

[00:39:33]

ERIKA: Aw.

BRENNA: To work on in my history with the show. I thought it was so fascinating to hear about the sister insider book club and your democratic system of choosing books, especially the fact that people can vote whether or not they're part of the club, and I didn't ask Phimy this, but I'm curious why you set it up that way? Why the voting is structured that way?

ERIKA: Phimy and I have both worked in coalition spaces for years and I'll speak for myself, I really feel that for people to feel ownership over a space or a set of principles and ways that we're going to work together, it really needs to be a democratic structure. And so we were very committed to making the way in which we choose books be democratic and we thought that it would be awesome to open it up to sister insiders who aren't able to join us in person because there was such a warm response to the launch of the book club, so we thought this would be a way to extend that engagement to folks who can't be in person with us. And then we also, you know, always loving to see folks who are reading along with us that can't be in person with us and are sharing their discussion questions that we can bring to our debriefs and there are sections that we like to pull out, maybe print out on some paper for some people debriefing with us in person to reflect on. So, really trying to have as open and broad community as possible.

BRENNA: So we know from Phimy and also from your gorgeous Instagram that your club voted on *A Place For Us* and according to Phimy, it was a knockout by far the winner, like not even close.

ERIKA: The themes that Fatima Mirza deals with really in a nuance way, you explore questions of identity and belonging, faith and then even more universal themes beyond second-gen, first-gen immigrant experiences. You know what forgiveness looks like between parents and kids and you know, differences in cultural expectations from the parents' perspective and from kids' perspectives. So I feel like it just hit on a lot of common themes that we tend to pursue in our reading lives. It was also a beautiful cover. I think that played a role. [LAUGHS]

BRENNA: Family and friends, how did they respond to the episode? Did you like have people listen to it or ...?

ERIKA: I was super nervous after the podcast aired, and was avoiding listening to it because I was just so anxious about it. And a really funny thing happened while I was at work after it aired where I was in a meeting with one of my colleagues kinda in an open office setting. And I just started hearing mine and Phimy's voices. I couldn't tell if I was imagining it. [BRENNA GASPS] I knew it wasn't coming from me 'cause like I said, I hadn't listened to it 'cause I was just too nervous and I knew I didn't have it up on my phone or computer. And after this went on for about 30 seconds, I just had to ask my coworker, do you hear that? This is so strange. [BOTH LAUGH] And then it dawned on him that our interview was playing on his phone in his pocket and he didn't realize it. [BOTH LAUGH] So I was kinda mortified because I didn't even know he

knew about it. [BOTH LAUGH] I became really self conscious. I thought okay, well, if it's having that wide of a reach, I really need to just know what's out there [LAUGHS] and so I gave it a listen and I was pleasantly surprised. I remembered texting Phimy later that day and saying oh my gosh, that was really fun and I'm glad I finally listened to it. So really grateful to the team for making us ... Making me in particular seem coherent. [LAUGHS]

[00:43:17]

ANNE: Well it was so fun to hear their voices. They did the sweetest thing. They sent me honorary sister insider book club paraphernalia, like a t-shirt, so now I can put it on and feel all official when I'm running.

BRENNA: Yes. They sent me a tote as well and I use it a lot.

ANNE: Oh, that's so sweet. I completely forgot the origin story of that episode. I think Phimy's husband wrote in and it was going to be a birthday surprise, wasn't it?

BRENNA: Yes. And it was. He gave her a printout of the email that I sent him saying we do want to have her on the show. And then she had a mild nervous breakdown because she was anxious about coming on [ANNE LAUGHS] and she said ... She emailed me and she was like, hey, I'm nervous. Can I bring my friend Erika on? And that's how the show came about.

ANNE: And the end result was so fun. You know, Brenna, I imagine you have similar conversations with our guests because you often talk to them before I do and that goes oh my gosh, I'm so nervous. This is so strange. So many people are going to be listening. People do get really anxious about it. What do you tell them? I know what I tell them.

BRENNA: I tell them that I understand because I've had the same experience. I was once on a podcast. I felt like I blacked out while I was on it and then I never listened to it again because I was so anxious. [ANNE LAUGHS] So I tell them that I understand and I take really seriously the editing process because I want everyone to feel so good about the end result. I don't want anyone to feel like they came on and they didn't sound great. But I also tell them that if there's anything they regret during the recording process, like if they say something they wish they hadn't or maybe they accidentally triangulate their locations so somebody can find them, to just email me. I'll make sure it doesn't make the final cut and they'll feel really comfortable with the final result. And also I tell them that everybody hates the sound of their own voice. You know, nobody else is judging you as hard as you are judging yourself.

ANNE: Yes, that is completely true. And knowing that you have those reassuring conversations with them about the details and how they're in good editing hands and we will make you sound good.

[00:45:18]

BRENNA: And what I cut from every single episode is you reassuring them that you will need more editing than them. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: I do! I think ... I mean, don't I?

BRENNA: I mean, yeah. [BOTH LAUGH] But only - only because I know you want to get wording like just right. That's just like your personality.

ANNE: And y'all, it's so hard to talk about books on the fly.

BRENNA: It is.

ANNE: Especially books that you really love.

BRENNA: Yes. Yes.

ANNE: As soon as you want to do something justice, I mean, it's all over. It's going to be a hot mess. Well knowing that you have had those conversations with our guests, what I often tell them is it's just you and me. Nobody's listening in right now. We're going to talk about something that you love. That you're totally an expert about. That you enjoy digging into and that we're going to do it together and it's going to be great. And sometimes people, they'll stop and tell me, they're like oh hey, it's been 10 minutes? Yeah. I forgot I was nervous. This is fine.

BRENNA: Yeah! And they're talking about something they're already an expert on, which is themselves.

ANNE: Exactly. I am so glad that Phimy and Erika loved *A Place For Us* because I did too and it's not essential for a guest and I to have the same reading taste. The fun thing about the reading life is that opinions differ. But I did suspect it would be an excellent pick for them and I'm just so happy that it really landed.

BRENNA: Yes. And I'm so glad that some What Should I Read Next listeners seemed to have gravitated towards that book club, like locally, to them, and have now joined and participate. That's amazing to me. I'd really like to make it down to California and visit.

ANNE: Oh. Can I come?

BRENNA: Yeah. Let's just do a live show down there.

ANNE: Oh, that'd be great. [BRENNA LAUGHS] We've started some discussions.

BRENNA: That's all we can say.

[00:46:53]

ANNE: And I think that's enough to say about that now. [BOTH LAUGH]

BRENNA: Secrets.

Readers, as much as I hate to say it, my life this fall is busy, busy, busy. We have four kids at four schools and between my business life and personal life, it's a lot. And that's why I'm grateful to PrepDish for helping me cope, by giving me one less crucial thing to think about.

PrepDish is the healthy, whole food based meal planning subscription that delivers weekly meal plans right to your inbox. Print out the shopping list, buy your ingredients, and then on your prep day do you all your chopping, marinating, and mixing so that even on the busiest days, you can have dinner on the table in a flash. That's another thing I love, complete meals that don't feel slapped together, that nourish your body and taste good, but that take just about half an hour or even less.

You can take care of your meal planning for the whole year RIGHT NOW with a premium PrepDish subscription—no matter what diet fits your lifestyle. They even have a Keto menu for anyone trying out the Keto diet—and if you've been curious about Keto, you can try it out free for two weeks. My family uses the gluten free menu. This week we're eating bacon and chard stuffed chicken with potatoes, Vietnamese steak bowls, and the especially delicious Cajun shrimp with polenta and asparagus.

With PrepDish, you shop once, prep once. Then enjoy delicious home cooked meals for the whole week in just 20-30 minutes a day. It is saving my life right now.

Go to PrepDish.com/readnext to check out all of the meal plans and to start your free 2-week trial. Again, that's PrepDish.com/readnext.

Readers, we all want to eat right and keep our bodies healthy. I know I do. And yet yesterday and today were jam-packed with meetings, which isn't usual for me, but it happens, so I've relied on protein bars instead of real food way more than I should. I tried to make up for it with salads at dinner, but I know that's not enough to get all of the essential nutrients I need on a daily basis. Luckily there's Ritual, the obsessively researched vitamin for women. From D3 to Omega 3, Ritual's Essential for Women helps fill gaps in a woman's diet. In MY diet, on days like today.

Their no-nausea capsule design is gentle on an empty stomach, and there's a mint tab in every bottle to keep things fresh—so you don't get that fishy aftertaste common with most Omega-3s. Which I am particularly thankful for since I take mine first thing in the morning while my coffee is

brewing and let me tell you—fish oil and coffee do not mix. Thankfully, I never have that problem with Ritual.

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Visit ritual.com/READNEXT to start your ritual today.

That's 10% off during your first three months at ritual.com/READNEXT.

[00:49:59]

BRENNNA: Okay. Our last clip Chelsey and Curtis from episode 164. I put their clip at the end because it really touched me when I listened to your conversation with them. They're a couple who want to read together and they have very different tastes, and it was a clear example of them taking what you were able to see in their reading life and applying it in such a way that it really changed their reading life together and empowered them to go choose books for themselves and do that book matchmaking for each other. And it was just ... It was just so wonderful to listen to.

ANNE: I had the conversation with Chelsey and Curtis, but now I'm excited to listen to it again too. [BRENNNA LAUGHS] Let's do it.

[00:50:40]

CHELSEY: We have always been readers together in the sense that we've sat on the couch reading next to each other.

CURTIS: But not always reading the same books and having similar interests.

CHELSEY: Yes.

CURTIS: So that's been a recent change for us, is trying to read the same things.

ANNE: And we were trying to give you books that would help foster this burgeoning happen.

CURTIS: Well we read *Song of Achilles*, that first month after we were on What Should I Read Next and I think it's been our favorite that we've read together. Checked a ton of boxes for us. It had the historical and mythical things that I liked about *Gates of Fire* and some of the old

Odyssey and *Iliad* stuff, and then it had this other component of you know, coming of age and a love story that Chelsey liked.

[00:51:20]

CHELSEY: We loved that one.

ANNE: I'm so glad! What about the other two? Have you read those? You still thinking about it?

CHELSEY: Not yet. I think it was the thing that we love *Song of Achilles* so much, we just want to savor that high. [LAUGHS] We are reading *Montana 1948*. We're going to start it today. I don't know. [LAUGHS]

CURTIS: It's our buddy read for next month.

ANNE: Oh wow.

CHELSEY: I think that one we kinda said oh, it's a good summer setting. We're going to save that for summer. But part of it was after chatting with you and sorta seeing some of the other areas where our reading tastes intersect other than just like oh, we both like mystery. We both like some YA. Our TBR list has grown because we figured out what we actually both like.

ANNE: That is amazing. Did you anticipate that happening?

CURTIS: I think it was a different thing we were expecting. I was focusing on, like, we're going to find some thrillers that we like 'cause those are the genres that we have a lot of overlap, but I think being on your show and getting these recommendations. I've read more literary books than I normally would go for. It's been a lot of those coming of ages and love stories like *Song of Achilles* than I feel like is a new avenue for both of us.

ANNE: Interesting. What happened after the episode aired? How did your friends and family respond?

CHELSEY: Well my mom was pretty giddy. [ALL LAUGH]

ANNE: That's so cute. Hi, Chelsey's mom.

CHELSEY: I think the fun part was having people come over and listen to our podcast and say, hey, we heard you on What Should I Read Next and it's really fun to listen to more of your book talk and that's been really special and fun.

ANNE: Oh! When we were in Tulsa, you all had a big moment. You had a first, happened at Magic City Books.

[00:53:01]

CURTIS: [LAUGHS] I'm glad that you brought this up because we were ... [ALL LAUGH] So the backstory was we were going to your book event in Tulsa at Magic City for Independent Bookstore Day, and Chelsey was trying to get me mentally prepared. She was like, you know, our faces are on the Internet and they're might be some crossover with What Should I Read Next that people are going to be at this bookstore and people that listen to our episode, and they might recognize us. And I was all, no, there's no way that's going to happen. Like ... And then all of a sudden, we get there and there's multiple people like eyes locked in just staring at us. I got like the back of my neck tingling. [CHELSEY LAUGHS] It was like, what are you looking at me for? Who are you? And then people were walking over and like, just wanted to say we like your show. We listen to ... We found your podcast from What Should I Read Next. We don't want to bother you, but we actually had, like, a couple of conversations with people so I was very uncomfortable. [LAUGHS]

CHELSEY: They were so sweet and it was really fun to meet people in person.

ANNE: All right, so your new celebrity life basically post-What Should I Read Next that's going here.

CHELSEY: Oh my goodness. [LAUGHS] I wouldn't go that far.

CURTIS: No, the more fun part actually is like the community of people that have been on your show. 'Cause we've met other people at Tulsa that had been guests on What Should I Read Next and it's a fun little community.

ANNE: Now didn't you all leave Tulsa with a book that you said would be a buddy read?

CURTIS: *The River* by Peter Heller, and we've done an episode on that.

ANNE: Which I sold to everyone at Magic City Books.

CURTIS: [LAUGHS] Yeah, you did.

CHELSEY: I think we grabbed the last copy. [LAUGHS]

CURTIS: But that was excellent. I really liked the pace and the way that Peter Heller does his dialogue style, and I loved all the lists of all the survival equipment. [ANNE AND CURTIS LAUGH]

ANNE: My brain probably moved rapidly over those descriptions. [CHELSEY AND CURTIS LAUGH] You probably assessing them for quality and I was like eh-

[00:54:41]

CURTIS: That's what I was doing.

ANNE: That's interesting. Let's get back to the characters' feelings.

CHELSEY: It's like a snowball effect because we read *The Song of Achilles* and then we started picking up more literary fiction. Once you figure out a couple of threads, you can enjoy it together. It's easier to branch out from there and experiment a little bit. It's been so fun.

ANNE: Yes. That's so true, and I'm so happy that that's where you feel you are.

CURTIS: It's a good place to be.

[00:55:06]

ANNE: Oh, that was so fun to talk to them again. And hear about their new glamorous life.

BRENNA: I'm so excited that people flocked over to their podcast. I love people getting to connect to other listeners. I want to see all of those guests we've had from Kansas City get together. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: We have had a lot of guests from Kansas City. I loved hearing from Chelsey and Curtis that they walked away from the show with information they could put to use in their reading life. That is fantastic.

BRENNA: It sounds like they took it, like, so seriously. Like they approached it like homework and it's working out so well.

ANNE: And I have enjoyed following their Instagram and podcast episodes where they're sharing what they thought about the further books they read like *Montana 1948*. I know they've read it since we've talked.

BRENNA: So if anyone wants to relisten to the episodes these guests were on, you can find all that information in the show notes. I'm going to link all of it. I have to say, I am really proud to work on this show. I would be even if there weren't all these themes of like connection and it makes me happy to be part of something that brings people joy. We get emails regularly about people who you know, they listen to the show on their commute or you know, it gets them through folding laundry and doing chores. Or just makes them feel connected to a readerly world that they don't have anybody around them in their everyday life that they can talk to about those things. And I'm really proud to be a part of it. I'm glad you started this show, Anne.

ANNE: Oh, thank you. I am too and I think you are one of the reasons it's actually worth listening to. [BRENNA LAUGHS] So thank you for your compassionate and gentle whip smart handling of all these pieces of audio. And all the wonderful guests that we've had week after week. Readers, you know that we want to talk to all of you. Unfortunately, this is a weekly show.

Not like a minute by minute readerly playbook. [BRENNNA LAUGHS] But yeah, whatshouldireadpodcast.com/guest is the place to go if you'd like to sit in the hot seat. Maybe one day, you can be reminiscing with Brenna about your episode and what you did or did not read next.

[00:57:09]

BRENNNA: I would love to have a test call with you. Just gotta apply. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Brenna, it's been a pleasure. Thanks so much for coming back on and taking this stroll down memory lane with me. Was that too cheesy? We're not opposed to that occasionally on What Should I Read Next.

BRENNNA: It's the 200th episode we can be as cheesy as we want.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Sappy sap-fest right here.

BRENNNA: Yeah.

ANNE: We won't do it again for another 100. Or maybe on our 4-year anniversary 'cause that's - that's not too far away.

BRENNNA: Oh, no, that's coming up, isn't it? Wow. [ANNE LAUGHS] All right. Well also thank you to all our listeners for your support and your dedication over the past three and a half years, 200 episodes. Couldn't do it without you. You're the heart of the show.

ANNE: We would never want to do this without you because book people are the best people and seriously, when I chose that Rilke quote on a whim to close out the first episode, how good it is to be among people who are reading, I thought that we could feature like a different bookish quote like every episode, that we would keep mixing it up. We could make up our own. There's plenty to choose from. But I decided to stick with the Rilke and I think it was a little bit prophetic because I don't think I understood at the time just how good it was and would continue to be among you all. 200 episodes strong now.

BRENNNA: How good it is to be among people who are reading.

ANNE: It's been a pleasure and a privilege. And I can't wait to see what we all choose to read next in our next 100 or 200 episodes.

[CHEERFUL OUTRO MUSIC]

[00:58:35]

ANNE: Hey readers, I hope you enjoyed this look back on the past 200 episodes of What Should I Read Next. Here's to 200 more! You can find the full list of titles and episodes we talked about today at whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/200 (that's 2-0-0).

And if you love hearing from these past guests today we're releasing the full conversation Brenna and I had with each guest in our Patreon bonus feed. Patreon supporters get behind the scenes looks into What Should I Read Next and One Great Book, bonus content like these interviews, author conversations, and our One Great Bonus episodes. Plus they get to chat more with Brenna, and all of the wonderful readers in our community.

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If you enjoy this podcast and want to support it, please share it with a friend. It's been so good meeting so many readers online and in person, as you heard in this episode, this really is a wonderful bookish community. So please invite your readerly friends to join us here. They can jump in anywhere, at any episode that catches their readerly fancy.

Thanks to the people who make this show happen! What Should I Read Next is produced by Brenna Frederick, with sound design by Kellen Pechacek.

Readers, that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for listening. And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading." Happy reading, everyone.