

Podcast 493: What Else Is in Your Audible Account?

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: It's a commentary on the delight of literature and how it elevates the spirit. And he's really a great wordsmith too. He uses vocabulary in a way that just tickles the palette of the mind.

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: Well, Andrew, this is part two of our recording that we did a couple months ago called "What's In Your Audible Account?"

Andrew Pudewa: I remember.

Julie Walker: Well, and we didn't actually have a part two scheduled. We talked about it on the podcast that we should do this again. This was fun.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and honestly, I get emails a few times a month on average of people saying, do you have a new book list? Do you have your book list? What are you reading? When are you going to have another book list?

Julie Walker: People love this.

Andrew Pudewa: They do, but then you feel a little bit guilty because. You mentioned a bunch of books, and then somebody's going to buy these books and they may or may not ever have a chance to read them. I have a friend, Carl, he calls it the infinity pile,

Julie Walker: It's so true.

Andrew Pudewa: You gain books faster than you read them. Even. I even tried putting a moratorium, a personal stop to buying books, and I think that lasted two weeks max. And then I just gave up. But my Audible list is weird because I have children who use it for their children. So when I look at my Audible list, I think, Hmm, I have never read that book, nor am I ever going to.

Julie Walker: Well, and Andrew, we talked about this last time. It was actually one of my friends who said, so when are you going to launch part two of this? And I said, we actually haven't recorded it yet. And she was very disappointed, but she loved the variety because we did share some of the books that we were reading to our grandchildren through Audible.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, well, you go first.

Julie Walker: Okay. So I recently listened to, and so my husband and I listened together. So sometimes we'll be on a road trip. Or we'll be putting together a puzzle at night. Turn off a TV and do something a little bit more meaningful. So, we'll, we'll put in an Audible book and we'll put together a puzzle, a thousand piece puzzle or

Andrew Pudewa: Just sounds so romantic.

Julie Walker: You know what? It's enjoyable. And truth is I love puzzles. My husband not so much, but if we can get a good Audible book, then we will do that. And so one of our recent reads was *The Testament* by John Grisham.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, Grisham, I love everything he's written.

Julie Walker: Yes, yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Brilliant, brilliant storyteller.

Julie Walker: This one in particular, it has a gruesome beginning, but it has a somewhat sad but satisfying ending. And I'm a romantic at heart. I had, we were at a convention together and one of our friends asked Tolstoy or Austen? And I said, hands down Austen, I'm a great fan of Jane Austin. I mentioned that in the last podcast, so I'm always looking for the happy ending.

Andrew Pudewa: I wouldn't consider Austen a romantic. I think she's a humorist. My problem with Austin is I tried to read her as if she were a romantic and I really didn't like *Pride and Prejudice* at all. And then actually a teenage girl that I correspond with, she sent me a copy of *Northanger Abbey* and I read it and I thought, ah, Austen is a humorist.

She belongs in there with with Mark Twain. So now I can read Austen without trying to take it seriously.

Julie Walker: *Northanger Abbey* in particular is a tongue in cheek the whole way through. She's just, it's like a parody. If you don't know that going into it, you're like, what a ridiculous.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, but I'll tell you, Grisham's book, *The Appeal*, boy, that was, that was a hard read because although it wasn't based on a true story, he did say that it's a composite of real things that are happening and it is not a happy ending. So.

Julie Walker: Don't read it.

Andrew Pudewa: But I prefer books that are realistically depressing. So speaking of realistically depressing, I have become a follower of a guy named Peter Zeihan, but his name is spelled Z-E-I-H-A-N. But he says, Zion. He's got a brilliantly short podcast. His episodes average about six minutes. Could you imagine if we did that?

Julie Walker: We'd be done. Thank you, Andrew. Goodbye.

Andrew Pudewa: I did finish his somewhat lengthy book called *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning*. He's a historian and a consultant, and what he helps companies do, I guess, is figure out based on the history, what's the future? So they can plan. But this book was super interesting because he looked at all of the major systems in the world, so the agriculture system, the transportation systems, the communication systems, the industrial systems, and he goes back way to the very, very beginning of, I guess, recorded history that we know things about and gives you the whole history of it and then extrapolates the future. So I didn't realize how significant ocean travel was in terms of prosperity of the world because of trade.

Julie Walker: Sure. Well, the Phoenicians were the first seafarers, right? And that was plus a. The phonic system.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, yeah, but moving stuff over land was extremely expensive and dangerous, and when you had large ships that could go across oceans, it reduced the cost of transportation so significantly that it was an explosion for the world economy. Anyway, his basic premise in this book is: we are at the end of globalism, and we're going to start seeing collapses in trade, collapses in agriculture, collapses in industry, collapses in economics, demographic. First, the first time I heard him, he was talking about the demographic collapses primarily in Asia, but almost all the industrial countries now are going to run out of people.

So anyway, the title grabbed me *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning*, and basically it ends pretty dark, like things are bad and they're going to get a lot worse pretty soon. But the good news is if you have to be anywhere when the global economy collapses, North America is the better place to be. be the least worst. Really good analysis, really good history. I would recommend it very realistic. He's got certain premises that may or may not hold to be true, particularly about his belief that the world trade system is going to start to become less functional because the United States will stop being the policemen of the world that keeps the oceans safe. So, we'll, we'll see how it goes, but I've been following him on his podcast and he's no fan of the current administration. But then his critique points are based on common sense reasoning and some facts. And so it's a balance.

Julie Walker: So I am reminded to say that some of these books that you and I are recommending are not necessarily for read alouds for children.

Andrew Pudewa: That one not, but I do think high school, you could read it with some high school

Julie Walker: Yeah. Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: It would go very well with the book *Dominion* by Tom Holland, which I know I've mentioned to you, which is it's expansive. It starts in 500 BC and ends with the first election of Donald Trump. So it's really a big, big history, but it goes through how Christianity and the Judeo-Christian tradition have had an impact on all the major events

through world history. So I, those two go together pretty well just because I've been in this history mode recently, so.

Julie Walker: Well, what's the adage about history? Those who don't know history are forced to repeat it.

Andrew Pudewa: No, no, no. Those who do know history are forced to watch those who don't know history repeat it.

Julie Walker: Okay, there's that version of it. So let me just go back, 'cause my next one that I'm going to recommend is in the same category of *The Testament*, and that is, it's not for children. It's not even necessarily for teenagers, but it's also by John Grisham, which I think is a good adult read. So my husband and I were empty nesters. Our youngest child is in his thirties, so we don't let our grandchildren listen to these books. But another one that John Grisham wrote is called *Sooley*. I don't know if you've ever read or heard of this book.

Andrew Pudewa: It must be newer.

Julie Walker: It is newer, and it's a basketball story about a young man who is from South Sudan and his journey into local, regional, and then collegiate basketball. It's really good, but we were talking about me liking happy endings. This has a tragic ending, so it's spoiler

Andrew Pudewa: That too. I would suggest the one Grisham book that you could read with anyone is *Skipping Christmas*.

Julie Walker: *Skipping Christmas*. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: It's really good. Well, let's mention a couple books that would be on the delightful list, because I do try to balance out my pessimistic hopelessness about the future books with ones that bring delight, and I just found this kind of by accident.

It's a two book set. The first one is *Parnassus on Wheels*, and then the sequel is *The Haunted Bookshop*. These are both by Christopher Morley, and he lived and wrote right before and after World War I. So there are period books, contemporary to when he lived and *Parnassus on Wheels* is this delightful story of this guy who travels around with this wagon that's pulled by horses, a horse I guess, or a mule. And he has books, and he goes out into the country and he opens up the side of it. He's got books for sale, and he goes out to the farmers and the people who live rural and tries to sell books, and then he has dinner with them and goes to the next place and sells books. And one of his customers, the sister of the farmer, she decides that she will buy his bookselling omnibus thing. And so they have a little bit of relationship, and then he disappears and she goes out and does this for a while, and it's a commentary on the delight of literature, and how it elevates the spirit. And he's really a great wordsmith too. He uses vocabulary in a way that just tickles the palette of the mind.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And then the sequel, *The Haunted Bookshop*, they end up getting married. And having a bookshop in town. And then there's kind of a mystery romance combined in that as well. So I would recommend this to any mom who just needs a delightful book to read before school starts again, or a teacher,

Julie Walker: So is this a read aloud that mom can read it aloud

Andrew Pudewa: I think so. Yeah, probably not too young of kids just 'cause they wouldn't get the delight aspect of it. But I think it certainly is something I hope I will listen to again. And it's short.

Julie Walker: good. Well, in the category of delightful novels, and you recommended this one to me, Andrew. It's the *Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place*

Andrew Pudewa: yes. And Sarah Mackenzie recommended that one.

Julie Walker: yes. It's a series of six titles, and it starts at the beginning of how this nanny got acquainted with these ragamuffin children who were raised by wolves. So you could see it's pretty fantastical, but then it ends with *The Long Lost Home*. And that's such a good one too.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't think I ever got there.

Julie Walker: You have to read all six books, Andrew and listener, because there's a thread that goes through it that just is, it has a really fun ending. It makes me very happy just thinking about that book.

I don't want to give anything away. So *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place* is definitely something that you can play out loud to all your children, and the youngest ones aren't going to be able to keep up. But this is definitely how those, there are some stories that the chapter ends and you're just like, are you kidding me? This is definitely in that category, which is really fun.

Andrew Pudewa: Very nice.

Julie Walker: So speaking of Sarah Mackenzie, my last listen with my husband David, he and I listened to *Bud, not Buddy*, and this is one that Sarah Mackenzie had on her reading list for middle school aged children. And it's a period book about a young black boy and finding his place in the world, and it's got enough tragedy in there that is real, but of course it has a happy ending. So I love that book, *Bud, not Buddy*. I don't know how well it would fly in today's culture in terms of things like protecting yourself, but it's a period book, so it's written in the thirties. I mean, it was written in the time period of the thirties, and that was just the reality of what they were dealing with at the time.

Andrew Pudewa: It reminds me of two other books actually. There's probably a whole lot you could do, maybe a whole podcast on just books that have the name Bud—but *Billy Bud*.

That's a super hard story because he is court-martial. Well, there's a mutiny thing going on and he is sentenced to death and he accepts that he must die for the justice of the law. Melville. Yeah, but that's a tough, tough read. However, *Bud and Me*, the story of the Abernathy Brothers who rode their horses from Oklahoma City to Santa Fe when they were five and seven years old, and then rode their horses from Oklahoma City to New York when they were eight and six years old, and then rode their horses from New York to San Francisco when they were a year older. And this is documented. This is, you can go read the Wikipedia information. It's quite remarkable. That would be a little bit dangerous if you have a 7-year-old and a horse, they might just decide to take off for Nebraska or something. I don't know. But it does give you a tremendous sense of, well, how parents would trust children a lot more a hundred years ago, this was 1904-ish, I think. And it gives you a sense of how, yeah, there's danger in the world, but there's good people everywhere. And children can be very resourceful when given responsibility.

Julie Walker: Exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: That was a fun one. I don't know if you ever came across this whole series by Arthur Ransom *Swallows in Amazons*, but the movie swallows in

Julie Walker: This is the sailboat kids. Oh, I love this.

Andrew Pudewa: But there are so many books in this series, and I have not actually listened to any of them. But evidently my grandchildren have gone crazy over this series.

Julie Walker: Andrew, you would love this because you grew up sailing. I grew up sailing and I love, and this is kind of in that vein of letting young children do things that you think they're too young to do, like camping on an island and sailing their sailboat across the sea. It was, it's really cute. That's a delightful book, so great one.

Andrew Pudewa: *Peter Duck* is another one in that series.

Julie Walker: Swallows and Amazons. So Wednesday Wars. Talk about

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, okay. Yes. So there's the *Wednesday Wars* and there's, *Okay for Now*. And then there's *The Labors of Hercules Beal*. These are three books by Gary Schmidt. Again, a Sarah Mackenzie recommendation, and they're all about middle school age boys. The first two books are in the same world. The third one seems to be in a different world.

I would say middle school and up—the second book in particular, there's kind of a darkness with an abusive father, but a tremendous amount of redemption. However, the way they're set up is brilliant. In *The Wednesday Wars*, the boy is sentenced to afterschool detention or something, and the teacher makes him read Shakespeare plays. So each chapter is a Shakespeare play, and the Shakespeare play teaches him lessons that help him negotiate the problems in his life.

Julie Walker: Wow, that sounds really good.

Andrew Pudewa: The second one, one of the characters, not the same boy, but a different boy. He's in a different city, and he's got a really hard life. And the theme is Audubon paintings and birds, and so he's learning to draw like Audubon, and so each bird has its kind of theme and lesson and that helps him navigate his life.

The third one, *The Labors of Hercules Beal*, I like this one the best because it is a boy in a school and he has a very strict ex-military officer teacher. And they have to do a project for the year, and he gets, he has to somehow recreate the labors of Hercules. So each chapter is him doing something that approximates to some degree, one of the labors of Hercules.

And then he has to write a report about this, and lot of chaos, lot of crisis, but brilliant storytelling. And so Gary de Schmidt. I really enjoyed all three of those.

Julie Walker: Great. Yep. So sometimes I look for books, and we probably have chance to recommend just one more. Sometimes I look for books for my mother. My mother, Andrew, is 95 years old and has macular degeneration, but she loved to read and she still loves to read. So Audible books is the best way. Yeah, and my brother has set her up with her Alexa and she'll say, Alexa read and Alexa will read to her. So one of the books that I found for her, again, we keep talking about Sarah Mackenzie. Sarah Mackenzie is a tremendous resource of great recommendations, and this is *The Last Bookshop in London*. This takes place during World War Wari, where London is getting bombed. There's obviously one bookshop left in London and the story of redemption of this young heroine in the story and just how she helps someone save their bookshop. So it's, it's a really good read, but again, this would also be something that I would listen to with my husband rather than with my grandkids, so,

Andrew Pudewa: It reminds me of a short essay that C.S. Lewis wrote, I think it was called "Study During Wartime" something like that. And he talks about why you kind of have to just keep on doing what's right, keep on pursuing knowledge and wisdom and virtue, even if the world around you is falling apart. I think that would be periodically a good one for people to read. Ah, so many books and so little time.

Julie Walker: You got one more?

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. This one is the book that I thought when you said you like romance. This evidently, at least according to Anthony Esolin, who I believe about everything, is the best novel written in Italian, and I finished it not long ago.

Julie Walker: In Italian, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: It's called, no, it's called *The Betrothed*.

Julie Walker: Okay.

Andrew Pudewa: It's interesting because the author, Alessandro Manzoni lived a couple hundred years ago, but he's writing historical fiction from a couple hundred years before that. And so it's a very interesting picture into Italy during the plague, and it's this problem of. A

couple that are betrothed, they're engaged, and because of kind of an evil warlord type of guy who wants the girl, they get separated and they have adventures, and there's problems.

It's a long book. I will say it felt longer than it needed to be. It's not tight like Grisham, but because it's an older book, it has so much description and insight into the time, and you think, well, if someone was writing historical fiction about 500 years ago or so, about 200 years ago, they're closer to it. So who knows? Maybe their descriptions are a little more accurate, but it does end nicely. And there's a beautiful, beautiful character in there. He's a bishop and he reminded me of the bishop in *Les Miz*.

Julie Walker: knew you were going to say that.

Andrew Pudewa: so noble and selfless. And there's a conversion that happens one of the really evil guys. And when you see a really evil character and then they're converted by beauty and truth, it kind of gives you hope for everything. So we'll end on a hopeful note. *The Betrothed* by Alessandro Manzoni.

Julie Walker: Sounds amazing. Well, we probably will not be doing Audible account part three, but I think we ended well.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well we've got to, because look at all the books we haven't even mentioned.

Julie Walker: Oh, it's so true. It's so true, and I will say that I did not even mention any business books this time. I guess it's because it's summer, and I'm feeling like that's what we need to be doing is just having delightful reads while putting together puzzles.

Well, thank you Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.