

Jody: Words cannot fully express how excited we are to talk to today's guest. We have used his curriculum. We have followed him for years and heard him speak at many homeschool conventions and hung on his every word. Everyone loves and adores him and we are so very blessed to have the opportunity today to talk to him about how to nurture competent communicators.

Jenni: So anyone who is a fan will know right away by what you said, Jody, who we're about to introduce. Andrew Pudewa is the director of the Institute for Excellence in Writing an organization which equips teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers. He and his heroic wife Robin have mostly homeschooled their seven children, who are now all grown and are proud grandparents of 11 with two more on the way. They reside in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Andrew, welcome. Thank you so much for coming to talk to us.

Andrew: It's exciting to be with you.

Jenni: We feel like we have hit the guest jackpot.

Jody: Yes, we have. Yeah.

Jenni: I told my, um, almost 13-year-old daughter who's done IEW for a few years, who I was talking to and she was like, "Really?!?! Like the real person?!" So, you are a bit of a homeschool celebrity.

Andrew: Give her my best regards.

Jody: Aw!

Jenni: Okay, so let's jump right in. You have said that you can't get something out of a brain that is not in there. So with that in mind, from where do children get language?

Andrew: Well, you know, I started thinking about this when I was, um, actually, um, had the opportunity to work in some public schools and I noticed that number one, a lot of teachers don't have much of a clue how to help kids learn to write and speak better. But they also have a misunderstanding about the whole nature of language and where it comes from. Uh, they think, well as many people do, it's accidental. You know, you just, whatever language is in your environment, that's what you get. And, uh, I was doing a talk on, on spelling, and I said that for the first time. I said, you can't get something out of a brain that isn't in there to begin with. And when I said it, I was like, I heard myself say that. I thought, "Wow, that's brilliant."

Jody: Profound.

Andrew: Only, it's not brilliant, it's obvious, but it has tremendous significance for what...

Jody: Yeah.

Andrew: ...what I do, you know, trying to help kids write better. You won't get reliably correct and sophisticated English out of a child if they don't have a good database of reliably correct sophisticated ones. So the question would be where are kids going to get their language from? And will that language qualify as basically correct and appropriately sophisticated?

Jenni: So where does it come from? We were having this conversation today, because I have a seven-year-old who really has a really sophisticated vocabulary and we're trying to figure out where it comes from. Now we've always read aloud to our kids, but being number seven, I don't know, he kind of gets lost in the shuffle sometimes. No, he's number six. He's six, I should say, he's seven years old, but he's number six.

Andrew: Younger children have some disadvantage, but they also have a huge advantage, um, because the, the quality of the language in their environment is generally above them. Right? So think about, okay, where can kids get language? Number one, influence on most children, not yours, not mine, would be TV and media. And, of course, that's not going to be reliably correct or sophisticated or even, um, anything you want. It's, it's worse than accidental. Uh, but a lot of kids watch a lot of TV. I, I mean, most of-- most parents who care, you know, limit that or control it very much. Then, of course, kids get language from the people in their environment. Well, that would be parents, busy parents, might be some teachers, siblings and peers. So, peers are probably the worst source of reliably correct and sophisticated, all you have to do is hang out with, you know, half a dozen nine-year-old girls and kind of just observe how they interact. And you'll notice that when kids are with kids the same age, they tend to sink down to kind of the lowest common linguistic level. But if kids are with kids who are older or younger, they tend to use better language, that's actually been researched. Uh, so younger children are overhearing the conversations between adults and older children. They're overhearing books that are way beyond what you would read to them if they were an only child, your first child. So they're getting this vocabulary and syntax and content and ideas. They don't understand it all, but I mean, nobody understands all of everything anyway, but they're building that database. And boy, is it exciting when, when they get old enough, it starts to come out and you're just like, "Wow, that was such an awesome, unusual and appropriate word for that child to use at that moment." My grandson who's six, um, he said to his mother the other day, "Mom, I accidentally plunged my hand into the baby's diapers."

Jenni: An awful picture, but so well said. Yes, that is how my seven-year-old speaks. When he was five, we've told this story on, on our radio show quite a few times. So when he was five, he asked me a question while I was doing dishes. And as I began to answer it, he put his little chubby hand up and he said, um, "Mom, that was rhetorical." And I said, "Matty Jay, what does rhetorical mean?" And he said, "It means you're not supposed to answer it."

Andrew: Oh, my gosh!

Jenni: Yes. Yeah, he was, he's really, the things that we always say, where does he pick this stuff up? Because he was playing with his little toys and he told me that this one character that he was creating was the decoy for the other character. He was like just about four or five. And I said, "Matty, what's a decoy?", and he knew what it was. So yeah, they just, and so just today, Jody and I were having this conversation like how does he get some of what he says? Because he says things even differently than we do.

Andrew: Well, and you know, kids have a language aptitude. Some are just more verbal and they're going to remember to use words more easily. Others less so. However, we can help every child improve their vocabulary by creating the right environment. Mostly as you know, I'm a big fan of reading a lot to children. That is, that is actually the number one predictor of good writing skills in adults. When I meet an adult who says, "You know, I write pretty well, at least I think I do. I mean, I always got As on all my papers, but I don't remember learning how to do it." I will generally ask, "Well, did your parents read to you a lot when you were young"? And 9 times out of 10 they'll say, "Well yeah, you know, that's right. Come to think of it, yeah. My Dad read the Reader's Digest every day at dinner, you know." or something like that.

Jody: My gosh. The Reader's Digest. You are so dating all of us, right now. Does that thing, even exist, still??

Jenni: I think it does.

Jody: It does?

Jenni: Yeah. I think it does.

Jody: That was-- There were piles of the Reader's Digest in my house when I was a little kid.

Jenni: Yeah, and M-- I know, my Mom is an audio learner, so we listened to a lot of talk radio when I was a kid, growing up, and even some books on cassette.

Jody: Oh, my.

Jenni: Because that was the format back then.

Jody: Some people may not know what that is.

Jenni: And I think that, I think that that really probably made a difference for me, too. Now, is listening to audio books as effective as having someone read aloud?

Andrew: Well, I think there's, there's an upside and downside. One benefit, one huge advantage of reading out loud is if you come across an unusual word or an idiom or an allusion to a different literature, look biblical allusion, which are throughout almost every book, or you know, a place or a person in history, if you come across that you can stop and talk about it. You can explain it, you can make connections, you can create

comprehension. And so that's one of the big benefits of reading out loud is you can talk. Um, audio books are just going to keep going. You can't really get away with saying, "Okay, stop. We're going to talk about that." Plus, you're usually doing something like driving or...

Jody: Right.

Andrew: You know, some activity kids are playing with Legos. The benefit of audio is of course [cough] excuse me, is it, they can, they can redeem the time. You know, you've got a lot of downtime in kids, kids' lives just driving in the car. I mean, when we lived in California, I don't think we did homeschooling. We get car-schooling. And you know, my wife was just always driving somebody somewhere and everybody everywhere. And so car, I have, as you know, I think you've heard my story, a very, very dyslexic child. He didn't read anything until he was 11 and he didn't read a book until he was 12. But he spent hours, I mean we're talking six, seven, eight, nine, maybe, hours a day listening to audio books while he did, you know, playing and chores and pretending to do math and all sorts of stuff. And that is tremendous. And what's so fascinating to me about him, is when he did start to read and write fluently, you know, certainly by the age of 14, he actually was a better writer. He had a greater eloquence, a greater range of expression, a bigger vocabulary than most all of his siblings. Even some of the sisters who were reading at, you know, six, seven years old. So that huge quantity you can do by supplementing reading out loud with audio books is just going to be a great blessing.

Jody: That's interesting.

Jenni: Yeah. And you know, I found, when we listen to audio books, sometimes, sometimes, not always, but sometimes the narrator could make the book a little more exciting sometimes than I could, if they had a gift for it.

Andrew: That's something, though, that, that parents and you know, we should be very careful about, because I have had this experience, a bad reader can destroy a good book. And a good reader can make a good book just as close to perfection as you can experience, but you have to be careful, cause you don't want to poison a child against a good or great book because of a, you know, a reader with a more monotone-ish or weird accent or just you know, a wierd way.

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah, totally. Totally. Yeah. We've, we've actually turned off audio books for that reason. But then there are those, those audio books that come along and you as you're listening, you think, "Wow, I could not have made it sound this good. I'm so glad we're listening to this on..." Yeah.

Jody: Andrew, what are the benif-- Go ahead.

Andrew: I was going to say, the other thing that audio books don't do is they don't get sleepy and fall asleep in the middle of reading.

Jenni: That does happen. This is a true story, I will tell you.

Jody: Yeah. So Andrew, what are the benefits of kids reading aloud to us and kids reading to themselves? Is there any kind of, is, is good, bad? Does it matter?

Andrew: Well, I think we want a balance. Uh, certainly we want children to enjoy reading on their own. Uh, one of the things that, um, sometimes early readers and fast readers will, will happen, it will happen to them that they, they read so fast, they get in the habit of skipping things.

Jody: Yeah, I have one of those.

Andrew: Just skip it. See a little illusion or idiom they don't recognize, skip it. See something that doesn't look important to the plot. You know, skip it, cause they, you know, they read books like they watch movies and so if they're a fast reader, the odds are they're not really building the language patterns into the mind the same way they are if they're hearing it. But if you have them read out loud, they can't do that. They can't just skip words and skip things. So, uh, that's good. Of course you want your children to grow up and be able to read well so they can read to your grandchildren.

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah. I, and it helps you, at least I feel like it helps me sometimes to, um, just put my pulse, my finger on the pulse of where they are in their reading abilities. Um, you know, some-- sometimes I'm surprised, both in good and bad. I, I find sometimes I'm like, "Oh, wow! Boy, you're reading much better than I even expected." And then other times I'm like, "Ooh, maybe we need to work a little bit on that."

Andrew: So, one trick I'd pulled, um, with many of the kids, but mostly with my son, you know how, I don't know if you're do it in your house, but we would rotate jobs. So one week, you know, someone would be setting, clearing, someone else would be dishes, someone else would be floors. So everybody had an after-dinner chore. Well, obviously the worst of the chores is dishes. So, I would, I would say to my son, you know, when he was about 12, 13, just starting to read somewhat fluently, I'd say, "Okay, so Chris, if you'd like, I'll read to you while you're washing the dishes or if you'd like, I'll do the dishes for you and you can read to me."

Jody: Oh, that's awesome!

Andrew: He would, pretty much, always take the deal. And, uh, then I would get a chance to, you know, have him read. And, you know, of course he would stumble over various things and, you know, he wouldn't recognize certain words, so we would have conversations. But, uh, I think that was kind of a really important period in his life because...

Jody: Yeah.

Andrew: ...he grew up later to do competitive speech and debate.

Jody: Wow.

Andrew: And, uh, in that, I don't know if you've ever been to a policy debate tournament or something.

Jody: Yes, I have.

Andrew: But they, those kids have to stand up and pull evidence out and, and cold-read it, right, with no practice and make it work for the judges.

Jody: Right.

Andrew: And make it work and debate on. Well, that's a skill and I think that kind of tricking him into reading out loud to me for a couple of years, at that age, really helped prepare him for success in that other environment.

Jenni: That is brilliant tip.

Jody: Yeah, it is.

Jenni: That is a brilliant tip. I'm so excited to do that.

Jody: I know.

Jenni: Except, I won't be the one doing the reading. I'll volunteer an older sibling. You know, we have to delegate. Big families and all. Um, I love that. So, um, at what age do you recommend that we begin reading to our children?

Andrew: Well, I mean, I think most people start reading to babies. Those little books, you know, what do they call them?

Jenni: Like board books?

New Speaker: Cardboard books? Yeah, board books. That's it. I mean you start with that and then you graduate up to things like, you know, "Blueberries for Sal and Ping" and there's lots of pictures to keep the child engaged. And then, you know, at some point you, you know, you, you start in on what we might call, you know, stories without all the illustrations, you know, short stories, fairy tales and then, then we get to chapter books. But I don't know that you would set an age for any of those things, because you know, all kids are different. Some are a little more interested in that, others are kind of a little more, like, mobile. Don't, don't want to stay in one place for more than a few minutes. Uh, so I think it's a natural kind of gradual thing. I will confess, though, my very first child, I was reading Shakespeare to her when she was four months old.

Jody: Wow. That's funny.

Andrew: That's how ambitious I was, my first child. Actually, I did it for two reasons. It had kind of a calming effect and helped her, kind of get to sleep, cause she was a little bit of rough getting her to sleep in her early, in those, you know, first half year or so. And then I thought, well I might as well read something I want to read. So I've always wanted to read some more Shakespeare. So I did. And then what I noticed, is she'd go off to sleep and I just keep reading, cause I was having a good time.

Jenni: Wow!

Jody: That's pretty cool.

Jenni: That is ambitious and I think, people listening are going, "I don't know if I could read Shakespeare."

Andrew: Well, you know, I-- You know, I was just, I was, I was teaching in a school and we were doing a Shakespeare play with the kids. So it kind of reactivated my, my interest. And then, you know, um, do you know Andrew Kern? Are you familiar with him?

Jenni: No.

Andrew: He has a organization called the Circe Institute. And I was talking to him one time about this reading out loud. And someone had asked him, "Well, you know, when do you stop reading out loud to your kids?" And he said, "Well, my father was reading out loud to me nine months before he died.'

Jenni: Wow.

Jody: How sweet is that?

Jenni: Wow. And that's-- And I thought you were going to say, you know, high school or-- but no, into adulthood. Wow.

Andrew: My, uh, my adult daughter, Genevieve, she was, uh, she had gone away and finished school. She'd worked for many years and then there's a period in her life. She wasn't getting married, so she was living at home and in her twenties. And, um, one day she said to me, I remember right where I was standing in the kitchen. She said, "You know Daddy, when you read to the family, it's, it's kind of like color. When I read it all on my own, it's more like black and white."

Jenni: Wow.

Jody: You know, I get that-- My oldest son is 31 and he's married and they have, they've been married three years now. And I'll tell you what, every night they read, they take turns reading to each other and it's so fun. Cause they'll contact me and we'll, you know, we'll be talking or whatever. And they're like, "Yeah, we're reading this book." And at first I was like, "What do you mean we, we're reading this book?" And they're like, "Well, we read to each other." I'm like, "You do?! That's so sweet." But they really bond.

Andrew: Well, he got the right girl.

Jenni: Yeah.

Jody: Oh yeah. And I mean it's very bonding and I have to tell you when I'm reading a book and like my husband's not reading it. I'm frustrated, because I want to share, I'm want to be like, "I want to talk about this!!"

Jenni: Yeah. Well, and like you said, sometimes hearing the other person read it brings it to life in a new way.

Jody: No, it does.

Jenni: 'Cause it's a different voice. It's really kinda cool. Okay. So how can parents encourage or reluctant reader?

Andrew: Well, one is, I think probably the most important thing in my experience is the parents have to encourage themselves to not be anxious. You know, a lot of times you have a kid he doesn't like reading and you're just like, "Oh no, oh no! What if he doesn't ever really read well and how awful is that going to be?!" and all that. I mean, I had a child who didn't read, literally didn't decode anything until he was 11 years old. He was so dyslexic. And then, you know, at 12, he started reading books and at 15, he could read anything. And uh, so I decided to get over it and I was like, "Okay, it's, you know, it's God's problem, not mine."

Jenni: Yeah.

Andrew: You know?

Jody: Oh, yeah.

Andrew: So that's the first thing. But there are some tricks. Uh, one trick I tried with him when he, you know, he moved into this period. I think all kids get there. Some stay in this period a little bit longer than others. There's this period where you can read, but it takes more energy than you're willing to expend. So you're not really, you're just not wanting to. So here was my trick. I get a book that I thought it was going to be a really good one and I would read him the first two, three chapters of this book where it was starting to get really interesting. And then I would go away on a trip. And say, you know, Chris, don't, don't read! You had the book, now!" you know, cause I, and inevitably I would leave the thing on his desk in his room and I would come back and he'd be almost finished with the thing, you know, where he's, you know, picking it up. Sometimes it's those first, you know, few pages. First couple of chapters aren't as motivating as once you're deep into the story. So that's one trick. I think that works pretty well. Um, I've also talked to parents with this suggestion, which is, especially for boys, you know, they'd rather be using their bodies and moving around and you know, sitting there reading just doesn't seem like they're doing much. I've, I've said, "Well, why don't you set up some kind of motivational system, get a, you know, get a chart with 20 boxes? "And every time he reads a book, he gets to color in one of these boxes. And when he's got all 20 boxes colored, give him a big prize, a big thing, like go to the pro baseball game with dad or have a, you know, "Star Wars", marathon pizza party, you know, something that would really motivate him so that he would see his progress right in that chart. You know, it could do 20 can do five, it just depends on the child. But when you get to check something off on a checklist or color in a little box or put a sticker when you're a child, that's a visual representation of some progress, some achievements, some effort invested and he knows he's working toward a goal. So that's another thought.

Jenni: Yeah, that works, even for the mom who's 45.

Jody: Except it would not be a "Star Wars" pizza party.

Jenni: No, I wouldn't have a "Star Wars" pizza-- You know, for me at this point, it's just the actual checking off of the box. Oh my goodness.

Jody: That feels so good to do that.

Jenni: Yes, I totally-- Okay. Now what do you say to parents about, um, those classic books that they, that they feel like their kids should read? Do we force them to read the books that they hate? Or what's your thought on that?

Andrew: Well, everyone today, all of us, you, me, every kid we know, every adult that's alive has fractured attention spans. Technology has decreased all of us in our ability to concentrate. Um, you know, 50 years ago people could do kind of sustained reading of challenging material and now it just takes a superhuman effort to do it, because we're used to, you know, screens changing continuously and a very high pace of visual hyper-stimulation. So it is a difficult time. Um, but I do think that the harder to read books are the ones that you, you know, would want to read out loud together so that you could stop and talk about them and explain things and have the kids try to narrate back and check their, check their comprehension to some degree. Um, I'm not opposed. And we had a set of those, um, classics that were abridged for children. I don't know if you've seen this.

Jenni & Jody: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: It would take, you know, really kind of tough reads like "Treasure Island" and, and make it, you know, shorter and a little easier with shorter sentences. I'm not opposed to those books for children to read themselves to practice their decoding skills and get familiar with the story.

Jenni: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Because once you're familiar with the story, then undertaking the real book isn't so tough. And I know one of my daughters, she was a little, a little later on the reading spectrum, she didn't read too much until she was about eight and she loved those abridged classics, because she got, you know, a good story. But it was in the range of what was possible for her. And then when she was a teenager, she wanted to read all of those real books again. The, the abridged version had, had planted the seed of enjoyment. So I wouldn't read them to kids. I'd read the unabridged, but I think those abridged classics can have a cool and...

Jody: That's a good nugget.

Jenni: That's really great. I think I did something that wasn't as great, but I had a son who was in eighth grade and he was taking a British literature class that the high-- At the high school co-op and I knew it was going to be really challenging. He was the youngest kid in the class. And so the summer leading up to the class, this is probably a terrible thing, and I'm confessing it to you right now on the podcast, but I actually got the list

of all the books they were going to read and I found a movie for each one of the books and I let him watch the movie. So he had a visual that he could, so he could kind of picture it as he was going when he was really reading the stories. Um, because I know some of the language was so dense and new for him. Uh, he did great with all the books. The only one he really struggled with was "Ivanhoe" and he came to me and he said, "Mom, this book, I fall asleep. Every time I start to read it, I fall asleep." So I said, "Okay, Sam, how many pages can you read before you fall asleep?" And he went and started to read, came back to me and he said, "Three pages." I said, "Okay, how many pages do you have to read a day?" He said, 20. I said, "All right, so you're going to do seven times slots. You're going to do three minutes and then you're going to get up and go to something else, and, and then, you know, in a couple of days you'll stretch it to four minutes." And then a few...

Jody: Four pages.

Jenni: Four pages, I mean, yeah. And then, uh, by the end he was almost to the full 20 by the time he finished "Ivanhoe". But that helped him at three pages at a time.

Jody: Tell the rest of the story.

Andrew: That's great!

Jenni: And he did get the highest grade in the class.

Jody: Yeah.

Andrew: I agree with you that um, particularly with like Dickens, watching the movie, so you know, the basic plotline is very, very helpful. I think it's absolutely necessary to watch Shakespeare plays.

New Speaker: I was gonna say, Shakespeare's right in that category, too!

New Speaker: Before you try to read any Shakespeare without watching it. Because you know, plays or worse, there's no, you know, scene description...

Jenni: No narration.

Andrew: No narration. Yeah. Uh, so I, I don't think it's a horrible thing you have to confess that maybe it's, you know.

Jenni: It just felt so like, you know...

Jody: Worse than "Cliff Notes".

Jenni: Yeah. It was worse than cliff notes. It was like catering to our perpetual poor attention span, you know? But I thought he's got to have some sort of picture, because he is young and these books are really hard.

Jody: So I have a question, because this is kind of a big thing with kids now is what are your thoughts on kids who prefer to read like comic books or

magazines over books? Is there any benefit to that? Is it bad? Like what do we do with those kids?

Speaker 2: I think that all kids, if they have access to it, we'll go through a period where all they want to do is read "Calvin and Hobbes" all the time. And there's a lot of wisdom in "Calvin and Hobbes". So I don't know that that's a bad thing. I think it probably is kind of a stage. Um, I sometimes use this analogy with parents and literature, because they often say, "Well, you know, my kid likes to read this thing and I don't think it's very good literature." But if I say, "Okay, food. You feed your children. Literature is like food. It is okay to eat some candy and some junk food now and then, you know, and occasional McDonald's is not going to kill you. You know, some Hershey's chocolate, it's not the best chocolate. It's not the best for you, but it's not going to kill you. Right? However, if you ate a steady diet of McDonald's and Hershey kisses, that would kill you. So how 'bout thinking just in terms of balance? We feed our children nutritious, good food, and they eat it whether they really like it or not. I mean, we hope they learn to like it. And then, occasionally, we have some treats or some convenience and that's okay. So I think if, if we as parents just, you know, usually wisdom is always in the balance, right? In the middle point. That's where the virtue and wisdom is, is to say, "Okay, let's not be extreme and let's understand the bigger picture of, "How do we cultivate this interest?"

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah. Um, you've talked a lot about the power of, uh, memorization and reciting poetry and literature.

Jody: Wait, we heard him recite some poetry.

Jenni: I know, you did! You recited some all on your own.

Jody: We might have to, like, pull that out, right now. Let's hear it.

Andrew: Well, um, first of all, um, yes. Occasionally when I'm at a conference and they wanted to do a mic check, I'll just say, "Well, why not 'Jabberwocky?' That'll test the mic." And this subject is, honestly, this is such a huge subject that it would be probably prudent to have another discussion in the future.

Jenni: We'd love that idea.

Jody: Let's do that. Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah. Just on memorization. I think there's a few things we need to understand is that most people don't really understand the tremendous value of memorizing anything, but in particular, music and language because that's what feeds our soul, you know? And my mother was a piano and voice teacher and she never used the word "memorize". She always said you have to learn it by heart.

Jody: Oh, I haven't heard that phrase in so long.

Andrew: Yeah, I haven't either. But that's what she said. Learn the piece by heart that's what you gotta do. And what does that mean? Well, it means you've taken it into the part.

Jody: Yeah! Love that!

Andrew: It's part of you, now. And I have noticed when children memorize poetry, when they memorize scripture, when they memorize music, they have such an incredible ownership over that. It's, it doesn't just build kind of a positive pride. I mean, I don't really like the words pride and self-esteem, but you know what I mean. They feel good about knowing something well and, and then they-- Then, because they own it, they can share it with other people and that's a joy to be able to give it away. And then, of course, we could talk about the neurological benefits of memory and developing memory. And again, every single person alive today has suffered the side effect of technology is the decline of memory. And then of course, schools have been marginalizing or eliminating memory work and memorization and learning by heart for a long time, for decades. So a lot of young moms today didn't, didn't grow up memorizing poetry or scripture or music. And this is, in my view, a hugely important thing to help people understand the value of it, how to do it well, uh, you know, some right ways to do it, some wrong ways to do it. And then of course to observe children. And I'll just tell you one short little story. Um, I was teaching, I think it was Kansas City. This woman had driven like six hours to come to my seminar and I said, "You shouldn't have done that." And she said, "No, I wanted to tell you something." I said, "You could have called me. And she's like, "I really want to tell you because this is so significant to me." My son is 10 years old and he is halfway through level three of your poetry memorization program, which is a thing I created, linguistic development to put your memorization. And so that means this child had memorized approximately 50 poems. And, and if he had done it right, which I suspect he did, he knew them all. He hadn't forgotten any, he had continued to recite and maintain this repertoire of poetry. And this touched me. I mean I almost cried. It was so beautiful. She said, and you know his favorite thing to do, the biggest privilege, he's an only child and, and his favorite thing to do is to go to retirement homes and assisted care facilities in our city and recite poetry for the old folks. And I just thought...

Jody: You're going to make me cry.

Andrew: It's so sweet, but that, to me, was this incredible illustration of how children love to give, but they have to have something to give.

Jody: You're right. You know, it was int-- Go ahead. I'm sorry.

Andrew: Go ahead. No, you go ahead.

Jody: When we sat and listened at, at, I think it was in Orlando, you, and you recited some poetry in one of your talks and we were in there and I have to tell you, there's something magical about it, because when you're up there reciting that and it's just the Jabberwocky or whatever it was you were doing. And I was-- your heart flutters a little bit. Like

there's something very magical about it and it's precious and it is an art that we no longer have in our society. It's a lost art.

Jenni: I'm excited. We are going to definitely do a whole show on that. You have inspired us.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: Andrew, thank you so much for spending this time with us. I know that you've blessed our socks off. I'm sure the listeners have been equally as blessed as we have and we are excited to have you come back again and talk to us in the future about the power of memory.

Andrew: Well, I would be delighted to do that and I wish you all the best in your new podcast undertaking. I think with the uh, the sunshine that comes through the both of you in your voices, which is all we get from the podcast. Uh, you're going to also bless the socks off thousands, hundreds of thousands. So God bless you. And keep at it.