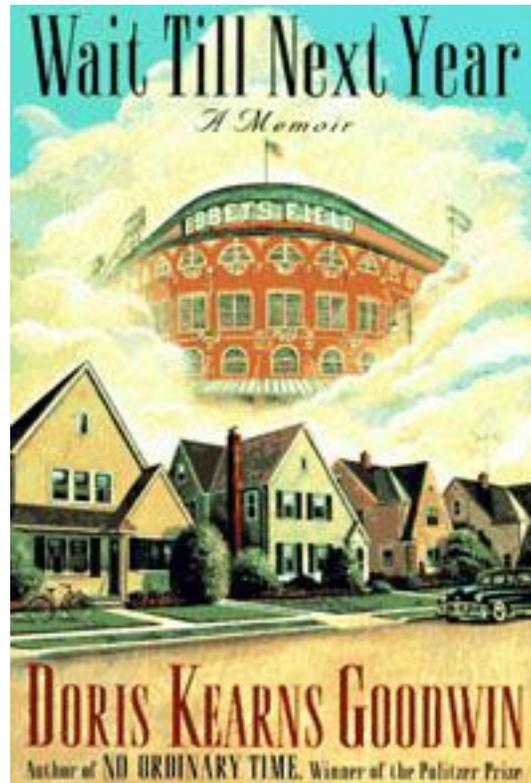


Long Island Reads 2009 Reader's Guide



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LONG ISLAND READS

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).

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. 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

The Big Read-National Endowment for the Arts 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 12-18, 2009.

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

www.longislandreads.org

About Doris Kearns Goodwin

Biographical and Professional information

Doris Kearns Goodwin is an award-winning author, historian, and political commentator. She has won numerous awards and prizes, including (most notably) the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1995 for her book about the Roosevelts, the Charles Frankel Prize given by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Sara Josepha Hale medal, and several noted below for specific books.



In addition to our Long Island READS selection, *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir*, 1997, Goodwin is the author of several biographies about American presidents:

- ❖ *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, 1976. Book-of-the-Month Club selection and *New York Times* bestseller.
- ❖ *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, 1987. Literary Guild selection and *New York Times* bestseller. Six-hour ABC miniseries.
- ❖ *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: the Home Front in World War II*, 1994. Awarded Pulitzer Prize in History, April 1995, in addition to the Harold Washington Literary Award, the New England Bookseller Association Award, the Ambassador Book Award, and *The Washington Monthly* Book Award. *New York Times* bestseller.
- ❖ *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, 2005. Winner of the 2005 Lincoln Prize. Was the inaugural selection for the Book Prize for American History, and a 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. *New York Times* bestseller. Steven Spielberg acquired the rights to the book and is developing a film based on it, with Liam Neeson as Lincoln.

Doris Kearns Goodwin was born on January 4, 1943 in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in Rockville Centre. In 1975 she married writer Richard N. Goodwin who worked in the White House under both Kennedy and Johnson as an adviser and a speechwriter. His experience as the investigator who uncovered the quiz show scandals of the 1950s was captured in the Academy Award nominated movie "Quiz Show," directed by Robert Redford. The Goodwins have three sons, Richard, Michael, and Joseph (who served two tours in Iraq). As of 2007 the Goodwins live in Concord, Massachusetts.

Goodwin attended Colby College in Maine where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and graduated *magna cum laude* in 1964 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

She was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship in 1964 to pursue her doctoral studies and earned her Ph.D. in Government at Harvard University, where she taught government for ten years, including a course on the American Presidency.

According to the Academy of Achievement's biography on Goodwin, "...she was serving as a White House Fellow in 1967, when her opposition to President Johnson's foreign policy led her to co-author an article...entitled "How to Remove LBJ in 1968." Only a few months later she became a special assistant to [LBJ]. The President apparently believed that having a White House Fellow who was critical of the administration would prove he did not feel threatened by the growing anti-war sentiment in America. After [LBJ's] retirement in 1969...on weekends, holidays and vacations she traveled to Johnson's ranch in Texas to assist the ex-president in the preparation of his memoir...In 1977 [Goodwin] published her first book, *Lyndon Johnson & the American Dream*, drawing on her own conversations with the late president." It was this experience of knowing LBJ and writing about him that directed her path of writing about American presidents. She said, "I think from then on, it made me want to understand the private side of the public figures, because I'd had that connection with the first one I ever knew. So the kind of books that I wrote from then on were not simply the public sides of [the presidents], but really what their lives were like in the White House at the same time."

Her life-long love of baseball, in general, and specifically a devotion to both the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Boston Red Sox, added to the joy of being the first female journalist to enter the Red Sox locker room. She said, "It happened that I was down at spring training doing a story (about older major league players and younger players both trying to make the team at the same time). It came down from the commissioner's office that a ruling had been made that women had to be allowed in the locker room. So the owner said, 'OK, go in.' It was fun to be a Trivial Pursuit question."

In 1996 Goodwin was inducted into the Academy of Achievement. She received an honorary L.H.D. (Doctor of Humane Letters) from Bates College in 1998. She is currently a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Advisory Committee (www.AbrahamLincoln200.org).

Goodwin has been a popular commentator and news analyst on television about history, politics and presidential elections (especially the recent 2008 elections), frequently appearing on *The Jim Lehrer News Hour*, *Meet the Press*, MSNB, *Charlie Rose*, *The Daily Show*, and *The Colbert Report*. She has been a consultant for and interviewed extensively for PBS documentaries on LBJ, the Kennedy family, Franklin Roosevelt, Abraham and Mary Lincoln, and Ken Burns' *The History of Baseball*.

Sources:
www.doriskearnsgoodwin.com
www.kevincmurphy.com
<http://en.wikipedia.org>
http://www.whitehouse.gov/fellows/news/WHF_NewsApril07.pdf
www.achievement.org

Plot Synopsis*

*'...Despite family traumas and all those years the Dodgers lost to the Yankees, it is a happy, even a jaunty memoir. "Once I realized what the title should be, it was so clear that's what the whole book was about," she said, "not only because of the Dodgers and my own temperament, but there was a larger theme about this country, this kind of resilience, the sense that if you push hard enough, something good will happen, even when life tells you it's not always true." ***

Set in the suburbs of New York in the 1950s, *Wait Till Next Year* is Doris Kearns Goodwin's touching memoir of growing up in love with her family and baseball. She re-creates the postwar era, when the corner store was a place to share stories and neighborhoods were equally divided between Dodger, Giant, and Yankee fans.

We meet the people who most influenced Goodwin's early life: her mother, who taught her the joy of books but whose debilitating illness left her housebound; and her father, who taught her the joy of baseball and to root for the Dodgers of Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider, and Gil Hodges. Most important, Goodwin describes with eloquence how the Dodgers' leaving Brooklyn in 1957, and the death of her mother soon after, marked both the end of an era and, for her, the end of childhood.

*Synopsis provided by Simon & Schuster
<http://www.simonsays.com/content/book.cfm?tab=1&pid=408701>

**From article in *The Daily Gazette* by Jack Rightmyer, *Doris Kearns Goodwin visits UAlbany*, 11/27/05.
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Interviews with the Author

1. Academy of Achievement; June 28, 1996; Sun Valley, Idaho.
www.achievement.org/autodoc/printmember/goo0int-1
2. BarnesandNoble.com Live Events Auditorium; October 10, 1997.
<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Wait-Till-Next-Year/Doris-Kearns-Goodwin/e/9780684847955/?itm=6>
3. The Online NewsHour with Jim Lehrer; October 17, 1997.
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/sports/july-dec97/goodwin_10-17.html

The Academy of Achievement interview is by far the most complex and most interesting. As it prints out at 19 pages we have included only a few selections to give you a sense of the interview and thereby a broader sense of DKG. The other two are short and very specifically focus on *Wait Till Next Year*, both have some very good questions posed.

~

Dr. Goodwin, tell us a bit about your early years, your background, where you came from and where you went to school.

DKG: I grew up in Rockville Centre, Long Island. My family originally came from Brooklyn, but moved out to the suburbs in the '50s, as so many other people did. It was that time after the war, when having that first home of your own meant a lot to our parents. I went to public high school in Long Island and then went on to Colby College in Maine and then to Harvard where I got a Ph.D.

But I've often thought that my love of history was rooted in this experience:

When I was six years old, my father taught me that wonderful and mysterious art of keeping score, so that when he went to work during the day, I could stay home and record the history of that day's Brooklyn Dodger game, play by play, inning by inning. And at night when he would come home, and you're only six years old, and he tells you, "You're doing great as a miniature historian." I think in some ways, that made history have a magic that it still holds for me to this day.

So you were inspired by your parents and that experience?

DKG: I think so. I think it was the combination of my close relationship with my father. My mother was very sick from the time I was born, and died when I was 14. So I think my love of books in some ways came from knowing that she was pretty much bound to the home, and read all the time as a way of learning about other worlds that she would never be able to experience, because she couldn't travel very much because of her heart condition. So books took on a certain kind of

magic for me, just as the baseball scores did. So between those two experiences, somehow history and reading became a very important part of my childhood.

Skip to...

Was there a period of history that particularly interested you at that time? What do you think further piqued your curiosity about it?

DKG: As so often happens, there was a teacher in my high school. She actually went on to win an award as the best history teacher in all of New York State. She taught 20th century American history. I'm not sure that it was the subject. I think no matter what she taught me, I would have loved it, had it been medieval history or renaissance history. But she just made it come alive, and I think that was the beginning of a young adult's love of history that carried through later in my life.

Then there was one in college. There was a teacher in college who made you feel that if you could understand everything he was saying, that somehow you'd understand truth, justice, everything. Later, I got to know him very well and he was always somewhat obscure. When I said to him, "If we could only figure out what you say, we would have understood everything". And he said, "Did you ever realize that I just might not have been clear, that I myself didn't know what I was saying?" I said, "Of course not. We just thought we weren't smart enough to figure out what you were saying." But he had that magical ability to make you want to understand things that were beyond your comprehension at that point. Those two teachers were really what did it for me.

Do you remember their names?

DKG: Absolutely. Louise Alston was the teacher in high school and Al Mavernack was my teacher at Colby College. I went to Harvard Graduate School, got a Ph.D., taught at Harvard for ten years, but there were never better teachers in that august institution than I had in those two schools. It just shows that there are great teachers in all levels of institution all over the country. So many kids think unless they go to one of these great Ivy League schools, which I was lucky enough to go to later, that they won't get the same kind of learning. But I learned just the opposite lesson; that my best teachers were not at Harvard University.

Skip to...

Was it President Johnson who fueled your passion for writing about presidents and the presidency?

DKG: I think so.

I think I was so aware of the privilege of having this man, for some reason, having chosen me to talk to. He talked to me about his mother, his father, his dreams, his sadnesses. And I realized that it was just a pretty lucky thing in some ways that he had chosen me to be there in those last years, and use that information for that first book on Lyndon Johnson. I think from then on, it made me want to understand the private side of the public figures, because I'd had that connection with this first one I ever knew. So the kind of books that I wrote from then on were not simply the public sides of President Kennedy or President Roosevelt, but really what their lives were like in the White House at the same time.

Was it during or following your conversations with him that you had the vision of studying the lives of other presidents?

DKG: After the Lyndon Johnson book came out, I was still a professor at Harvard. I taught a big course on the presidency in the Government Department there.

Not long before Lyndon Johnson died, he called me and he said that he had this terrible feeling that no one was really going to remember him. He had been reading Carl Sandberg's biography on Lincoln, and trying to bring Lincoln to life, and he couldn't do it. And he said that now he realized that maybe he would have been better off searching for his immortality through his children, and their

children in turn, instead of through the fickleness of the American public, who were now preoccupied with Nixon, his successor. I remember trying to tease him out of that, and saying, "Oh, they will always remember you. I'll put a question on every exam on you," because I was teaching this course on the presidency. And he said, "You're not listening to me. I'm telling you something important. Get married, have children and spend time with them." Only two weeks after that, he was dead. He died of a heart attack at his ranch.

I think I spent three or four more years after his death finishing my book on Lyndon Johnson. Once it came out, because of the way it was received and the pleasure I had in writing it, I decided that I wanted to be a writer. Up until that time, I think I saw myself mostly as a professor, writing on the side. But at that point, I had gotten married, had three kids, and couldn't do it all. I couldn't be a teacher and a writer and a mother. I had to choose. So I gave up teaching at Harvard in order to become a full-time historian, which is what I've been ever since.

Skip to...

You've had many forks in the road. What do you consider the biggest decision you've had to make in your career?

DKG: I decided when my two little kids were one and two years old, to give up being a professor at Harvard. Harvard had been an identity. When you are connected to a university -- and especially one like Harvard -- you go places and you say, "I'm a Harvard professor." They know who you are. I had written my Lyndon Johnson book, but I didn't have the same confidence that I could be as good a writer as I thought I was as a teacher. So it was scary to give up that umbrella in a certain sense. But... I knew that if I could spend the time writing and being at home with my kids, that if I could do that, it would give me more satisfaction, because I wouldn't feel torn in a million directions, as I was feeling. Luckily, it really did work out, because I don't think I would have had the chance to write the book on the Kennedys, to write the book on Franklin Delano Roosevelt, if I was also trying to teach. I think I would have been doing things sort of half well all the way through. It wasn't so easy at that time.

I remember when I was writing the Kennedy book, after I gave up the teaching at Harvard, and I was at a cocktail party. I heard somebody say, without realizing I could hear them, "Well whatever happened to Doris Kearns anyway?" As if somehow I had died, because I no longer was a public figure. I remember wanting to hit them and say, "I've had three kids, that's what happened to me!"

It all has worked out. I couldn't ask for more than the kind of recognition that I've had as a historian. I didn't know that at the time, when I gave up something that was of value to me. I had to do it, because I wasn't happy trying to be moved in a million directions at the same time.

Skip to...

Hillary Clinton was kidded for having an imaginary conversation with Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House. Just as an intellectual exercise, what would you say to Eleanor Roosevelt if you had the chance?

DKG: I thought about this so much, because during the six years that I worked on the book, there were so many times when I wanted to talk to both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. When this whole thing came out with Hillary, I kept thinking, "Oh my God. They will think I'm crazy, too. I'm having seances with these dead people."

I think the most important thing I wanted to say at various times to Franklin and Eleanor was that it seemed so sad to me that -- I really believe they loved each other and had a great deal of affection -- but because of that early hurt in their marriage, there was a certain kind of distance from then on, until their deaths actually. At times, one would reach out to the other to try and break that distance, and

then the other one would pull away. And another time, the other one would reach out. So at times, I just wanted to push them together and say, "Come on, you guys! I know you love each other. This is crazy!"

I could see, as I read their letters, as I did interviews with people, that they both wanted the other one, but there was too much pain and hurt to fully get back together again. So I think that's what I would have talked to them about.

The book takes place on the second floor of the family quarters of the White House during the war. During Roosevelt's time, an amazing group of people lived there, including Franklin's secretary Missy LeHand, who was in love with Franklin Roosevelt, never married, and in many ways was his other wife when Eleanor traveled as much as she did. Harry Hopkins, his closest advisor, had a bedroom right next door to his. Then a woman reporter, Lorena Hickock, who was in love with Eleanor, she had a bedroom next door to Eleanor. Winston Churchill lived up there for months at a time during the war, drinking all day long. This beautiful princess from Norway, Princess Martha, would come in and spend the weekends.

So when I wrote the book, I kept saying to myself and saying, when I talked about it in public, "What would the modern press ever make of this Roosevelt White House, where all of these people are floating around?" And I mentioned on a radio show in Washington that I would love to see the second floor once more, because I'd been up there with Lyndon Johnson. But at 23 years old, I never thought of asking, "Where did Franklin Roosevelt sleep? Where did Eleanor sleep?" For that whole six years of working on the book, that was the location of -- most of the story took place on the second floor. So it happened that Hillary Clinton overheard me say this on the radio show, called up the radio station and invited me to sleep overnight in the White House. She said then I could wander the corridors and figure out where everyone had slept 50 years before. So two weeks later, my husband and I went to a state dinner, after which, between midnight and two a.m., the President and Mrs. Clinton and my husband and I went through every room up there, and figured out who had been there. It was great, because we realized we were ending up staying in Winston Churchill's bedroom. So the whole night, I could hardly sleep. I was sure he was sitting in the corner and smoking his cigar and drinking his brandy.

Skip to...

What do you think it was about your work that earned you the Pulitzer Prize? What was it about your work that singled it out for this award?

DKG: I'd like to think that what my style of writing is, is an attempt not so much to judge the characters that I'm writing about, to expose them, to label them, to stereotype them, but instead to make them come alive for the reader with all their strengths and their flaws intact. So there's not a way in which, when I start the book, I say, "I'm going to make Franklin great," or "I'm going to get Franklin Roosevelt." But rather, "I want to render him as he lived, day by day."

I found an usher's diary at the Roosevelt Library that recorded what Franklin and Eleanor did every day. "Awakened at 6:30; had breakfast with Henry Stimson; had lunch with Joe Lash," or whatever. I could then go to the diaries of the people they had lunch or breakfast with to record what they said at breakfast or lunch. Eleanor wrote 25 letters a day to her friends. I got every single one of those letters and figured out what her mood was like on that day. Made a huge chronology, before I even started the book, of 1940 to '45, the years that I was covering, so that I could recreate every day, in a certain sense, in their lives.

Eleanor wrote a column every day, which often reflected what she was feeling that day. Not that the book went every day from '40 to '45, but you'd have themes in the book, in terms of civil rights or battles of the war.

I tried to ground every issue in a day's experience, so that the reader could feel what it was like to be Franklin and Eleanor at that time. This means that if they made mistakes, you could at least understand why they did. If they did something admirable, you could feel it with them. So your emotions would go on a roller coaster as you were reading the book. At times you would feel great about Franklin, at other times you would be mad at Eleanor, and vice-versa. It is not a question of coming at it from the start as if I'm out to get them, or out to praise them. I just want them to come alive again. That's all you really ask of history. Then the reader can feel, with all the complexity of emotions, what it is that is happening to them. I would like to think that is what the Pulitzer Prize people recognized, was that desire to make them come alive without an agenda, to try and push them into a labeled stereotype.

Skip to...

On the basis of your experience, what is your advice to young women and young men about balancing work and family?

DKG: When I was at Harvard, in graduate school, I was in a seminar with the great psychologist Erik Eriksson. And I remember he taught us, or tried to teach, that the richest lives, in the long run, somehow balance work, love and play in equal order. He tried to define for us what that meant. He said, "You have to commit yourself equally to each of those realms. Work is the obvious one, with the perseverance and the discipline to do something that you love, and to do it well. But," he said, "even in the work -- in the spheres of love and play -- loving meaning friendships, family, children -- you have to commit yourself, and in energy and emotion, so that they really become an important part of your life. And even play," he said, "If you're going to be involved in a sport, if it is a participant sport, you have to play it enough so that you can enjoy it, or if it is a spectator sport, follow it fully enough so it really becomes an emotional part of you."

The most important thing he taught me, I didn't listen to at all at the time. I was working for Lyndon Johnson. I was still teaching at Harvard, or a graduate student at Harvard, and I thought, "Oh, I can worry about marriage and play later. Work is what really matters." It was only the experience of watching Lyndon Johnson, as I said earlier, that taught me that he hadn't the play part of his life, he didn't have the love part of his life, and that the balancing was really important. I think what I learned, more than anything, was that you can't have it all balanced perfectly at any one time. When I was young, it was much more balanced toward work. When I had my children, it was much more balanced toward love and family, and I didn't get a lot of work done. But you have lots of time left. My youngest is about to go to college. So I'll have a lot more time than I had before, and I'll be able to do more work than I did before. So you can't ask of it to be perfectly balanced at any time, but your hope is, before you die, you've somehow had each of those spheres come to life.

I think that's probably more important than success in any one of those spheres alone.

Generally speaking, regardless of what field someone chooses, what personal characteristics do you think are most important for success? What do you tell your students and your children?

DKG: One of the important qualities that I think is often overlooked is just energy. It's vitality, and sort of a life force that some people have and others don't. Probably that is connected to a love of whatever it is that they're doing. Another quality that I think is central is confidence. Again, some people are more blessed with that than others.

When I look at Franklin Roosevelt's leadership, I think the most important quality he had during the Depression and the war was this absolute confidence in himself, in his country, really in the American people. He was able to exude that confidence and almost project it. So when the people in the country heard him speak in these fireside chats, they said, "Yeah, it's going to be okay. We'll get through this depression," or "We'll win this war." I think confidence comes from doing something well, working at it hard, and you build it up. It's not something you're born with. You have to build the

confidence as you go along. So I would say energy, vitality, confidence, being willing to take risks at certain times if it's something you believe in. That's probably the hardest thing you have to figure out, and that's where courage comes in. I think in the long run, these qualities somehow all meld together in a way that it's hard to speak about them separately.

Skip to...

What does the American Dream mean to you?

DKG: I think what the American Dream means to me is the fact that -- what founded this country -- when I think about those posters that were put up in Europe which said, "Come to America and you'll have golden sidewalks. The land will be yours." There was something so inspirational about the fact that these immigrants from all over the world felt that here was a place of freedom, a place of opportunity. There is still something about Ellis Island, whenever I see it, that makes me realize that the root, in some ways, of this country was that people felt that this was a new land, without a class society, without an aristocratic background, where if you worked hard you could become what you want to become. It's only partly true. I mean, obviously there's racism in this society. There's economic benefits that go to people who are wealthy. There are some people who don't really have a chance. But on the other hand, there's always somebody who makes it through -- even from the worst ghetto -- that makes it through to the top of the society, and that's not true in a lot of other countries. I think that's still what the American Dream means: that with perseverance, with hard work, you can become something, that the classes won't prevent you from becoming, that there's a movement up that ladder with hard work.

More follows...

Visit the Academy of Achievement's website to view the complete interview.

Reviews, and articles about Doris Kearns Goodwin, her books, and her writing:

- ❖ *The New York Times Book Review* (10/26/97), *Keeping Score*, Ann Hulbert
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AT LUNCH WITH: Doris Kearns Goodwin; Foundations of a Lifetime, Found in the Box Scores

By MEL GUSSOW, The New York Times, November 12, 1997

In her new book, "Wait Till Next Year" (Simon & Schuster), Doris Kearns Goodwin is a historian of her own life. Growing up in the 1950's in the Long Island suburb of Rockville Centre, she defined herself by her family, her street, her town, her Roman Catholic religion and her team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Looking back at her childhood, she evokes a thoroughly harmonious and often humorous portrait of a loving family that never would recognize the word dysfunctional.

Through Ms. Goodwin's early life, the reader has a full understanding of how she became who she is, including her role as a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian. Outsiders can identify, and anyone with a similar background is bound to feel a wave of nostalgia for a period and a place that seem frozen in time.

At the center of her book is baseball, her love of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a team that stayed together and rewarded her fidelity. Baseball was the common ground between her and her father. Every day she listened to the game on the radio and kept the box score, as he had taught her. Then after dinner, she would recreate the game for him.

For several years, she was unaware that he knew the outcome before she began her account, but this allowed her to clarify her subsequent approach to history: "I really believe that what happens one day affects the next, and I think that came from that experience of learning that if I told the score inning by inning, play by play, it built up to its natural climax. My books are written with a strong chronological spine." While she and her father talked about baseball, she and her mother read and talked about books. Together, these were "the roots of my love for history," she said.

Baseball became more than a passion; it was an obsession. "I always knew I wasn't simply writing a memoir about myself," said Ms. Goodwin, who is 54. "What I was hoping to do was to put a window onto that era when baseball was central to people's lives, when corner stores gave you a sense of an extended family, all of which came to an end not only because the Dodgers left Brooklyn and people moved from my neighborhood in Rockville Centre," but also because her mother died at 51, and the Kearnses moved from their house to an apartment. This was the end of her childhood and is also the end of her book.

In common with Ms. Goodwin, I grew up in Rockville Centre. Her older sister, Jeanne, was a classmate of mine at South Side High School. We had some of the same friends, classes and extracurricular activities. Years later I had read Ms. Goodwin's books about Lyndon Johnson, the Kennedys and the Roosevelts, and I had watched her on television, talking about Presidents, politics and baseball. On the Ken Burns series about baseball, she filled the director's need, in her words, "for an irrational female fan." But I had never met her until we had lunch at Union Square Cafe during her recent visit to Manhattan from her home in Concord, Mass.

Conversing congenially, we were soon comparing memories of our hometown and talking about old times at South Side High. In this quiet village of 18,000 people, most fathers commuted to work in New York City while their wives stayed home and took care of the children. In the evening, parents would drink a traditional manhattan before settling down to a family dinner. In the infancy of television, radio was still a family activity, and movies were at the center of the cultural life: the Fantasy (a movie palace) and the Strand (with its triple features of Marx Brothers comedies).

In Rockville Centre during the late 1940's and early 50's, there was an air of peacefulness to the point of serenity, even with the approach of the cold war and McCarthyism. Anyone overhearing our conversation might have thought the subject was Grovers Corners, N.H.

All this is reflected in Ms. Goodwin's book. Despite family traumas and all those years the Dodgers lost to the Yankees, it is a happy, even a jaunty memoir.

"Once I realized what the title should be, it was so clear that's what the whole book was about," she said, "not only because of the Dodgers and my own temperament, but there was a larger theme about this country, this kind of resilience, the sense that if you push hard enough, something good will happen, even when life tells you it's not always true."

As she spoke about her memoir, she often referred to the politicians in her other books. A discussion of the variability of memory led her to a story about Lyndon Johnson, who once gave a stirring speech about his great-great-grandfather, who had died at the Alamo. It turned out that the story was pure fiction. He had wished so much that he had such a relative that he made him up. Ms. Goodwin asked him how he could do that, and he replied, "Oh, these journalists, they're such sticklers for details."

She approached her memoir as she did her Presidential histories. First came the research, gathering papers and letters and tracking down people she had not seen in years. Each source added to the vivid collage.

With her skillful grasp of revealing detail, Ms. Goodwin brings great political figures back to life. Similarly, when she wrote "Wait Till Next Year," she wanted to give an immediacy to the people of her youth. In particular, it was an attempt to deal with the early deaths of her mother and father, as "a part of a futile effort not to have my parents die so young, that somehow by recreating the past, you'll remember it and it's not lost to you."

Working on her book, she realized that in her own life she had been "careless with the stuff of memory." But when she is writing about a public figure, she revels in letters and other papers.

One afternoon when Ms. Goodwin was visiting the Kennedy home in Palm Beach, Fla., she had a fleeting fantasy: "Suppose the devil came to me and said, 'I'll take away all your documents, but I'll let

you be in this house for one day in 1937 when the whole family is alive.' I didn't know what I'd answer. I'm not sure even now. As a historian, what I trust is my ability to take a mass of information and tell a story shaped around it."

She continued: "My recurring nightmare is that someday I will be faced with a panel: Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson all of whom will be telling me everything I got wrong about them. I know that Johnson's out there saying, 'Why is it that what you wrote about the Kennedys is twice as long as the book you wrote about me?' "

She remembered visiting Johnson near the end of his life: "Every day he would walk from his ranch to the little house in which he had been born. So much of what he told me about his early childhood and his parents was evoked by this dirt path that took him to that place. I didn't have that kind of place," just that house on Southard Avenue, a drawing of which appears on the book jacket of her memoir.

In contrast to her earlier books, the memoir is short, which means that it took less time to write, and it is receiving an immediate response from readers. A New Jersey lawyer wrote her that if his daughter remembered him as fondly as Ms. Goodwin remembered her father, he would feel his life had been worthwhile. He had recently bought a seat from the old Ebbets Field and was having it refinished. When it is delivered, he said, he plans to raise a manhattan and toast his father and the children of Helen and Michael Francis Aloysius Kearns of Rockville Centre.

Museum exhibits with related themes:

Yale School of Architecture, New Haven, CT ~ www.architecture.yale.edu
“Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes”

February 16 – May 8, 2009

The intention of (the exhibit) is to demonstrate how the American suburb has played a catalytic role in the creation of new art.

Levittown Historical Society

Museum tours: Wednesdays 2:30 – 4:30 pm, and Fridays 7 – 9 pm
(516) 735-9060

www.levittownhistoricalsociety.org

The Long Island Museum of American Art, History & Carriages

1200 Rte. 25A, Stony Brook ~ (631) 751-0066 ~ www.longislandmuseum.org

“Growing Up on Long Island”

February 14 – October 25, 2009

The exhibit will feature more than 140 paintings, photographs and artifacts (christening gowns, a prom dress, school ephemera, games and toys, including Jerry Seinfeld's report card, Walt Whitman's school-teaching desk, and a Quinceanera dress from Riverhead) exploring 200 years of childhood of Long Island, from 19th century rural childhoods to the suburban baby boom and beyond

Audio Interview:

‘Team of Rivals’: Lincoln’s Political Prowess

Interview by Linda Wertheimer

NPR, Weekend Edition, Saturday, Nov. 5, 2005

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4989622>

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 and Book Discussion Leader, Port Washington Public Library:

1. Besides her father, what motivates young Doris toward baseball?
2. How does keeping score prepare her for her later career as a historian?
3. Is her story a “typical” one of childhood? How different or alike was your childhood?
4. Her own story seems almost sugar-coated, at least compared to the histories she has written about others. Would your “story” be as sweet? Share something from your history.
5. Doris had an active imagination as a child – she made up stories based on events going on around her, like imagining that her first love, Johnny, developed polio and was therefore unable to return to the beach. Storytelling helps create memory. Did you have a storyteller in your youth?
6. What dark clouds penetrated her childhood and how did she react to them?
7. Jackie Robinson was her favorite player. What do you think drew her to him?
8. Old Mary reminded me of Boo Radley in “To Kill a Mockingbird.” What other characters can you think of that seem threatening when the reality is something different? What is the significance of this story to Doris’ childhood?
9. Her Catholic faith, as interpreted in her youth, leads her to spend some sleepless nights and an effort to “make things right.” What did she learn from her attempt to “redeem” herself?
10. Doris talks about her school lessons, and how she learned the “melting pot” theory of assimilation in America, only to find out how simplistic and inaccurate it was. Discuss the influence of our childhood education on our lives and values.
11. When visiting Roosevelt’s Hyde Park house for an assignment, Doris makes a connection between imagining history and visualizing baseball games. What other “epiphanies” does she relate in her memoir?
12. Discuss the Rosenberg story in light of the recent admission of guilt from David Greenglass.
13. Playing their McCarthy game led the neighborhood children to accusations and recriminations, just like on TV. What lesson did they take from that?
14. In retrospect, the 1950s appear to be an uneventful period in history, but many changes in cultural and political habits were in fact brewing. What were some of the issues Doris talks about and how different (or similar) are they to what you remember or have understood?

B. These discussion questions are taken from the Simon & Schuster Readers Guide.
<http://www.simonsays.com>

1. Like millions of Americans, Doris was caught up in the glory days of baseball in the 1950s, exhilarated by the Dodgers' victories, and pained by each and every loss. Individual players became her heroes, as well-loved and respected as family and friends. How important is it for people -- particularly children -- to have such heroes to look up to? How can we feel such a strong kinship to people we have never met? Are sports figures the best role models? What lessons can athletes teach us about life?
2. Doris's parents each pass on their own special gifts to their daughter. Through baseball, Mr. Kearns teaches Doris the importance of telling a story slowly, building the drama to a powerful crescendo. Through reading, Mrs. Kearns demonstrates the beauty of a well-chosen word, and how a good book can take you away to places you might otherwise never go. Discuss how these gifts complement one another and how they came together to make Doris the historian and wordsmith she is today.
3. In the 1950s, most fathers did not take their little girls to baseball games. How did you respond to the female point of view in this book? Did you see Doris as the son her father never had? Or was she an extension of his sister, Marguerite? What does Mr. Kearns' relationship with Doris provide that he missed during his tragic childhood?
4. Although her childhood was marked by the untimely death of her mother, Doris paints a near-perfect picture of life in the suburbs. How does time affect our memories? Is it natural to "revise" our own personal history? Are we destined to recall the best times of our lives as rosier than they actually were?
5. Idolizing her team as only a child can, Doris was fortunate enough to have her childhood coincide with baseball's most glorious heyday. Discuss the sport's changing role in the American landscape through the second half of the 20th Century. Does regional team loyalty still mean the same thing in today's "global village," or has the technology that has made our country seem smaller altered the notion of the "home team?" What does baseball offer that other sports cannot? Is it still our true national pastime?
6. One of the most pleasant aspects of reading a well-written memoir is that it often helps you recall dim memories of your own. Did *Wait Till Next Year* spark any forgotten memories from your childhood? Did it remind you of special moments you shared with your parents, of family traditions that you enjoyed? Did this book inspire you to write down any of your own history to share with family members in years to come?

7. Doris says that her "early years were happily governed by the dual calendars of the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Catholic Church." In fact, Doris's careful calculations of baseball scores and batting averages charmingly mirror the manner in which she tallies up her nightly prayers. Discuss the mingled roles of baseball and religion in Doris's childhood. Was baseball a kind of secular worship for her? How are these different institutions similar to one another? What does each offer that the other does not?
8. Prior to television, Doris listens to baseball games on the radio, relying on her imagination for visual images to accompany the announcer's play-by-play. This changed when the Kearnses bought their first television set and Doris was able to watch the games in the comfort of her own home. How did the addition of television change the face of baseball for Doris and other fans? How did it add to her enjoyment of the game? What did it take away?
9. When Doris's sister, Jeanne, is selected co-captain of the "Blue Team" in a girls' athletic competition, Doris is able to witness first-hand the unification that results from competition. Jeanne serves as a role model for Doris, teaching her that sportsmanship and competition are not limited to the world of men. But these types of events for women were rare in the 1950s. What does this say about the culture of that time? Discuss the importance of women's sports and how our society's views on women's athletics have changed. Have they changed enough? What do women miss when they are discouraged from participating in sports?
10. The landscape of Doris's childhood remains intact through the first decade of her life, leaving her with a misguided notion that her world will never change. But by the time Doris reaches adolescence, everything that had seemed so permanent slowly begins to slip away. Longtime neighbors move, the Dodgers and the Giants leave New York, and, most important, Doris's mother passes away. How does Doris react to these changes? Has the strong foundation her loving parents provided during her early years prepared her for these sudden changes?
11. An important rite of passage for all children is the moment that they first see their parents as real people, not the all-knowing figures they appear to be when we are very young. Childhood is never the same after you see a parent in a moment of weakness. How does Mrs. Kearns' illness force Doris to grow up more quickly? How does it affect her childhood, her relationships with her parents? Can you recall the events that made you realize that your parents were, just like you, infallible and human?
12. In many ways, the Kearnses are a traditional, nuclear family of the 1950s, with the father playing the role of a breadwinner and the mother keeping house. Yet, in many ways the Kearnses are quite progressive, teaching their daughters to reach as high as they can to fulfill their dreams. How is Doris different from the other girls on her block? Does her independence and faith in her abilities have its roots in her love of baseball?

13. Doris pays tribute to many of her female teachers in junior high and high school. Many of these women rose to the top of their field during World War II -- and then refused to "go back home" when the war was over. Did you have any teachers who stand out in your mind as particularly inspiring? Share your own recollections of an important educator who encouraged you to be your best.
14. Doris stands out as a child not only for her ability to realize when she is observing history-in-the-making, but for her ability to see herself as part of it. Is this the result of her early love of reading, where she actually inserted herself into the action of the stories she read? How does baseball play a role?
15. One of the most memorable scenes in *Wait Till Next Year* is when Doris and her young friends imitate the McCarthy hearings which have captivated the nation. What begins as fun and games ironically have the same result as the real hearings, driving neighborhood kids apart and provoking mean-spirited attacks. Discuss other important life lessons Doris learns through current events, such as the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs, the escalation of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. How does her interest in these events prepare her for her role as an historian?

**If you liked *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir* –
here are some suggested titles for your reading pleasure...**

- Allen, Maury. *Brooklyn Remembered: the 1955 days of the Dodgers*. Sports Publishing, 2005.
- Frommer, Myrna. *It Happened in Brooklyn: an oral history of growing up in the borough in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s*. Harcourt Brace, 1993.
- Golenbock, Peter. *Bums: an oral history of the Brooklyn Dodgers*. Contemporary Books, 2000.
- Kahn, Roger. *The Era: 1947-1957, when the Yankees, the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers ruled the world*. Ticknor & Fields, 1993.
- Kemp, Bert. *EB: a boy – a family – a neighborhood – and a lost civilization – memories of growing up in Brooklyn NY in the '40s and '50s*. Paerdegat Park Publishing, 1998.
- Lowenfish, Lee. *Branch Rickey: baseball's ferocious gentleman*. University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Marzano, Rudy. *The Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1940s: how Robinson, MacPhail, Reiser and Rickey changed baseball*. McFarland & Co., 2005.
- Marzano, Rudy. *The Last Years of the Brooklyn Dodgers*. McFarland, 2007.
- McGee, Bob. *The Greatest Ballpark Ever: Ebbets Field and the story of the Brooklyn Dodgers*. Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Nordell, John R. *Brooklyn Dodgers: the last great pennant drive, 1957*. Tribute Books, 2007.
- Oliphant, Thomas. *Praying for Gil Hodges: a memoir of the 1955 World Series and one family's love of the Brooklyn Dodgers*. St. Martin's Press, 2005.
- O'Neill, Molly. *Mostly True: a memoir of family, food and baseball*. Scribner, 2006.
- Onofri, Adrienne. *Walking Brooklyn: 30 tours exploring historical legacies, neighborhood culture, side street and waterways*. Wilderness Press, 2007.
- Prager, Joshua. *The Echoing Green: the untold story of Bobby Thomson, Ralph Branca and the shot heard round the world*. Pantheon Books, 2006.
- Prince, Carl E. *Brooklyn's Dodgers: the bums, the borough, and the best of baseball, 1947-1957*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Schilling, Peter. *The End of Baseball*. Ivan R. Dee, 2008.
- Wolpin, Stewart. *Bums No More!: the championship season of the 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers*. St. Martin's Press, 1995.

The Long Island Reads 2009 Committee

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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 12-18, 2009.**

Long Island Reads 2009 Evaluation

1. Have you read, or do you plan to read, *Wait Till Next Year*? Yes ___ No ___
2. Have you visited the Long Island Reads website at 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. Have you participated in a Long Island Reads event in the past?
Yes ___ No ___ If yes, which one? _____
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 are there? What type of book do you usually read? You can use the back of this page if you need extra space.

6. If you would like to suggest an author or title for Long Island Reads 2010, please do so below, and tell us why you think this would be a good choice.

Your name (optional) _____

Are you a library employee? Yes ___ No ___
In which county do you reside Nassau ___ or Suffolk ___.

Please return this form to:

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Head of Adult Reference
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You can mail this form, or bring it in to your local library and they can forward it for you, **or return it here today!**

Thank you for participating in Long Island Reads!