

#110 - Summer Reading Plans 2019

Hi, everyone! Welcome to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is the start of something fun. I strongly believe in living in the season, whether it's your season of life or the season of the sun or the calendar or whatever we call spring and summer and such. Things change based on the season we're in, so we're going to start every new calendar season with a three-part series to get us ready. The topics might change, but for this particular series as we enter into the summer of 2019, we're going to talk about our summer reading plans, how we're going to cook summer food, and how we'll deal with time in the summer or the lack of routine that is lovely but also drives us crazy. I hope you'll join me these next three weeks to keep the season of summer as our driver in how we live and eat and read and just choose to be a person. I kind of hate summer; that's the honest truth, so it's important for me to be intentional about how I see it so that I don't hate it so much. Even when you're in a season you don't like, it still has something to teach you, so let's learn from the summer this year. This week, let's talk about reading!

Summer reading is a thing, right? We did it as students in school, our kids might do it, and it just feels like the time of year to have a stack of books ready to go. Today, I want to share my personal goals for my summer reading and some titles I'm looking forward to, and I hope it inspires you to make one or two small moves toward your own summer reading approach this year. So often, I'll enter the summer with grand intentions to read more but have nothing to really show for it because I went too big. My goals were too grand, or I left them ambiguous and overarching, thinking that "read more" would translate into actual reading. Often, it doesn't, so let's talk about being specific and realistic in our summer reading but also remember that this is supposed to be fun, not another thing to fail at. Only do it if it matters to you.

I have three main desires for my reading life this summer. First, I want to reach for a book during any free time or down time as opposed to my phone or the TV. I'm not knocking either of those things; I love them both, but the truth for me is that I love reading more. That hasn't always been true, but it is now. I love to read, but if a book isn't right there, it's often easier to grab my phone instead. If I want to read more this summer, I want to have always have a book. That means bringing the actual book from room to room and not leave it in my bedroom where it feels like too far to go get it. I realize how silly that sounds, but it's also my reality so there you go. Always having a book with me also means strategically putting my book in the room where my kids play. Sometimes I'll start reading while they play around me, and they're so content. It's like we're all beautifully co-existing. But if I sit with them and they're content and *then* I get up to get my book, the magic is broken. If I move, it's over. They want snacks and a playmate, and I lose my chance to read. I want to keep a book by my side whatever room I'm in so this doesn't happen. As far as downtime goes, whether it's waiting in the car or at the doctor or just when a few minutes appear, I'm going to use my Kindle Paperwhite. I love this thing. It's so light, and it doesn't have the same qualities as other screens. It's basically as close to paper as you can get without it being actual paper. I love having it in my purse for any downtime. It feels simple to say

“always have a book around,” but when I don’t, I don’t read. It’s that simple. Usually the simple things are the ones that make the biggest difference anyway, so maybe you can think about how to always keep a book close by in your life, too.

My second desire for my summer reading is family reading time. We did this the last couple of summers where me and my two boys who can both read would lounge in the living room and all read our own thing. It’s taken some time to keep them from reading out loud, but that’s okay. I just have to say “remember to read in your head, not with your mouth” when they start talking. And my kids talk super loud, so it kind of kills the quiet reading vibe. But it’s so nice to all just sit around in the living room and read together. Super simple but incredibly life-giving for me immediately and for them once they get started. Last summer, it only took a few days before they looked forward to family reading time where before they’d whine that I was making them do it.

Since summers are notoriously flexible which is what makes them fun and also horrible, my plan this summer is to use family reading time as the central hub of our daily rhythm. It’ll likely happen while my youngest, Annie, takes her nap, and that’s something that’s fairly set in stone every day. My intention is to enter into family reading time after Annie goes down, but I’m flexible if it needs to change. It’s always good to roll with it and see what works best. Sometimes during the few minutes I’m putting her to bed, the boys suddenly play well together without me. I don’t want to mess that up by interrupting pleasant playing with reading time, so I know that it’ll be fluid. But family reading time always happen. That’s a commitment I’m making. We’ll definitely be home a couple of hours every afternoon during that nap, so half an hour of that time will be family reading time.

My third desire for summer reading is to read a chapter book aloud to my boys. We don’t really do that now, and I really wish we did. Sure, I read all the kids books, but not chapter books. For context, my boys are entering second and fourth grades, and they’re both pretty sensitive readers. They’re easily scared. I read the illustrated Harry Potter to my oldest a couple of years ago, and he couldn’t get through the second book. The basilisk really freaked him out which, let’s be honest, is really understandable. We read the first book in one of my favorite series ever The Wingfeather Saga around that same time, and while Sam really liked it, he did get scared. Ben is less sensitive than Sam, so I’m hoping that now that they’re both a little older, reading slightly scary things will go better. I really want to read the boys The Wingfeather Saga this summer, but I think it’s a harder ask to get them into a new practice of listening to me read to them with a story that’s completely new, so I’ve decided that we’ll save Wingfeather and start with Harry Potter. Sam has already gone through the illustrated version like I said, but that was a couple of years ago. I think I can sell them on Harry, and if I do say so myself, my accents are not too shabby. So a read-aloud Harry Potter summer it will be. The problem is when. I haven’t quite figured that out yet, but it’ll likely be before bed. I’m still mulling over how strong to beat that drum of announcing “okay now we’re going to read together!” I don’t want to force them into something they’re not excited about, but they won’t change on their own. They like things to stay the way they are, so adding something new to their nighttime rhythm is a borderline silly but real problem they have. But wherever it lands, we’ll read Harry Potter together.

One of the things that stops us from reading more is not knowing what to read. It’ll be easier to follow through on reading aloud to my kids because I know what I want to read them. Having the actual book really helps. The same goes for our own personal reading life. If you want to join me in this, I’d love it. I’m going to make a Summer Stack, an actual stack of books I want to read

this summer. I fill my bookshelves at an annual book sale in my town, I get bonkers recommendations from Anne Bogel's Summer Reading Guide which is one of my favorite things the Internet has to offer ever; I'll put a link in the show notes if you want to check it out. The point is I personally have plenty of actual books to choose from.

You likely have some titles on your shelf, too, or you can totally use libraries or borrow from other people or hit up your local used bookstore. You don't have to have a physical summer stack. In fact, if you prefer to read on a Kindle, your summer stack is technically very tiny and not a stack at all. Or you could just make a list of books on your virtual summer stack and read them as they come in from the library. The point is, choose what you want to read this summer. Think realistically about how quickly you read, how many books you might be able to enjoy over eight weeks or so, and choose titles for your summer stack. If you need ideas on what to add, I'll list a couple of blog posts I've written over the years of my favorite reads of that year, plus I'll include a link to Anne's Summer Reading Guide. Or you can take any ideas from my current Summer Stack which I will share with you now.

I'm in the middle of three fantastic books right now that I'll share in the next Latest Lazy Letter which you can get by joining the VIP list at thelazygeniuscollective.com/join, but once those are done, my Summer Stack will start with a book called *The Read-Aloud Family* by Sarah Mackenzie. If I want to begin more of a read-aloud culture in our family, starting with this book seems like a no-brainer. Sarah is such a delightful person, and I'm excited to learn from her as I get started in reading aloud more to my own family. That book is almost like summer reading for my summer reading; it's the best kind of homework. For the rest of my books, I chose all fiction. I do enjoy nonfiction and read it every day, but summers scream fiction for me so all of my picks are fiction picks which I'll share links for in the show notes.

I made a library summer stack and put holds on the books I want to read from Anne's Summer Reading Guide. A couple of them I'm fourth in line and another I'm 58th. Who knows when those will come in, so I have an at-home summer stack while I wait for library holds to come in. My library holds are *Field Notes on Love* by Jennifer E. Smith. It's about a guy and his girlfriend who planned this huge railway trip across the United States, but she breaks up with him before they leave. Since the tickets are in her name which is Margaret Campbell, he has to find another Margaret Campbell to go so he can go, too. Which is the sweetest little rom-com meet cute ever. We all know what will happen, but I'm excited to read this one. I like a good rom-com love story.

My next pick is *The Mother-in-Law* by Sally Hepworth. This is the one I'm 58th on the list for, so it might end up being a summer 2020 pick, but that's okay. Anne says it's great for Liane Moriarty fans, which I am, and it's about a mother-in-law who supposedly commit suicide but it might be murder, and everyone in the family, including the daughter-in-law who had a difficult relationship with her, has motive. Sounds so good for summer... of 2020.

Next on my library summer stack is *The Accidental Beauty Queen* by Teri Wilson. One twin is on the beauty pageant circuit, and the other very much is not. But when the competing twin gets sick, she begs her sister to pretend to be her in the pageant so she doesn't lose her spot. And of course the non-beauty-pageant twin starts to crush on a guy involved in the pageant who think she's someone else we totally know where this is going, but I love it.

I also put a hold on *Ayesha at Last* by Uzma Jalaluddin. I'm sorry for poorly pronouncing your name, Uzma. This is a *Pride and Prejudice* retelling set in a Muslim community in Toronto, and I'm so excited to read this one. I'm only fourth on the hold list, so I'll throw everything else down once it comes in.

And finally, *Save me the Plums* by Ruth Reichl. I've never read anything other than a Gourmet cookbook by Ruth, but I love memoirs around food. This one is about her time at Gourmet magazine as a food critic and writer, so I'm pumped to read it. This is my only nonfiction book, but obviously it's heavy on narrative since it's a memoir.

The two books I want to read most from Anne's Summer Reading Guide are the new Blake Crouch book *Recursion* and *The River* by Peter Heller. Both are thrillers and neither is yet available at my library. I'll be patient. Blake Crouch's book *Dark Matter* is one of my favorite novels ever. So exciting and surprising and just scary enough. I loved it. Don't read descriptions though; just enjoy the process.

So that's my library summer stack. My actual summer stack that will literally be stacked in my house, other than *The Read-Aloud Family*, starts with *Once Upon a River* by Diane Setterfield. I'm actually a couple of chapters into this one already but had to put it down for a couple of library books I'm getting through, but I'm so into it so far. It's a story where multiple storylines converge, and it all centers around this girl who was pulled from the river. Because I'm not too far in, I don't want to give anything away, but it has a little magical realism, the setting is rich and easy to imagine which I love, and the writing is solid. I can't wait to finish this one.

Also on my summer stack is *Attachments* by Rainbow Rowell. I really loved *Eleanor and Park* and tend to like a YA love story. I don't know much about this one other than it's in a genre I enjoy, especially in the summer, by an author that I've enjoyed before.

I'm also looking forward to reading Lauren Groff's *Fates and Furies*. It's a super hyped book about marriage, and based on the description it ticks a lot of my boxes - intrigue, interesting characters, a story that moves, and solid writing. I tend to not dig too deep into what books are about because I like to be surprised, but I know enough about this one to assume it'll work out.

And finally on my summer stack, I have *The Little Paris Bookshop* by Nina George. It's described as a love letter to books, and based on how much I've talked about them so far in this episode and also everywhere else in my life, that seems right for me. From what I understand, it's about a heartbroken man who has a bookstore on a river where he helps fix people's problems by giving them the exact book they need, but he can't do that for himself. There's a journey and companions on the journey and that's about all I know, but a book like that seems perfect in the summer, and since I have a physical copy I picked up for fifty cents at a book sale, I'm ready.

In case I just bust through that list, I also have *The Hive*, *Olive Kitteridge*, and *The Book of Speculation* at the bottom of that summer stack. No matter how fast I read, I'll be ready.

The thing I love about approaching my summer reading this way is that I am ready. I have a life rule where I start a new book 24 hours after I finish the last one, just because I want to keep the momentum. It's so easy to lose it, and having a handful of books on deck that I can choose from based on my mood is so important to enjoy reading more this summer.

And a quick word as you make your summer stack and start your own summer reading: quit a book if you don't like it. I know for some of you that's easier said than done, but I think about all of the books in the world and how many good ones I can enjoy. I don't want to waste my time on a book I don't absolutely love, so if you're brave enough, quit it if you don't love it. Sometimes I'll ask a reader I trust who knows my reading taste if I should keep going. Some books don't get good until later, but don't be afraid to quit. I quit Iron Gold which is in the Red Rising series that I'm obsessed with, and when I shared that in a Latest Lazy Letter, several of you told me to try again, that you didn't enjoy it at first either but it paid off later. And I believe you and will pick it up again. I've shared with you guys that you should read The Bear and the Nightingale and that entire trilogy but that the first 60% of the first book is a bit of a slog. There's so much set up, a lot of characters, and it feels like nothing is actually happening. And then suddenly everything is happening, and it's one of my favorite series ever. So I get the struggle with quitting a book because maybe it'll be good, but ask questions rather than just pushing through. It could help.

I hope you make your own summer stack! If you do, share it on Instagram @thelazygenius and use the hashtag #lazygeniussummerstack so we can all see each other's books. And a random quick tip that I recently realized, if you share a hashtag in a story, it's only visible for the 24 hours your story is visible. After that, it's gone, unless you put it in a highlight. So the best way for us to see each other's summer stacks in the long run is to post them as an actual photo in our feeds, not our stories.

Again, if you want some book ideas, I'll have links to all of these books plus links to other posts I've shared about books I like in the show notes at thelazygeniuscollective.com/lazy/summerreading2019.

I think that's all for today, you guys! Next week, we'll talk about making food in the summer and my own personal approach to meal planning when routine goes out the window. If you're not subscribed to this podcast in a podcast app, go ahead and do that now so you don't miss any new episodes. Thanks for listening, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!