



One Great Book: Volume IV, Episode 2 *This Is Where You Belong* by Melody Warnick

[Show Notes](#)

[00:00]

One Great Book Volume IV, Book 2: *This Is Where You Belong*

[UPBEAT INTRO MUSIC]

Hey readers, I'm Anne Bogel, and you're listening to *One Great Book*, the short-form podcast from the team behind *What Should I Read Next?*, where each week I pull one stand-out selection off my personal bookshelves and tell you all about it in ten minutes or less.

[MUSIC]

Readers, sometimes I read a book and think, my life would be better if I could memorize every word in this thing, if every idea I just read could sink into my brain and permeate my worldview. I want to remember all the new ideas I read, and the action items to try for myself, and the interesting data points. I most often feel this way about the books that in addition to being enjoyable to read, are relevant to my everyday life—they tend to be about managing my relationships, or managing myself, and finding my place in the world.

Today's book covers all three. I first read Melody Warnick's *This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live*, when it first came out in hardcover in 2016. Longtime Modern Mrs Darcy readers know that I have a weird fascination with urban planning and, by extension, anything having to do with people and cities and *place*. That may have been my way in but the book has proved to be one that countless Americans have read, and enjoyed, and have even wished, as I have, that they could download it into their own brains. Here in the United States, where I am, we are among the world's most mobile people. 12 percent of us move every year, in what Warnick calls "a national game of musical chairs with 36 million



players.” But this issue of transience is not uniquely American: I was surprised to find that New Zealanders move a little more than we do; Norwegians and Finns move just a little less.

[01:58]

In this season of *One Great Book*, we’re focusing on cozy reads that are perfect for cuddling up with for a few hours with a cup of tea, as well as books that would make excellent gifts for the people in your life. The odds are pretty good that you have someone on your gift list who is in a state of physical transition—someone who’s moving from one place to another, or has a move on the horizon, or who doesn’t yet feel settled in their community. You may think this is blasphemy, but dare I say you don’t even *have* to be a reader to appreciate *This Is Where You Belong*: that’s because while many will pick this up for pure enjoyment as I did, others will turn to its pages because they **NEED** it. Thankfully, both sets of readers will be satisfied with this One. Great. Book.

[MUSIC]

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The subtitle of the paperback edition of *This Is Where You Belong* is “finding home wherever you are,” which captures the idea that whether you choose the place you live, or have it chosen for you, you have to choose to love it. But I'm partial to the original hardcover subtitle: “the art and science of loving the place you live” because it says so much about how the story here is told: Warnick draws on a great deal of research about mobility, happiness, demographics, and place attachment to guide her readers in what works and what doesn't when it comes to finding geographical and community contentment, but the book doesn't have that textbook feel. It unfolds like a conversation with a friend who's telling you about the stress of her recent move, the perks and challenges of her new community, the actions she's experimenting with in an attempt to feel more settled.

These topics are clearly personal to Warnick, who begins telling her story in the midst of her own move, from Austin, Texas to Blacksburg, Virginia, the most recent move in a litany of transplants her family endured over a twelve-year period. When they moved to Austin, they had hoped it would be the perfect city for them, just like they'd always hoped the next city they moved to would be the perfect one, but, just like any city, it was not without its problems. When it came time to pack up for yet another move—this time to Blacksburg, because of a job—Warnick finally came to see she'd been doing it wrong. All this time, she thought she was searching for the perfect place to live, but maybe she had more control over the issue than she'd imagined.

When she moved to Virginia, she decided that she had to figure out how to be happy HERE.



[MUSIC]

[05:43]

So can you just choose to be happy, wherever you are? Well, yes and no. Just like people, places have their own personalities, and any given city will naturally suit some people more than others. But it's also true that the perfect city for you isn't "out there somewhere"—in a very real sense, you have to create it. That brings us back to "place attachment," a concept that captures the emotional connection people have to where they live. How much do you care about where you physically are in the world? This attachment doesn't just happen; it happens because of what we do—whether we do those things with great intention or without even realizing we're engaging in practices that strengthen our bond with our places.

Warnick's goal here is to give her readers the tools to be intentional about engaging with the places they live, and deepening their connection—their attachment—to them. In the book, she walks readers through her own series of mini-experiments she did in her attempts to cultivate a passion for her new community, things like walk more and buy local, get to know her neighbors and do fun stuff (that really is a line item), explore nearby nature and stay loyal through hard times.

As she began to settle into her new community, she found her initial suspicion to be confirmed, over and over: people who love their communities don't necessarily live in great places—they might, or they might not—they're also extremely proactive about the ways they engage in their communities. This is good news for anyone on the move, or who wishes to bloom where they're planted, and deepen connections where they already are.

It's funny, the title of this book, *This Is Where You Belong*, is strikingly similar to a novel I told you about in volume 1 of One Great Book: Maggie O'Farrell's *This Must Be the Place*. The novel is about finding your people, and today's book is about finding your place—or rather, about making the place you've found your own. If you're looking for an unexpected but very interesting book flight, take note of that pairing.



[07:43]

I can't help but notice that we're also perched near the end of the year right now, and *This Is Where You Belong* has "New Year's resolutions" written all over it.

In short, if you're looking for a book—whether that's for yourself, or for someone on your gift list—that's not only fun to read, but also practical, actionable, and bound to make a difference in your everyday life, *This Is Where You Belong* may be the next great book you're looking for.

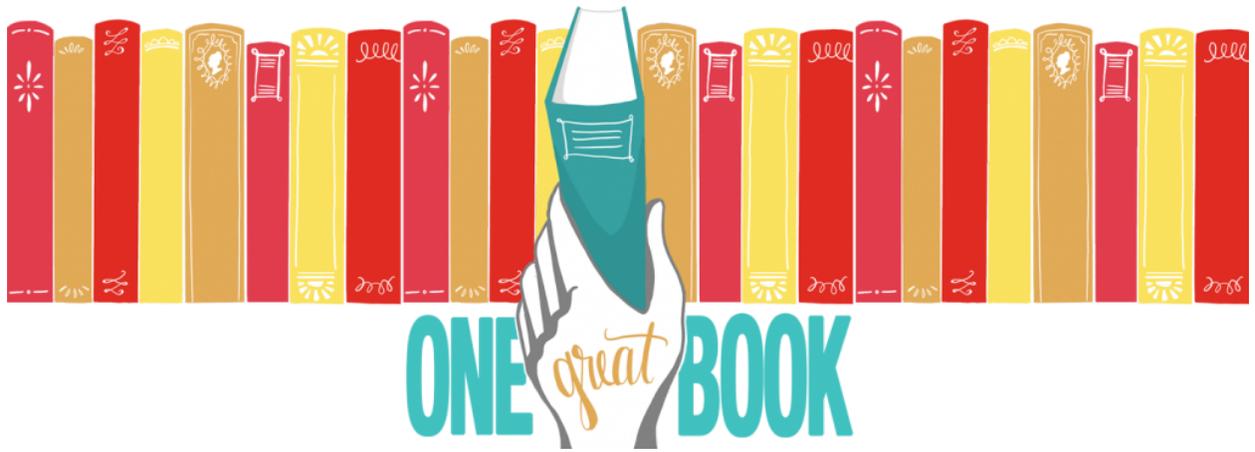
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Thanks to Kellen Pechacek for his sound design on today's episode.

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.