



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 219

thesimplershow.com

Segment One

Tsh: [00:04](#) This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

[00:10](#) Hey friends, I have got a good chat for you today. In this episode, I'm talking with my friend Nicole Bennett, whom I have known for years and writes here and there on *The Art of Simple*, usually about books and reading. She's got a fantastic Bookstagram account and she particularly loves reading young adult, YA. In this chat, we talk about why so many adults like us love to read YA, what it is about that genre we're drawn to. She also makes tons of good recommendations for dipping your toes into the YA waters as an adult reader. And then I share a list of adult book recommendations for teens who love to read, but these are books that are written for adults yet are appropriate enough and potentially interesting enough for teen readers. We'll get right into all this but always quick reminder to make sure you're signed up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things because it is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode of this show or anything else that we put out. Basically you get links to five things from the week I either created or loved plus occasional news you'd otherwise miss because I don't share it anywhere else. These emails can be read in under a minute because I hate inbox clutter too. Go to fivequickthings.com to sign up for the free weekly email or just click on the links in the show notes of this episode. Alrighty, so let's get into it. Here's Nicole chatting with me about why so many adults are drawn to reading YA.

[01:33](#) Nicole, I've known you for quite awhile and I know the thing that you and I share probably more than anything else is our love of reading. I love that you wrote a post about the different ways you've spring-boarded off your reading hobby and taken it to the next level besides just reading the books, which is enough in itself. You do all these other things like you run a Bookstagram account and you listen to the podcast about books and you go to author events, all that great stuff that you wrote about. But I wanted to have you on in particular because you are my YA go to person and that's a lot of what your Bookstagram account focuses on. Tell me a little bit about your thoughts about why you love reading YA as much as you do as an adult.

Nicole: [02:14](#) It's funny because I do read, over half the books I read are usually YA and I'm drawn to the stories, the characters. I think there's an element of nostalgia. I wrote a post quite awhile ago on Art of Simple where I talked to some reader friends and I was trying to figure out what is it that we adults like about YA and it does seem like there's a general nostalgia for all of us having been teenagers at one time and some people appreciate that some of them are lighter, sometimes less dark and graphic. They still can deal with heavy topics, but a lot of times with a lighter tone and I just tend to get immersed in YA stories quicker than I do in adult stories. I don't know why that is? Maybe I'm more in touch with my inner teenager. I like reading about that time period when people are figuring out who they want to be and what they want to do. I think partly because I still feel like that even as a 38 year old, I still feel like I'm figuring out who I am and what I want to be.

Tsh: Right. How old is your oldest now? I can't remember.

Nicole: She's 12 and a half.

Tsh: You've almost got a teenager in the house. Does she read YA at all?

Nicole: She is just starting to dip her toes in a little bit here and there. She's a big reader and still really enjoys the juvenile fiction middle grade novels, but I think she's starting to head that direction.

Tsh: [03:38](#) Okay. That's a fun stage when you can start legitimately, I mean, I like reading middle grade a ton.

Nicole: Yeah. So do I.

Tsh: But there is something really fun about getting to share YA together with your own kid and get to actually have real conversations because you actually like the book as opposed to you're reading it because it's primarily targeted for your own kids. When you do read aloud as a family or when you're listening to an audio book, even if you totally like the book and it's a children's book, you're still listening to it or reading it because it's for them. You're not choosing an adult book cause you know that they won't like it. Whereas when you start having a YA reader in the house, it's like no, no, we both actually want to do this and now we can talk about it. It's a really fun stage to be in.

Nicole: [04:17](#) Yeah. Even with Harry Potter, which crosses over into that, my nine year old son is actually reading book seven right now, which is technically YA and it's fun to see him going into that realm of something that I really love and I love for myself, like you said, not just because I'm reading it with them.

Tsh: I think that's one of the huge appeals of Harry Potter to me. I didn't read it until I was an adult. I mean they didn't come out until I was an adult which maybe dates me, but I didn't read it for a while after they came out. I love that that's something that we can legitimately share as a family. It's not just me putting up with something kid like and enduring it like the way we do sometimes with kid shows or kid trope like book series. We legitimately all love this.

I totally relate to what you said about why you like YA because you still feel like that inner teen maybe figuring out who she wants to be in life or what she cares about. I'm curious why we think we might outgrow that at some point. I hear from so many people that we all sort of feel that way, that there's a person in us that still feels alive. I don't know if you have this Nicole, where you're walking along and you realize you're the adult here and you know that you're just making things up and hoping it works.

Nicole: Yeah. I feel the same way. Are there people that just feel like they've made it and they're adults and they know everything's going right in their life? I don't know.

Tsh: I think back to, I remember when my parents were my age, my parents had me when they were young and so they already had adult kids when they were my current age. I can look back and think, oh my gosh, I really thought they knew what they were doing. And they might have, but I'll bet you more than anything that they were feeling very similar to me, still trying to figure out how life works and just hoping they don't screw it up, really.

Nicole: I look back nostalgically because I feel like I had a thankfully really great childhood and my adolescents was a time that I really enjoy it. I really liked high school. I think even if you don't have that experience, if you look back and it was maybe a traumatic time or somebody that I asked about when I wrote that post said that it reminded her of how books were a safe haven for her in that time. That's where the nostalgia comes in for her was that it's not that she remembers back to everything being so great and wonderful, but she remembers books being a safe haven and so when she goes back into that literary space and reads those books again, she gets that nostalgic feeling again.

Tsh: Oh, I really like that. I can completely see what she means when I think about particular books. I can be specifically in a particular corner in my room reading that book and that feeling of security does come on me. I have a one kid in particular who loves to reread the same books again and again. Part of me has this thing of like, oh my gosh, there's so much great stuff out there. Why are you rereading it? But then I realized so much of why he reads is security, he loves going back to Hogwarts and because that feels like a second home when he reads about that place. I can actually read a little bit into how he's doing. It almost feels like a barometer by what he's reading. If he's reading something

new, he's feeling okay and secure with himself in the real world. But when I see him pick up the Harry Potter book and at this point, he knows the series so well, he'll just randomly grab book five and read it, open it in the middle and just start reading a few chapters. That tells me a little bit like, okay, he's kind of stressed or he's feeling a little overwhelmed by the world and he just wants to escape for a little bit and that's totally okay. I love that about reading. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it feels like in YA there's a lot of series, like we see Harry Potter one through seven. The Hunger Games. Twilight. There's a lot better choices than that. Those are just what comes to my mind. There's a lot of series. Is that true?

Nicole: Yeah, I think it is. That's one of the reasons why I also like it because I have a tendency to latch onto characters and not want to say goodbye to them. I love it when I'm in a series and I get to keep going. I don't love it when I accidentally read a series that's not finished being published yet and then I have to wait.

Tsh: Right then you have to wait. We have no patience anymore.

Nicole: I know. But I think that's a really popular aspect of YA books is that there are so many great series and you really can get into the fandom and really immerse yourself in a world for more than just 250 pages.

Tsh: [08:52](#) That's actually true. When I think of adult books, there's only a handful I can think of that are actual series and they're probably not as die hard, loyal. I mean I guess they could be, but I don't know. They just don't feel as connected as maybe a YA series with a start and finish story and a culmination. That's interesting.

Nicole: Yeah, that's true. Or like a series of books that could hypothetically be stand-alones but they just are the same world or character. But you feel like you get a lot more of those concurrent stories in YA than you do an adult.

Tsh: Very interesting. I hadn't thought of that.

I will say another reason I particularly like reading YA as an adult is that now that I'm a high school teacher and now that I have a teen, I feel like there's an inner teen in me, but I also remember how much I've grown up whenever I'm around teens, yet I can remember feeling that way. So maybe I don't necessarily feel that way anymore, but I sure as heck remember feeling that angst or that concern or that this thing is a huge issue in my life feeling, whenever I overhear my students talking about that, when my daughter talks about it, and then when I immersed myself in the world of these books, it's like, oh yeah, this is what it's like to be a teen. It softens my heart toward that demographic so it keeps me from being one of those get off my lawn adults. You know what I mean?

Nicole: Yes, absolutely. I feel like that too. It's funny because I feel like in high school, I didn't really read YA. There wasn't that in the 90s that wasn't particularly categorized like that. I mean I read *The Outsiders*, which is maybe one of the first arguably YA books and a few other things. But it wasn't until I was in college that the genre itself category was starting to be formed. Then that's when I got that perspective of, oh, I remember feeling like this not that long ago. Then that's carried me on and I feel the same way. I feel like it connects us to now a younger generation and it keeps us young. Like you said, we don't become as old and crotchety when we're immersed in that world in books. I think it definitely helps us engage with the younger demographic.

Tsh: And I feel like YA books actually still do a good job of talking about deeper things or maybe societal wide issues that aren't just what teens deal with. They are maybe what we all deal with. But from a teen's perspective, I can think of some books that deal with racism or the immigration issue. I don't know if you've read *The Sun is Also a Star*? That's one that comes back to me. Tate and I both read that and we had great conversations about race and and immigration and things like that, and yet it still had that teen twist on it so it didn't feel quite as, I don't want to say it didn't feel heavy because it definitely did, but to add that storytelling aspect of it and a storytelling from a 17 year old just felt a little more grounded and down to earth than theoretical the way we can be as adults about big picture issues. You know what I mean? It put a face to a name.

Nicole: [11:54](#) Yeah, absolutely. I feel like when people snub their noses at YA or would think it's beneath them, I think they're missing out for that reason. That there are great topics, great issues being discussed in that literature. But yes, with maybe a little bit of a lighter tone, it's a little bit more digestible maybe. Obviously teens are going through these issues and experiences just like adults are. I don't think we should discount their experiences with these topics which I think it would be easy to do if we just only read adult perspectives on these things.

Tsh: That's right. Yeah. I love that about YA.

Now that we've explained why you and I are YA readers as adults, I'd love for you to maybe give some book recommendations perhaps for someone listening who thinks, okay, I'm now going to give it a try or I'm still not convinced. Can you give us some actual recommendations that we can put in the show notes for people to give YA a shot, especially if they haven't tried it yet?

Nicole: [12:50](#) Yes, this is the fun part. For starters, we've talked about engaging with youth culture and I think that's a really the best place to start. If you want to dip your toes into YA for the first time or go back to that if it's been awhile. I think the easiest place to start is anything that is being made into a movie or into a Netflix show is a great place to start because that's what everybody's reading

and watching. *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* is fantastic and swoony and fun and just a great story. They're still making I think the second movie comes out soon and then they're making the third one, there's three books.

Tsh: [13:35](#) There's three books? Okay. Tate's read them all. I have not read any of them, but she tells me they are delightful.

Nicole: And of course I'm always of the mindset, usually, with very few exceptions that the book is always better than the movie. If you like these movies, then of course go back to the book and you're sure to be even more delighted. Another fun one was *Dumplin'* and that's a Netflix movie. That was a really cute book. I think it has a sequel, which I haven't read the sequel, so that's a cute one. You mentioned *The Sun is Also a Star*. That's one of my all time favorite YA novels. I haven't seen the movie yet though. I've heard good things about it though. Then along the vein of the issues being present would be *The Hate You Give*, which is fantastic.

Tsh: [14:25](#) I have not yet read that and I want to, it's on my TBR list. I think I'm on hold forever at the library for that one. I might just need to buy it.

Nicole: Probably, it's so good. I haven't seen the movie yet of that one either but the book was really engrossing and just moving. There's a lot of John Green options. His books are so fun and smart and you can definitely see some movies while you're at it. *Looking for Alaska* is coming out soon. That's one of the ones of his that I really liked. If you like fantasy, *The Grisha Trilogy Book Series*, by Leigh Bardugo, are being made into a Netflix show right now. They just released the cast. It's a complicated world with a trilogy and then a duology. The main ones are *Six of Crows* and *Crooked Kingdom* are the more recent popular ones. Then before that was a trilogy that started with I think *Shadow and Bone*.

Tsh: I've seen that one. I know what you're talking about now.

Nicole: Those are all in the same world and then they're creating the Netflix series about the whole world and they're really, really well done. Really good stories with a magic system that's really interesting. She's a crossover author, also. She just had an adult novel come out, fantasy.

Tsh: Who's she?

Nicole: Leigh Bardugo.

Tsh: Okay. Got it.

Nicole: So that's another thought that came to my mind was maybe try an author that is a crossover writer, who writes adult and YA. Rainbow Rowell is probably the best

example of that that I could come up with. Her books are just wonderful whether they're for young adults or adults. I feel like an adult can easily enjoy both.

Tsh: That's true.

Nicole: Another is Julie Buxbaum, which I think you've read?

Tsh: I love books. I actually read her first and then recommended them to Tate, so that was very fun. What does say her more well known one is *Tell Me Three Things*, but actually liked *What To Say Next* a little bit better. I loved both.

Nicole: So good. I just read her her third young adult book, *Hope and Other Punchlines*, which actually is about 911 and she's definitely not afraid to go into issues and and deeper topics, but they still have that lightness to them while tackling these deeper issues. Her other books as well. It's grief and there's a character, I can't remember in *What To Say Next*, what's going on with the boy character?

Tsh: Yes. I can't remember his name.

Nicole: Yeah, just some different issues that are tackled really nicely.

Veronica Roth also, she's well known for *Divergent*, but she has a brand new book in the adult market of short stories that just came out too. Another crossover.

Tsh: I was going to ask you about sci-fi. This is a genre that I feel like as an adult I've only just dipped my toes in the past few years because I've written it off as not for me until I started reading some adult sci-fi like *Dark Matter* by Blake Crouch and I just loved that. I was told, a friend of the pod who has been on a lot, Kendra Adachi, loves sci-fi and her all time favorite series is called *Red Rising*. Have you read that before?

Nicole: No, but it's on my TBR. I've heard really good things about it. I feel the same way about sci-fi. I had totally written that off when I heard you talking about that on one of your recent podcasts episodes. I felt like, yes, she's saying what I would say. For me it was YA that got me interested in sci-fi. My first series I read was *The Lunar Chronicles*, which I think you and Tate have read, right?

Tsh: Yes.

Nicole: My daughter brought home *Cinder* from the school library. That's the first real YA book and she's not into sci-fi at all. I said go ahead and try it. It's not what you think it's going to be. She hasn't started it yet, but I just loved that series and that was, I would say things to my husband, I'm reading this fairy tale about a cyborg and he just side-eyed me, that's not your normal thing.

Tsh: It's not what you think.

Nicole: It's so good. One of my all time favorite series, no matter what genre or category is *The Illuminae Files* by Amie Kaufman & Jay Kristoff. That is just the super fun sci-fi romp with a rag tag team of cast of characters and very sci-fi, it's in space. I would not have expected to have loved it as much as I did. That was a really fun one.

Tsh: Nice. I have not read that yet.

Nicole: Oh my gosh. It's so good. Then I guess dystopian also falls into sci-fi and I feel like that's a little bit more easily accessible. In fact, I read *The Hunger Games* when I was in nursing my now eight year old and that was my foray back into reading for fun. I got sucked into *The Hunger Games* and loved it.

Tsh: I love that.

Nicole: I dressed up as Katniss a couple of years ago for Halloween. Dystopian is really mainstream but really popular in the YA genre in recent years. I feel like people say dystopian is dead, but I disagree with that.

Tsh: Which I think is so interesting what that must say about the YA mindset or just the teen mindset that dystopia is so attractive when you're a teenager. This alternate universe where everything is different and you are in survival mode and it's often up to the teen to save the planet. I love that stuff.

Nicole: [20:12](#) Yeah. Another really well done series that took me by surprise is *Scythe*. Have you read that by Neil Shusterman?

Tsh: Tate read it this summer. Tate read it and could not put it down. She devoured it and said it was so good.

Nicole: Yeah. I was completely shocked by how much I liked it and how sucked into that world I was. The second book I just flew through and then was horrified to come to the end and find out that there was no publication date yet for the third book.

Tsh: Oh, that's the worst.

Nicole: Now it's coming out next month and I'm thrilled. I can't wait for that one. That was definitely one that I wasn't expecting to like.

A mystery series that I have loved and highly recommend is the Charlotte Holmes series.

Tsh: Yes. I've seen that in our library and I haven't picked it up. I love mystery and Tate is not as drawn to it, but I want to give that to her to give her a little taste of mystery to see if maybe this will change her mind because I've heard it's great.

Nicole: I think you need to read it. I think you would love it. You are a fan of Sherlock, right?

Tsh: I loved Sherlock so much.

Nicole: This is a retelling of Sherlock Holmes it's gender swapped. Charlotte is the Sherlock character and then Jamie Watson is the Watson character and they are supposedly the great, great grandchildren or something of the real Sherlock and Watson and it's so creative. It's told that part of it is a little tongue in cheek. They say that, I'm blanking on his name, the real author of Sherlock Holmes. Anyways, he's the literary agent instead of the author them being fictional novels. He's the literary agent of the real Sherlock Holmes that wrote these books years ago.

Tsh: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Nicole: There we go. I knew he had a sir in his name.

Tsh: Right. So, and now they're the descendants.

Nicole: They're the descendants, they're at a boarding school and they're going to start solving crimes together. So good.

Tsh: That sounds completely up my alley. I'm going to have to put that on hold at the library.

Nicole: Then the other genre I wanted to mention was historical fiction and historical fantasy, which I personally got burnt out on historical fiction. I feel like there was a couple of years where I read too many World War II novels that were fantastic, but I just got burned out on it. Then recently in YA I started giving a couple things to try. There's not as much historical fiction in YA I feel like, but one that I really liked was *Olivia Twist*, which is a retelling of *Oliver Twist*, which I don't even really know the story of super well just the basics, but I've never read it. It was really captivating and instead of *Oliver Twist*, it's *Olivia*, so it's about a girl. Historical fantasy is an interesting idea and genre that I had never really read. But there's a book called *My Lady Jane*, have you read that?

Tsh: Never even heard of it.

Nicole: It's by three authors, Cynthia Hand, Brodi Ashton and Jodi Meadows. They also wrote one called *My Plain Jane*, which is a retelling of *Jane Eyre*. I feel like you would like that one, but I haven't read that yet because I have not read *Jane*

Eyre yet. It's on my lifetime TBR. But *My Lady Jane* is about the Tudors and we had just gone through this period in history with my kids. But instead of it being the Protestants and the Catholics that are butting heads, and this sounds so weird, you just have to go with it. It's people who turn into animals without meaning to and people that don't. It is so hilarious. It is so funny. It's so well-researched. The characters that are historical figures, are morphed into these obviously different imaginings of them but it is so well done, so funny. They have another one coming out that's about the wild west that I just saw the cover release for about another Jane in history. I can't remember the title but so just really creative and that's the other thing I feel like YA authors do well is creative retelling. Fresh spin on things which can be so fun.

Tsh: Which by the way the book three, it looks like it's called *My Calamity Jane*.

Nicole: [24:35](#) There you go. Yes.

Tsh: Set in 1876. Yeah, that's very cool. I love that kind of stuff too. I feel like maybe teens because they're more open to creativity or just thinking outside the box. It doesn't have to be based on reality, that there is a lot more twisting of ideas that stand on its head that you have to suspend belief in order to read. That's part of what makes reading great is I'm all about reading realistic books. I think there is just as much value in that, but sometimes it's fun to read really and truly to escape in a healthy way and YA is so great for that.

Segment Two

Tsh: [28:41](#) I am such a big believer in adults reading YA but I'm also a bit of a believer in teens reading adult books that are appropriate and really make them think and stand the test of time. I thought it'd be fun just to piggyback onto everything that you suggested and just toss out a few adult books that are good for a teen. Now I have to say that every teen is different. Reading preferences are different obviously, but I still feel the need to say that because I am a little bit reticent to share all this and say teens would love this and then to get some message from someone saying, I can't believe you suggested that, my teen had nightmares or that had that had some language on it. Just know in this list of suggestions, your mileage may vary. This is what works for me and my teen daughter, but you know your kid best, proceed with caution.

Obviously there's the classics and I talk about this a lot on the pod, so I'm not gonna really harp on why classics are good, listen to previous podcasts related to books if you want to hear me talk about why classics are great, a few that are perhaps more attractive to teens though I think they shouldn't just stick with these are *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl*, *A Separate Peace* is really teen centric. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *A Raisin in the Sun*. *The*

Great Gatsby, even though that's not about teens, I think teens still gravitate to that story. *Night* by Elie Wiesel and *Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger. That's like the epitome of a classic teen angsty novel that I actually didn't love. But teens sometimes they either love or hate it. I didn't love it even as a teen, but a lot of teens do you like it. That's all I'm gonna say about classics.

Nicole: My 12 year old just read *Little Women*, which I was surprised because it's so big and wordy and I just reread it a couple of years ago and I realized I'd never read the full version. I'd only read the abridged one as a kid, but she read the full one and she loved it.

Tsh: That is a great suggestion. I hadn't even thought of that. I'm going to add that to the show notes along with everything else we suggested because that is so good. What I think makes a great classic book that draws teens in particular is when the protagonists are around their age. There's plenty of examples and if you're listening, I'm sure you're thinking, why haven't you said X, Y, and Z and you can hear me talk about why I love *Jane Eyre* or why I love these other great books. There's plenty of them with young people in them. If you're not sure if you want to get your kid interested in reading classics and aren't sure where to begin, check out a few of these mentioned or just see which ones do have a teen protagonist because there's a little bit more to identify with I guess when you start in that age range.

A few more modern books that I think are fantastic for teens, even if they're not maybe written for teens, one is *Peace Like a River*, by Leif Enger. Did you ever read that?

Nicole: No, I haven't read it.

Tsh: Okay. One of my, I would say in my top 10. It's in my top 10 of all time favorite books that is so beautifully written. The story will stay with you for months after reading it. So well done. Another one, and I don't think this doesn't have a teen as a protagonist, but I think it's still engaging is *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Anne Shaffer. It's so good. It's easy to read. There's a Netflix movie that it doesn't entirely stay true to it, but it's still fun. I liked watching it but the book is definitely better. My teen really liked it. *The Outsiders*, which you mentioned earlier by S.E. Hinton. This is a classic, so I guess I could possibly have mentioned it earlier, published in 1967.

Nicole: I thought it was funny that you put it as an adult.

Tsh: Where are you going to say a teen wrote it?

Nicole: Yeah. I call this YA book, I call it the foundational YA book written by a teen written about teens, but it definitely tackled some heavy issues.

Tsh: I could see an adult liking it just as much. It does deal with heavy issues. Obviously there's that one movie that I remember watching 500 times in the 80s because of the certain boys that were in it. It's a great book and I think it just is even better knowing that it's written by a teen. I think she was in high school when she wrote it.

Nicole: I think she was 16. Yeah, it's amazing.

Tsh: Oh my gosh, so good. Speaking of, this might be YA it might not be. I am not sure. Another great rec is *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak.

Nicole: I've seen it marketed as YA.

Tsh: I'm not sure that's YA?

Nicole: I'm going to be honest, I started it and I DNF'd that, I couldn't get into the narrator, but I know people love it.

Tsh: Okay, that's fair enough. It took me a while to get into it. I would say halfway through, if you're not loving it, you can set it down. But I really loved it and I love books set in World War II.

Another one are books by Gabrielle Zevin. I'm not sure if I'm saying her last name right. The first one that I read of hers is *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*.

Nicole: So good.

Tsh: Yes, and the one that came out a few years ago, *Young Jane Young*, it's also good. I don't think I loved it as much as a A.J. Fikry but it was still really good. It gives you a lot to think about. I think there's a little bit of stuff that's maybe borderline, I don't want to say inappropriate. Just maybe a little more thematic for adults. It doesn't blatantly describe anything. It just talks a little bit about some adult themes in *Young Jane Young*. But *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry* is a delight. I loved that book. I don't think the kid ever reaches teen hood in that book.

Another great one is *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett because it gives you a lot to talk about. It's an easy read and you can talk about the racial divide that was just a few decades ago that we still deal with ramifications. Of course, there's an accompanying movie. I really enjoyed that book quite a bit. Tate has yet to read it, but I'm thinking I'm going to pass it onto her the next chance she has some free time to read in the midst of a school year.

Another good one, did you read Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi?

Nicole: I haven't, but I know a lot of people love it.

Tsh: Oh my gosh. This was a book that it took me a while to get into as well, in fact, I put it down for awhile and then picked it back up whenever it came to be my turn again at the library and then I could not stop reading it. It was so good. In fact, I think so far it's my favorite read of this particular year. It came out a few years ago. I think it's still my favorite of my personal reads. I'm going to say there's some heavy themes in it. You have to know your teen. I would say I'm gonna wait a few years till Tate is older to read it. But I loved it so much. I almost feel like it's required reading for young adults because it really, she does such a good job of helping you understand the black American experience because of our history. It starts off in, I want to say the 16th century or maybe 17th century, I forget, in Africa, in West Africa, what is now Ghana and every chapter is a self contained short story where you do see past characters showing up, but it's in the same family tree. The next chapter is the generation one step closer to the present day. It starts off in the 17th century and it ends in the present day with one family tree. I don't want to say much more than that because it is so profoundly good, but it really, really makes you think. I can't stop thinking about that book. It is so good. I want Tate to read it in the next few years.

Nicole: Yeah, that sounds really good.

Tsh: Another good one that is in that sci-fi, maybe not sci-fi, more dystopian realm, is a Station Eleven by Emily St John Mandel. Did you ever read that?

Nicole: Yes. So good.

Tsh: I adored that book. Tate has yet to read it still, but I'm gonna pass it onto her probably maybe in a year or two still. It's not because there's super heavy themes, but just because it's a slow burn.

Nicole: That's was what I was going to say. The pacing might be a little slow, right. For a younger reader, unless they're used to reading more literary [inaudible].

Tsh: [36:34](#) Exactly. This is more literary dystopian and I really loved it, but it did take me awhile to get into it and I think she will like it eventually, but I think she's going to need to be a few years more mature just as a reader, but not because the content itself. That was another book that I thought about for months afterwards.

The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern.

Nicole: I think I've heard people say that might be YA or might not be, I don't know. What are your thoughts on that? I haven't read it.

Tsh: Yes, I know. Actually before we talked, I actually Googled, "Is The Night Circus YA?" and that's what I saw, people talking about it and no one coming to a definitive conclusion. But it's really good. I think one of the reasons it might be is because the protagonists are teenagers but I'm not quite sure it is. It's really well done. If you like fantasy that is based in our own world, which I do. It's that sub genre called trans realism. This is a great example of it. There is some magic in it, but it's not set on a whole other planet or a make believe world. Very well done.

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie and the whole Flavia de Luce series. I don't know if I'm saying Flavia? Have you read it?

Nicole: No. But those look really cute covers.

Tsh: Yes, by Alan Bradley. Tate hasn't read these either because they are mysteries and I want to get her to actually want to read mysteries before I give these to her. They're really well done, fun, I guess you could call it lighthearted stories. The protagonist, she's 11 years old, so she is a kid. She is basically the detective here in this series and they're just so fun. She's got this interest in chemistry, which leads her to being interested in poison. It's hard to explain really, but she's kinda got that rebellious streak that kids are drawn to yet she's one of the good guys. It's really fun.

Then just to wrap it up, *The Thursday Next* series by Jasper Fforde. It's on my shelf because I got him this past summer at a used bookstore. But I have not started them, but I hear they're great. I hear teens like them too. Have you read them?

Nicole: Are those the ones that reference like Jane Austen, in the titles and stuff?

Tsh [38:53](#) Yes.

Nicole: Okay. Those look really appealing to me.

Tsh: Me too, like *The Eyre Affair* is one of them, so I've heard they're great. They're TBR for me literally on my shelf. Another book that might be borderline classified as a classic and it actually probably is YA I'm not sure, but it's *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, written either late seventies early eighties something like that, but it's very well done and we're going to read it in our English class this year. It's actually the last book we're reading to close out the year. It's just fantastic. I'll put a link to that in the show notes.

Nicole: I feel like I read that in school. My daughter actually just picked that up. She wanted to read that book.

Tsh: Perfect. Oh, so good. I'll have to hear what she thinks.

Now I'm going to link also to a Twitter thread, I asked recently for ideas from Twitter followers what are good adult books that aren't necessarily classics, but teens would like and there's some really good suggestions besides the one I mentioned. I haven't read them all, but I still want you to have reference to them if you're curious beyond what I think. Those are the suggestions I have.

Nicole, I love talking books and I love talking to you.

Nicole: Likewise.

Tsh: This was such a fun excuse to catch up and hear what you're reading and as always you can find everything we mentioned in the show notes along with how to connect with me and Nicole, thanks so much for chatting. It was really fun.

Nicole: Thanks for having me.

Tsh: [40:18](#) You can find Nicole at nicolevbennett.com that's Bennett with two N's and two T's as well as on Instagram @nicoleviolabooks. To keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @tsh and Instagram @tshoxenreider and of course at theartofsimple.net where you can find my writing. Head to the show notes of this episode number 219 at thesimpleshow.com where 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 and how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few bucks a month. The show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely, Tyler Huckabee, and Jessie 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.