



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 200

[thesimpleshow.com](http://thesimpleshow.com)

## Segment One

Tsh: This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

Hey friends! In this episode, I'm chatting with my friend, cohost, and managing editor of The Art of Simple Andrea Debbink and we thought we'd do something a little fun for this episode because this is episode number 200! Honestly, this podcast has had several iterations since it started back in 2011 but it's number 200 since we started seriously counting, so we'll just go with it. Andrea just returned from a rather epic trip to Scotland, the lucky duck, and as you're listening to this, I'm currently in London leading my second ever Literary London where I lead a small group of you guys through one of my favorite parts of the world through the lens of what we can learn from the storytelling greats. I'm leading once more with my friend Emily P. Freeman and also coming along this year is my assistant extraordinaire and right hand woman, Caroline TeSelle, who told me last year in London, you know, I need to come with you on all these trips. You know that, right? In this episode, Andrea and I thought it'd be fun to nerd out on all things British. We're both unapologetic Anglophiles so we get into why we love you guys across the pond.

Before we get into this chat, you know it's actually a pretty big deal that this is episode 200 because we can't do this podcast without dedicated listeners, and that's you. You literally make the show what it is and it's also for you I have you in mind as we plan out every single episode. I want it to be a thing that both encourages you and inspires you and also kickstarts your weekend with a little bit of fun. This show is so fun to do for you, but it's not easy and it's not free.

We've got all sorts of things to pay for to make it happen. If the show adds value to your life in any way, I'd love for you to join the growing community of patrons that help keep the lights on around here. For just a few dollars per month, you can help keep Simple what it is and you can help it become even better with improvements and ideas we've got for it down the road. As a patron, you'll also get access to my other podcast that's just for the community, it's called The World At Home, and in each episode we get into one small thing that you can do to help you learn more about the world. Either something to watch, read, listen or do. It's not one more thing to add to your plate. It's actually stuff you

want to learn about and enjoy anyway. I just do the work of finding and curating the best of what's out there for you all in a short five to fifteen minute episodes. I would love for you to join this community, so go to [TheArtofSimple.net/](https://TheArtofSimple.net/) community to learn more or you can head to the show notes of this episode where it's linked. Thank you in advance. We quite literally couldn't do this work without you. Let's get right into it. Here I am with Andrea where we are gushing about the little island we love so much.

[03:01](#) Well, it is impossible to believe, but this is the 200th episode of Simple and honestly it really should be probably more than that. I would not be surprised if this is more like the 300th episode to be honest. The reason it's officially numerically 200 is because we've had so many iterations of this show. We've been doing this podcast since 2011 which is honestly a neanderthal time period for podcasting back in the day when it was just getting going. There were podcasts before then but they weren't as mainstream as they are now. Looking back on 200 episodes and thinking about those ones that honestly are pretty much buried now because they're not even on the same feed. I am grateful for that because I feel like I have learned so much as a podcaster and that's not to say that I don't want to keep getting better, but really and truly thinking back on just how I've grown as a host and as a storyteller and as a conversationalist or interviewer, I feel like I've grown so much since those early days and I'm grateful for the podcast and for you listeners, because it's been a platform and honestly it's helped, I think, especially in the storytelling part, this audial storytelling. Is that a word?

Andrea: Sure.

Tsh: Storytelling has helped me as a writer, as a storyteller on paper. I think there's a lot of play back and forth that's really buoyed each other. The one consistency is, and you know this, if you're a longtime listener, the one consistency we've had to the show is change. This show has changed forms in so many ways and I used to feel badly about that. I used to feel like I need to issue a statement of apology every time we make a big change. I don't bother anymore. I don't mind because I feel like I changed as a person. Why can't the podcast change as well? We've had all sorts of iterations where I have someone I'm interviewing one at a time, every single episode, something different. I've had it where we have a rotation of cohosts. I've had it where we have certain series where I'm just talking and when I'm talking to somebody else and now what we have is a rotation of cohosts and we're talking about what we wrote about. I know Andrea, you're new to this season of the show, but this has been my favorite so far, I would say. I think the reason it's my favorite is because of what I was saying earlier, because I primarily think of myself as a writer and embracing this idea that used to really tie me up in knots that am I more of a podcaster or am I more

of a writer? Whenever I really decided to embrace, I am more of a writer who podcasts instead of a podcaster who writes. Having this format where we write every week and then talk about what we wrote about feels just right. It feels like, oh, this is where I'm supposed to be. This is how it's supposed to be, where they both mutually support each other. But really primarily I process my thoughts best and I think my greatest contribution to the general public is my writing more than my podcasting. Anybody who's listening that's either thinking about starting a podcast or just thinking about the landscape of podcasts in general, I would just say I am all here for celebrating all types of podcasts out there. There are podcasts of different sizes in terms of both audience and presence, maybe on the Internet, podcasts of different styles and links. I think they're all good. It's very easy to compare, super easy to compare, not only when it comes to metrics, but when it comes to just community interaction and maybe more whether a show is on the zeitgeists of people's lives and minds. I have learned the importance of not comparing, just to do what you're good at, to do you, do the thing that you're here to do and to enjoy it. To enjoy what's been given to you, but what's here for your creative input and output and it all comes down to the listeners. I value you guys so much and I'm so grateful for you listening and I am grateful immensely for those of you who support this show in the community as a patron, you're the ones that make this happen and you're the future of this show. Because I would love, my ideal is eventually for the show to be completely and fully a community funded and supported where we don't even need ads at all. Wouldn't that be amazing? That's my goal one day, is to make this completely a community effort and I'm grateful for you.

Thank you for 200 episodes and I look forward to 200 plus more. To celebrate my cohost here, Andrea, and I thought it would be fun to talk about something a little bit different than what we normally talk about, but not so different that it completely strays from what you guys know us as. We got to looking at our calendars and we realized that on this episode drop day, this 200th episode, I am literally in London right now leading the trip that I started last year called Literary London.

As you're listening to this, you will see me maybe on Instagram or just somewhere else in London leading a group of women. Andrea has just returned from the UK. She had spent a couple of weeks there. You're not quite there yet as we're recording this, but by the time this airs you will have gone and come back and you've been there before. We thought, okay, there's the idea just staring right in front of us and we're going to talk about why we love the UK. And it's a little bit funny, I know for those of you who are from the UK to hear an episode of Americans talking about why we love you guys and you might roll your eyes a little bit or think we're being hyperbolic and in a way that's sort of a meadow. One of the reasons I like you guys is because you are a self

deprecating, but just bear with us because we're going to just shower you with affection anyway. We just love the UK and everything about it. We thought, let's just talk about why we love the UK.

Andrea, why don't you start us off with why you personally have an affection for the UK?

Andrea: [09:36](#) I didn't actually go to the UK for the first time until 2016 so just a few years ago. But I was always fascinated with it ever since I was a kid. I think part of that was just, and I think this is something you get into when you start talking, but so much of our literature obviously has its roots in England because of our common history and common language. Obviously a lot of the children's stories I grew up reading were either based in the UK or by UK writers. On top of that, my mom was always an anglophile growing up. So she always loved everything British. She watched a lot of British TV that back at the time was only on PBS.

Tsh: [10:16](#) I was going to say it had to have been PBS because we did not get that mainstream.

Andrea: [10:20](#) Right. I think she actually has a subscription to Acorn now, which I need to get. We watched a lot of 1970's British sitcoms when I was growing up. Which is my introduction to their sense of humor and that sort of thing. On top of that, I'm a writer now and have always wanted to be a writer from the time I was a kid. I think they just have such a rich literary history. And on top of that, and this is one thing I discovered when I went there in 2016 and I was actually surprised by this even just being a traveler there, you can get a sense that in the UK they care more about books and writing and publishing I think than they do here. This could be an inaccurate assessment on my part, but it just seemed that in the United States, so much of our culture is influenced by movies and by Hollywood and entertainment in general. When I went to the UK, just by the advertisements I would see, the number of bookstores, the things that people were talking about in the news. It was just so much more publishing focused, honestly as a writer and a reader, I loved that. I remember being on the tube and seeing this big advertisement, not for the next superhero movie, but for the next book that was coming out by some publisher in London. I was just so shocked by that because we give a lot more attention to movies and entertainment I think in the US so it was really gratifying to see that love coming through when I was actually just traveling around the UK.

Two other reasons I love it. First, I just love history. History was one of my majors in college and actually my husband and I met in a History of Shakespeare's England class.

Tsh: Serious? Oh that's fun.

Andrea: It was crazy. Actually we met before that, but he took the class because I was in it and that's how he got to know each other. I was taking it for my history degree. He was taking it just because I was in it and he needed an elective. I studied history in college and I've always loved history and that's part of the reason that I love traveling in the UK. Lastly, I am just shamelessly fascinated by the royal family and I know that's pretty cliché for an American. Back when I was younger I loved Princess Diana. I love the Queen and just that whole structure and that obviously continues today. Actually, one of the highlights of my trip, the last time that I was in England was that I got to see the queen ride by in her carriage. I didn't actually meet her. It was a total surprise. I didn't know that she was coming to open Parliament that day. We were actually on our way to Westminster Abbey. We had tickets and we weren't allowed to cross the street to go into the Abbey and found out that it was closed because she was coming to open Parliament. There was this huge parade, she and Prince Philip came by in their carriage. Prince Charles and Camilla were there in their carriage. It was just this incredible pageant parade sort of thing that I wasn't expecting to see. That was really exciting. That was definitely a bucket list item for me.

Tsh: [13:24](#) That's very cool. I love hearing all that. I think it's easy for us as Americans to stereotype England in the same way so many places around the world stereotype us. They think of us anytime, anytime somebody in other cultures here is that I'm from Texas usually the first thing they say is, well you don't have an accent, how are you from Texas? Followed by some form of cowboy related reference or gun-related reference. That to me is always a reminder of how often do I do that about other cultures. I know that we do that about England easily, and I think our cultural fascination with the royal family embodies that really well. Right? Because they don't have any daily effect on us or any effect on us really as Americans, our governments do not intertwine at all. So we can watch from afar and just look at the surface and think, oh that's so fun. I know a lot of these things are a little heavier or I don't want to say fraught with deep things because that's not always the case. But I know that there's two sides to every coin maybe is what I should say. Those of you listening who maybe have a different view, we get it, we get that it's very easy to idealize a place and I think even your comments on publishing I think is very true as well because while I totally agree with you that I think as a bibliophile, the UK is just a fantastic place to be, both with their publishing standards and publishing record, but also their bookstores and how charming so many of them are. I also get and have seen in the 20 plus years since I started traveling to the UK, a change in things. I do see more posters in the tube these days for and other things like that. We get that our culture's blur and blend together in those departments when it comes to that stuff.

I agree with most of everything you said really. One of the main reasons I really love the UK is really my personal history as a traveler. That was the first place I traveled to by myself overseas. I went first in the late nineties, I think in 1999 by myself and met up with a friend and it was formative for me. It really was a game changer for me in terms of my worldview and ultimately the trajectory of my life. I felt like the UK was very welcoming in that department. I felt very safe as a traveler and it was just a very formative place for me. I have a lot of personal affection for it and in that department. On that note, The Art of Simple has a sizable UK audience. We have listeners and readers from the UK that are loyal and have been around a long time. When you look at our statistics pretty much consistently every month, the UK is number three in terms of where our audience comes from after the US and Canada. I have affection for it just because you guys are there. I feel a personal connection, oh, these are where friends are from, if that makes sense.

Andrea, I'm with you. I love history as well and I think you Brits sometimes forget how old your history is compared to ours. When we go somewhere old here in the US we're talking 1700s probably, right? Of course that's a whole, heavy thing that we of course have had our native Americans who have had a much, much longer history. But when it comes to our democracy and our framework as a country, we are only a couple of hundred years old and England has a recorded history that spans millennia. I think that actually does affect our worldview and I'll get into that in a little bit, our two different world views. That said, I am not here to praise all of British history. There is a lot of stuff that's not great. In fact, I think of this any time, almost every time we do A World At Home episode in the patron community where, it's my other podcasts that's just for patrons where we talk about different parts around the world and the way we can learn about them through things we watch, read, listen, or do, almost every time, whenever I'm doing 101 on the history of a place, I have to say something like, and the British colonized it from this date to this date. What was that whole phrase about the sun never sets on the British empire. That was literally true for a long time. There's that whole thing. Not here with rose colored glasses,

Andrea: [18:11](#) I think just the difference with the history you encounter in the UK or anywhere in any other part of the world possibly, is that you can actually walk around in the history. Like the buildings are still there from way back. You just don't have that as much. We do have a very old history in this country beyond when we were first colonized, but there's not those structures still standing or things that you can actually go and still physically, tangibly experience. I think for me that's the really interesting part of the history in England.

Tsh: Yeah, that's a great way to put it.

Andrea: I also should mention I keep interchangeably using UK in England and I know from being there and having people set me straight, those aren't interchangeable. Those are two different things, right? England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, are all different. I need to say that caveat.

Tsh: [19:05](#) We know basically if you're listening and you're ears are cringing, we get it. Good point. Another reason I just feel connected, and this is just weird and I can't really quantify it, is that I'm Anglican now. I've been Anglican for three years or so, as a Christian. I feel this weird connection in that way. It's not to say that to be Anglican means this homogenous definition, in fact, most Anglicans in the world or in the southern hemisphere. It's not actually because of a certain Britishness or Englishness that I am Anglican. But something about the fact that it did, that branch of Christianity did get its beginnings there. It just makes me feel a little more rooted there in faith.

You hinted at this a little bit I think, but the geography is obviously it's much smaller than the US in terms of just how big it is. I think that actually really affects both our ability to enjoy it as travelers and also it affects the culture and the way people are. There is the well known weather of the UK and that it's gray a lot of the time and just wet and drizzly. It's not at all to say that the geography is perfect, but there is something about the way the architecture and the people interact more organically with the geography when it comes to the rolling hills in the Cotswolds, and towering cliffs of Dover and the more ruggedness of Scotland and all the islands. It's pretty much in the same way as the US if you think about how our geography affects who we are as people in our different places, it's just on a much smaller scale. It's almost easier for us to comprehend it as people.

And then the sense of humor. I love British humor. I feel more British in my humor than I do American. I just love just really dry, deadpan, self-deprecating humor. Those are always my favorite comedy shows to watch or things to enjoy. I just love British humor so much. It's so silly. It's often irreverent. It often doesn't make any sense and I am here for it. I just think it's really fun. I remember watching *Fawlty Towers* with my dad and thinking as a kid especially, this is dumb. This doesn't make any sense. Especially Monty Python, thinking this is so bizarre. I'm laughing because of how bizarre it is. Of course to this day, if any of you have been around teenagers, they are still a quoting holy grail all the time.

It's hilarious and my kids love it. They just saw *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* not too long ago and they quote it all the time now. I do too. It's fun to share in that.

With that, the art in general, British films, British TV series, the books which we'll get into, the music. I am here for all of it. I create a Literary London playlist on

Spotify that I give to attendees just to get in your head space of going to the UK. When I am scrolling for something to stream, my default will be to pick something British. I just prefer British cinematography. I prefer the pacing of the storytelling as much slower. It's less dependent on action adventure. I feel like of course I'm broad brush stroking here, but in general I find that to be true and I think the storytelling in books reflects that as well. I'm going to link in the show notes to an article that I read parts of to our Literary London attendees about why the British tell better children's stories. I think there is something really fascinating about this idea of how we in the US like our stories to end with this moral lesson tied in a pretty bow and British writers and storytellers are more comfortable with things being either left open ended or trust the reader and viewer to make that judgment for themselves. We in America with our pilgrim heritage of thinking, we tend to, even if we're not aware, like to have a heavy handed lesson learned, especially in children's books. Our fantasies are a little bit different too in that regard. This article gets into why the beautiful fantasies of Harry Potter, of Narnia, of Lord of the Rings have a set apart framework than we tend to create in our American storytelling. Along with just the delight of the humor you can find in things like Winnie the Pooh. It's a really fascinating article. I don't want to over read it right now, especially because we read it in Literary London and talk about it some. Those of you listening might find it fascinating.

Andrea: I love that article. I remember coming across that when I worked at American Girl as an editor and sending it around to my fellow editors because it was just something really interesting to think about as we were writing and editing fiction and nonfiction for kids in the US it was like, oh, here's a different perspective on that. I thought that was really fascinating and also true.

Tsh: Yeah, it is very true. I mean I personally think it's true and ultimately this article I feel like embodies why we do Literary London and it's ultimately the framework for what we do. We lead people through a framework of storytelling and we start off with, okay, think about the question, why are the British such great storytellers and what can we learn about our own stories in our lives? I really focus on this idea of letting the landscape, letting the history of the place, and letting the great storytellers from England speak to us while we're there. Because there are countless storytellers and yes, we have our great American authors too, but there is really just something special about British storytelling.

Andrea, that is our why we love the UK, let's talk a little bit about our favorite parts of the UK. Obviously we're going to have to go quickly here because we could do a whole episode of our town at a time, little favorites, but a hit us up with your first thoughts about where you love to be.

Andrea: [25:26](#) I don't want to camp out on this too long cause I know this is your specialty and you're going to get into this. I really did love London when I went

there a few years ago, which surprised me because I don't tend to like big American cities. I get overwhelmed in them. There's so much going on, there's not a lot of nature. Before I went, I remember someone telling me, oh, London's just like New York and I think this person maybe didn't like New York, so it was supposed to be an unfavorable comparison. It's just a big city. There's just a lot of people. But then I went there and I was just amazed by it and I love it. Not to hammer this point again, but it was the history, but it was also just very dynamic and diverse compared to where I live. I live in a very small city in the Midwest. A city like London is just very different from where I spent most of my life. I really loved that.

Tsh: I will say that I think one of the reasons London, I like New York too, actually. I think New York fits this bill as well. But London I think has a little bit of a small town way about it and it's because of its diversity. There's so many pockets that are different from each other that you can be in one part of London and it's walkable. You feel like you're in a little small part of town when you're in Camden. And then when you go to Chelsea, it's completely different. Or the Kensington area and whenever you go to the East Side, it feels totally different. To me it's almost like a conglomeration of small towns.

Andrea: [26:52](#) And it's so easy to get around compared to the cities I'm used to in the US. I have to get in my car and take a freeway everywhere. Whereas in London we would either walk everywhere or you get on the tube or you get on the bus or you take a cab. There was just a lot of different ways to get around.

Tsh: [27:06](#) Their public transportation is fantastic and that's actually one of the reasons I started with Literary London in my repertoire of travel guiding because it was like, well I know the public system so well and it's so easy to learn. You could be a beginner traveler and get the hang of it within a day and a half. I love it there.

Andrea: [27:27](#) My next two favorite places are close to each other and they're both outside of London. The Cotswolds, we didn't do a whole lot in the Cotswolds other than walk a lot, which is what you do.

Tsh: Which is its charm, right?

Andrea: You just take in all that beautiful countryside. That's a place I would definitely love to go back to just because it was just a really peaceful place and how you picture that quintessential English countryside. There's also a couple of filming locations, actually probably more than a couple, but we went past one of the houses where they filmed Poldark. There's also a town there, I forget the name of where they filmed Cranford, which was an Elizabeth Gaskell book, but then they did a mini series that they filmed there.

Tsh: [28:14](#) That's right. And it's also the Downton Abbey area as well. You can find the mansion there.

Andrea: [28:19](#) The next place I would say was Oxford. I really enjoyed that. I know you're going to get into this too. But just to a quick highlight for me there was the Bodleian Library. It's more of a library system now. It's not just one building anymore, but we took a tour of the medieval section of the library, which is gorgeous and they don't allow photos while you're there, so you really just have to be there and take it all in, which is actually nice. One of his more recent claims to fame is actually that it's where they filmed the library in Harry Potter, I think. All the books that are chained to the shelves and everything, those are all in the Bodleian Library. Beyond that, I would say outside of England, we spent some time in Wales when we were there in 2016. Obviously, I'd heard of Wales. It wasn't really on my list of places to go, but my husband was really interested in going because my brother-in-law actually went to boarding school there when he was in high school so he had told us all these great stories about hiking Mount Snowden and Brecon Beacons National Park. We decided to include it on our trip. We rented a car in Oxford and we ended up driving from the southern end of Wales straight up through the middle to the northern end of Wales and had different stops along the way. One of my favorite places that we stopped was a little town called Hay on Wye, which is known as a book town. It's probably only has a population of around 1500 people, but it has more than 20 bookstores. In this tiny town. It also has a big literary festival every year that brings in like 250,000 people.

Tsh: That's right. I've heard of that.

Andrea: Which is amazing. This little town, obviously I love the books in the bookstores, but I'm just the setting, it was right on the river Wye in this beautiful little valley. It was just a really peaceful, relaxing place to spend a few days. Beyond that, also while we are in Wales, we made a stop in Brecon Beacons National Park. That's mid Wales and it's just really beautiful, rolling countryside and some big hills actually don't know how tall they are. They're smaller than the hills around here, but there's a lot of great hiking opportunities there and just a lot of small towns. It's definitely a place to go for a more slower paced vacation and a more outdoor oriented vacation. I would love to go back to Wales. I was really surprised by how much I enjoyed it. It was interesting too because we'd run into people there who are actually from there, like our B and B owner. She actually asked us when we arrived, how did you find us? We don't get that many American tourists in this part of Wales where we were. She was just really surprised that we would find it to go there. I don't really want to let the secret out.

Tsh:

[31:04](#) I've only been to Wales once and it was that very first time I went and I really loved it. I thought it was really beautiful and I want to spend more time there. I ended up being a overnigheted unexpectedly in the little port town of Holyhead because of a delay in a boat that was taking me to Ireland. I ended up just hanging out in this village, and this is back in the 90s without Internet everywhere. I just didn't really know what to do. I just remember going on a massive walk by myself and ended up at the top of this beautiful green hill and there was just a park bench sitting up there and there was nobody around, so I just sat up there for a long time and read a book and it was overlooking the sea between Wales and Ireland and just thinking, this is unbelievable. It was amazing and nobody knows where I am. It was really fun and random. I ended up staying with this gracious British couple who basically just rented out rooms in their house. This is pre-Airbnb. I don't even remember how I found them. I can think now, how on earth that I find those people.? I paid 20 pounds or so for just a bed in their house.

I love London. I actually like really big cities whenever they have a heart and soul to them, so I feel like New York is one of them. London's one of them. A lot of the reasons are just simply because it feels like a small town in each little section. I've heard that from people who live in New York actually, that it feels like a small town cause you know so many people in your few block radius. I think London has that same vibe for me. When we lived, well, we stayed in Battersea Park that area last year and it was great and loved it so much. We're now staying in a little village outside of London, so it's going to be a little bit of a different experience than the previous year. But I'm just as excited about it. I loved the little villages outside of London and I'm just spotted here and there throughout the UK.

My favorite all time place though in that area that you've already mentioned is Oxford. I feel like Oxford is a town I could live in. For me it's mostly because of the history. The university and the college system there is just other worldly really when it comes to the greats that have come through there. C.S. Lewis living there and Tolkein as well with the Inklings. That Eagle and Child pub that is really pretty much, they, they definitely have it's older nooks and crannies, but it really is a modern day working pub that just looks like one of many. But just knowing what all happened there historically is just fascinating. I just really love Oxford. It's, it's definitely gotten pretty touristy over the years since I started going a couple of decades ago. But I still love it. I think it's fascinating.

Another great place that I actually have only been to recently, is Windsor. I don't know if you went to Windsor as a royal...

Andrea:

No, I didn't. I would love to go.

Tsh: It is a delightful little small town. Obviously there's Windsor Castle, which is the oldest lived in castle in the world and that's the big tourist draw, but it's also just a working town and it's beautiful. Full of cobblestone streets and friendly people and it's just scenic, on the river. It's a great place to go for a day trip in London. I really enjoyed it. I went with Myquillyn and Caroline for the day last year and we had so much fun just walking around and just enjoying a breather from the big city and we were back in less than 45 minutes. It's all really close together.

Let's talk now for, I think maybe what the listeners will really appreciate is, we can't always go to places like the UK when we are at home and we have life and we can't just up and leave. Let's talk a little bit about the ways we really enjoy the UK when we're not able to be there. Of course I'm talking about things like music, books, movies, and TV series. Andrea start us off telling us what are some of your favorite in that genre of things?

Andrea: I don't think this would actually count as high British culture or anything, but a show that I've very lately gotten into has been The Great British Baking Show. I am 10 years behind.

Tsh: That is a classic I think.

Andrea: People have been telling me forever because I love to bake. People have been telling me for a long time, oh, you would love this show. I tried it a few years ago and I was like, eh, I don't think it was that interesting for whatever reason. A few months ago I started watching it on Netflix and I got hooked on it. I watch it a lot and I feel like I learn a lot because there's just a lot of things about British baking culture that I'm not familiar with at all. I think it's fun. Of course they film it somewhere in the countryside, I actually don't know where they film it in England. I've been into that. Also, one of my favorite British TV shows is Endeavor.

Tsh: It's so good.

Andrea: Have you seen that?

Tsh: Yeah.

Andrea: A friend of mine introduced me to it a couple of years ago and I love mystery shows. I'm not so into crime drama, so I wasn't sure on where this would land with me. It took probably two or three episodes, but then my husband and I both just got hooked on it. I love the characters. It takes place in Oxford in the 1960s and I think it's actually a prequel to the Inspector Morse series, which is a really long running show. I don't know how long that was on, but I just love the setting the characters and I think we're almost done with all the seasons. I'm not

a binge watcher at all when it comes to these shows that I like, I tend to do the opposite of it. If I find a show I like, I take forever to watch. My husband and I, when it comes to Endeavor, will watch Endeavor, an episode once every month or two because we just want to spread it out.

Tsh: [36:58](#) I will say, I'll just interject and say, I think one of the reasons that's especially true when it comes to watching British shows is they have fewer but longer episodes typically. On a show like Endeavor, each episode is like a mini movie, really.

Andrea: That's true because with American shows there can be 20 episodes of seasons sometimes. I love the other shows that are pretty popular right now, like The Crown, Victoria. I'm in the middle of slowly watching them. I'm definitely behind in those. Poldark, I'm two seasons behind. Then a couple of years ago I watched The Paradise.

Tsh: I don't think I've seen that,.

Andrea: It's another BBC series. I think it only ran for three seasons. It takes place around the turn of the 20th century in this department store in the north of England. The department store was called The Paradise and it's about the people that run this store and work in the store. It had a little bit of a Downton Abbey feel for me because of the time period, which is another show I love. That's all the British TV I'm into. Of course, there are books too.

Tsh: Yeah, we'll get into those.

Andrea: It sounds like I only watch British TV.

Tsh: [38:13](#) Those are all really good and whenever someone is part of Literary London, part of the experience we give them is a six month trickle out of ways to prepare for the trip, both practically in terms of make sure you have your passport and here's a packing list. But also mentally and so several months beforehand we make book recommendations and a few months before and make TV and film recommendations. I'm gonna just hit up a few. I'm going to keep most of them under wraps because this is for our Literary London attendees, but a few of the TV shows we recommend along with some of them that you've already mentioned, like Victoria, Polkark, and Endeavor. We also recommend Broadchurch. I don't know if you've ever seen that one. If you like Endeavor, you like Broadchurch.

Andrea: [39:00](#) Okay. I've seen it in the queue but I've never watched.

Tsh: It's heavy in the sense of the crime involved. But it is epic storytelling and I absolutely love Olivia Colman and David Tennant, I was about to call him Barney

Crouch, Jr because that's who he plays in Harry Potter. Fantastic actors. It's just such good storytelling. We also like Father Brown mysteries. I don't know if you've ever watched that. It's obviously based on GK Chesterton's character in short stories. The show springboards off of those and goes beyond and they're probably not quite as great as the original stories, but the show is fun. It stars, speaking of which, what is his name? He plays Arthur Weasley in the Harry Potter series. I cannot think of his name, that actor, is father Brown. It's fun to see him in that element and it's just short, well, less than an hour, about 45 minutes long episodes takes place in the 1950s, a little small English countryside. It's mysteries usually involving murder, but they're not gruesome or grotesque or even heavy most of the time. They're just fun. The thing I like about the show is, as I am here for shows that build on each other, like Broadchurch where you have to watch the entire thing to even understand the story. But Father Brown is, each episode is standalone so you could watch each one separately and totally know what's going on. I really appreciate that sometimes. In fact, those are kind of shows I like to watch at night so that I don't get hooked and I'm not tempted to keep going so then I would go to bed. Kyle and I sometimes watch Father Brown before bed.

Another fantastic show that suddenly, a few years ago got cancelled and so we're left on a cliffhanger for the foreseeable future is Home Fires. That is on Amazon Prime. I'll put a link in the show notes, but that is such a good show. The funny thing is when I watched that, I don't know, maybe a year ago, I didn't know that it was suddenly canceled. I finished season two and I was getting ready to start season 3 and I was like what? It's done. I started doing internet research and there's a whole die hard fan base that is just as upset because it was such fantastic storytelling. It's basically about women in a rural community, like a small town during World War II. It's a lot about what life was like during the war, but back home in terms of how they supported the war, but also just what life was like when men were gone, where they had to live on rations, where community gardening became literally a matter of life and death in terms of how just a village supports each other and helps each other do the work that they have to do to stay a float. It's really well done.

[41:45](#) I think you hit on most of the good ones. There's also Luther, that's a great show. It's a bit intense. When it comes to movies, there are some good ones right now that you can stream. Really and truly we could not get into all the movies that are fantastic from the UK, but some that are really good then maybe lesser known, there's a really good one called About Time. I don't know if you've ever heard of it, but it's currently streaming on Netflix and it's one of our favorites. It's a romantic, I guess you'd call it comedy, but it's just really great acting. It's about a kid, well, a young adult who can time travel and what happens in his life, but it's not sci-fi really. It's my favorite kind of storytelling.

[42:29](#) There's also the King Speech you can currently stream that. I'm a big Colin Firth fan and I really loved that. Then there's one that's maybe a little lesser known called An Inspector Calls. It's funny, here I go again. It stars the guy who plays Remus Lupin.

Andrea: Yes. I know what you're talking about.

Tsh: Everybody to me comes from Harry Potter which is terrible and very American to me, but it's a short movie, so it's a little bit longer than an episode, but it's shorter than a full length movie standalone. It's based on an original short story called An Inspector Calls. It's really good. We'll put the link to that in the show notes as well because you can stream it on Amazon prime right now.

Andrea, hit me up with a few books that you really like.

Andrea: [43:12](#) It was really hard for me to come up with this list because of looking back over my reading history and just realized there's a lot of books by British authors. Just recently, a book that I read in preparation for my trip to get in the mindset was My Love Affair with England.

Tsh: I've never read it.

Andrea: It is a travel memoir that was written in the 90s by a woman named Susan Allen Toth. She is a professor, I think of English at a liberal arts college in the Twin Cities, or at least she was at the time when she wrote the book. She had taken many trips to England starting in the 1970s. The book is a bunch of different essays from different points in her travels. She talks about one of her trips in the 1970s, more of her trips in the 90s. It's just really interesting because the book was written in the early nineties and she's reflecting upon the changes in British culture and travel. It's interesting reading that now 20 years beyond. I'd be really interested to hear your thoughts on that book, paralleling some of your past experiences with what she says.

Tsh: I'll have to read that sometime.

Andrea: Yeah, it's interesting. It's an interesting take on an American traveling in England. The next book that I'd recommend, it's a classic, and I just read it for the first time a few months ago was I Capture The Castle by Dodie Smith and it was written in the 1930s, I think. Dody Smith was a woman from England that ended up moving to California. I think she wrote this book when she was homesick and missing life back in England. It's about this family that lives in this old castle in the English countryside. It's not very plot driven, but it's very character driven. There's a lot of interesting characters in the book. I just loved it. I'm probably going to pick up a copy for myself when I'm over there, if I can.

Another book that I read back when I was there a few years ago was Everyone Brave is Forgiven, which it came out when I was traveling there. I remember seeing signs for it everywhere. Unfortunately I didn't buy a copy of there but when I came back home I thought I need to get this book. I love that book. I love Chris Cleaves' writing. Though it's one of those books that I have a hard time recommending it to other people because there is a lot of heavy stuff.

Tsh: That is true. But you know what, we did an episode about this book a few years ago and I will say it's heavy, but he also manages to weave in a bit of humor, which is for odd that you wouldn't guess in a book about the blitz and just this era of British history, specifically in London.

Andrea: [45:42](#) Another book, I feel cliché saying this, but I love Jane Austen. My favorite Jane Austen would be Emma. I feel like I should say Pride and Prejudice because a lot of people say that, but I just love Emma as a character and a narrator. This last series of books that I haven't personally read, but my husband has gotten really into are Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus stories.

Tsh: I've never heard of them read them.

Andrea: The reason we got into this is because we're going to Scotland and my sister-in-law who's going with us had read a lot of Ian Rankin and Ian Rankin is from Edinburgh, which is where we're going. We wanted to start familiarizing ourselves with writers who are in the places we're going to. He's written a ton of these Inspector Rebus books. I think also other books featuring different detectives, but they're contemporary present day Edinburgh.

Tsh: Which by the way, is a fantastic city. I love Edinburgh. It's so fun.

Andrea: I'm so looking forward to going there. We're going there next week. By the time this podcast airs I'll have already been. It'll be our first time there. I feel like I could say a lot more, but I know you'll probably have some great things too.

Tsh: [46:48](#) Like we've said, we can't cover them all. For me, what I've suggested to our attendees is a mix of fiction and nonfiction. What we narrowed it down to is not so much what are the great stories that have come from there because there's infinite, amazing, you can spend the rest of your life reading nothing but British novels and never read them all. It's more what are really good stories that take place in places where we'll be. What are great novels that are set specifically in London or in Oxford or in the areas that we will be visiting. That was our filter so that we weren't overwhelmed. For example, The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. That's a great one because of familiarity. I can never, I don't know if it's Neil Gaiman or Neil Gaiman. I've heard it both, but he is a great

storyteller and he does a bit of Gothic fantasy style. Neverwhere is a great book that's set in London, but obviously not realistic London. Zadie Smith, her book *White Teeth* is fantastic and it gets into more of that immigrant side of London. In the Lord Peter Wimsey series, which we have also podcasted about. It might've been the same episode where we talked about *Everyone Brave, We'll Lie* by Dorothy Sayers. Dorothy Sayers is a well known British author and she has a whole series and particularly, *Gaudy Night* is the gold standard of that series. In terms of novels, that's where I recommend our attendees along with some children's books like *Paddington* because of it taking place in England. Then nonfiction wise, you really can't beat Bill Bryson.

Bill Bryson is an American who was married to a Brit and so they lived there for several decades. He's a funny, witty writer and he writes, I don't remember if he's back in the UK. I want to say he went back. He has great books, nonfiction travel memoirs and *Notes from a Small Island*, in particular is about what it's like to be an American living in that side. That book was written whenever they were about to leave. It was sort of a farewell tour. Another really good one is *84 Charing Cross Road*, which I can't remember if I talked about here on this podcast, or in the world at home for my patrons, I don't remember. But *84 Charing Cross Road* is a really good short nonfiction, I guess you'd call it memoir. It's epistolary so it's a series of letters back and forth between an American reader and a bookseller in London. This took place in the 1950s mostly. I mean, it follows several decades. Actually, no, 1930s, I want to say it's much earlier. You know what it was at the start of the war because they got into talking about rations and stuff like that. It was really good. Another final one, this is a more recent one. It's called *A Hobbit, A Wardrobe and A Great War*. This is about Tolkien and Lewis and what happened in World War I to help them become the writers that they ended up being and their friendship and how it intersected, but really how the Great World War I affected them as writers and the way they told their famous stories. That one's a fantastic one, especially if you are super into that kind of writing and those writers and the UK specifically, it's right at my alley.

Ultimately, I thought I would just end our chat here with why I lead Literary London. It's a little bit, I could see how it seems a little bit random, why London, why specifically there? I get asked all the time, are you going to ever lead a trip in another place? And my short answer to that is I hope so. I want to go above and beyond to other places and lead trips there. But ultimately I started with London. I mentioned this a little bit, for practical reasons, it's a very easy city to get around that we share a common language so we don't have the language barrier, but also because I just genuinely really love it there for all the reasons we've said in this episode. On the trip last year, which was a beta trip, as my deciding, do I even want to do this again? It hit me that one of my favorite

things both in my writing and in this trip leading is that I love hosting meaningful conversations in meaningful places. That's ultimately what it comes down to. We can talk about our work as storytellers, as writers or even our work as entrepreneurs or as people who just value good storytelling. We could talk about that through social media or we could even talk about that in person and across the dinner table. But we could also talk about that sitting on the grass in Oxford, with Christ Church right next to us and the river going by as we watch people on their boats and we can be thinking about this is exactly what it was like more or less when some of the greatest storytellers we know we're working on their stories or we could be sitting in St James Park, sitting around in chairs talking about what our experience is like here overlooking Buckingham Palace and asking what's our place in the world and why does our work matter?

I love hosting those meaningful conversations specifically in meaningful places. Really and truly it comes down to in person trumping screens every time for me. I place such a high value on in person time that there is nothing Instagram or YouTube or even a zoom based webinar can do to replace face to face time where we are sharing the same meal together and we are talking about what's going on in real time.

With that I really have grown to appreciate small groups. There's a place maybe for large gatherings like a conference or even larger trips, but I've really grown to love small groups both in my own work, like when it comes to teaching, I prefer small groups of our big huge arenas, but small groups really do lead to actual friendships. These sorts of trips and gatherings and experiences we do together, this can be continued on when we go home versus a 3000 plus person conference, which you can break up into and find your friends but it's harder to do. But when you're in a small group setting like that and you share an experience, that's gonna stick with you lifelong and it's not just entertaining, you're not just sitting there watching, you're actually on the ground interacting with it and these experiences change you. Really and truly, I love sharing how I travel with others and that's my framework for Literary London. We give everybody a free day in the middle of the week because I have grown to appreciate both downtime when I need it and also just alone time, traveling. There's something that really stretches us when we decide I'm going to go here by myself and see if I can do it. To me London is a really safe way to do that. The train system is fantastic. There's so many great day trips and so those of you who have never traveled internationally before, you can get your feet wet in a place like this and learn how to just make your own plans and just try something new and it's relatively easy. That's one of my favorite things about leading this trip.

Andrea: [54:20](#) I love that. I think that this whole idea of this Literary London trip in this small group is such an awesome idea. I remember when I first heard about it,

last year was your first trip, right? I'm just thinking that's the most incredible idea. Who wouldn't want to do something like that? Like you said, I've never been a big conference person either or like a huge group sort of thing, but to be a part of just a smaller group sharing all these experiences, having those conversations, that just sounds awesome. I totally hope you do more of these in the future.

Tsh: [54:49](#) Based on the interest I've gotten, I think we'll just keep doing these forever and ever. The first trip we went on I just had an email list open saying, hey, if you're interested in knowing when the next one is, let me know. We got 1200 people, which is fantastic. But I really like to take about six people at a time. You can do the math there of how often we'll have to do this drip.

Andrea: I did have a question about that real quick. I know you bring people from the US when you go over there, but last time you also had a meetup, like you were saying with some of readers and listeners that are over in the UK. Is that something that's gonna keep being a part of the trip?

Tsh: [55:26](#) I don't know yet and honestly, we haven't set anything in stone yet for this one. The reason we really did it for the first one was because the type of people we invited were other people who had internet based work. They were podcasters or writers. There was interest in meeting people beyond just me. But I love reader and listener meetups so much. I'm going to just actually say by the time this airs, we will have decided whether we're going to have a meetup. If we do, it'll be in the show notes. I will also say it's not just Americans who go, this year, we've got an Australian going, so that'll be fun. It's fun that we can be even more global like that and get together in a small place so it really is open to anybody worldwide.

[56:22](#) You can find Andrea at [AndreaDebbink.com](http://AndreaDebbink.com) and on Instagram at [@andrea.debbink](https://www.instagram.com/andrea.debbink) and to keep up with me, I'm on Twitter [@Tsh](https://twitter.com/Tsh) and Instagram [@TshOxenreider](https://www.instagram.com/TshOxenreider). Of course, at [theartofsimple.net](http://theartofsimple.net) where you can find my writing as well as Andrea's. Head to the show notes of this episode number 200 at [thesimpleshow.com](http://thesimpleshow.com) or you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about where you can sign up for my weekly email called five quick things. As I mentioned at the top of this episode, how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few dollars a month as well as how to connect with Andrea and myself. The show is produced by Chad Michael Snavely and Jesse Montonya and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink and my furry intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.