

Roslund Family Readers

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NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2008

Audiobooks anyone?

by Lynne La France

When I first started teaching, one of the big highlights of the year for me was getting to spend the school's money on the new materials for the next school year. Getting to shop without having to spend a penny of my own summer vacation budget was a shopper's dream. Now this same task fills me with dread. I look forward to it about as much as I look forward to paying income taxes, getting a root canal, dieting, or cleaning out hair from a clogged drain. (Okay, I make my husband do the drain thing.) Anyhow, you get the point here. I hate having to order for next year.

Now, you might be wondering what the big deal is and what the heck does this have to do with audiobooks? Okay, the big deal is that shopping in education catalogs is just not for the budget minded person (me.) Trying to find a bargain in an education catalog is like having the price of gas go back down to \$1.50/gallon. It just isn't going to happen in this lifetime. So there I was one day, trying to order recorded books for my struggling readers and filled with outrage at the price of an I CAN READ audiobook. This particular catalog wanted \$15.99 for the cassette version. CASSETTES! Who are these people kidding? Do we even have cassette players anymore? NO! Of course the price for ordering the CD version wasn't much better - \$21.99 for a little 20 page I CAN READ book (not including the book.) So rather than hand over money to these highway robbers, I started looking for another company. My search led me to a

new and better world of audio books.

Of course, audiobooks for both children and adults have been around for a long time. These are complete books narrated on cassettes or CDs. You pop it in the player, and listen to your heart's content. But (you guessed it,) I never invested in them (personally or for school) because I felt that the price was too high. I checked in the library, but their selection was limited and not to my taste in books. So I forgot about audiobooks for a long time. But now, with a world full of iPods and MP3 players, I find that there are lots of new options these days for listening to audiobooks.

I explored several audiobook sites online when I was doing my shopping for Title I. I ended up getting a download subscription to a site called, www.simplyaudiobooks.com. All the websites that I looked at had a good variety of up-to-date books for both children and adults. I ended up going with this website, simply because they had the Harry Potter books available and the other site did not. Let me tell you how this website works, and some things that I discovered along the way.

You have several options at [simplyaudiobooks.com](http://www.simplyaudiobooks.com). If I had been thinking about getting audiobooks for myself, I would probably go with renting unlimited audiobooks, rather than downloading. There are several advantages to renting audiobooks rather than downloading (buying) them for keeps. Renting is cheaper than buying. Most of the time, you only read the book once, so why pay more to own it? Also, they will ship you the CD in the mail, so you





Audiobooks anyone? Cont'd.

don't have to mess around with downloading to your computer or MP3 player and burning to CD's. The best advantage to renting audiobooks as opposed to downloading them is that not all books on the site are available for downloading (as I found out with the Harry Potter books ☹) but they are available for rental. The rental program works exactly like renting DVDs from www.netflix.com. For \$17.98/month (\$15.00 if you get the 12 month prepaid plan) you can have out one audiobook at a time. There are unlimited rentals, no late fees, due dates, or shipping costs. You return the CDs in the prepaid mailers and request your next book. Based on my own experience with netflix, The turn around time between mailing and receiving your CD is about 3-4 days. You can cancel your subscription at any time. As I said before, the best books are available as rentals, however for my purposes, I really needed to have the books on CDs so that I could send them home with students, along with a copy of the book. So I joined the download club. I get three downloads a month for \$26.95 (12 month prepaid membership.) You can get 1 download a month for \$14.95 or \$11.95 for the 12 month prepaid membership. (Even prepaid memberships can be cancelled at any time and your unused months refunded to you.)

Once you add the books to your cart, download them to your computer, burn to CDs, and then import the CDs to your iPods.

If you just don't want to add another monthly expense to your budget, you can browse the downloads and pay as you go. Find what you like and click the buy option. Buying audio CDs from this site is exactly like shopping at any other online shopping site. You set up an account, pay with a credit card, and they ship you the merchandise (CDs). This option is more expensive. I looked up the price of the audio version of A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini. There were actually two choices, the unabridged version was \$23.95 and the abridged version was \$17.95. You pay shipping.

So in a nutshell, for the best selection of the most up to date books and the best price, go with the rental club. For books that you'll always own and can listen to over and over at affordable prices, go with the download club. However, your selection will be more limited. For books that you'll always own, **and** the best selection too, buy the book. Another site for buying audiobooks is www.audible.com. Great selection of books to buy and a rental club too.



Why Choose an Audiobook?

Audiobooks are a great choice for struggling readers. Research has shown, that children who struggle to read fall well behind their peers in their vocabulary development. Once that happens, reading becomes an even greater struggle. These children read even less and fall even further behind, and so on and so on. Audiobooks allow children to choose books at their interest level and read the same books that peers are reading. If they read along with the narration, they improve their sight word and speaking vocabulary as well as make gains in fluency. But the best part is, they are reading great books!

Audiobooks are also wonderful for those of us on the go. If you feel that you would like to read more, but just don't have the time, pop an audiobook in the CD player in the car. You'll "read" a whole lot more, but beware! You probably won't want to get out of your car when you arrive at your destination.

Hot Book Picks of the Month

Every so often, I change the books on display on the shelves in my room. No other book has generated as many comments as [Bad Dog Marley](#) by John Grogan. [Bad Dog Marley](#) is the children's book, based on the adult best seller, [Marley and Me: Life and Love With the World's Worst Dog](#) by the same author. Although I haven't read [Marley and Me](#) yet, it comes highly recommended to me from Mrs. Schantz, our instructional aide at Roslund. She recommends it for anyone who has ever loved a dog, but cautions that there will be tears. I found this summary of the book from Publisher's Weekly on Amazon.com.

"Labrador retrievers are generally considered even-tempered, calm and reliable; and then there's Marley, the subject of this delightful tribute to one Lab who doesn't fit the mold. Grogan, a columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and his wife, Jenny, were newly married and living in West Palm Beach when they decided that owning a dog would give them a foretaste of the parenthood they anticipated. Marley was a sweet, affectionate puppy who grew into a lovably naughty, hyperactive dog. With a light touch, the author details how Marley was kicked out of obedience school after humiliating his instructor (whom Grogan calls Miss Dominatrix) and swallowed an 18-karat solid gold necklace (Grogan describes his gross but hilarious "recovery operation"). With the arrival of children in the family, Marley became so incorrigible that Jenny, stressed out by a new baby, ordered her husband to get rid of him; she eventually recovered her equilibrium and relented. Grogan's chronicle of the adventures parents and children (eventually three) enjoyed with the overly energetic but endearing dog is delivered with great humor. Dog lovers will love this account of Grogan's much loved canine. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved."

Mr. Grogan brought the story of Marley to young readers in his book, [Bad Dog, Marley!](#) This is for reader's ages 4-8. Here is the editorial review taken from Amazon.com.

"Mommy, Daddy, Cassie, and Baby Louie welcome Marley, their new Labrador pup, into their family. But Marley doesn't stay a tiny puppy for long. He grows and grows, and the bigger Marley gets, the bigger trouble he gets into. Big, bad-boy trouble. Whether it's chewing Mommy's reading glasses or swallowing Daddy's paycheck, Marley is a dog like no other. He tries to be a good dog, honest he does, but everything he tries ends up bad. Then one day Marley goes too far. Will this family have to find a new home for their big, crazy, pure-hearted dog?"

Inspired by John Grogan's bestselling memoir, *Marley & Me*, this heartwarming story shows that loving someone, flaws and all, can reap huge rewards."

We have our own reviews to add to this from two of Mrs. Sands' second grade students. Leah R. had this to say about the book:

"I liked [Bad Dog Marley](#) because I thought it was funny and I liked Baby Louis. Maybe I can have a dog like Marley, but not as crazy!"



Olivia and Leah pose with Marley.

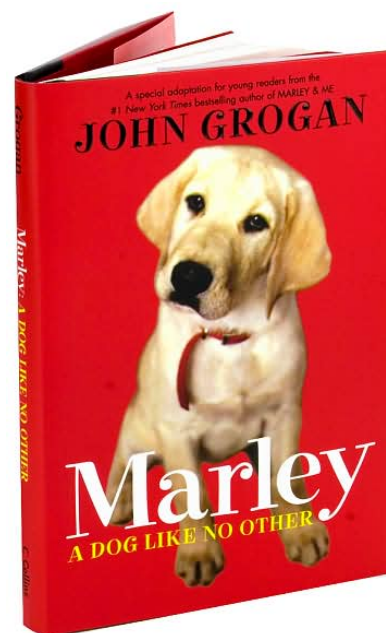
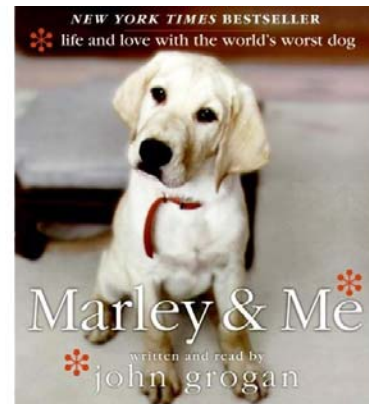
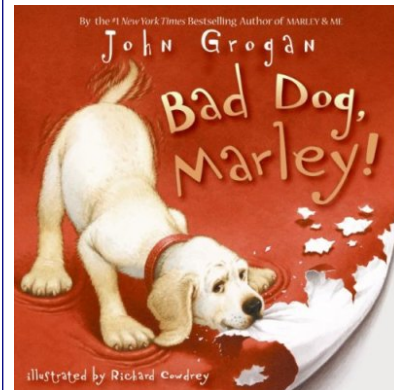
Olivia Heise wrote this book review:

"I really like [Bad Dog Marley](#) because Marley does lots of very silly things. He chews up sofas, food, and even walls! Marley does not try to be this bad. Really he doesn't. He is trying to be his best. But one day he crossed the line. When the family got home from a movie, they saw Marley covered in feathers, standing on the chewed up couch. The father put an ad in the newspaper. Marley was very sad. "I try my best," says Marley. "But I ruin everything!" Just then Marley started to bark. The baby was climbing up to to the cookie jar on the refrigerator. A little girl screamed. Marley thought the baby could fall. Read the book to find out what happens."

For the Middle School Readers, Mr. Grogan has published, [Marley, A Dog Like No Other](#). This review is taken from Kirkus Reviews.

In this adaptation of his bestselling memoir, *Marley & Me*, Grogan celebrates the life of his free-spirited, bad-boy Labrador retriever. When Grogan innocently picks the enthusiastic Marley from the puppy litter, little does he know this dog will crash through his life with hilarious abandon for the next 13 years. "Wild as a banshee and as strong as a bull," Marley grows at a furious rate, chomping and chewing everything in sight. At six months, the incorrigible Marley is kicked out of obedience school. When a film company wants a "big, dumb, loopy dog," Marley's a natural. Whenever there's an electric storm, Marley claws his way out of steel cages like a pro. Over the years, Grogan and his growing family became increasingly attached to their goofy canine, but eventually the elderly Marley wears out, prompting Grogan to acknowledge that despite his flaws, Marley was "a great dog." Written with real affection and humor, this tender tribute to a dog "with stinky breath and bad manners" will win the hearts of even those who aren't dog lovers. (Nonfiction. 8-12)

While some reviewers on Amazon.com accuse Mr. Grogan of being an opportunist by writing the two sequels, I applaud his idea of bringing a beloved literary character to all generations.



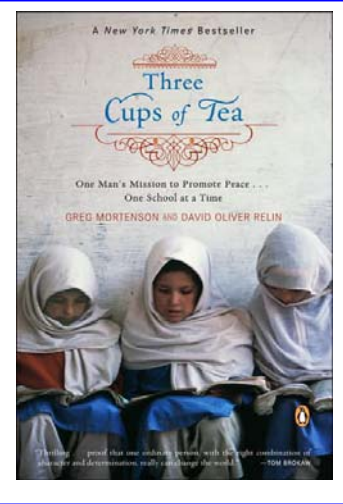
Sarah Billings, our ESL teacher, wrote this review of a book she recently enjoyed; Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.

The stories about people who sell everything they own and live out of a car in order to "better" the world are far and few between and are often heard and forgotten. Greg Mortenson's story, weaved throughout the pages of his book, *Three Cups of Tea*, is not one soon forgotten.

When young, Mortenson, an avid rock climber and emergency room nurse is asked to accompany a group of friends on their attempt to climb K2, Pakistan's highest summit and one of the highest in the world. He agrees, only to fail at the attempt due to the injuries of another climber who had to be evacuated from the mountain for medical care. On Greg's descent, however, he becomes lost and wanders into a remote village in Pakistan's mountains. He mistakes this for the village that he had intended to find at the end of his ascent; the village in which he would be able to find transportation to an airport to return home to the United States. He is welcomed by the people of the village, however, even after realizing his mistake and is treated hospitably from therein.

After basic conversation with the people of the village and the village's elder, Mortenson realizes that the children of the village do not have a school and the village elder tells him, "We have not had a school here for 500 years." Mortenson also learns that the children use inadequate books and supplies for school, when the weather isn't too cold for school. This epiphany begins what is to be ten years and more of work for Mortenson within Pakistan and Afghanistan, building schools and improving the lives of women, children and men living there through opportunity and education.

Sir Edmund Hillary said in his book *Schoolhouse in the Clouds*, "slowly and painfully, we are seeing worldwide acceptance of the fact that the wealthier and more technologically advanced countries have the responsibility to help the undeveloped ones." Embodied in *Three Cups of Tea* is that message of hope. *Three Cups of Tea* is a New York Times Best-selling novel by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Mortenson, head of the Central Asia Institute. He was inspired to write the book after many years of working and living in Pakistan and Afghanistan building schools and improving community opportunities for people in remote areas. He currently still heads the CAI, continues to plan and carry out projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and resides in Montana when he is not elsewhere.



amazon.com

Newsletter Links

Due to the way this file is saved to post onto our website, some of the links to websites are not active under pictures. Therefore, I'm posting all the links here. From here you should be able to click on them, but if for some technical reason I don't understand, they don't work by clicking on them, just copy and paste them into your address bar.

To get started with audiobooks:

www.simplyaudiobooks.com or www.audible.com

The Marley books and Two Cups of Tea can be found at all major booksellers.

All the books mentioned can be purchased at amazon.com. You will be helping our PTO earn money as well by clicking here to start your Amazon session. The link is:

www.amazon.com/?%5Fencoding=UTF8&tag=ropt0b-20

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Each and every month, I owe a shout out to Mrs. Regina Conaboy, from TAHS, and her students. Their efforts get the newsletter online for me. Thanks guys. 😊