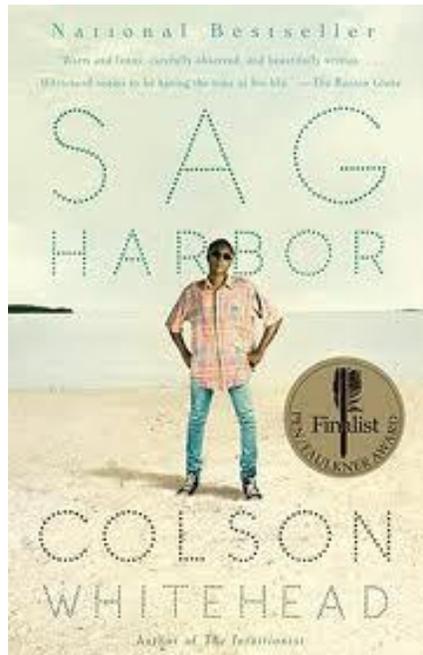


# *Long Island Reads* 2011 Reader's Guide



*Long Island Reads* is sponsored by  
The Nassau Library System &  
The Public Libraries in Suffolk County  
&  
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# About Long Island Reads

## *One Island, One Book*

**One Book** projects are community-wide reading programs. The first **One Book** project was initiated by the Washington Center for the Book in 1998. Since then, the concept has spread across the United States and around the world. Seattle librarian, Nancy Pearl, author of *Book Lust* and *More Book Lust*, and NPR book critic, is the mastermind behind the **One City, One Book** phenomenon. If your city is interested in starting its own program, you can obtain “How To” information by going to Seattle Reads ([www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org)).

To see a listing of **One City, One Book** projects visit the Library of Congress website at [www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html](http://www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html). Projects are listed by state, city and author. While at the Library of Congress site, check out their Center for the Book.

Other sites of interest include:

All America Reads [www.allamericareads.org](http://www.allamericareads.org)

The Big Read-National Endowment for the Arts [www.artsmidwest.org](http://www.artsmidwest.org)

The **Long Island Reads** Committee is a group of librarians and library employees from Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, New York who volunteer to work on this Island-wide reading initiative. Each spring people in Nassau and Suffolk read the same book, participate in discussions of the selection, and enjoy related events in public libraries.

Many events take place during  
**National Library Week, April 10-16, 2010.**

**For more information about Long Island Reads  
One Island, One Book visit:**

[www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)

# About Colson Whitehead



Colson Whitehead was born in 1969, and was raised in Manhattan. After graduating from Harvard College, he started working at the Village Voice, where he wrote reviews of television, books, and music.

His first novel, **The Intuitionist** (2000), concerned intrigue in the Department of Elevator Inspectors, and was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway and a winner of the Quality Paperback Book Club's New Voices Award.

**John Henry Days** (2001) is an investigation of the steel-driving man of American folklore. It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Los Angeles Times Fiction Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. The novel received the Young Lions Fiction Award and the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.

The **Colossus of New York** (2003) is a book of essays about the city, and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year.

**Apex Hides the Hurt** (2006) is a novel about a "nomenclature consultant" who gets an assignment to name a town, and was a recipient of the PEN/Oakland Award.

**Sag Harbor** (2009) is a novel about teenagers hanging out in Sag Harbor, Long Island during the summer of 1985. It was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner award.

Colson Whitehead's reviews, essays, and fiction have appeared in a number of publications, such as the New York Times, The New Yorker, New York Magazine, Harper's and Granta.

He has received a MacArthur Fellowship, a Whiting Writers Award, and a fellowship at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

**At once an incredible adventure narrative and a penetrating biographical portrait, *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* is the true story of Roosevelt's harrowing exploration of one of the most dangerous rivers on earth.**

The River of Doubt - it is a black, uncharted tributary of the Amazon that snakes through one of the most treacherous jungles in the world. Indians armed with poison-tipped arrows haunt its shadows; piranhas glide through its waters; boulder-strewn rapids turn the river into a roiling cauldron.

After his humiliating election defeat in 1912, Roosevelt set his sights on the most punishing physical challenge he could find, the first descent of an unmapped, rapids-choked tributary of the Amazon. Together with his son Kermit and Brazil's most famous explorer, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, Roosevelt accomplished a feat so great that many at the time refused to believe it. In the process, he changed the map of the western hemisphere forever.

Along the way, Roosevelt and his men faced an unbelievable series of hardships, losing their canoes and supplies to punishing whitewater rapids, and enduring starvation, Indian attack, disease, drowning, and a murder within their own ranks. Three men died, and Roosevelt was brought to the brink of suicide. *The River of Doubt* brings alive these extraordinary events in a powerful nonfiction narrative thriller that happens to feature one of the most famous Americans who ever lived.

From the soaring beauty of the Amazon rain forest to the darkest night of Theodore Roosevelt's life, here is Candice Millard's dazzling debut.

Synopsis provided by Random House

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE AUTHOR

**TechNation, Podcast interview of Millard by Dr. Moira Gunn, November 8, 2005, 19 minutes.** <http://itc.conversationsnetwork.org/shows/detail827.html#>

**This blog had some interesting comments about Millard; some comments are very personal and some are professional.**

<http://sixthousand.blogspot.com/2006/01/candice-millard.html>

**This is an e-interview by Josephine Anna Kaszuba Locke, January 2006.**

<http://www.bookloons.com/cgi-bin/Columns.asp?name=Candice%20Millard&type=Interview>

Reviews and articles about  
*THE RIVER OF DOUBT: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*

**This is very cool...actual film footage of TR on the expedition.**

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/papr:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(trmp+4094s1\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER+@band(trmp+4094s1)))

**Listen to Steve Inskeep's interview of Millard on NPR's *Morning Edition* on November 3, 2005:** <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4986859>

***The River of Doubt: Candido and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, by Bruce Barcott, New York Times, October 16, 2005.**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/books/review/16barcott.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/books/review/16barcott.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print)

***Roosevelt in Brazil, with Ticks, Termites and Malted Milk*, by Janet Maslin, New York Times, November 24, 2005.**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/24/books/24masl.html?pagewanted=print>

## Suggestions for Reading Critically

*Adapted from the Library of Congress Center for the Book Guidelines*

The best stories are those that connect to human experience. They reveal an important truth, or provide a profound sense of kinship between reader and writer. Searching for, identifying, and discussing these truths deepens the reader's appreciation of the story. Asking questions, reading carefully, imagining yourself in the story, analyzing style and structure, and searching for personal meaning in a work of literature all enhance the work's value and the discussion potential for your group. Here are some helpful suggestions on how you can become a more critical reader.

- **Make notes and mark pages as you go.** Reading for a book discussion – whether you are the leader or simply a participant – differs somewhat from reading purely for pleasure. As you read a book in preparation for a discussion, ask questions of yourself and mark down pages you might want to refer back to. Make notes like, "Is this significant?" or "Why does the author include this?" Making notes as you go slows down your reading but saves you the time of searching out important passages later.
- **Ask tough questions of yourself and the book.** Obviously, asking questions of yourself as you read means you don't know the answer yet, and sometimes you never will discover the answers. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions because often the author is presenting difficult issues for that very purpose. Look for questions that may lead to in-depth conversations with your group and make the readings more meaningful.
- **Pay attention to the authors' messages.** As with any skill, critical reading improves with practice. Remember that a good author uses every word in a text deliberately. Try to be aware of what the authors are revealing about themselves and what they want you to learn about life from their perspectives.
- **Analyze themes.** Try to analyze the important themes of a story and to consider the premises the author started with. Imagine an author mulling over the beginnings of the story, asking, "what if" questions.
- **Get to know the characters.** When you meet the characters in the book, place yourself at the scene. Think of them as you do the people around you. Judge them. Think about their faults and their motives. What would it be like to interact with them? Are the tone and style of their dialogue authentic? Read portions aloud to get to know the voices of the characters.
- **Notice the structure of the stories as well as the organization of the entire book.** Sometimes the structure of the book illustrates an important concept or helps to create a mood. Notice how the editor structured the book. How do the stories relate to each other? How are the individual stories and selections structured?
- **Who are the narrators?** How does the sequence of events unfold to create the mood of the story? Is it written in flashbacks? Does the sequence of actions make sense to you?
- **Make comparisons to other stories and works.** Compare the book and the stories to others that have a similar theme or style. Often, themes run through an author's works that are more fully realized by comparison. Comparing one author's work to that of another can help you solidify your opinions, as well as illuminate qualities you may otherwise miss.
- **Think about what the author doesn't say as well as what they do say.** During a book discussion, what you're really talking about is everything that the author hasn't said – all those white spaces on the printed page. (Incidentally, this "everything that the author hasn't said" idea is why poetry makes such a rich topic for discussion.)

## Suggested Book Discussion Questions

**A. These discussion questions are provided by Lee Fertitta, Librarian, LI Reads Committee Member, and Book Discussion Leader, Port Washington Public Library:**

1. Is the exploration of and inevitable change to a previously unknown area justified? Is there a way to explore without changing the ecology/culture? Have we the right to intrude on an area just because it's there?
2. Since the earth can now be mapped from above, down to the smallest leaf on a tree, what will be the nature of exploration in the future?
3. Put yourself in Kermit's shoes. What would you change, if possible, in his relationship with his father? Where did he lose his way?
4. Roosevelt had fought off childhood illness through determination and stubbornness. How significant was this ability during his trip down the river?
5. Millard makes a point in the Epilogue about the capacity of the Amazon to obliterate all signs of intrusion. Can such an inhospitable environment ever be tamed? Should it be?
6. Groups facing difficult struggles often either break apart or draw closer together. Roosevelt's traveling companions showed evidence of both reactions. How do you think your group of friends would fare in similar circumstances?
7. Millard has written this history so realistically that there are times when you feel the terror of the unknown, the dread of an anticipated Indian attack or the severity of the jungle heat. Was there a particular part that you found especially unnerving? Why?

**B. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** from [www.ReadingGroupGuides.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuides.com):

1. Chapter one, "Defeat," depicts dramatic scenes from Roosevelt's final election. What parallels exist between a risky political career and a risky Rain Forest expedition? What enabled him to survive both?
2. Compare Rondon's and Roosevelt's leadership styles. In what ways did these co-commanders complement each other? In what ways were they at odds?
3. Discuss the very concept of survival as it shapes *The River of Doubt*. In choosing provisions, what items did Roosevelt's team consider necessary for survival? What aspects of survival (greater quantities of dry, mildew-free clothes, for example) did they overlook? What intangibles (especially in terms of emotions) are also necessary for such an expedition?
4. What aspects of humanity were represented by the various personalities in the group, ranging from exploitive Father Zahm and the rational Cherrie to the volatile Julio? Can such varied people coexist? How did you react to Roosevelt's belief that it was necessary for Julio to be found and shot after he murdered one of the team members?
5. Do any contemporary American politicians possess Roosevelt's public-speaking style? Why did he believe it was important to debate the former Chilean ambassador and deliver speeches refuting the protestors there?

## **If you liked *THE RIVER OF DOUBT*...**

**Novelist suggested these titles, assuming one was looking for other books about “Discovery and Exploration.”**

*The Heart of the World: A Journey to the Last Secret Place*, by Ian Baker

*Toward the Setting Sun: Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci and the Race for America*,  
by David Boyle

*The Voyage of the Vizcaina: The Mystery of Christopher Columbus’s Last Ship*,  
by Klaus Brinkbaumer

*The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman*, by Nancy Marie Brown

*Mirage: Napoleon’s Scientists and the Unveiling of Egypt*, by Nina Burleigh

*The Worst Journey in the World: Antarctic, 1910-1913*, by Apsley Cherry-Garrard

*The Silent World* , by Jacques Yves Cousteau

*Into Africa: The Epic Adventures of Stanley and Livingstone*, by Martin Dugard

*The Last Voyage of Columbus*, by Martin Dugard

*Off the Map: Tales of Endurance and Exploration*, by Fergus Fleming

*A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*, by Tony Horwitz

*The Race for Timbuktu: In Search of Africa’s City of Gold*, by Frank Kryza

*Race to the Polar Sea: The Heroic Adventures of Elisha Kent Kane*,  
by Ken McGoogan

*Travels of Marco Polo*, by Marco Polo

*A Land So Strange: the Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca*, by Andres Resendez

*Shackleton’s Forgotten Expedition: The Voyage of the Nimrod*, by Beau Riffenburgh

*To the Heart of the Nile: Lady Florence Baker and the Exploration of Central Africa*,  
by Pat Shipman

*The Mapmaker’s Wife: A True Tale of Love, Murder and Survival in the Amazon*,  
by Robert Whitaker

## The Long Island Reads 2010 Committee

Lori Abbatepaolo, Middle Country Public Library  
Samantha Alberts, The Public Libraries  
in Suffolk County

Belle Baxter, Elwood Public Library  
Deborah Clark Cunningham,  
Harborfields Public Library

Donna Diamond, Book Talk Leader  
Diane Eidelman, The Public Libraries  
in Suffolk County

Patricia Eren, Floral Park Public Library  
Lee Fertitta, Port Washington Public Library  
Maureen Garvey, Merrick Library  
Beth Gates, Rogers Memorial Public Library  
Candace Hope, Huntington Public Library

Linda Joe, West Hempstead Public Library  
Catherine Nashak, Deer Park Public Library  
Deborah Neuman, Jericho Public Library  
Thérèse Purcell Nielsen, Huntington Public Library  
Grace O'Connor, West Islip Public Library  
Elizabeth Olesh, Nassau Library System  
Lisa Paulo, Franklin Square Public Library  
Florine Polner, Manhasset Public Library  
Marcia Pryluck, Brentwood Public Library  
Loretta Piscatella, Middle Country Public Library  
Susan Santa, Syosset Public Library  
Janet Schneider, Great Neck Public Library  
Mara Zonderman, n/a  
Danielle Zubiller, Brentwood Public Library

Deborah Clark Cunningham, Long Island Reads Suffolk Co-Chair, Harborfields Public Library

Maureen Garvey, Long Island Reads Nassau Co-Chair, Merrick Library

Reader's Guide compiled by: Loretta Piscatella, Middle Country Public Library, and  
Candace Hope, Huntington Public Library

**Special thanks to Carolyn Fostel from Astoria Federal Savings**



**Contact your public library for more information about  
Long Island Reads events during  
National Library Week, April 11-17, 2010.**

# Long Island Reads 2010 Evaluation

1. Have you read, or do you plan to read, *River of Doubt*? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.
2. Have you visited the Long Island Reads website at [www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. How did you obtain your ticket? Called myself \_\_\_ From a friend \_\_\_  
From my Library \_\_\_ Took a chance-came without a ticket \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_
4. What Library do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please let us know what you thought about today's program. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you participated in any Long Island Reads events in the past? Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_ If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you in a Book Club? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
If you are in a Book Club, please tell us a little about your club: (For example:  
How often and where do you meet? How do you select the books? How many  
members? What type of books do you read?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you would like to suggest an author or title for Long Island Reads 2011,  
please do so below. Please tell us why you think this would be a good choice.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a library employee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Do you reside in Nassau \_\_\_ or Suffolk \_\_\_

**Please return this form to a member of the LI Reads committee here today or to:**

Deborah Clark Cunningham	OR	Maureen Garvey
Head of Adult Reference		Assistant Director
Harborfields Public Library		Merrick Library
31 Broadway		2279 Merrick Avenue
Greenlawn, NY 11741		Merrick, NY 11556

**Thank you for participating in Long Island Reads!**