Intro

Hello everyone, and welcome to Novel-Tea from the North Scituate Library. I'm your host Katherine, and every month I review a couple books and give you a look behind the shelves at the secret and sometimes, maybe, not-very, scandalous lives of library workers.

Review of *Midnight Sun*

Today I'm reviewing Midnight Sun by Stephenie Meyer. This is - the new Twilight book, released last summer, that I didn't know about until I saw it in our YA display and immediately had to read.

Rather than a catchy plot description, because the Twilight saga really needs no introduction, I feel like I need to start with MY general thoughts on it, because - people are going to want to know where I'm coming from. Everyone has an opinion on this series, whether they've read it or not.

The quick version is "well, everyone has problematic faves and guilty pleasures." The longer version is - I think there are elements of the Twilight books that are brilliant. The Cullen family, the Quilutes, the other vampires we learn about - they have interesting backstories and motivations and depth. And I also think that, in general, the idea of a love that feels so strong, so fated, that it's inescapable, even though everyone knows its a bad idea? That's timeless. It's *The Great Gatsby*, it's *Wuthering Heights*, it's *Romeo and Juliet* - and even Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers speech lets you know, this tragic romance where love is a force of nature messing with everyone is NOT a new idea. I just also think Edward Cullen is creepy, Bella Swan is boring, and the moralizing subtext is just… Not Great.

So, onto the review. This book made a very interesting and bold choice! There's no new plot. It follows the same plot as the first Twilight novel from back in 2005, but it comes from Edward's perspective instead of Bella's. It's about 200 pages longer than *Twilight*, with no new plot. The majority of the book is character-driven, putting the events of Twilight into a new light, with a lot of input from Edward, and a lot of extra vampire content that Bella missed out on because humans need to sleep and can't read minds.

Meyer really takes the time to address her haters throughout the book. For example, right up front, she makes it clear that - yes, of course the Cullens hate going to high school over and over! Edward literally calls it "hell," and considers it a punishment for all the bad things he's done in his life. He is also fully aware of how creepy he is - which is pretty refreshing. Honestly, I don't know how I feel about this. One one hand, I appreciate that she's holding by her story, because... someone has to. Plus, the average Twilight critic isn't really reading for nuance! They latched on

to things and unleashed a constant deluge of bad feelings. On the other hand, it's… really not the classiest move. It gives me the same vibe as… a subtweet? But 650 pages long.

I am finding that I could talk on and on about this book, because there's just a lot of material to cover. I'm not going to even try to talk about the long car-chase sequence at the climax of the book, or any of the other weird stuff in here. To keep it reasonably concise… this book was exactly what I expected and wanted, and I think it probably scratches the itch for other Twilight fans as well. It's a long and easy comfort read, something to take a weekend and disappear into, a page-turner that gave a deeper look into characters I remember and love. Like - we gained a lot more insight into just WHY Edward fell in love with Bella! We learned so much about the standoff after the baseball game! The entire experience gave me some serious headcanons about Bella being neurodivergent! So - yeah. It was a good time, with a lot of bad times as well. I feel like it's 2008 again!

Midnight Sun is available in print, as a traditional audio book, and as an ebook or audio book through the ezone - as you like it. This book is definitely part of a longstanding series, so I don't recommend it to anyone who hasn't read the preceding books. However, if you haven't, I do recommend that you take a BIG grain of salt and try the Twilight saga!

Youth Services Corner

Hi everyone this is Miss Alyce here to give you a quick update on what's happening for children and teens. I hope you're all having a nice month and have been able to enjoy the beautiful weather we've been having. Before I tell you about all the fun stuff that's been going on at the library, I would like to tell you about a fun new graphic novel I just read called Sherlock Bones and the Natural History mystery by Renee Treml. Skeleton bird Sherlock bones and his partner sidekick a stuffed parrot named Watts live at the Natural History Museum. When the Royal blue diamond goes missing, the museum may have to close for good unless it is found. Sherlock and Watts set off to find out what happened and who took it. There are lots of suspects including a chocolate obsessed raccoon, a suspicious security guard, and maybe even a ghost. Can Sherlock find the diamond and save the museum? This was a funny and cute graphic novel with a lot of silly but loveable characters. It is recommended for kids ages 6-9, but I think older kids might like it too. Fans of series like The Bad Guys and Dog man may want to check it out, I think they would like it. Once again, it's called Sherlock Bones and the Natural History Mystery and it is the first book in a new series.

We've been having a fun month so far here at the library. Our story time sessions have just wrapped up for the season but stay tuned for some during the summer. We also had a very exciting game of candy bar BINGO over at the gazebo recently. It was a lot of fun and we were lucky and had beautiful weather for an outdoor program. Coming up at the end of the month on May 26th we will have a yoga practice over at the gazebo for ages 3 to 9 if you would like some mindfulness and movement, you can call, stop in, or email me at alyce@scituatelibrary.org to sign up.

Any teens that need community service for school or honor societies, we're offering an hour of community service for each book review you write. For more information contact me and I'll tell you all the details. Also don't forget to stop in and check out one of our new kits so far, we have an escape room in a box, 2 knitting looms, a gravity maze, and a Little Learner backpack for telling time all available to borrow now, but we will be adding more in the next couple of weeks so stay tuned to see what will be next. As always if you have any questions or suggestions or just want to say hi please reach out to me. I always like to hear from you. Hopefully I'll be seeing some of you soon at the library or at programs. Have a great rest of the month and enjoy the wonderful weather. Thanks, bye!

Behind the Shelves

Now for our little peek Behind the Shelves.

Big news this week, and I am excited to announce that, I have a voicemail to play you from Jenn.

> Katherine, I'm so angry - so I figured I'd document the anger over voicemail for you to steal for your podcast.
>
> I just got out of a meeting with "Gary Industries" and... after sitting in on the Cook Book Club, he wants to restructure all of the programs I'm doing! He saw the way I was talking with Bill and thinks that the problem is with my program, not with that monosyllabic jerk! Ugh! He wants to turn our casual programs into... I don't even know. Pre-planned events where everyone is supposed to talk about a certain topic in a certain way at a certain time, and brings notes? Has he ever WORKED with the public? Does he think we're hosting an Edwardian dinner party over here??
>
> The worst thing is, the whole time, he was treating me like a collaborator!! He kept saying "we" will do this, and "we" will do that, and "we" will make a spreadsheet, you know? Acting like I would be really excited about how he was interfering with my entire job! And yours, but mostly mine. He wants to destroy everything I've built here.
>
> I have a plan but need backup on this! Call me when you can.

And so I did! I called her, and I talked her through the feelings and we decided that the best way to go about it would be to answer with statistics - to prove without a doubt that our program, and every other one the library runs, is well planned and effective. And to get backing from her boss, who ideally would take it up with the board if it got there.

So last week, all the librarians from the cook book club met with Gary, laid out our side of things, and told him that we were by no means going to change the way we are doing things, to break a formula that's somehow working against some pretty terrible odds during this pandemic.

And it went… terribly? Amazing? Uh. I don't know, whatever it did, it WENT. Gary SNAPPED at the idea of being naysayed, and the fact that we had backing from Jenn's boss.

"What a charming meeting!" he said, scrabbling with his laptop to find the "leave meeting" button. "I am sure that when sanctioned by the express authority of your excellent Board, my proposal will not fail to be acceptable." He was already picking up his phone as his video went dead.

So, you know. Drama, but I think we may have won this one.

Review of *Ultimate meal prep cookbook*

This month's cook book is America's Test Kitchen's Ultimate meal prep cookbook

I grabbed this off the new shelf in desperation on May 12, needing a cookbook to review, and I found... the one true cookbook. This thing is amazing.

This book from America's Test Kitchen does exactly what the test kitchen does best. It provides a bunch of tasty recipes for things that seem like they might be beyond the average home cook, broken into simple steps and tricks that make it work well. It gives 25 extremely DETAILED plans for a week's worth of meals for a family of 4, with a 2-page spread for each devoted to the required grocery list and pantry items, ingredient prep instructions including what can be made ahead and how many days ahead you can do it, and an explanation of why the combination of dishes works. It also has a collection of 30 "pantry recipes" that most cooks, or anyone following the book's advice on pantry staples, will be able to pull together without having to plan or buy anything ahead.

So for example, let me give you a rundown of the plan my household is making this week. We chose plan 5, which includes chicken and leek soup with dumplings, garlicky strip steaks with cauliflower, pork chops with chorizo rice, and orzo primavera with feta cheese, plus a pantry recipe. For the pantry recipe I chose cacio e pepe, because I am excited to try their version of the deceptively simple dish - which isn't the easiest thing to make in a home kitchen.

- It told me on the breakdown page what I need to buy - which included a rotisserie chicken for the soup. I loved that they made that as simple as possible.
- It told me that I can make leek broth for the orzo salad up to 5 days ahead, the chicken soup base up to 3 days head, and parcook my rice up to 1 day ahead.

- And, it told me a full list of prep steps that I can do to get my mise en place in order. Cut the cauliflower into florets, trim and wash the leeks, trim the asparagus and make sure to reserve the ends because you'll be using it for stock, shred the rotisserie chicken meat, etc.

The main thing that I've liked, so far, is how devoted it is to helping you get organized to save time. It took me about 15 minutes to put together my entire grocery list for the week. The stuff listed on the page, the stuff I need for a party I'm attending over the weekend, and a few extras like snacks and fruit. I also know exactly what to have prepared on the days I have to cook, and will be able to do it ahead for the night I have to work and it's still my cooking night.

The main thing that is a drawback for my family, is that America's Test Kitchen considers frozen shrimp to be a pantry staple, and a lot of the recipes are for fish. I am the only Shrimp Liker in my household - if I was back living with my parents, different story. But my wife and roommate don't like shrimp or fish, and that cuts down on the list of available pantry recipes and meal plans for us. However, I think that this book is so inspiring, that I may be able to use it to come up with my own alternatives. This is definitely one of those books that I am going to PURCHASE and put in my home library. Which is unusual. Though I may have said that for another book I've reviewed on the podcast - I'm not sure.

The library has the *Ultimate Meal Prep Cookbook* available in print. I especially recommend it to anyone who is struggling with meals right now. After 15 months of mostly cooking at home and getting takeout from the same 2-3 places, food has been a constant source of stress for me. This book is a great and organized way to shake yourself out of a cooking rut and learn some new recipes.

Closing

Thank you for listening to Novel-Tea. Please note that the opinions in this podcast are my own, and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the North Scituate Public Library. The Behind the Shelves segment is a work of fiction, and any similarities to real people is unintentional. The voice of Jenn was Tess Cocchio.

Today we mentioned...

- Midnight Sun by Stephenie Meyer
- Sherlock Bones and the Natural History Mystery by Renée Treml
- Some cool new kits we have to borrow
- America's Test Kitchen's Ultimate meal prep cookbook

I'm including links to all of the books we discussed in the show notes, as well as a link to a transcript of the episode, and to all our social media. If you can't get enough library content, visit scituatelibrary.org to learn about all our services and programs. Also, please send us feedback

on this show! Leave us reviews wherever you can do that, or even just drop us an email. I'm at katherine@scituatelibrary.org and Alyce is alyce@scituatelibrary.org. We'd love to hear from you!