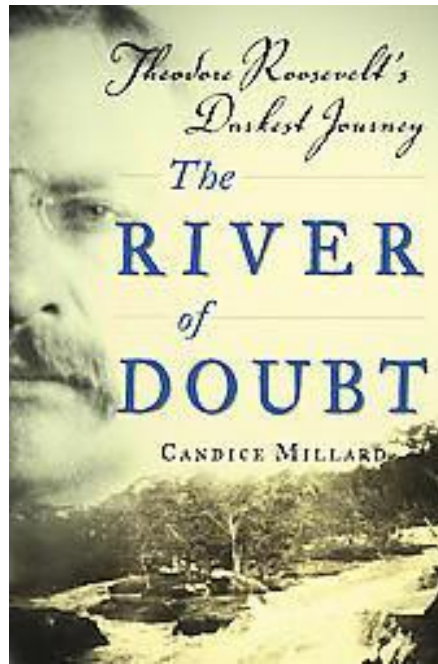


# *Long Island Reads* 2010 Reader's Guide



*Long Island Reads* is sponsored by  
The Nassau Library System &  
The Public Libraries in Suffolk County  
&  
Corporate Sponsor  
Astoria Federal Savings



# 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 11-17, 2010.**

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

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

## About Candice Millard



### Biographical and Professional Information

Candice Millard is a former writer and editor for ***National Geographic*** magazine. Her first book, ***The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey***, was a national bestseller and was named one of the best books of the year by, among others, ***The New York Times***, ***The Washington Post***, and ***The Christian Science Monitor***. ***The River of Doubt*** won the Barnes & Noble Discover New Writers award and was a Book Sense Pick. Millard's work has also appeared in ***Time*** magazine, ***The Washington Post Book World***, and ***The New York Times Book Review***.

Millard lives in Kansas City with her husband and three children and is working on her second book.

## 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>

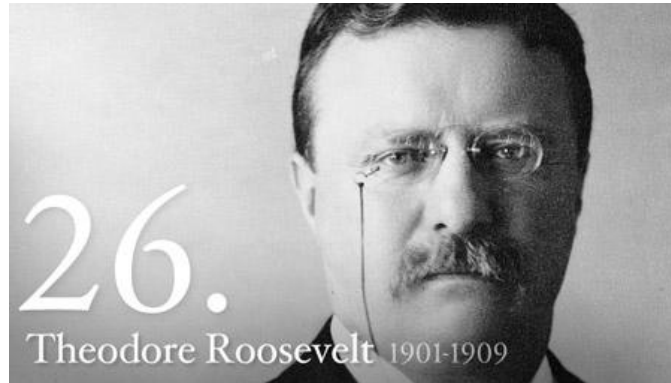
***The River of Doubt: Candido and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, by Bruce Barcott, New York Times, October 16, 2005.**

[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>

## Information about Theodore Roosevelt:



**This is an excellent timeline of Teddy's life, which also includes a few choice quotes, photographs, and a political cartoon. Take a look:**

<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/timeline.htm>

**Theodore Roosevelt Association:** <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org>

**Theodore Roosevelt National Park:** <http://www.nps.gov/thro/index.htm>

**Here are five pages of TR's quotes:**

[http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/t/theodore\\_roosevelt.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/t/theodore_roosevelt.html)

**TR's home on Long Island, Sagamore Hill:** <http://www.nps.gov/sahi/index.htm>

**Friends of Sagamore Hill:** <http://www.sagamore-hill.com/>

**Presidential biography from [www.WhiteHouse.gov](http://www.WhiteHouse.gov):**

With the assassination of President McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, not quite 43, became the youngest President in the Nation's history. He brought new excitement and power to the Presidency, as he vigorously led Congress and the American public toward progressive reforms and a strong foreign policy.

He took the view that the President as a "steward of the people" should take whatever action necessary for the public good unless expressly forbidden by law or the Constitution." I did not usurp power," he wrote, "but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power."

Roosevelt's youth differed sharply from that of the log cabin Presidents. He was born in New York City in 1858 into a wealthy family, but he too struggled--against ill health--and in his triumph became an advocate of the strenuous life.

In 1884 his first wife, Alice Lee Roosevelt, and his mother died on the same day. Roosevelt spent much of the next two years on his ranch in the Badlands of Dakota Territory. There he mastered his sorrow as he lived in the saddle, driving cattle,

hunting big game--he even captured an outlaw. On a visit to London, he married Edith Carow in December 1886.

During the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt was lieutenant colonel of the Rough Rider Regiment, which he led on a charge at the battle of San Juan. He was one of the most conspicuous heroes of the war.

Boss Tom Platt, needing a hero to draw attention away from scandals in New York State, accepted Roosevelt as the Republican candidate for Governor in 1898. Roosevelt won and served with distinction.

As President, Roosevelt held the ideal that the Government should be the great arbiter of the conflicting economic forces in the Nation, especially between capital and labor, guaranteeing justice to each and dispensing favors to none.

Roosevelt emerged spectacularly as a "trust buster" by forcing the dissolution of a great railroad combination in the Northwest. Other antitrust suits under the Sherman Act followed.

Roosevelt steered the United States more actively into world politics. He liked to quote a favorite proverb, "Speak softly and carry a big stick. . . ."

Aware of the strategic need for a shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific, Roosevelt ensured the construction of the Panama Canal. His corollary to the Monroe Doctrine prevented the establishment of foreign bases in the Caribbean and arrogated the sole right of intervention in Latin America to the United States.

He won the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating the Russo-Japanese War, reached a Gentleman's Agreement on immigration with Japan, and sent the Great White Fleet on a goodwill tour of the world.

Some of Theodore Roosevelt's most effective achievements were in conservation. He added enormously to the national forests in the West, reserved lands for public use, and fostered great irrigation projects.

He crusaded endlessly on matters big and small, exciting audiences with his high-pitched voice, jutting jaw, and pounding fist. "The life of strenuous endeavor" was a must for those around him, as he romped with his five younger children and led ambassadors on hikes through Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C.

Leaving the Presidency in 1909, Roosevelt went on an African safari, then jumped back into politics. In 1912 he ran for President on a Progressive ticket. To reporters he once remarked that he felt as fit as a bull moose, the name of his new party.

While campaigning in Milwaukee, he was shot in the chest by a fanatic. Roosevelt soon recovered, but his words at that time would have been applicable at the time of his death in 1919: "No man has had a happier life than I have led; a happier life in every way."

## 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?

6. Discuss the extraordinary medical history included in *The River of Doubt*. How was Roosevelt able to survive so much in his lifetime --- from gunshot and disease to a train wreck --- with only rudimentary medical care? What aspects of modern medicine would have made his expedition safer? Would safer conditions have undermined the thrill?
7. What did you discover about the intricate, sometimes surreal ecology and geography of the Rain Forest itself? What is the significance of the ancient history of South America's formation, such as the plate tectonics that sculpted the Andes Mountains? What was it like to read descriptions of a region where few humans have adapted to the environment? Why is it important to preserve rather than develop these ecosystems?
8. In the end, what do you believe Roosevelt's true missions were in this expedition? What was revealed about the nature of some geographic explorers when his success was met with deep skepticism? What motivates any explorer --- from ancient nomads to NASA scientists? What separates Roosevelt's brand of adventurousness from that of contestants on television shows such as "Survivor"?
9. Share your observations about the Cinta Larga, ranging from nutrition and family life to warfare. Does their self-sufficiency make them noble?
10. What did you discover about Roosevelt's parenting style? Is his approach--particularly his insistence that his children learn to conquer rather than avoid obstacles --- prevalent in many American schools today?
11. Do you believe that Kermit's later despondency, which eventually drove him to suicide, was related more to genetics or to his life's circumstances? Did his father expect too much of him? How did their relationship shift throughout this father-son expedition? How would you have fared on a similar mission with your mother or father?
12. How might Roosevelt respond to current concerns about the environment and climate change? How might he and his Progressive "Bull Moose" Party have fared in recent elections?
13. What separates *The River of Doubt* from other presidential narratives you have read? What writing techniques enabled the author to weave together science, travelogue, and history? What do the Notes and Acknowledgments sections reveal about her research techniques? If someone were to write a biography of you, what narratives could be constructed from your collection of letters and other memorabilia?
14. Discuss the historical context of Roosevelt's trip, in terms not only of South American history but other aspects of world history from this time period, such as the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912? Would World War I have unfolded differently if Roosevelt had defeated Wilson?
15. How were the first chapters of Roosevelt's life, which were marked by poor health, resolved by this final South American chapter? Do his triumphs of endurance, from boxing at Harvard to valiant service during the Spanish-American War, form a timeline of progressively more dangerous challenges throughout his life? If so, did he finally meet his match with *The River of Doubt*? Why do you believe this expedition was, until now, less well known than his other triumphs?

## **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

*Sir Frances Drake*, by Peter Whitfield

**Here are some books by Theodore Roosevelt...**

*The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*

*A Bully Father: Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children*

*The Rough Riders*

*The Strenuous Life*

*Theodore Roosevelt: An American Mind: A Selection From His Writings*

*Theodore Roosevelt on Hunting*

*Through the Brazilian Wilderness*

**(this is TR's journal of his River of Doubt adventure)**

## 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!**