

# CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




## EP 64 - Audiobooks Count!

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| Does listening to audiobooks count as reading books?

### 1. What's a book?

- A book is a collection of words packaged together.
- Preferably, this package of words is:
  - Identified with a title and cover that relay what's inside
  - Notes the author or authors who wrote it
  - Is organized with a clear structure, such as chapters or formatting
  - Well written, with artistic and expertly-crafted sentences, characters, plot, facts, etc...
  - Entertaining, or in the case of non-fiction: Informing & fact-checked.
- The book is not the packaging itself: Since the collection of words can be delivered in multiple different formats:
  - Physical printed book
  - eBook
  - Audiobook
  - Serialized across multiple magazines/publications

- Spoken aloud

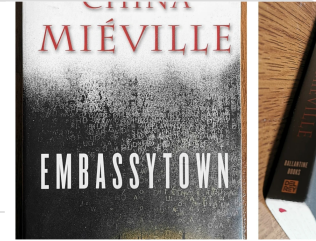
## 2. The Joys Of Audiobooks

- I'll admit that it took me a while to adjust to audiobooks
  - What worked for me was starting with smaller novels & novellas (which are ~20,000 to 40,000 words or about 100 pages)
  - I built up the capacity to process long-form audible content. It's a skill that can be developed!
  - This skill was further developed through listening to podcasts.
  - My audiobook listening really took off when I had kids: Sleepless nights holding a baby made it impossible to also hold a physical book - but I still got to read!
- A good book is a good book: It'll keep you coming back to read consistently & the content stays top of mind between reading sessions.
- Audio narration can add dimensions to the telling of a story
  - Listening to other voices reading books is different than always reading the book in your own voice, in your own head.
  - Professional voice actors can add emotion, pacing, dialect & pronunciation
- Books written with a unique voice or structure can be enhanced in an audio format. Three examples:
  - The Whitesky Saga books by Waubgeshig Rice, narrated by Billy Merasty are post-apocalyptic thrillers about the fate of an Anishinaabe tribe in northern Ontario. They're incredible books about resilience, and the native words and phrases spoken by a native speaker added a lot to my experience of reading them. And given that the books were written in a world without electricity or delivery trucks with new books - the audiobook reflected the tradition of oral storytelling which became central to the tribe's success in their post-apocalyptic world.
  - Romance novels typically have alternating chapters between the different protagonists falling in love. Having them read by different actors makes them feel more fully realized, deepening your connection to the characters, and their romantic journey.
  - China Miéville's Embassytown features an alien race called the Ariekei. They are famed for having a unique language in the universe that is incredibly challenging to speak, impossible for any human not physically altered to speak it. It involves speaking through tandem mouths making different sounds at the same time. In the written book they're represented like fractions. But for the audiobook they recorded both words, then layered the audio so it sounded like the aliens were actually speaking. This trick stuck with me, inspiring the Ranakana species I created in my Rainy River Bees trilogy.

#### Alien Linguistics at the Frontier: A Review of China Miéville's Embassytown

We speak now or I do, and others do. You've never spoken before. You will. You'll be able to say how the city is a pit and a hill and a standard and an animal that hunts and a vessel on...

<https://nusantaranaga.wordpress.com/2019/11/08/alien-linguistics-at-the-frontier-a-review-of-china-mievilles-embassytown/>



- I've found listening to non-fiction more of a challenge:
  - Difficult to stop & replay sections to take notes.
  - Can be hard to follow the organizational structure
  - Content like charts/graphs/images can't be translated effectively into audio
  - When I do, it's usually narrative-based non-fiction

### 3. Counting The Read

- What constitutes the reading of a book?
  - Is it the act of moving your eyes across sheets of paper (or an ebook reader), and turning them in order?
  - Or is it the act of transferring the information within the book to your brain via whichever method(s) are available or preferable to you?
- The rise of reading apps like Goodreads and The Story Graph have made tracking & sharing news of what we're reading a thing. (And therefore a debatable topic)
  - It does seem pretty crazy that some even make the argument over what counts as reading - an argument I don't think exists if there isn't a social, performative aspect to these apps.
- Audiobooks have more than doubled my reading - and are typically how I do about half my reading
  - This year, audiobooks have been a whopping 75% of my reading (16 books)
  - They're great for longer commutes & drives
  - Allowed me to read without having lights on while trying to put babies & toddlers to sleep.
  - Allows reading while doing something active: yardwork, taking a walk, chores around the house
- Audiobook and eBook products do come with the downside of not having a physical book to put on your shelf or to hand off to a friend.
  - One of my favorite things to do when visiting someone's home is to check out their bookshelf: So much can be learned about a person's interests & it's helped spur so many conversations!

## Episode 64 Quote:

Love this quote by author David Brooks

*...“my worry is that, you won’t put enough really excellent stuff into your brain. I’m talking about what you might call the “theory of maximum taste.” This theory is based on the idea that exposure to genius has the power to expand your consciousness. If you spend a lot of time with genius, your mind will end up bigger and broader than if you spend your time only with run-of-the-mill stuff. The theory of maximum taste says that each person’s mind is defined by its upper limit—the best that it habitually consumes and is capable of consuming.”*