



A MAMAS ONLY BOOK CLUB

BY SHARON MCKEEMAN

At
HOME
in the
WORLD

REFLECTIONS ON BELONGING
WHILE
WANDERING IN GLOBE

TSH
OXENREIDER

Author of *Notes from a Blue Bike*

Mamas need book clubs too. As homeschooling mothers, we don't just have a lot on our plate, we are juggling multiple plates crammed full of good things. We wear so many hats in our roles as the primary educators of our children, homemakers, caretakers, wives, possibly employees or business owners, and so much more. It's far too easy to forget that we need time to just be us.

Self-care, soul-care and mama culture is incredibly important. Most times it feels like we can't take time for these things, but we honestly can't afford to ignore them. We need time and space to breath so that we can give our best to our children. We need margin to reflect on our own emotions, needs and desires. We need to give ourselves permission to explore avenues of interest and learning that light our hearts. And we need fellowship.

It's not enough to just take time for ourselves apart from our families and homeschooling duties. We must make time to gather with other women walking similar paths, so we can unwind, learn, laugh and sometimes cry together with them.





In this spirit, our regional group in Southern California has made mama book clubs an important part of our community. Not only do we hold monthly nature outings, seasonal child book clubs and other events, but we have begun to host quarterly mama book clubs. These have become times for us to devote attention to fiction and nonfiction that give our hearts space to breath and our minds fuel to dream and grow. When we come together after reading a book, it's a time to not only connect, but have a good time—no kiddos allowed.

erica

Thailand

Kalinti:
Moroccan Tart

Italy





This fall, we kicked off the school year by reading Tsh Oxenreider's unique travel memoir, *At Home in the World*. I must admit that although I helped pick the book, I was reluctant to read it. My husband was on an extended work trip to Europe, and I was at home cooking, cleaning, chauffeuring, and homeschooling all within a thirty-mile radius.

I thought the last thing I wanted to read about was how Tsh, a homeschooling mama, spent a year globetrotting with her family while making a string of countries their classroom. I didn't want to feel *less than*; I didn't want to grow restless.

However, as I dug into the book, I was surprised and reassured. The parts of the trip that Tsh and her family most enjoyed were the places where they felt most at home. She felt stretched thin by the sections of time that they raced from country to country taking in the sights, but she felt renewed, and deepened by the seasons they spent in one place—homesteading in the French countryside or visiting friends in Australia.

As I read, I gained an appreciation for my small and ordinary days and was satisfied with a glimpse of traveling the globe. Her chapters also served as the most readable and memorable travel guide I have ever picked up. I feel better equipped to pack a backpack to travel the world with than if I had poured over countless outdoor magazines.

As her book helped me value precious days at my home with my children, she also lit a fire in me to dream of the adventures I would like to have with them when our youngest is a little older. This feeling resonated with many of the women in our Wild + Free regional group.





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Traveling means touching, tasting, smelling the world. It means the chance to explore hamlets and boroughs that citizens the world over call home. Through travel, you can know, firsthand, the difference in taste between the bread in Sri Lanka and Turkey. You'll add years to your life with more layers, thicker skin, and a softer heart because of it. Travel is a gift. But travel doesn't provide stability. And isn't it in stability that we find home?

Tsh Oxenreider in At Home in the World





When we came together for book club, I prepared a table with a traditional red and white tablecloth, a globe, and supplies for making little signs. Each mama brought a dish from one of the countries Tsh traveled to. We made little toothpick and luggage tag signs with the name of the food and the country, placed them on the table, and then had a feast! Again, no kiddos involved. Tsh has created an awesome book club kit available for free on her website.

After downloading it, we listened to her global playlist during our event, and many mamas brought food from the kit while others came up with their own favorites. Her list of questions also made it super easy to chat about the book. Not everyone had the same feelings or thoughts about the book, but that is what makes for a great discussion, right?!





I recommend this book for a mama culture book club because although it relates directly to homeschooling, it also reaches outside of many of our immediate experiences while still bringing us full circle back home. I love how Tsh refers to herself as homebody who somewhat reluctantly took on this year long odyssey. That itself, can offer inspiration for many ventures that we may find ourselves on the verge of.

Most of all, just the act of gathering together with other mothers who are walking this homeschool journey is a meaningful and empowering act. I can't wait for our next book and meeting together.

If you are not yet part of a Wild + Free regional group, I highly recommend finding one in your area. Or if there isn't one yet, you can start one yourself!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon McKeeman is a Christian author, educator, artist and photographer. She is married and has three children that she has home-schooled since the first one was in kindergarten. She has also experienced pregnancy loss and has three children in heaven. On her blog she writes honest encouragement for women walking through daily life and grief, and she is completing her memoir on pregnancy loss. She teaches at The Define School, an online photography school. She is a contributing member of Childhood Unplugged, a project inspiring families to enjoy life outside of digital activities. She calls sunny Southern California home, and loves spending time outdoors with her family.

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