

YA Café Podcast
Episode 39: 2018 Recommendation Round-Up Pt. 2
27 Dec 2018

Danielle: 00:00 Welcome to the YA Cafe where we share conversations about books for teachers, readers, and caffeine addicts everywhere. On today's episode, we'll be joined by friends of the podcast to give you part two of our 2018 recommendation roundup. Grab a mug of your favorite beverage friends Let's talk books.

Music: 00:16 Music

Ad: 00:21 Have you tried the RadioPublic app? It's a great app where you can find all of your favorite podcasts like this one. You'll experience the same great content for free and we'll receive a small kickback every time you listen there. This is a great way to support any podcasts you enjoy. Come find us over on RadioPublic.

Amanda: 00:43 Welcome y'all. Today's episode will be a little different. We've called up some of our writer, reader, and teacher friends to make some recommendations of books we didn't cover this year on the podcast. We did part one of this episode last week and if you haven't gotten a chance to listen yet, there are some great recommendations on there too. I'm Amanda Thrasher.

Danielle: 00:59 I'm Danielle Hall and 8th and 9th grade English teacher and I blog at teachnouvelle.com . We've got a great mix of recommendations ahead, so hold on tight. You can find links to these titles and more information about our guests in our show notes, and as always, if you're a teacher or librarian, we've got ideas for using these books in the classroom.

Amanda: 01:19 Our first recommendation comes from our friend and bookstagrammer Anna. You can join us on several past episodes including our episodes on Mondays Not Coming and Children of Blood and Bone.

Anna: 01:28 Hey bookworms, Its Anna also known as hayinas7 on Instagram, and my book recommendation this year would be the Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo. The stories is about a young Dominican American girl named Xiomara who is trying to find her voice in this world and pretty much figure out where she fits in. Xiomara comes from a background where her mom is a devout Catholic and pretty much won't allow her to deviate outside of her faith as well as her culture. So, Xiomara finds refuge in writing poems and is eventually invited to be part of her school poetry club. The only problem that she has there is that poetry club conflicts with their time on confirmation classes, so Xiomara is trying to figure out how she's able attend poetry clubs so that way she can find the outlet that she needs and

not get in trouble for not attending her confirmation classes. This book is absolutely amazing. I myself, being a child of immigrant parents know exactly what Xiomara went through, is very difficult when your parents try to hold you to something that you truly don't feel or can connect to. This book is just absolutely amazing. I cannot praise it enough. It won the National Book Award or finalist this year, is a New York Times best seller. I highly recommend this book if you do so listened to by audio. I normally don't recommend audio books, but this one is like an absolute must because the author herself is the narrator and Elizabeth has a background in slam poetry, so if you don't even know who Elizabeth, I recommend that you go find her videos on YouTube and just listened to her. She's absolutely amazing! Every time I hear her, she just brings chills to me and this book is probably my top YA read this year, so if you get a chance to check it out. Thanks, bye!

Amanda: 03:35 Thanks Anna! Again you can follow her on Instagram @hayinas7.

Music: 03:44 Music

Danielle: 03:47 Do you want to support this podcast and check out a book we just recommended audible is offering YA Cafe listeners a free audio book download with a free 30 day trial to give you the opportunity to check out their service. Elizabeth Acevedo narrates the audio book for The Poet X and this works out great because it is truly the best listening experience you could have for that novel is to hear her narrate it in her own voice.

Amanda: 04:12 She has an incredible reading voice.

Danielle: 04:13 Yeah, We were able to hear her read at the PDXBookFest and I could listen to her all day long.

Amanda: 04:19 Definitely.

Danielle: 04:20 So can you to download your free audio book today. Go to audibletrial.com/yacafe *Music

Danielle: 04:36 Erin Callahan. Welcome back to the YA Cafe Podcasts.

Erin: 04:40 Yay! I am so excited to be here. Thank you for inviting me on your end of year show.

Danielle: 04:46 I'm so excited. I really listen to our episode When Life Gives You Demons and you're just charming. So, we want another book recommendation from you, but first, can you tell me a little about your Halloween party? *Laughter I saw some pictures Instagram.. *Laughter

Erin: 05:07 You stalking me online?

Amanda: 05:07 It's not weird. *Laughter

Danielle: 05:07 Only a little *Laughter

Erin: 05:07 Oh, my goodness. *Laughter

Erin: 05:09 Yes. Okay. So, for years, friends of mine who lived in Maine, I think this is actually number seven. They have held murder mystery Halloween parties..

Amanda: 05:18 And it's like all out. The costumes are amazing.

Erin: 05:22 Oh yeah, like every year people get more into it. So yeah, it's, it's reached peak. I think at this point in possibly though I next year could surprise me you just never know. But yeah, this past year it was fairy tale themed and my role was Cinderella's fairy Godmother. Cinderella had recently disappeared, so I was very concerned *Laughter and um snow white may have bitten the dust during the party. *Laughter

Amanda: 05:47 Snow had to die.

Erin: 05:49 There were several mysteries to be solved.

Danielle: 05:52 That is incredible. So, like who thinks up these things? Do you have like a creator?

Erin: 05:58 They actually purchase a package from the Interwebs *Laughter with a different theme every year though. Um, another friend of mine who is a writer, he and I have discussed possibly writing our own murder mystery to test out on the crowd.

Danielle: 06:16 That would be so cool!

Amanda: 06:19 That would be great!

Erin: 06:19 It would be amazing.

Danielle: 06:20 And Erin, you wrote a book that we still think about all the time.

Erin: 06:26 Awe!

Danielle: 06:27 Anytime there's a lock or a lock picking or anything, I'm just like, Oh, I read a book about this. *Laughter Yeah, so, how is that going for you? You wrote *The Art of Escaping* and we did an episode about it so everybody should listen to that and you're awesome. So how's your year been?

Erin: 06:45 It's been fantastic. Um, I got featured on a podcast. *Laughter Um, other very cool things have happened though. I'm one sort of amazing thing is an escape artist who gets mentioned in the book. Dorothy Dietrich actually reached out to my literary agent and was like, this book is cool want to do a thing together?. So, I got to go down to the Houdini Museum in Scranton, Pennsylvania and chat with her and we actually filmed a Q & A that is up on YouTube in case you're interested. *laughter

Danielle: 07:22 We will link it in our show notes.

Amanda: 07:22 That is incredible. What an awesome opportunity.

Danielle: 07:25 Yay!

Erin: 07:27 It was really cool. One other exciting thing because I am super vain and I google my name and book title every couple of weeks.

Amanda: 07:34 Of course.

Erin: 07:35 I scrolled upon a piece of fan fiction that had been written about the characters in my book.

Amanda: 07:41 Man! That is the dream fan fiction like!..

Erin: 07:44 Right! Like this is not going to get any better.

Danielle: 07:46 Alright Erin, what book have you brought to the YA Cafe today?

Erin: 07:52 I have one of my favorite books of 2018. It is *The Accidental Bad Girl* by Maxine Kaplan. I met her at the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in Denver and she described her book to me as a contemporary feminist retelling of *North by Northwest* and all of that and more. Um, there was a lot of talk about, you know, I can't wait for the books that are going to come out and like 2020 about girls who just burned the roll down. And I'm like, yes, we need those books, but also this one exists right now and we should all go read it. It is sort of a high school mar vibe in the vein of *Veronica Mars*, but maybe a little better. Yeah, it is truly clever and I am going to read one of my favorite lines from it. "What really killed me about this whole mess was that everything I was, everything I had ever been in athlete, honor student, class officer, friendly, smart, social responsible, funny had been wiped out in the second I'd had sex." So, it's positive, it's feminist, it's just so smart. So once again, *The Accidental Bad Girl* by Maxine Kaplan, everyone can check it out.

Danielle: 09:12 Awesome. Well we will definitely do that. *Music

- Danielle: 09:23 Our next guest is Chris Peck. He's a high school English teacher who you can follow us on Instagram @_hipsterteacher_ and he joined us on the episode for How I Resist
- Chris: 09:33 The book I would like to recommend for this year is Educated by Tara Westover. This is a memoir by Tara that talks about her growing up in Idaho to her parents who were both survivalists, very anti government, and didn't allow her to go to public school. Through the book she tells a lot of stories about growing up with her brothers and sisters and these parents that were adamantly against a lot of forms of education thinking that education was ran by the Illuminati to brainwash children, stuff like that was the reality that she grew up in. After her brother left for college, kind of rebelling against his parents. Tara eventually decided to do the same thing, learned and studied where she could at the library, often against her father's will, and was able to get a good score on the act, allowing her to go to the college BYU. From there, she began to learn about the world around her. It wasn't a BYU class on history that she asked what the Holocaust was having no idea that anything like that happened. She was incredibly ignorant at that point, but dedicated ourselves to her studies and eventually went on to learn at Cambridge and then at Harvard. She tells the story of becoming educated and learning that the way that she was raised prevented her from understanding a lot of basic things that we take for granted in the world. This book helped inspire me especially to want to become educated, to want to study and learn and grow not only as an educator myself, but in my own education. This is a book that I recommended constantly to a lot of my students and encourage them to read, to help inspire them to also become educated.
- Amanda: 11:31 Thanks for that recommendation Chris. I have heard a lot about that book and I'm really looking forward to reading it. *Music
- Amanda: 11:44 So next up we have our very good friend and wonderful author whose books we have talked about on the podcast before Hannah Moskowitz. Hi Hannah!
- Hannah: 11:54 Hi! Thanks for having me.
- Amanda: 11:55 Thanks for coming. So, we did an episode on your book that just came out Salt a couple of weeks ago, which we really, really loved.
- Danielle: 12:03 And we have previously mentioned not otherwise specified in our episode about creative types. So we're super excited to have you join us on the podcast.

Hannah: 12:14 Awe, well I'm so happy to be here. So, Salt came out, I think it was October 30th, October 29th or something like that. And I mean people already know about it because you guys talked about it. It's about a whole bunch of orphans who fights sea monsters.

Danielle: 12:27 The family business.

Hannah: 12:27 Yeah, the family business. It's supernatural at sea right? *Laughter So, it was fun to write because of the structure of it is like vignettes and short chapters and stuff like that. And Chronicle was a really great publisher for it because they do a lot with visual stuff and really thinking about the book as an object. So, the book has stuff like those pages that are black with the stars on them in between the chapters and then the casing of the book itself, If you take the cover off is black with those same stars on it, so it's just really pretty. They're the same publisher who did A History of Glitter and Blood.

Amanda: 12:56 Cause that's another one that's like the book itself is really beautiful too. Like they clearly put a lot of thought into it and we're like, how can we serve the story? And I think it's really good.

Danielle: 13:05 That is the first book that a publisher ever sent me.

Amanda: 13:08 A History of Glitter and Blood?

Danielle: 13:09 Yeah.

Hannah: 13:09 Oh that's so great. It was sold it in a two book deal with Glitter and Blood. I don't know if you guys talk a lot about how like how publishing works but.

Amanda: 13:17 Not really, I mean every now and then it comes up I think. We talked about it a lot with Emily Skrutskie when we were talking about Seafire and her experience publishing Hullmetal Girls specifically with regards to like the queerness and the book and like sometimes the difficulties with that.

Danielle: 13:32 Which like Hannah, have you had trouble publishing books with queer characters?

Hannah: 13:36 I've had trouble publishing books period, so I don't really know if I can blame the queer characters. Um, what sort of happens with publishing in my experience is if you have one book that doesn't sell great, that can really set you off on a track with determines the rest of your career. So, stores like Barnes and Noble, I don't know if this is common knowledge. There's one dude who decides what every single Barnes and Noble stocks in the children's section in the country. There's one dude.

Danielle: 14:04 Wow!

Hannah: 14:05 And its just weather or not he wants to stock it. It's him. So if he looks at your previous sales and he doesn't like it, or if you look at your book and literally, thinks, this book is too wide It's going to take up too much space on the shelf and I could fit two books here instead of one or if he just doesn't like your cover. A lot of people get their coverage change because the Barnes and Noble guy goes, I don't like this cover. And so they go back and they change it. If he decides that he doesn't want to stop you, that can determine your entire career from there on out. It's really scary.

Danielle: 14:32 So I will confess that we do a little bit of Guerrilla Marketing, which is when we go into Barnes and Noble will face all your books. *Laughter

Hannah: 14:41 Although people can get in trouble for that.

Danielle: 14:43 Not if they don't catch us.

Amanda: 14:44 Dun! Dun! Dun!

Danielle: 14:46 So Hannah, what do you have coming up next?

Hannah: 14:48 Oh, okay. So I think it's going to be next year. It might not be till 2020. You know how publishing is. Its title title right now, It will change almost definitely is Sick Kids in Love and it's a really

happy, traditionally structured romance between these two teenagers who each have different chronic illnesses and nobody's going to die in it and they're going to end up happening together at the end. So what I always say about this as I'm not reinventing the wheel, I am giving the wheel to people who have not had the wheel before. So this is all of the fluffy, like exciting, lovely romance stuff that you love with no bad surprises..

Danielle: 15:22 Right.

Hannah: 15:22 ...giving characters who don't usually get to have it.

Danielle: 15:24 We talked about this in Baltimore because this is like your answer to *The Fault in Our Stars*.

Hannah: 15:31 It absolutely is. Yeah.

Danielle: 15:32 Like a rebuttal.

Hannah: 15:33 I think it's going to mean a lot to kids with chronic illnesses because what I realized was there's a lot of books with sick characters in them and I was reading one recently and I was really upset about it because I was thinking this book was not written for sick kids. The people who wrote this book and we're involved in the publication of this book, never considered sick kids are going to read this book too. Because they weren't being thought about. It was about a sick kid being used as a vehicle for a healthy character and I'm sure it's a really nice story for healthy kids to read and get perspective, but it was not written with the idea that kids would read it. So I think the fact that I as a chronically ill person, I'm writing chronically ill characters for chronically ill audience is going to mean something to that audience. They're going to look at this and think, okay, this is by for and about and I'm about as a powerful trio of words.

Danielle: 16:21 That is amazing. I'm really looking forward to it too. And wet recommendation have you brought us today?

Hannah: 16:28 I actually literally brought the book, Okay.

Amanda: 16:30 Yes!

Hannah: 16:31 So, it is called Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe...

Danielle: 16:34 Great title.

Hannah: 16:36 ...by Preston Norton. I'm pretty sure this is his debut. Um, and it came out this year with Disney-Hyperion. And I love it. So, it has a structure that's similar to my favorite book from last year or it might've been 2016 actually, which was American Girls by Allison Umminger. This is a narrative structure that I really like because I get really stressed out about conflict in the middle of the books. This one, everything is really, really bad at the beginning and then it gets better as the book goes on. So it's like the beginning is as bad as it's gonna. Get. Things go wrong throughout the book of course. But like the lowest point is at the beginning and then you're just like kind of going up hill. Um, and I like that because it's less stressful for me. It has characters that I like was really rooting for. There's this friendship between the main character in his new best friend and it's just so heartwarming and you just love the interactions between the two of them. They're really funny and I remember while I was reading that I was taking these pictures and putting them up on twitter because there were so many lines and I was just like yes! I didn't love every single thing about it. There were a few things that bugged me, but for the most part it was really, really enjoyable and lovely. And there was a lot of narrative satisfaction and I would absolutely recommend it. What it is about, I guess I should probably touch on that *Laughter is this boy who's really, really big. So they call him Neanderthal , he's like really tall and he's really broad and the most popular guy in school gets a brain injury and while he is conscious he has a vision that our boy Neanderthal needs to help him complete the strange lists of tasks in order to save the world. So, it's about the popular kid teaming up with him to save the world and plus about him dealing with his brother's suicide and figuring out why his brother killed himself and figuring out basically why he's been asked to reach out to these different people around the school and to perform these various tasks.

Danielle: 18:17 That sounds really great. Can you tell us the book title again?

Hannah: 18:21 Yes, it is Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe and its by Preston Norton.

Amanda: 18:25 I love that you came prepared to evangelize this book. *Laughter Not just this is a book I like, like this is a book you should read and everyone should read and here's why. It's a delight. Thank you so much, Hannah, for coming on with us this was really wonderful.

- Hannah: 18:38 It was lovely to be here thank you for having me.
- Danielle: 18:40 And we look forward to reading Sick Kids In love. Wait It's not going to be called Sick Kids in Loves..
- Amanda: 18:44 To be named Sick Kids in Love. Someday. *Music
- Danielle: 18:45 Next step, we'll get a recommendation from Lamar Giles. Lamar is an author, an editor who joined us on the podcast for a collection of short stories he edited Fresh Ink.
- Lamar: 19:05 This is Lamar Giles, author of the upcoming novel Spin, and The Last, Last Day of Summer. I'd like to recommend Monday's Not Coming by Tiffany Jackson. If you don't know this book already, it's about a young girl named Claudia who hasn't seen her best friend Monday, all summer. When school starts and Monday doesn't show up Claudia is the only person who seems concerned about Monday's, whereabouts that's including other classmates, school administrators, and even Monday's own family. The story is skillfully rung out through the juggling of various timelines. We get Claudia and Monday's relationship in relatively good times. The immediate aftermath of Monday's disappearance. If it really is a disappearance, she could just be away and we get glimpses into the time immediately after the mystery has been solved. The structure is challenging and rewarding in a way that casts doubt on everyone in Claudia's life, including Claudia. This is a chilling mystery that shows off all of Tiffany strengths, which you'll be familiar with if you've read her incredible debut novel Allegedly. She has a talent for giving us characters that for a long time I didn't believe you were allowed to write about. Their characters I know in urban environments raised in dark circumstances. Tiffany shows us that they are as beautiful as characters from any wacky fantasy world, rich suburban school or dystopian future, and that they have voices that also deserve to be heard. So if you haven't read Monday's Not Coming by Tiffany, D. Jackson, get yourself to your favorite bookseller Immediately. Pick up Allegedly too while you're at it and get ready to become well acquainted with your new favorite writer. Happy New Year.
- Amanda: 20:45 Thank you so much Lamar. Monday's Not Coming really as a wonderful book. Uh, we were able to do it on a podcast episode earlier this year and so far it's made a lot of best of lists of 2018. So if you haven't picked it up yet, please do put it on your list. It really is fantastic. *Music
- Amanda: 21:06 We're joined now by one of our favorite friends of the podcast and authors, Amanda K. Morgan. Mandy is the author of Secrets Lies and Scandals, Such a Good Girl and joined us on the episode All of This is True. Hi Mandy.

Mandy: 21:19 Hi! Thank you guys so much for having me again.

Danielle: 21:23 Thank you for coming back.

Mandy: 21:24 Of course, you know, I love this podcast.

Amanda: 21:27 So, Mandy, you have published this year *Such a Good Girl*, came out for you, right?

Mandy: 21:32 Uh, the paper paperback. Yes. Last year the hardcover came out this year the paperback came out I believe it's all melting together, you know.

Amanda: 21:39 Did you do anything big for the paperback release?

Mandy: 21:41 I really didn't. I did a little bit of extra promotion but usually the most bang for your buck as you know, during the hardcover release. So that's when I did signings and promotions and things like that. But I did get to go to Comic-Con this year, which was really cool.

Danielle: 21:55 That is awesome! I was totally going to bring that up. So, what did you do at Comic-Con?

Mandy: 21:59 We actually, um, did our panel and when I say we, I'm also talking about Jo Whitemore who wrote *SuperGirl* and *Girls Who Code* and she's the author of tons of amazing books. So, I was her guest on a panel about basically how to be a writer, how to get started if you want to learn how to write for publication. So, we talked to the crowd to questions and talked about our experiences in publishing.

Amanda: 22:24 That sounds like a really cool panel.

Mandy: 22:26 It was very cool. We actually had to go up against Sean Aston x Comic-Con, which was, you know, for your first Comic-Con appearance its very intimidating, but I was really happy about how it turned out.

Danielle: 22:39 That's really great. I love going to panels and stuff like that. What other cool stuff have you been up to since last we spoke?

Mandy: 22:46 I had been working on a couple of new projects which shall remain nameless for now, but I've been talking my agent about those and working on a secret co project.

Amanda: 22:55 Oh my God! I love secret projects. *Laughter

Mandy: 22:58 As always I work as a copywriter for my full time jobs, so I never get away from it.

Amanda: 23:04 So, I have read something else by you a little more recently than all this Mandy, which is an incredible escape room game coming together with the brain power of Amanda K. Morgan published author and Nouvelle ELA TPT, who I've heard is a pretty cool chick.

Danielle: 23:20 Okay, that's me, y'all. It's me. *Laughter

Danielle: 23:23 Yeah, so, Mandy and I have been working together on a new adventure game series called Burn Bridge Breakouts and hopefully the first game will be available in January.

Mandy: 23:35 Yes, it has been so fun. So we are such a great team and she is a pretty cool chick. The rumors are actually true.

Amanda: 23:42 Yes.

Mandy: 23:42 So I can confirm. *Laughter

- Amanda: 23:45 Outside validation *Laughter
- Mandy: 23:48 Yes, and we are creating these games with these fantastic puzzles and this beautiful art and I am so, so excited for the first one to come out.
- Danielle: 23:55 Me Too. I can't wait. Alright, so let's talk books. Mandy, you've brought us a recommendation today?
- Mandy: 24:01 Yes. Actually, um, I just recently read this book, although I believe it came out in 2016. It's called *A Madness So Discreet*. It actually won an Edgar Award. It's by Mindy McGinnis and I want to start with a couple of trigger warnings or sexual assault and suicide because it is a very, very dark book. And I think that is actually part of its appeal is its darkness because it's handled very well. It is actually, um, set partially in a Victorian insane asylum and it's just this incredible story of this teenage girl who is pregnant and you know, this going in and her family puts her in this insane asylum until she gives birth and it's to hide her pregnancy at the time. And it's just such an intense story and there's so many different pieces. It's like if you married American horror story was Sherlock Holmes and they had a bookbaby madness, so discreet, it's just, it was mind blowing and it was just not what I expected at all. It was really good.
- Amanda: 25:07 That sounds really intriguing. Those are two huge fandoms. Like there are a lot of people who love those shows. So great comps.
- Mandy: 25:14 You spend the first part of this book in this horrible Boston Insane asylum and you learn how people have the era were treated and how they viewed insanity and how a lot of those people down there weren't actually suffering from anything at all. And it's really interesting because you, the view shifts and I don't really want to give anything away. Eventually this girl gets out and is able to, um, if there's a bit of a revenge component, but it's just the most interesting story because there's mystery, there is a very handsome doctor that comes along, but it's just all kind of melded together and it's, it's just perfect. I really enjoyed it.
- Amand: 25:55 Awesome, thanks for the recommendation Mandy.
- Danielle: 25:57 We'll definitely have to check that out.

Amanda: 26:00 Thanks again for joining us for this recommendation roundup and thanks for joining us all through 2018 and has been a great first year of podcasting. We've gotten to talk to a lot of great people, authors, readers, teachers, and read a lot of really great books and we're really glad to have this first year done.

Danielle: 26:18 We'll see you in the new year.

Amanda: 26:19 Happy Holidays!

Amanda: 26:20 ...and Happy Reading! *Music