

# Audiobooks can make story more personal

Some years ago, I attempted to listen to an audiobook (on cassette, so it was a good number of years ago). But I could not do it. I could not focus my attention — could not attend to the voice reading the book to me.

I considered myself an audiobook failure, or maybe I just did not like them, and I did not attempt another audiobook for a long time.

Fast forward to today: I got over that auditory inattentiveness, and since then I have grown into an enthusiastic audiobook reader. (Yes, if I've listened to an unabridged audiobook I will say I've read the book. Sally Miculek, the Georgetown Public Library's assistant director, says "I read some books with my eyes and some books with my ears.")

I always have an audiobook in progress through Overdrive, to which the library provides access for most of our cardholders. I listen to the books through my smartphone using the Overdrive app called Libby, but the library also has hundreds of audiobooks on CD.

I enjoy both fiction and nonfiction, and I've discovered how enjoyable it is to listen to books — essentially, how enjoyable it is to be read to as an adult.

The audiobook I've most recently completed was Ann Patchett's newest

## BIBLIOFILES

Dana Hendrix

novel, *The Dutch House*. Set in Philadelphia and spanning five decades of the 20th century, it's an inventive story about loyalty and forgiveness in the intertwined lives of two siblings and their parents.

I would have enjoyed the book had I read it in print, but I believe I enjoyed it significantly more by listening to the audiobook, which was read especially well by actor Tom Hanks.

Hanks also read the audio version of his own collection of short stories, *Uncommon Type*, which is on my reading list for the future.

There are many benefits to audiobooks. For anyone with diminished vision, for instance, audiobooks are a great way to read books.

What makes an audiobook enjoyable, and what is it about an audiobook that can add to the experience of the text itself? For me, it's both the portability of it and qualities of the reader's voice and interpretation.

The portability of an audiobook, especially digital, or e-audiobooks, is what initially led me to listening rather than reading some books.

Inside, I am still the 8-year-old girl who could not get in the car to go anywhere without taking

a book along, but now I'm the driver of the car — and I can't hold a book to read while I'm driving. (Though in my first professional position, in Syracuse, New York, I did work with a librarian who did just that on her long commutes. She used her thumbs to hold a romance paperback up on the steering wheel so she could read and drive.)

Listening to an audiobook is safe, and it makes a drive go by quickly. And the portability of audiobooks is a benefit in other ways, too.

Having an audiobook you only listen to when you are working out or walking can be a big incentive by making the activity more enjoyable.

The other thing that can make an audiobook a better choice than print is the reader.

I recently listened to my first Louise Penny novel, *A Better Man*, the 15th in the Chief Inspector Armand Gamache series.

This is not one of my usual genres but for years friends have recommended Penny.

I found myself really drawn in by the audiobook, not only because of the plot, setting and characters but by the marvelous reading by Robert Bathurst.

When I reached the end, I immediately started the 14th book in the series, also read by Bathurst.

Tom Hanks and Robert Bathurst aside, I've developed a preference for au-

diobooks that are read by the books' authors.

It seems logical that the author's performance of a text may have just the right inflections and emphases and that an author's reading may reveal intentional elements of character or emotion that I might miss reading words on a page. I listen to a lot of nonfiction, and I particularly enjoyed Michelle Obama's *Becoming*, which she reads herself.

On the other hand, there are audiobook readers I don't care for.

Delia Owens' novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* is one I listened to rather than read, but I wish I'd read it instead.

It was read by Cassandra Campbell, who reads many popular audiobooks but I found her performance distracting rather than enhancing the text.

And then there are books I'd just rather read and savor than listen to — complex literary novels are definitely better if I can linger over the words on the page and reread as I like.

It is nice to be read to. Listening to an audiobook certainly lacks the intimacy of being read to by a loved one, but being read to by Tom Hanks or Michelle Obama is pretty nice, too.

See you in the library!

*Dana Hendrix is the Fine Arts Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library.*

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## Read it to me

These are a few audiobooks read by their authors.

### Fiction

- Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- Neil Gaiman, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (and many others of his books)
- Tom Hanks, *Uncommon Type*
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
- Luis Alberto Urrea, *House of Broken Angels*

### Nonfiction

- Glennon Doyle, *Love Warrior*
- Dan Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*
- Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*
- Michelle Obama, *Becoming*
- David Sedaris, *Calypso*
- Dani Shapiro, *Inheritance*
- J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*
- Lawrence Wright, *God Save Texas*



## VALENTINE'S BRIEFS

Love is in the air and Georgetown businesses and organizations are celebrating Valentine's Day with events around the city. Shop for someone special, make homemade cards or gather to mingle with friends and loved ones.

### Shop for jewelry, support community

The Caring Place will host a jewelry show from 2 to 6 p.m. Thursday at 2001 Railroad St.

It's a chance to stock up on gifts for loved ones just in time for Valentine's Day. All purchases support The Caring Place mission to provide for the basic needs of everyone in our community in a welcoming, respectful and caring way.

### Craft cards, sip cocktails

Drop into the Williamson Museum on the Square between 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday to make a Valentine card for someone special while sipping a cocktail. This is a come-and-go event. Tickets are \$10 for non-museum members, \$8 for museum members and include one drink, crafting supplies, and light snacks.

Tickets are available online at williamsonmuseum.org, at the door, at the museum, or by phone at 512-943-1670.

The museum is at 716 S. Austin Ave.

### Shop to support women's shelter

The Bird Ladies and Dr. Jana Schrier of Women's Wellness are hosting the third annual Galentine's Gals' Night Out from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at For the Birds on Williams Drive. It's an evening for gal pals to come together to enjoy food, bubbly, massages and shopping while raising funds for the Hope Alliance Women's Shelter. The shop is at 1103 Williams Drive, Bldg. 4, Suite 400.

### Focus on heart and flow

Brave Vira Yoga is focused on the heart for Valentine's Weekend and will host a Powerful Flow yoga session from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Feb. 15. Bring yourself, a friend or your sweetheart and heat up the weekend with a hot, powerful flow followed with a mimosa. The session is \$17 for members and \$20 for nonmembers. The yoga studio is at 112 W. Eighth St. Sign up at bravevirayoga.com.

### Pawty with pups

Pawsome Blossoms invites you to celebrate Valentine's Day with your pups from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday at 201 Nicole Way. The Valentine's Pawty will have photo opportunities, painting time and delicious treats. The Pawsome Blossom artworks created by your pup and finished by the artist will be half price and free goodie bags will be included with purchases.

### Lace up for Cupid's Chase

The 25th annual Cupid's Chase 5K and Fun Run sponsored by Georgetown Parks and Recreation be-

gins at 8 a.m. Saturday in San Gabriel Park. Cupid costumes are encouraged. Strollers and leashed dogs are welcome. A Kids Fun Run for children age 10 and younger will start at 7:30 a.m.

As this event is weather-dependent, check parks.georgetown.org or the Georgetown Parks and Recreation Facebook page for updates. The run will start near the showbarn in San Gabriel Park, 445 E. Morrow St. Registration is required and can be done through cupid.georgetown.org

### Celebrate puppy love

Pupology will host That's Amore! A Dachshund Wedding, Adoptions and Fundraiser event Feb. 8 at 4230 Williams Drive, Suite A. The shop has partnered with Diamond Dachshund Rescue of Texas and Georgetown Animal Shelter to celebrate the wedding of Eli, Pupology's Doxie-mix pup and Scout, a friend's mini-Doxie. The event will feature the wedding, fund-raising, opportunities for dog adoptions and photo booth fun. The wedding pupials will be at 11:30 a.m. Register on Eventbrite.

### Create your own love potion

Sanctuary Holistic Kitchen will host Love Potion #9 Aphrodisiac Tincture Class 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Feb. 8. at its shop on 1911 N. Austin Ave. Suite 102. Valentine's Day is the perfect time to get your hands on some warming aphrodisiac herbs and making a little medicine of your own. The class instructor will discuss the aphrodisi-

ac properties of herbs such as damiana, rose, vanilla and participants then get to make a blend of their own. Everyone must wear closed toed shoes free of mud and debris, and hair must be tied back and covered with a hat or bandana entering the kitchen. The class is \$35. Register on Eventbrite.

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