

The Wide World of Children's Literature

Episode 85

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:

When you read great books, the authors and characters become dear friends. As we continue our series on literature, we are sharing some of our favorite authors and why great books are so important to a world class education. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Carol Joyside has been helping families homeschool for several decades now through her literature based approach to education. In this episode, Carol returns to her conversation with Jan Bloom, who shares advice for homeschool parents who want to raise readers. Listen in.

Jan Bloom [00:00:39]:

It's been fun to, be part of people's lives and, you know, to have people come up and and tell us how they discovered this author or that author and, you know, things have really changed in homeschooling. So this new crop of homeschoolers, there's a group of them that that still do the older books, but I don't know a lot about the newer books. And so that's a challenge when people come into the booth and ask about newer authors, and I there's so many of them. And some are really great and some, I think, are not so great. Whereas the ones in my book, the first volume when it was produced in, like, February or 02/2001, I think all but six of the authors had died. So, you know, these authors were older authors. And then volume two, I just started keeping track of authors that people said, I can't believe you

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:38]:

don't have this author in the book. Right.

Jan Bloom [00:01:40]:

And so I started the list and finally, I thought, oh, I have enough to do a second volume. So I think the second volume was ten years later, maybe in 02/2009. And and so they were, you know, they were a little bit more current

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:55]:

Yeah.

Jan Bloom [00:01:56]:

Than the first volume. But I still you know, they still mostly are what I would consider to be the older authors

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:04]:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jan Bloom [00:02:05]:

Who wrote, you know, in a time that was

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:09]:

Of the innocence. A time of innocence for children.

Jan Bloom [00:02:12]:

It was. And Yep. And a time of strong families and and Yeah. And and family members doing things together. Now it's Yeah. Mostly unrelated kids. Play dates. Being a group.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:25]:

Yep. Strangers. Yeah. Instead of loving your siblings and having Yeah. You know, as a child, I was not read to. My mother was highly educated, but she really never read to me. And I just somehow had a I had a great first grade teacher and a great childhood librarian at my elementary school who also owned a camp. So that woman, that librarian, miss Odell, never married.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:51]:

She loved books, and she loved nature. So can you see how God in first grade imprinted me with the things that I care about, why I'm sitting outside to do our interview? Because I can't bear to be indoors when it's a beautiful day. So those people influenced me so so much. But these old authors, I would read these stories, Jan, about these happy, sweet, little families, and I wasn't really raised in a in a family of faith. And so I would read these innocent books, and the children all loved each other, and the dog was happy, and the, you know, whatever. It was the most everyone loved each other. There was joy. There was innocence.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:32]:

And I would cry when the book ended. And they weren't even necessarily great literature. They were just I mean, even things like the Bobsbee twins or I don't know if you've ever read Honey Bunch. Have you ever read that?

Jan Bloom [00:03:44]:

Those old yeah. Yeah. Honey Bunch and Norman.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:46]:

Oh, okay. I don't know that one, but just Honey Bunch. We had a friend, and they had these books, and I think it was from, you know, friends of my parents from their childhood. And I would borrow these books, And I would cry as I read them because of the the the happiness in the books and the the sweetness of relationships and and the innocence. I think even in my childhood growing up in the fifties and sixties, there was already a loss of innocence in our books that was not in those old books. And I like to say I rarely read anything by anyone who's breathing. That's kind of a good rule of thumb because history is the ultimate sieve. And so all these books that are being written today, they're a dime a dozen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:34]:

There's millions and billions of them. And I always say when publishers want me to read a book, I always say, so tell me, do you think this will be in print in twenty years? Twenty years. That's nothing. And they all groan and kind of shrug and shift around on their feet because they know, in all honesty, this book won't even be in print in twenty years. So why would I read it when I haven't even had time to read Anna Karenina? So my motto is read books mostly old. Mhmm. And you won't go you won't go wrong because we don't know if a book is gonna stand the test of time. But if we read an old book, we know for sure if it stood the test of time, particularly if it's still in print.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:16]:

I mean, think of a book like Wind in the Willows. Been in print about a hundred and fifty years now, and they keep printing it. Why? Because people still love it, and they're making money on it. They're not altruistic. They don't think, oh, well, this is a good book every child should read. They could care less about your children, your grandchild. But but they wanna know is, will the book sell? And when in the willows is a continual bestseller or the four hardback Winnie the Pooh books. Why are they still in print? Because they're fabulous and graduate school students love them just as much as your six year old will love them and the humor is just as sophisticated now as it was then.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:57]:

And so reading old books and the service that you do by collecting these books and selling it to people who may not even know about them, thank you for doing that. Well, it's it's always an adventure, and I figured, you know, someday

Jan Bloom [00:06:11]:

I should sit down and just tally up the miles that we've put on our vehicles with all the conventions we've gone to. And, yeah, it's been it's been good. Oh, so in the front of the turquoise book, there's, a quote that a bookseller friend of mine let me see if I can grab a book.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:31]:

Okay. I've got it right here.

Jan Bloom [00:06:32]:

Where it says 80% it's like

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:35]:

the second page or something. 80% of all books Have been published since 1980. '80 percent of those would have been better off left as trees. That's a great quote. 80% of all books have been published since 1980, and 80% of those would have been better off left as trees. And you said somebody quoted it, Jerry Hanson, but I guess he's not the originator of the thought. But these are really, really important concepts because, again, older tends to be better. Older tends to be better.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:16]:

We can't make I mean, there are new books being written every day that are great books, but how do we know if they're going to stand the test of time? We don't. But in thirty years, we'll know or fifty years or a hundred years, we'll definitely know. So why not just read the old books now and save yourself a lot of sifting is my motto.

Jan Bloom [00:07:38]:

Sifting. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. So I do read modern Christian fiction. Yeah. I'm careful about the publishers.

Jan Bloom [00:07:46]:

I go by publishers.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:47]:

Yeah. Me too.

Jan Bloom [00:07:48]:

And I do enjoy a lot of that, just because there wasn't a lot of that done. I really like Angela Ella Hunt who does, you know, bible characters Oh. Or, oh, there's just so many great authors. I love bible character fiction stories.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:04]:
Yes.

Jan Bloom [00:08:05]:
And, so I do read I do read I do read some more modern books. Yeah. Yes. I do.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:11]:
I'll still love you. But What about Oh, thank you. What about Jan Kieran?

Jan Bloom [00:08:14]:
I've really enjoyed her stuff, and at some point in time, I'd like to start at the beginning and go through

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:20]:
I do it all the time. I read them over and over and over. They never they never disappoint me. Never.

Jan Bloom [00:08:27]:
But that was one thing I had to learn of rereading a book. I had never reread a book. Really? So that's been something maybe in the last ten years

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:37]:
Yes.

Jan Bloom [00:08:38]:
I've started rereading books because I never did before. And so that's really been a joy and a delight because you're through you're through the conflict. You know what the conflict is, so you can enjoy the dialogue and the character development and the writing. Yep. Yep.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:54]:
Nailed it, Jan. That's why I read Jane over and over again, and she gets better every year, doesn't she? She's the gold standard.

Jan Bloom [00:09:03]:
She, you know, she really is. She she's so, piercingly insightful. Yeah. Jane Austen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:12]:

She says as as, Jearin Bars from the Francis Schaeffer Institute says, when you read Jane Austen, you think to yourself, I don't believe that could be any better put. Like, the woman was a wordsmith and and she's considered the greatest fiction writer of all time. That is quite an accomplishment, but I agree.

Jan Bloom [00:09:37]:
Quite. Yes. Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:39]:
Yeah. I've never tire of her. Never tire of Charles Dickens. But then living author, I never tire of Penelope Wilcock, the author of, the hawk and the dove trilogy. Yep.

Jan Bloom [00:09:52]:
I have those in my bookcase. Yep.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:56]:
Tell me some of your other favorites because I could bore you with all mine. Tell me some of your favorite authors, childrens or adult, whatever you want. Definitely Elizabeth Gouge. Me too. She's number one.

Jan Bloom [00:10:07]:
Yep. Love Elizabeth Gouge. I really like PG Woodhouse. I have Yes. I thought I should just I should just walk with my computer and show you my bookcases and Yes. Show you the books that I have in them, but, but I won't. But, oh, I don't know. I'm seeing I'm looking across at my living room where where my bookcases are and well, of course, DS Lewis.

Jan Bloom [00:10:30]:
I mean, Narnia Yeah. Changed my life and changed my world. So, love Narnia. And, oh, there's just so many. I mean, nonfiction and fiction and

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:45]:
Yeah. Yeah.

Jan Bloom [00:10:47]:
I I wasn't ready for that. I did not I did not write a list down. No.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:51]:
You don't have to. I'll say it again. Something that will make you laugh. Well, you mentioned PG Woodhouse, who is our fave favorite in our family. So my grandsons

were spending the night, two nights ago and they, were getting ready to go to sleep. So they're, let's see, eight and 10. So the twins are 10 and and the youngest is eight. And the youngest said to me, Grammy, Grammy, do you know Jeeves? And I said, of course, I do.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:21]:

And he said, do you mind if we listen to Jeeves as we fall asleep? And I said, no. I don't mind at all.

Jan Bloom [00:11:28]:

And and, actually, so I found Peachy Woodhouse on my own. I was at the library when Jenny was a baby. Yeah. And I came across a title that said Jeeves, and I thought, oh, I've seen that name before. And so I picked up a Peachy Woodhouse book not knowing at all, you know, who

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:48]:

Which you were getting into?

Jan Bloom [00:11:49]:

Yes. Yes. And so I'm kinda proud of myself because I discovered him on my own by now.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:55]:

That is incredible. Yeah. So you know something fun about him? I was listening to a biography on him years ago, and the biographer said that PG Woodhouse, although he was not himself a believer, was raised, very much within the Church of England and that you can hear the cadence of the King James Bible in every sentence that he ever wrote. And I thought, yes. It's true. And I'm such a fan of the King James Bible as the ultimate piece of literature of all time in the English language, the penultimate. And so he was influenced by that, and it shaped how he wrote, which makes perfect sense.

Jan Bloom [00:12:38]:

Yes. Yes. Well, did you know, just a quick story about PG Woodhouse that

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:43]:

Yeah. Tell

Jan Bloom [00:12:43]:

me. He was accused by the British government of being a Hitler sympathizer because he and his wife oh, you'll have to read the story. He and his wife had property on the

coast of France. And when Hitler was advancing, he he figured they'd be safe, and they weren't. And Hitler his troops came, and they captured PG Woodhouse, and they

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:05]:
put him

Jan Bloom [00:13:06]:
in a camp. And so they asked him they figured out who he was, and they asked him if he would do some radio broadcast. And so PG Woodhouse, being PG Woodhouse, he did these amusing broadcasts that were wired over to Britain. And so because he was in a Nazi camp and he was working for the Nazis supposedly, he was basically blacklisted in England, and that's why he came to The United States after the second World War. Wow. Because he did not wanna go back to Britain because he was so, he was just so damaged by them thinking that he was not

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:48]:
pro Hitler.

Jan Bloom [00:13:49]:
Yes. Yes. And so he was eventually, you know, given, a knighthood, and and he did go back, like, in a shortly before his death. But, he spent all those intervening years mostly in Hollywood and New York City doing so

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:09]:
He was a genius. Oh, yes. Grandchildren and the we have all these inside jokes as a family because of PG Woodhouse. So one day, my grandson said something about eulily, and then they all just started hooting and hollering in my kitchen. And I thought, don't you love having shared fun from the books that you've read altogether? It's just it is so delightful. Oh my goodness. That man has just brightened the world with his humor.

Jan Bloom [00:14:41]:
Yep. It's so fine.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:44]:
I love it. I love it. So if you were giving some advice to some homeschoolers starting out, you you've been quite a pioneer in the homeschool movement. We I think we both probably heard the same broadcast the same day with doctor Moore and then probably started attending his seminars. I was going to the seminars in California, and you were going to the ones in Minneapolis. Right?

Jan Bloom [00:15:08]:

Yep. Yep.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:09]:

Mhmm. Yep. So what would you tell these people? Doctor Moore isn't here anymore, and I feel that we need to carry on the message and the legacy that he gave to all of us as pioneers in the homeschool movement. What would you say to these families that are buying school in a box or open and go or coming under this school umbrella or that school umbrella and marching to everybody's drum? What would you say to them as an expert, really? I'm saying it. You I know you wouldn't say it, but I'm saying that about you.

Jan Bloom [00:15:45]:

You know, I think the most important books to me were books children love and For the Children's Sake and Yeah. And Honey for a Child's Heart. Yep. And, you know, so many books have come out since then. I mean, so So many books. And and, but those three, to me, they they just lay it out. And if people haven't grown up in a book rich family Yeah. We need to learn before we can teach our children.

Jan Bloom [00:16:17]:

We need to understand what a good book is. We need to learn to love good books and to read good books ourselves. And so I I just love those three books, and I don't even know if any of them are currently in print, currently available.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:33]:

Honey for Child's Heart is, Books Children Love is not currently in print, but it's pretty easy to find. Those three books you mentioned and Susan's book, is in print, I think I said that, from Crossway. But the beautiful thing is that every time that I speak, Jan, those three books are on the handout that I give every time I speak. I mean, we are just kindred spirits because I completely agree with you. I remember buying my first honey for child's heart when I was a young single girl. I was at a training for the school that I was teaching at, the Christian school, and they had that book in their bookshop. And I bought it not knowing anything about it, but just because I had always been a lover of children's literature my whole life. And I bought that book, and it changed the course of my life.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:26]:

And then when Susan came to California to speak with, with Jane Stewart I mean, with, Oh, Elizabeth Wilson. Yeah. Thank you. Elizabeth Wilson. Yeah. Susan came to

California with Elizabeth Wilson, and they both spoke, at Cal Poly. And we went up to hear them when our son was very, very young. And when that book was printed, I just clicked my heels.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:52]:

And I tell people put Honey for Child's Heart and Books Children Love in your basket that you take to the library. Oh, yes. Tell your children you can check out any books in any of these in both of these books. And I say give your children a highlighter as a color per child. One child is orange, another child is green, another child is blue, whatever. And then let them highlight the books in those two books during quiet time. And then when you go to the library, they have a whole wish list of all these fabulous books so they're not walking around going, well, how about the babysitter club? Oh, please. You know, instead, there's this beautiful buffet that they have available to them and it just changes everything for their lives.

Jan Bloom [00:18:36]:

Yep. So homeschool libraries for for homeschoolers. Circulating libraries. Yes. Yes. Because they have the older books.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:46]:

Yes. They do. So I did a podcast with my friend, Kathy, and she is in, the Madison, Wisconsin area, and she explained how to find circulating library. Yes. We did a podcast. Yeah.

Jan Bloom [00:18:59]:

Okay. Yes. That's so important because, you know, like I said, in our neck of the woods, the libraries don't even have so many of the books I know. That we love.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:10]:

Well and, Jan, I pray that you do open the circulating library, and then I'm gonna take a field trip to Virginia Beach to come hang out at it because you know what you're creating you know what you're doing? You I'm sure you've read Fahrenheit four fifty one. Years ago. Uh-huh. And the movie by, Francois Truffaut. It was his first English speaking movie. And in that book at the end, especially in the movie, I love the way they portray it. The the young man who's has discovered books, he was a book burner for a living. He was like a fireman but they burned books and he started stealing books from firings where they would burn the books and he started reading them at night when his ditzy wife was asleep.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:54]:

And he began to fall in love with books and finally he became an enemy of the state and they were, after him with speakers and robot dogs and all these things And Julie Christie played his silly wife. But but he gets on this train and she has two parts in the movie. And the other part she played is the woman who challenged him to read some of the books he was burning. And she's on the train with him and she says, if you ever are in trouble, just take the train to the very end of the line. And when you get there, keep walking until you find the the train cars that are just up on the grass. And he does that as he's escaping the authorities. And he gets there and it's cold, it's starting to snow, and a man comes up to him, holds out his hand, and says, I'm To Kill a Mockingbird. And the next man comes up and says, I'm Crime and Punishment.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:48]:

And the next one says, I am, I don't know. I can't remember all of the ones. Anna Karenina, whatever. And then Pride and Prejudice. And each person had memorized the book to save it for posterity. And then there's a man dying. He's an old man, and his grandson is there. And he of course, it's all from memory because the books have all been burnt.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:13]:

And then the grandfather is teaching on his deathbed, coaching his son the next line the next line of the book that he was to to preserve it for posterity. That's what people like you have done for my grandchildren and my great grandchildren. So thank you.

Jan Bloom [00:21:33]:

Well, it's been a joy, and it's been what, surprisingly, what god called me to do. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:38]:

I know that. I know that. Jan, you're a gift. Would you pray a blessing over the homeschool young millennial families that are coming up in this movement? And would you pray for them?

Jan Bloom [00:21:51]:

Certainly.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:52]:

Thank you.

Jan Bloom [00:21:53]:

Dear lord, thank you for this time that I've had with Carol. Thank you for the impact she had on my life. And, lord, I pray that as we walk through our days that the words we've

said, the words we've spoken, the words we've written will reach the the minds and the hearts of these younger moms. Lord, that they will learn the joy of reading, the joy of books, the joy of older books, and, Lord, that they will be wise in choosing the newer books. And thank you for the authors that are writing, and we just lift up the authors who care about their children's book

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:31]:
Yes.

Jan Bloom [00:22:31]:
And who are writing good books. And just thank you, Lord, that words are important and that you are the God of words and you are the word. And, just thank you so much that you love us and that you've given us opportunities to love each other. The name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:52]:
Amen. Oh, Jan. I love you. And if you ever come to Oklahoma, you have a guest room at my house anytime.

Jan Bloom [00:23:00]:
It's been lovely. Thank you so much for your encouraging words, and thank you so much for being who you were at the very beginning.

Rachel Winchester [00:23:07]:
If you're interested in getting Jan's books, check out her website at booksbloom.com. You've been listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. If you like what you heard in this episode, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or share this episode with a friend. It means so much when you help us spread the message of Homeschool Made Simple with others. Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. Remember, Jesus' commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.