

## **My Dog Ate My Book Report**

### Episode Three Transcript

#### **Wren**

Welcome to "My Dog Ate My Book Report" a podcast where two weirdo 30-somethings take turns introducing each other to a formative book from childhood the other has never read to see if some magic has held up. I am Wren (they/he) and I am more of a mouse with a moped sort of fella. Motorcycles are super dangerous and noisy. I need to tell you the story about when my brother burned himself on a motorcycle.

#### **Brandon**

Yeah, what about immediately.

#### **Wren**

(Much too much goofy and hesitant laughter) Okay, fine. Um, my grandfather had a motorcycle. And if we you know, behaved and stuff, he would, you know, take us for rides on it. But my mother was very, not super excited about the motorcycle so we knew that if we ever got hurt it was game over for the motorcycle rides. And one day a couple of days after a visit to our grandfather, my mom realized that my brother hadn't changed his socks in several days. And after a slight argument with my then I think five year old brother she wrestled the sock off of him and realized he was covering up a huge burn he got on his leg from I think the exhaust pipe of the motorcycle? But as a tiny child he didn't know how to take care of it so it was obviously like already getting infected and stuff and it was super gross and stuff was like sticking to it, this is not a good podcast story! It's really gross and I wasn't gonna say it! But yeah, we were not allowed to ride the motorcycle anymore after that, which was why Cory was hiding it because he knew that that would probably happen.

#### **Brandon**

I injured myself on a bicycle once...

#### **Wren**

Bicycle or motorcycle?

#### **Brandon**

Bicycle, which might be why I never upgraded to a motorcycle. I was participating in an ill advised activity which was riding my bicycle barefoot. I was, uh, this was probably like first or second grade age maybe. And at one point I just like one of, my foot slipped off the pedal and like wedged between the front wheel and the support of the front wheel so it just kind of like shredded the sole of my foot. It probably was not as bad as it seemed at the time but it was

definitely like pretty... pretty painful at the time and I when I went inside my mom got out like all the bandages and stuff, like significant quantities of bandages. I don't think we ever went to the doctor about it or anything so I imagined it was fairly superficial but definitely never... basically just didn't go outside without shoes on after that. Probably much less get up, get on a bicycle.

**Wren**

Yeah, that sounds safer. Yeah, my brother definitely went to the hospital, had to get treated, it was bad.

**Brandon**

Anyway, I'm Brandon (he/him) and I'm like yeah, I'm maybe like a ferret on like one of those one of those trikes that has two wheels in the front and one in the back. They're still motorcycles I guess but...

**Wren**

I thought there were two wheels in the back and one in the front?

**Brandon**

Those also exist, those are both things.

**Wren**

That makes you sound more like a circus act. Are you like balancing plates?

**Brandon**

I sure hope not, cuz that's not gonna end well.

**Wren**

Well, today it's a me pick, as you probably know by now, because I'm the one that did the intro. And today I have selected "The Mouse and the Motorcycle" by Beverly Cleary. It is a 1965 children's chapter book about a juvenile mouse... that makes him sound like... I couldn't find a good word for, like he's like a teenager age mouse. You know, whatever, named Ralph who lives in an aging hotel. He struggles with coming out from under his overbearing and over protective family's grip. While at the same time befriendng a boy who is staying at the hotel for the weekend. It's a bit of a coming of age bit of a magic light adventure story. Because, you know, the aforementioned motorcycle is a toy that belongs to the boy that Ralph can actually make run like a real motorcycle by making, you know, motorcycle brr-ing noises. I can't reproduce that with my mouth. Brr. No, I can't do it. And he can also talk to the boy. So there's that level of sort of magical, unexplained magic going on. But he can only talk to the boy and one member of the hotel staff, but not any women because they are silly. We will get into that.

In terms of content warnings, I would say this book displays a fair amount of casual sexism, which was to be sure you know, a product of its time as much as I hate that term. But there is that. And there is a little bit of mention of mice dying. But as a past tense. *No mice die in the process of this story*. It's definitely a book that makes me anxious while I'm reading it. Because I don't know, I get very invested in stories of little woodland creatures and just worried that dangerous humans are going to harm them in some way. But that's not really content, warning, just my own anxiety about small fuzzy creatures getting hurt.

So I read this when I was quite young, I would have to guess second grade or so. And my memories, you know, are a little fuzzy at that age. And I'm gonna use that memories are fuzzy justification to explain that this is not the book I thought it was. When I started reading it, I was so perplexed. Because what I thought this book was was what I found out when I was doing research on it was it's sequel, "Runaway Ralph." That's definitely the one I read first. And I don't know if you know, when I was six or whatever, I had the concept of a prequel. But I think I thought that this book was like a prequel or something like that, because I know I read it but like later. "Runaway Ralph" which I have not reread, but I intend to after this, is wonderful. But it takes place in like a summer camp or something. So I was just so confused as to why this was happening in a hotel.

### **Brandon**

This was more or less what I expected. Because I did see a film version at some point in school. I remembered very little about it, but I know that I saw it.

### **Wren**

I looked up, I looked up on YouTube to try to find a trailer of the film. And I couldn't but I found like a three minute snippet of it. And it's horrifying.

### **Brandon**

I don't know. My recollection of the movie is so vague. All I really remember is that there was a mouse that rode a motorcycle. And that it happened in a building. I didn't remember it was a hotel specifically but I really only had memories of seeing him ride the motorcycle like around the hallway or like things like that. Certainly not a summer camp. But I had no real recollection otherwise, of what transpired in the story. So.

### **Wren**

From what it looks like in the little snippet of the movie was that the mouse parts were stop motion. But it made Ralph so strangely, like angular and jerky, and scary looking.

So it's hard to say whether or not you know, the magic holds up because I feel silly about how this is not the book I thought it was. But I definitely liked it. And it made me remember some of

the stuff I liked about Ralph's later adventures. Because he's a fun little guy. He's kind of like a Disney protagonist of mice because he just wants to like, go out on adventure. He doesn't have an "I Want" song, but there would have been one if he was in a Disney Movie. But as much as he does want adventure. I did find it kind of cute that at the end when he was given the choice to go with, what was his name? Keith. The boy was named Keith?

**Brandon**

I think.

**Wren**

Yeah, Keith was like, "hey, do you want to come with me?" And live with me in a cage in my bedroom and he was like, "Ooh, no, I'm gonna stay here with my family". Which to be fair, I think was probably more of a doesn't want to live in a cage situation.

**Brandon**

Yeah, that struck me as a very reasonable thing.

**Wren**

I don't think of, you know, these, older children's chapter books as really having much in the way of world building, because they're also short. But coming back at books for this age range, I'm realizing that was kind of erroneous because there was a lot of interesting like tiny little tidbits of world building in this that I really liked. In particular, the kind of morbid parts where Ralph talks about how his father died because he carried an aspirin pill around in his cheek pouch, and it dissolved and poisoned him. And the aunt who got stuck in a suitcase and carried away, so there's all this little mention of the sort of human caused dangers in the mouse world, which I, little, little brief world building tidbits for what life is like.

**Brandon**

I mean, we all know that aunt is somewhere living her best life though, right?

**Wren**

That's right. They described her as someone who liked the finer things in life and she hopped into a suitcase because of like, some silk fabric or something.

**Brandon**

Either that or she's the equivalent of like one of the children in Willy Wonka.

**Wren**

\* Transition sparkle noise\* So Ralph meets Keith because he falls into the wastepaper basket beside Keith's little hotel room, bedside table. And he's having a good little panic because he

knows that when they empty the trash containers, they go straight into incinerators. So immediately, like in the first couple of chapters, there's this very real mouse about to die danger, in kind of a horrifying way.

**Brandon**

Yeah, but, and here's the thing, when I started reading this book, and gotten to that part, my, specifically the part less the wastepaper basket part but the driving the motorcycle off the nightstand part. My brain immediately produced a specific anxiety on on Ralph's behalf and that anxiety was I kid you not, worrying that he probably didn't have insurance.

**Wren**

What? (Laughter)

**Brandon**

Yeah, that was, it took me a moment to realize that was a completely ridiculous thing. But no, like I was genuinely, for him, like, oh, crap.

**Wren**

I don't know what I thought when I was a kid at that part. But what I was thinking was maybe a little too sciency because I started thinking, oh, well, what if he's able to use the motorcycle as sort of leverage and if he goes back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, enough times, maybe he can tip the thing over.

**Brandon**

Or what if he can, like ride along the inside of it. Like, like a circus act sort of thing. Yeah.

**Wren**

Yeah. I think physics wise, he could tip it over with the use of the motorcycle.

**Brandon**

It could be, although he didn't really know how to make it go yet, right.

**Wren**

That's true.

**Brandon**

He just kind of walked it.

**Wren**

That was when he first, yeah. Oh, and the phone rang and knocked him off.

**Brandon**

I did appreciate the level of casualness with which all of the magical elements of this world were just there. Nobody, was bothered by the notion that a boy and a mouse could talk to each other. Nobody really questions the fact that if Ralph just makes engine noises, it makes the little toy vehicles go because it's not just a motorcycle. He does it with an ambulance too. And it's just like it's just there, everybody is totally chill about it, and perfectly accepts this is just how things are. I kind of appreciated that like lack of feeling the need to explain the mechanics of everything going on or have an extended period where Keith is like, holy crap, you can talk, and Ralph is like, well, of course I can, I'm a mouse.

**Wren**

Yeah, that's why when I was sort of describing the book, I was like magical-ish because it's like, it's magical, but it's like normal. That does kind of lead me into my, my small gripe about the books casual sexism. There are really like no women characters in this book that are not taking jabs at for some silly woman trait. Every woman is either like fussy and overbearing, or I want to speak to your manager Karen types, or silly girls who only care about boys and their hair. And there's a scene where Ralph sneaks into the room of a couple of teachers. And he tries to talk to them, because he's going on his little aspirin quest. And they can't understand him. They just hear squeaking because of course. And this is a quote from the book. "Young woman could not speak his language." This is definitely something I wouldn't have noticed as a child, but reading it now. It's just so glaring to me how much just like I said, casual sexism is in this book. And the author is a woman. So I, and I couldn't really find anything about you know, the topic, but I, my hypothesis is that in 1965, as a woman writer, you probably had to make sure that you know, were one of the guys in some capacity. So it kind of comes off to me as like, I don't know internalized sexism or to appease male publishers. I don't know. These are just my assumptions.

**Brandon**

I feel like I've definitely heard contemporary authors talk about sort of the ingrained, internalized sort of misogyny, that was kind of hard to escape.

**Wren**

Yeah, it could be something that Beverly Cleary never even thought about just just, you know, put in there. But the thing that it like sort of steamrolled in me was thinking, I read this when I was a small kid, and I didn't think anything of it. So it sort of perpetuates this cycle, where I internalize it. And then I know that I definitely went through long periods of internalized sexism. It's just, it's just this cycle. It's there and present from books that I read when I was tiny.

**Brandon**

And like some of it is also just that like, I think with this book in particular, as with I imagine a lot of books that we may have read when we were younger, it's easy for that stuff to also kind of disappear into, like, "adults don't understand" kind of stuff, because like there aren't any, none of the female characters in this book are Keith's age, you know? So I think it's easy, if there is any takeaway when you're younger, it's easier to consciously sort of recognize the fact they're adults. And like everybody, you don't like when your mom gives you a bedtime and stuff, right? So it's okay, but even though there is a definite gendered divide.

**Wren**

Yes, but at the same time he can talk to the adult bellhop man. And there's not that many other male characters in the book. But the ones that are there are very sympathetic like the father is clearly like a very nice chill guy who just wants to visit this nice hotel and be perfectly happy about it and the wife is just ahh this place is gross.

**Brandon**

Ah, see. I did not read the father that way at all. I read the Father as the sort who is like, "I've decided that the family is going on vacation, and I'm deciding what the vacation is because I'm the man." Right? Even though...

**Wren**

You have a car alarm happening behind you.

**Brandon**

Yes, somewhere. But yeah, I definitely read Keith's father as also kind of crappy, although he's not in the scene as much as Keith's mom and then the other, the guy staying in the other room with the dog is just constantly like really mean to that dog.

**Wren**

Well, so I have a snippy thing to say to that and a reasonable thing to say. Back to the Father, you're right in that I didn't quite notice that he was like, yes, this is the vacation we're going on. What I was more referencing was the scene where they're in the room with Matt, the bellhop and the wife is just like, in front of the worker of this hotel. Like "this place is gross. Should we go somewhere else?" And the father's just like, "no, this place is fine." Like, trying to be polite to the guy and she's just like acting like he's a servant. And that's, that's what made me grumpy about the mother. As for the as, as for the guy with the dog. That little yippy terrier was clearly being a little tyrant. Have you ever spent any time with a terrier?

**Brandon**

Yeah, I grew up with a Terrier.

**Wren**

Oh. You, wait, wait, wasn't your dog like a terrier/something else?

**Brandon**

No. So this was the dog my parents had when I was born, actually. And thus for like, a lot of my early childhood. They had a West Highland Terrier named Chaucer. All of this to say, I'm definitely not disagreeing with the sexism element here just observing that I think were I to have read this, you know, 25 years ago or whatever. I think I would have noticed the "adults are bad" part, rather than the "women are not as cool" or whatever, part.

**Wren**

I guess that's a good point. You have brought up a good point. And I still think there was some sexism there. But I do think that you're right, that all almost almost all of the adults are painted as not great.

**Brandon**

I mean, you're absolutely correct. There is like a lot of sort of casual sexism built in.

**Wren**

I think there's just like so many more, like snide remarks about the woman being fussy or, you know, the one girl who just wanted to like stare at her hair in the mirror and like there was just a lot of time spent on how silly that girl was. And yeah, I also don't want to shy away from the fact that there were some weight jabs as well which I didn't love, talking about Ralph's overweight uncle's going for a seconds, like, super greedy, and I was like, Ooh, that's not very nice." So yeah, internalized, you know, sexism, casual weightphobia, etc. 1965!

**Brandon**

I read this stuff on my phone on a Kindle app, because I've tried to divest myself of having a bajillion physical books, which I would do if I didn't police myself a bit. So I would highlight and make notes about things as I read, that felt important. And on the topic of dogs, I highlighted the sentence if there was one thing Ralph disliked it was a snoopy dog. And my note was, "Ralph hates Peanuts." I'm going to be honest, I don't know if I can get along with a mouse who doesn't like Peanuts?

**Wren**

I mean, but he does like peanuts. He's so happy when Keith brings him some extra peanuts.

**Brandon**

Yeah, like literal actual peanuts. But like, I just Ralph would would definitely bully Charlie Brown. Let's be clear.



**Wren**

I do have more notes and things. But uh, what? What did you overall think about it?

**Brandon**

Uh... It was fine.*(noncommittal)*

**Wren**

Do you think you would have liked it if you read it when you were a kid?

**Brandon**

If I had read it at the correct age? Yeah. As compared to the books we've read prior, this one does feel more like reading it as an adult, definitely, there's just certain, a certain amount that I can't really connect with it. Had I read it when I was younger, and like, younger enough? I think I would have been on board with it. It might have gotten me to read the others. Or at least the next one, potentially. But as an adult, there's a little not enough for me to latch on to, I think to like, really, really dig it. I don't dislike it. It's fine. I'm not like, man, this is a bad book.

**Wren**

Yeah, I am with you on that. It was, it's a book that I could have very easily read in one sitting. But I was not compelled enough to do so. It took maybe four or five tries of me reading it before bed and just falling asleep. And as I was reading it, I was definitely sort of feeling some of the nostalgia goggles, like, come off. Where, you know, I still had that feeling of like, "Oh, I remember what it was like reading this and feeling like it was so cool and magical." But not having that same experience again, whereas like you know, when I reread Hatchet I'm just like I am so here I'm so into this. And this didn't have the same thing. But it could also be a little bit more of a problem where a little bit of my schooling seeped through with Hatchet where, you know, when he would say things and I would be like, "Oh, but do snapping turtles actually lay their eggs at the same time that raspberries are in season in Canada? What about the ecology of this?" In this one, I was just thinking just way too deeply about the, you know, social structure of wild mice. And you know, which are also a thing that I've studied. So a little bit of the magic is gone off of the concept of talking mice for me as a you know, animal scientist of sorts.

**Brandon**

Likewise, didn't have as much that I could like, dig into nerdy, nerdy wise, as some of the previous books that we read, but I did try a little bit to determine, because this is what picked my brain: the the motorcycle has rubber tires. And I'm not sure that toy cars had rubber tires back then. And I'm the sort of person who knows enough about that to feel like it might be

inaccurate, but not enough to be sure. And I didn't look very hard. I couldn't find a definitive like, here's when toy cars started to use rubber tires.

**Wren**

Are you saying that like the illustrations depict it as having rubber tires? Or the descriptions depict it as having rubber tires?

**Brandon**

The description.

**Wren**

Okay, that's, that's interesting, because it was written in 1965. So if toy cars didn't have rubber tires, then Beverly Clearly like, invented them. It didn't exist?

**Brandon**

Well, ok, I guess it doesn't actually say rubber just "had a good set of tires," which I assumed meant rubber. I don't know. It was a weird little nitpick that I did not find a definitive answer to.

**Wren**

Well, I mean, if it was based on illustrations, I would say yes, but I have, I have a whole I have a whole rant, regarding the illustrations. So my illustration nitpick is that in every cover, and in the description of the motorcycle it is red. It's red on every cover I've ever seen, until this most recent version, which is the first version where they change all of the internal illustrations as well. So from from 1965 to 2014 I think it is, they use illustrations by Louis Darling, who is an amazing children's book illustrator. He does this sort of stippled dotty illustration look and I love it. I will link some illustrations in our show notes of the original versions. They decided for this you know, later edition and I tried to look up why but Harper was not about to tell me the, uh, that's the imprint that published this version. They just redid all the illustrations, and also to add insult to injury, the cover depicts the motorcycle as being blue, which I don't know why they would change the illustrations because they were just little tiny works of art.

**Brandon**

I wonder if it was like a legal thing or like they didn't have the rights to the earlier illustrations for some reason or what.

**Wren**

I sure tried to find out and I could not. I will say you know because early early publications were you know, different publishers so you might be right about that. But I couldn't find anything on the internet anywhere. And I was not brave enough to email the publisher. I feel like you know, I could have done that but I didn't. Maybe I will at some point be like "so I'm

doing a little podcast. Please tell me why you changed the illustrations, please Mr. Harper publisher guy." And they'll probably ignore me. But that's fine.

### **Brandon**

Okay, yeah, so something I didn't really think about when we set out on this journey of revisiting childhood books and everything was that a lot of the books we would be reading would have illustrations in them. Not, you know, because they're picture books necessarily, but certainly many books of a certain target audience have a, you know, an illustration, every chapter or whatever. And I've never really thought much about how those come to be if it's, you know, part of the creative process of making the book in the first place, if it's a publisher thing. And I think, Hatchet didn't have any illustrations. And then from the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, the illustrations were done by EL Konigsberg as part of the story, so I think that's a good reason why they have never changed as far as I'm aware. But I don't know what the process is when the author and the artists are different people, right?

### **Wren**

Yeah, I, I'd be interested in knowing because I don't want to like trash this newer artist, it's just that I think part of you know, the magic not quite being there is that for a book like this, the illustrations are part of the book. And without those pictures, the same ones. It's just like a different experience. And, and the pictures in this one are more modern and kind of cartoony. And it just took me away from the nostalgia.

### **Brandon**

Yeah. So one of the funny things I did like, so the stuff I really liked about this book was, as I said, kind of the casual, magical-ness and willingness for the those rules just to just to be accurate, just and everybody just accepts them without much question. I did get a little bit of a smile about when Ralph establishes for us that he was descended from the mouse that ran up the clock.

### **Wren**

Oh, yeah. When I first read that line, I was like, how would mice even know our fairy tales? And then he clarified and I was all WHAT.

### **Brandon**

The first time that it happened I thought it was just a jokey little allusion, because it's just in narration. So I was just like, okay, Beverly Cleary's being a little bit cute with us as readers. A little flair to telling the story, but it comes back, not like in a bit. It's not like integral to the plot, but like, it comes up again, and it's like, oh, no, clearly canonically in this world, Ralph is part of the Hickory Dickory Dock family, I guess, of mice. Which, which maybe explains a lot. I don't know, maybe that's where the mythology goes. I assume that there's like a huge mythology

that kind of carries on from here and the mice meet aliens eventually or something. And that revelation was actually in the part of the book that I actually really did dig was sort of the journey to find an aspirin for Keith, and the whole like, adventure to the lower floor and everything. That I was pretty on board with, you know, it was it was basic and straightforward in a lot of ways. But it definitely felt like there was some peril there. And there were problems that Ralph had to figure out how to solve. You know, he got to bust out a different vehicle. He did this elaborate "Kings Quest" style, like setting up things exactly right, so that the dog in the room would start barking at the right time to create, to get the guy on the elevator to take him outside. And then like, it was it was very adventure game, which for me is a pretty nostalgic feel. So I'm like, yep, that solution to the problem is so esoteric and impossible to actually coordinate that if I had to solve that puzzle in Monkey Island or something, I'd be "Yep, this is normal."

### **Wren**

Yeah, you're definitely right about that. Once I got to that point, I read straight on. The part that really dragged for me was sort of like the middle conflict, which really hinged upon a literary plot device, which I just hate. I get very frustrated when there's a conflict that comes about because a character just doesn't explain everything truthfully. And the middle conflict is when Ralph loses the motorcycle because he was trying to save the motorcycle from the vacuum cleaner. And the maid scooped it up into the sheets and so he lost it in the hotel laundry. If he had just explained, the maid had been vacuuming, and you know, all of this happened, then Keith probably wouldn't have been so angry at him. And Ralph wouldn't have had to go sulk off and have the little middle of the book sad, which really dragged on, if he had just explained. I hate when they rely on misunderstandings because of just like a very simple fix. To create a plot twist.

### **Brandon**

I was maybe a little bit let down by the fact that Ralph didn't recover the motorcycle during his adventure downstairs. Because it felt like that was the obvious thing, right? Where like part of his, part of his adventure downstairs, he would eventually hit something that he can only surmount, some obstacle that he can only bypass, if he gets the motorcycle back. And maybe he finds the motorcycle somewhere where he's got to think about how to get to it or whatever. Instead, he goes through that entire adventure and then like the bellhop right at the end is like, Oh, hey, little boy. Is this your motorcycle that I found in the laundry? I mean, he was more knowing than that. But like...

### **Wren**

Yeah, the motorcycle actually takes up very little of the book. It's really the mouse and the motorcycle, and the toy ambulance,

**Brandon**

"The mouse who was really fixated on motorcycles" because once he encounters the motorcycle, Ralph's character is completely fixated upon being a mouse that likes motorcycles. And how like This or That was not important to mice who like motorcycles or this was not as, as this thing was a waste of time when you've had your paws on the handlebars of a motorcycle now, or whatever the case may be. He just, you know, which I found that sort of charming, I think it was meant to be kind of like, funny. In a way it was, I think, if I were younger, I would have, some of that some of that humor would have hit me more. As it is as an adult, I'm kind of like that's that's cute If I were telling a story to a seven or eight year old maybe I would also do that.

**Wren**

I have in my notes that the story about the father who died because of ingesting aspirin made me think about this time that I walked up to my desk at work, and we knew that there were mice there, they, you know, we had to store food in certain safe ways so that they couldn't get to them. But I got to my desk and I had a little tube of Gorilla Glue, which is, you know, some badass glue. And mice had chewed all the way through it and eaten some of it. And I still think in horror about what life must have been for what the rest of the brief life of those mice must have been. When that glue hardened in their systems. I should probably edit this part out because it's really gruesome. I don't know why I'm saying it. It's horrible.

**Brandon**

Being a mouse is dangerous. You gotta you gotta not mess with people things.

**Wren**

Yeah. Well, that. That being said, yeah, I have a discussion question. If you were a mouse, where do you think the comfiest and safest place to live would be?

**Brandon**

I think it'd be probably at the National Air and Space Museum. Where I would also run away to.

**Wren**

I realize it's very close to your question from last time, but I feel like the parameters are different.

**Brandon**

Yeah. And I'm not entirely sure my, my answer is actually different. I feel like if...

**Wren**

What are you going to eat at the National Air and Space Museum?

**Brandon**

Look, here like, if I'm a mouse the shooting model of the USS Enterprise would be really impressive. It's not quite to scale, but.

**Wren**

What kind of note what kind of noise do you have to make to make that go?

**Brandon**

Like, let's see to make the enterprise... I didn't even think about making it... okay. Now I'm definitely on board with this with this decision.

**Wren**

Cause you gotta make it with your mouth.

**Brandon**

Probably like a... (makes a low whooosh noise.)

**Wren**

Alright, I guess you could you can play with the shooting model of the enterprise with that sound.

**Brandon**

Just a six foot monstrosities flying around the museum. Somehow.

**Wren**

(Transition sparkle noise) It certainly didn't have as many sort of awards and accolades as our previous two selections. It did receive some awards but not Newbury style. Like I said, it was written by Beverly Cleary who I found out actually only just died in 2021. She lived to be 104, which is impressive. She wrote this book being inspired from two incidents. The first is that she had a son who had a fever when they were on vacation, and he was you know, playing with cars and motorcycles at the time, and also a neighbor had shown her a small mouse that she'd accidentally trapped in a bucket. And those two stories converged in her head and she created this whole this whole thing. Like our first two authors, she did not set out to be an author. She was a librarian when she started writing, children's books sort of out of the blue. And so there are two sequels. There's "Runaway Ralph" and "Ralph S Mouse." From my little amount of digging, "Runaway Ralph" is the book I thought it was where Ralph runs away and goes to a summer camp, which I'm excited to go revisit. And I don't remember what Ralph S Mouse is at all. I'm sure I read it because I was very into these books as a kid. She also is the author of all of the Ramona books and I don't know if you've read any of those.

**Brandon**

I feel very sure without really being able to remember much about them that I at least read Ramona Quimby age eight, and I may have read other Ramona books.

**Wren**

I know that I have not read all of them. I read what I think was probably Beezus and Ramona. I could be wrong. The only thing I really remember is that it's about an older sister and the younger sister is kind of a pest. And it was the first time I ever read the word propreek... bleh... it was the first time I ever read the word, paprika. And because there's a scene where they're trying to cook dinner for their parents, and they overuse paprika, which I don't think it's possible, really. But because I'd only read that word for a really long time, I thought it was pronounced pap-rick-ah. So that book, Beverly Cleary is why I got made fun of in my 20s for saying paprika. That's not of historical significance, but I thought it was a funny anecdote. The edition of the book that I got, which I think was a 50th, something is it was a, it's a recent edition, and it has a foreword in it. Because it's, you know, so many years since it was written, by Kate DiCamillo. I don't know if I'm saying that right. Who wrote the Tale of Despereaux. Have you read that?

**Brandon**

I haven't. But I remember there was a movie, I think.

**Wren**

Well, that was a 2003, you know, kids chapter book about mice, which means I missed it as a kid. But I do know that I own it. And I've read the first few chapters, because I picked it up as an impulse buy when I was waiting at a train station a few years ago. But Kate DiCamillo writes this little forward about how this book, you know, inspired her fascination with mice. And you know, it's why she ended up writing this series about a little swordfighting mouse but I really liked this quote she wrote "It's been almost 50 years since I read about Ralph for the first time and here I am still believing that if I'm quiet enough, and if I believe enough, if I hope enough a mouse might talk to me."

(Transition sparkle noise) I waffled about how many giant peaches to give this because I feel like it's... you know me and rating systems I always just kind of want to give everything a middle ground. I feel like giving us three out of five giant peaches, some of the magic was still there I love some little bits of world building and I love how casual the magic is. I don't love the sexism and I did have a hard time pulling my way through it. But that may have just been because I was reading at the end of my work day and I was tired. So yeah, three out of five.

**Brandon**

I've also been a little bit wishy washy about whether I'm going like two and a half or like three. Trying to decide even like where we're in our scale of book becomes... like is is lower than three quote bad because it's in the lower half or is it like not right? Anyway, I'm around three I think. I liked it fine. I know I would have really dug parts of it when I was younger that I I don't have as much appreciation for now but it had a lot of charm in places and it is it is a book that ultimately if I knew a young kid who was just getting into chapter books or whatever I'd potentially be like here, here's this one this is a good this is a good ride. So yeah like like three also I think.

**Wren**

I do know that there are other books that involve small mice that I think I might like more but you know still thinking about all these books back with nostalgia goggles it's hard to really say I will be suggest subjecting you to The cricket in Times Square at some point.

**Brandon**

I feel like if we really wanted to, we could just do a podcast about books about mice. Right? Like that's, that's a big genre.

**Wren**

Thank you all for listening. Next episode will be a Brandon pick. What uh, what have you selected.

**Brandon**

I have decided, you know, with our first two picks, I followed up your tale of survival, with my tales of survival. And so here I'm going to follow up your story with a motorcycle in it with one of my story with a motorcycle in it, two motorcycles in fact. We're going to read the first book of the Hardy Boys series, the Tower Treasure by Franklin W Dixon. I fully expect that this is not going to hold up. I will explain in more detail when we talk about it next time but like I have intentionally chosen a book that while it was a springboard for me at a certain time into things that like I got more into, I kind of expect it's not going to hold up great. However, modern editions do have a motorcycle on the cover. Actually, the motorcycles are in the very first chapter, so thematic!

**Wren**

I'm excited. I've never read any Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew, I just skipped over them completely.

**Brandon**

Yeah, it's definitely a book where there was a time in my life that I read quite a few Hardy Boys books. And but it's been long enough ago that my recollection of them in particular is pretty hit



and miss. So I'm excited to revisit it and see how I feel about these books if they kind of work for me still as mysteries. Or not as the case may be. So that's what we'll find out next time. Is this any good? Should you read Hardy Boys? Also I think the oldest book that we've done so far.

**Wren**

I have so many questions about Hardy Boys versus Nancy Drew, but we'll get there.

**Brandon**

Yeah. Yeah, I know. I know some things about those things, because I read a lot of Nancy Drew as well.

**Wren**

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**Brandon**

Have a question or comment for the team? You can find us on Twitter @mydogatemybookpod, or by emailing at DogAteMyBookReport at gmail.

We would be super excited to know what books you loved growing up!

**Wren**

We'll see you next time. No, we won't see you. Cause this is a podcast.

**Brandon**

You won't see us.

**Wren**

You'll hear us. Next time.

**Brandon**

You are invisible to all of our senses.

**Wren**

\*Laughter\* Boop!