

The Good Words Podcast episode transcript - ANTEDILUVIAN

Lily: Knock, knock.

Ben: Who's there?

Lily: Norma Lee.

Ben: Norma Lee, who?

Lily: Norma Lee I wouldn't bother you, but I really need to come in!

Lynn: The unabridged Oxford English Dictionary contains over [extreme echo effect] two hundred thousand words! These words express the breadth and depth of human experience, from the ordinary to the spectacular. Yet the average American adult only knows about one-tenth of this total number of words, and regularly uses only about half of those. This podcast is dedicated to the pursuit of using words better, and using better words. This is the Good Words Podcast.

Robot voice: Good Words Podcast.

[*music*: "Good Words" by Miss Lynn]

Lynn: Salutations, Logophiles! Welcome to the Good Words Podcast with me, Lynn Hickernell. You know what are full of good words? Books. So in this episode: a passage from one book, and a dramatization of another from my friends at fellow Kids Listen podcast "Book Power for Kids!" We'll examine a well-known expression in "Say What?", find out what "Came From the Internet," and hear an outtake from a conversation I had with Emily King. It all wraps up with a song and, of course, "GET IT?!?!?" All of this brought to you around a theme word of Biblical proportions:

Ben: Antediluvian.

Grace: Antediluvian.

Sarah: Antediluvian.

Lily: Antediluvian.

Zeke: Antediluvian.

Millie: Antediluvian means very old . . .

Sarah: . . . very old . . .

Ben: . . . very old . . .

Zeke: . . . very old . . .

Anna: . . . old . . .

Ruby: . . . old . . .

Lily: . . . old, from a past era . . .

Millie: . . . from a past era . . .

Keli: . . . from a past era . . .

Logan: . . . from a past era, or obsolete.

Ruby: . . . obsolete?

Sarah: . . . obsolete.

Grace: . . . obsolete.

Anna: . . . obsolete.

Robot voice: Antediluvian.

Lynn: "Antediluvian" comes from the Latin words *ante*, meaning "before," and *diluvium*, which means, "flood." So "antediluvian" literally means "before the flood," as in, older than the story from the Bible in which Noah builds the Ark. "Antediluvian" almost always has a negative connotation, meaning something that is so old as to be rendered hopelessly irrelevant. When I started working on this episode, I realized that there are numerous synonyms for "antediluvian": *antiquated*, *obsolete*, *archaic*, *old-fashioned*, *passé*--and without exception, all of those terms are generally used as a put down, to convey that old things are inferior to newer things. What do you think? Do you prefer old things, or new ones?

Logan: I like old things better, because old time music is always better than modern music. Just listen to old time rock and roll, and you'll understand.

Ben: New things all day. 'Cause they usually have electronics, and like, touch screens, and like, more action to them.

Sarah: I like some old things, and some new things. I like something that's new and pristine and hasn't been broken in yet, like a new set of dishes, that nothing's broken or chipped. So, sometimes I like new things, and sometimes I like the old things, like a set of dishes, because it reminds me of my grandmother, or it reminds me of a time long ago.

Grace: I like old things better because usually old things are memories, and like you have memories of someone or something. I have an old picture of my grandpa teaching me how to play piano. I'm four.

Millie: I like phones, and those are very like, new, 'cause new technology. And then, old things, like special things that I have in like my room, that are, like, old or something? Like my special blanket or stuffed animal, those are old things, and like, I love them.

Kelley: I generally like old things better, because I feel like more effort and thought was put into things before today's consumer society. I think things now seem to be built to fail so that we have to buy another one quickly.

Zeke: Actually, I probably do like new cars better, 'cause back then I doubt there was, like--you know, like, our car? If we go on car trips or something, there's like a screen on the thing, and I doubt, like, a long time ago, like, in cars, they had, like TVs in the car.

Keli: I like the convenience of new things, but I find myself gravitating towards things that are more comfortable, they're sturdier. It brings back a sense of history. And so I think I like old things better, but I can't live without new things.

Lily: Well, most things I like to change. So, I get tired of one thing. So I might get--like, if I have an old pair of jeans, I'd rather wear the new pair of jeans than the old pair of jeans.

Lynn: Where do you think people get such different ideas about old things versus new things? We hear messages about older and younger from people we know, from print media and broadcast media, and undoubtedly . . .

["It Came From the Internet" segment introduction cue]

Lynn: The Internet is filled with problematic and misleading language around the idea of people growing older. A quick search of YouTube yields hundreds of videos, all starting from the premise that growing older is something that should be actively avoided.

Different male and female voices, overlapping: But most people are not excited about the signs of aging. Being young is awesome. Aging, on the other hand, isn't so much.

. . . make you look younger . . .

. . . the warning signs of premature aging . . .

. . . can help you look ten years younger.

Clear and smooth skin is a non-negotiable requirement.

. . . prevent, minimize and reduce the signs of aging.

. . . the more invasive the procedure, the greater the possible improvement.

. . . helps to improve neck creases . . .

How do you correct the visible signs of aging on the skin?

Lynn: Think about some of the words those people use to talk about aging. The term "signs of aging" refers to the physical characteristics that change as someone gets older. Every person's body changes as they grow older, and that process continues throughout our lives. There are lots of ways that the way we look changes over time, but the "signs of aging" referred to in most of these videos are changes that occur after adults are grown, and progress towards older adulthood, like the pigment in your hair diminishing, so your hair changes from its previous color into grey or white. "Premature" means that something happens before it is meant to happen, but every person on earth is growing older at the same rate. Every minute, you are one minute older than the minute before! You can't get ten minutes older in two minutes, so there's just no such thing as "premature" aging. Several of the videos talk about "improving" skin, which implies that there is better skin, and worse skin. And the final video I excerpted discusses *correcting signs of aging*. You correct something when it is wrong. Is it better to have smooth skin than skin with lines and wrinkles? Is it wrong to have skin with lines and wrinkles? If it's better, or correct to have smooth skin, why is it better? And who gets to decide what kind of skin is "correct"?

Grace: The Good Words Podcast.

Lynn: The book *The 14th Goldfish* by Jennifer L. Holm, is told from the point-of-view of 11-year old Ellie Cruz. Ellie's grandfather is a renowned scientist, and maybe he watched some of the videos from the last segment, because he has worked long and hard to develop a process to alter the way people age. One night, Ellie's mom--a drama teacher at the local high school--comes home accompanied by an unfamiliar teenage boy.

Leilani as Ellie: He doesn't look like the typical theater kid. They usually wear jeans and T-shirts, stuff that's easy to work in. This kid's wearing a rumpled pinstripe shirt, khaki polyester pants, a tweed jacket with patches on the elbows, and leather loafers. But it's his socks that stand out the most: they're black dress socks. You don't see boys in middle school wearing those a lot. It's like he's on his way to a bar mitzvah. He stares at me with piercing eyes.

Chaska as Melvin: "Did you make honor roll?"

Leilani/Ellie: "Uh, we haven't gotten report cards yet." Something about the boy seems familiar. His hair is dark brown, on the shaggy side, and the ends are dyed gray. An actor from one of my mom's shows, maybe? "Who are you?"

Chaska/Melvin: "You need good grades if you're going to get into a competitive PhD program."

Pimchewa/Ellie's mom: "PhD program? She's eleven years old!"

Chaska/Melvin: "You can't start too early. Speaking of which, is that what you wear to work?"

Leilani/Ellie: My mom likes to raid the theater wardrobe closet at school. This morning, she left the house in a floor-length satin skirt and matching bolero jacket with a frilly white poet's shirt.

Chaska/Melvin: "Maybe you should consider buying a nice pant-suit."

Pimchewa/Ellie's mom: "Still stuck in the Stone Age, I see."

Leilani/Ellie: Then he turns and looks at me, taking in my tank-top-and-boxer-shorts pajama set.

Chaska/Melvin: "Why are your pajamas so short? Whatever happened to long nightgowns? Are you boy-crazy like your mother was?"

Pimchewa/Ellie's mom: "All the girls her age wear pajamas like that. And I wasn't boy-crazy!"

Chaska/Melvin: "You must've been boy-crazy to elope."

Pimchewa/Ellie's mom: "I was in love!"

Chaska/Melvin: "A PhD lasts a lot longer than love. It's not too late to go back to school. You could still get a real degree."

Leilani/Ellie: Something about this whole exchange tickles at my memory. It's like watching a movie I've already seen. I study the boy—the gray-tipped hair, the way he's standing so comfortably in our hall, how his right hand opens and closes as if used to grasping something by habit. But it's the heavy gold ring hanging loosely on his middle finger that draws my eye. It's a school ring, like the kind you get in college, and it looks old and worn and has a red gem in the center. "I've seen that ring before," I say, and then I remember whose hand I saw it on. I look at the boy. "Grandpa?"

Lynn: You can hear that whole scene from *The 14th Goldfish*, as well as a summary and review in episode 8 of "Book Power for Kids!" at KidsListen.org, in the Kids Listen mobile app, or at bookpowerforkids.com.

["Say What?" segment sound cue]

Lynn: "Say What?" is the part of the podcast where we look at different well-known expressions or phrases. Keeping with the theme of "antediluvian," maybe you have heard someone say: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." It means that as people get older, they can't learn or adapt to new things the way they could when they were younger. But is that true?

Cognitive scientists study how human brains operate, and their work helps us understand more about all the complicated processes constantly happening within our brains. I recently read about a study in this field that examined at what points in our lives our brains develop certain skills. The scientists found that certain processes, like being able to assimilate information quickly, and being able to remember things easily, did peak with adults in their 20s, and start to diminish as people grow older. They also found that other important cognitive processes, such as the ability to have empathy and compassion, to see beyond an immediate situation to a larger picture, and to manage multiple different tasks, continue to develop and reach their

greatest points later in a person's life, in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. Certain systems in our brain keep developing and maturing into our 60s and 70s! This study demonstrates that we really are *all* "still learning"--irrespective of our ages--and that people of different ages have very different strengths and skills to offer.

Monster voice: Antediluvian.

Lynn: I wanted to share with you a bit of the conversation that family therapist Emily King and I had when we were discussing the "Do Over" called "The Invention." Most of what we talked about is in the podcast episode about the word, "audacity." I cut some of it out because it didn't directly relate to that episode, but I thought it was worth listening to in this one. In "The Invention," Kid Lynn had a hard time understanding another 5th grader with a significant speech impediment, and his teacher was not very helpful in resolving the situation.

Lynn: She was his classroom teacher and this was towards the end of the school year, so presumably . . .

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmm.

Lynn: . . . she didn't have any trouble understanding him. But that she would presume that everyone could understand him because she could . . .

Emily: Right.

Lynn: . . . um, seems short-sighted.

Emily: Yes.

Lynn: To me, as an adult, now.

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmm.

Lynn: Who is probably, you know, probably the age, or even older maybe than she was then. I mean, of course, she seemed . . .

Emily: Isn't that funny to think about?

Lynn: . . . super grown-up at the time, but . . . that's, you know . . . it's just such a different perspective that you get when you're grown, and you realize, like, oh, so many of the adults that we encountered when we were kids were younger than we are now . . .

Emily: I know! That's crazy.

Lynn: . . . that we're grown. And when you're a kid, it seems like, adults have it all figured out, and they know all the rules . . .

Emily: Right.

Lynn: . . . and they know all the things to do, and . . .

Emily: They're all so old.

Lynn: They're SO old. And, um, yes, here's . . . spoiler alert, kids who are listening: [whispers] we don't know all of the things! We're all still learning. [normal voice] That's not really a secret, actually.

Emily: And we're . . . we're not old, guys. [laughs]

Lynn: [laughs] Well, except there's nothing wrong with being old.

Emily: No. There's not.

Lynn: I mean, some, some grown-ups are definitely on the much older end of the human lifespan spectrum . . .

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmm.

Lynn: . . . and, I mean, it's, it's a privilege denied to many to get to live to be old . . .

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmm.

Lynn: . . . to get to be older. We use "old" as, you know, sort of a pejorative, disparaging term sometimes, but there's nothing wrong with being old.

Emily: There's nothing wrong with it.

Lynn: Yeah, we probably need to talk about that at a . . . in a different podcast.

Emily: That's a whole different, that's a whole different subject.

Lynn: Yeah. Yeah. That doesn't really relate necessarily to "audacity," um . . . although, I mean, I do think I have learned to be more audacious as I have gotten more experience and gotten older . . .

Emily: Sure.

Lynn: . . . and learned things like, you know, the fact that people have different *modus operandi*, and people are going to maybe make fun of you, or not like you, or--there are just so many things that other people do that you don't have any control of that . . . that has definitely helped me learn to become more audacious because I used to worry about a lot of those things, and then . . .

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmm.

Lynn: . . . I realized from time and experience that those aren't things that I have control over anyway, so there's no . . .

Emily: Right.

Lynn: . . . real point to worrying about them.

Emily: That's right. Right.

Lynn: So . . . it's good to be old.

Emily: Well, there . . . you get a lot of freedom with the experience.

Lynn: Yeah.

Emily: You know, and understanding that everything's not a big deal.

Lynn: Yeah. It's true. But also, we can learn a lot of bad habits that can be hard to unlearn.

Emily: Mmmmmmmmmmm. Yes.

Lynn: So there are also, I think, things that are good about being young, 'cause you haven't had the opportunity yet to learn, you know, learn habits that are going to have a negative impact on your life moving forward.

Emily: Mmmmm-hmmmmmm.

Lynn: Hopefully, hopefully you can learn good habits!

Emily: That's right.

Lynn: Everybody's going to learn some bad habits. That's inevitable.

Emily: Right. We're all still learning.

Lynn: We are all still learning! Oh my goodness.

Lily: The Good Words Podcast.

Lynn: Margery Williams's *The Velveteen Rabbit* was first published almost a hundred years ago, and so for that reason might be considered antediluvian in its own right! It tells the story of a stuffed toy that is given to a boy as a brand new Christmas gift, and then has to get to know all the other toys in the boy's nursery.

Kara Shallenberg: The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out to string bead necklaces. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"I suppose you are real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

"The Boy's Uncle made me Real," he said. "That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.

Chipmunk voice: Antediluvian.

Lynn: "That's such an old joke!" someone might say to indicate that it can't possibly be funny. But I think the opposite is true--if a joke has survived over a long time, being told over and over again by many different people, I think it just demonstrates how funny it is!

Many voices: GET IT?!?!?

Grace: Why do you have to be careful when it's raining cats and dogs?

Zeke: So you don't step in a poodle.

[dog barking sound effect]

Fred: Why did the cowboy buy a dachshund?

Millie: He wanted to get a long, little doggy.

Lily: Where do generals keep their armies?

Ben: Up their sleeves! Now that's actually an okay joke.

Logan: What kind of building weighs the least?

Grace: A lighthouse.

[foghorn sound effect]

Millie: Why do birds fly south in the winter?

Marty: It's too far to walk.

[geese honking sound effect]

Lynn: A lot of the songs I have written over the years tell stories, but a few years ago, I worked on a project that was a little different. Instead of writing a bunch of songs that each told their own, separate stories, I wrote a group of songs that work together to tell one larger story. The name of the project is "Bottle Builder." It's about a number of things, but one of the themes throughout is the idea of things and people growing older, and how we behave towards them when they do. The song, "Studebaker Truck" is sung by a woman who has

lived a long time, and taken on an unusual hobby. You can hear "Studebaker Truck" in a few minutes to conclude this episode. But before that, I have so many people to thank for their help telling you about the word, "antediluvian." Thank you to the Power family, who make "Book Power for Kids!" The roles of Ellie, Melvin, and Ellie's mom in *The 14th Goldfish* were read respectively by Lani, Chaska, and Pimchewa, and I'd also like to thank Brennan and Mirabel, whose indefatigable spirit infuses their podcast even when she isn't in it directly. I've included links to help you find "Book Power for Kids!" in the show notes for this episode at goodwordspodcast.com. Thank you to all the rest of this episode's contributors: Anna, Ben, Emily King, Fred, Grace, Keli -i, Kelley -ey, Lily, Marty, Millie, Ruby, Sarah, and Zeke. The passage from *The Velveteen Rabbit* was read for Librivox by Kara Shallenberg. Thank you to the GWP Partners who support The Good Words Podcast on Patreon, and get early access to every episode, as well as other extra things like written transcripts of the episodes and partner exclusive bonus content. You can find out how to become a GWP Partner at patreon.com/goodwordspodcast. You can also help out the podcast by reviewing and rating it on iTunes, which helps other logophiles discover it. And whether or not you do any of those things I just mentioned--thank you for being part of this episode by listening. You'll have another opportunity when the next new episode comes out in two weeks. So in the interim, I hope you'll keep listening and talking about what astonishes you, amuses you, infuriates you and frightens you. And as long as you tell the truth with kindness, the things you say will be good words. Bye for now!

[music: "Good Words" by Miss Lynn]

[music: "Studebaker Truck" by Miss Lynn]