

65th Annual Great Books at Colby College

Waterville, Maine

July 18 – July 24, 2021

American Experience

Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*

Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*

Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*

August Wilson, *Gem of the Ocean*

Well, 2020 has proven to be very challenging. Colby 2020 was virtual, yet very successful, with readings related to our theme of *American Experience* and a video Talent Show. We postponed our original readings for 2021. We now realize that potential delivery of vaccines suggests that we may actually attend Colby. We won't know probably till May whether it's possible or whether once again we have virtual discussions using Zoom. With either scenario, we will definitely discuss these books listed above. My guesstimate is that we have a 65% or better chance of actually attending. We may have to produce proof of having taken a vaccine. Delivery of vaccines may become an impediment. So, if virtual, our discussions and Talent Show will be spread over July 15 – 27, 2021. Given this indeterminacy, you can register for \$80. That provides the books and if we actually attend, I'll request the remainder of your deposit in May/June or as soon as we are certain.

So, with contingencies, we proceed with hope of an actual attendance at Colby. Please participate in our annual lively discussion. Our community enjoys reading and discussing Great Books. You can discover insights rarely achieved just reading alone. Connect with fellow book lovers, make lifelong friends, while enjoying the beauty and splendor of summertime Maine. Our theme is *American Experience*. Explore the complexities that still confront contemporary America.

This unforgettable vacation brings together readers who love great literary works and who can associate with others sharing that enthusiasm. On campus participants reside in Colby dormitories, eat meals together, and participate in formal discussion groups that meet for two hours each morning, Monday through Saturday. Books are mailed once registrations are received, and people are expected to have read them before arriving. Readers develop insights through the Great Books Foundation's *Shared Inquiry Method*. No outside sources facilitate an egalitarian discussion wherein the emphasis is truly on readers and the text. There are assigned leaders, who move from group to group during the week. Some experienced participants prefer a *leaderless* group.

After discussions, participants are invited to use the many recreational, athletic and cultural opportunities available on campus. In addition to an opening night orientation and a Thursday evening Talent Show (strictly voluntary), there are a wide variety of activities. Colby's beautiful campus features a great library, an outstanding Art Museum, tennis courts, first-class athletic facilities with an Olympic swimming pool, an arboretum with hiking trails, as well as waterfront property at a nearby lake. In addition, Colby is scheduled in conjunction with the Atlantic Music Festival (www.atlanticmusicfestival.org) which provides a series of excellent free classical concerts. We also offer a Children's Program for ages three and above. Parents and grandparents avail themselves of the advantage of bringing children or grandchildren.

Registration covers books and discussions, as well as lectures, films, group social activities, use of the athletic facilities and tennis courts, and a real Maine Lobster Bake. On campus registration includes a single or double dormitory room (six nights: Sunday through Friday night) and all meals. For a nominal additional fee, you may stay over Saturday night either before (July 17th) or after the week (July 24th). You will enjoy dining at Dana Dining Hall, newly renovated with air conditioning, which offers a variety of distinctive locally-grown and organic foods in an all-you-can-eat buffet. Commuters participate in all activities, but live on their own, off-campus, and receive lunch each day and the Lobster Bake. Breakfast and dinner for commuters are optional for additional fees.

Registration and Refunds: A deposit for each person is required with registration. Cancellations before April 1, 2021 incur the cost for books and mailing. Otherwise, one half normal deposit is refundable for cancellations received before **July 5, 2021**. Balance is due at registration on **Sunday, July 18, 2021, and must be either Cash or Check**. A previous attendee who registers someone or a family new to Colby, is eligible for a \$25 discount, unless already receiving discount by scholarship. You must register by mail. As previously stated, if just registering for the books (\$80), the remaining deposit will be required in May/June or as soon as we are certain.

Make checks payable to **Great Books at Colby** and send your deposit to:

Great Books at Colby, PO Box 424, Newtown Square, PA 19073.

Colby Fees	Books Only	On Campus		Commuters**	
		Fee	Deposit	Fee	Deposit
Adult	\$80	\$670	\$335	\$395	\$200
Young Adult (Ages 10-16*)	\$80	\$470	\$235	\$295	\$150
Children (Ages 3-9*)	\$80	\$420	\$210	\$250	\$150

No charge for children under 3 years of age. Scholarships are available on a need basis.

* **Age as of Sept 1, 2021**

** **Includes Lunch and Lobster Bake: Breakfast per meal, \$10; Dinner per meal, \$15.**

Optional Saturday Nights to Attend the Atlantic Music Festival's Concert: Extra nights: Saturday, July 17th (\$90, lodging, dinner, breakfast, and Sunday lunch) or July 24th (\$85, lodging, dinner and breakfast). Concerts are free. Please prepay for additional nights with your registration deposit.

For more information or additional flyers visit our website at www.GreatBooks-atColby.org. You can also direct questions to John Dalton at 610-608-7711, or email him at agreatbook@aol.com

People attending Colby Great Books vary in age, background, and interests, but all share a love of reading. Some have come to Colby for decades, but many newcomers arrive each year. Everyone is welcome. The goal is shared inquiry, shared laughter, and shared experience. Results are often friendship, fun and sometimes even glimpses of truth. We also regularly have a social gathering place each night. The *Wachs Works* is our version of a friendly pub with an emphasis on socialization and relaxation.

Colby food is good and plentiful. Living arrangements are in comfortable dorm rooms. Fans, phones, reading lights and bed boards are available. It is dormitory living, however, with no frills and no air conditioning (Our Maine location means this usually is not a problem.). You might want to bring a mirror. We have private bedrooms with shared bath facilities. All buildings are smoke-free. The school provides towels and bed linen. Arrangements can usually be made for people with special needs. If you have special medical or other needs, please include that on your application. That information is forwarded to Sylvia Eusebi (Sylvia@softhands.net) who assigns rooms and oversees accommodations.

Participants make their own travel arrangements. Many arrive by car, but there is air service to Portland, Bangor, and Augusta ME; Manchester, NH; and Boston, MA. Rental cars, buses and limousine service are available from there. There is also a Greyhound bus terminal in Waterville. For those without cars, rides with other participants can sometimes be arranged. Coordination of carpooling can be made by emailing participants. An email list from last year's participants is available upon request. There is also a Facebook page for sharing ride info: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Wachs-Great-Books-Summer-Institute-at-Colby-College/156086481080727?ref=ts> See all details and history at [GreatBooks-atColby.org](http://www.GreatBooks-atColby.org) and check out the photos of our participants in action.

Below is a brief introduction to some works that we feel capture the ***American Experience***:

Elizabeth Anderson, ***The Imperative of Integration***: An Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and John Dewey Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, Elizabeth Anderson, is a notable American philosopher specializing in moral and political philosophy. Anderson demonstrates that, despite progress toward racial equality, African Americans remain disadvantaged on virtually all measures of well-being. Segregation remains a key cause of these problems, and she skillfully shows why racial integration is needed to address these issues. Weaving together extensive social science findings—in economics, sociology, and psychology—with political theory, this book provides a compelling argument for reviving the ideal of racial integration to overcome injustice and inequality, and to build a better democracy.

Marilynne Robinson, ***Gilead***: This novel won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award. *Gilead* is described as an epistolary novel. In fact the entire narrative is a single, continuing, albeit episodic, document, written on several occasions in a form combining a journal and a memoir. It comprises the fictional autobiography of the Reverend John Ames, an elderly Congregationalist pastor in the small, secluded town of Gilead, Iowa, who knows that he is dying of a heart condition. At the beginning of the book, the date is established as 1956, Ames explains that he is writing an account of his life for his seven-year-old son, who will have few memories of him.

Annie Dillard, ***An American Childhood***: Annie Dillard remembers the exhilaration of whipping a snowball at a car and having it hit straight on. She remembers playing with the skin on her mother's knuckles, which "didn't snap back; it lay dead across her knuckle in a yellowish ridge." She remembers the compulsion to spend a whole afternoon (or many whole afternoons) endlessly pitching a ball at a target. In this intoxicating account of her childhood, Dillard climbs back inside her 5, 10, and 15 year-old selves with apparent effortlessness. The voracious young Dillard embraces headlong one fascination after another, from drawing to rocks and bugs to the French symbolists. "Everywhere, things snagged me," she writes. "The visible world turned me curious to books; the books propelled me reeling back to the world." From her parents she inherited a love of language and the understanding that "you do what you do out of your private passion for the thing itself," not for anyone else's approval or desire.

Neil Postman, ***Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*** (1985) is a book by educator Neil Postman. The book's origins lay in a talk Postman gave to the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1984 while participating in a panel on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the contemporary world. In his introduction, Postman says that the contemporary world was better reflected by Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, whose public was oppressed by their addiction to amusement, than by Orwell's work, where they were oppressed by state control. Drawing on the ideas of media scholar Marshall McLuhan, he alters McLuhan's aphorism "the medium is the message" to "the medium is the metaphor". He describes how oral, literate, and televisual cultures radically differ in the processing and prioritization of information. He argues that each medium is appropriate for a different kind of knowledge. The faculties requisite for rational inquiry are simply weakened by televised viewing. Accordingly, reading, a prime example cited by Postman, exacts intense intellectual involvement, at once interactive and dialectical; whereas television only requires passive involvement. His indictment persists in our new cyber age.

Philip Roth, ***An American Pastoral***: Here is Philip Roth's masterpiece—an elegy for the American century's promises of prosperity, civic order, and domestic bliss, and a serious reflection on assimilation. Roth's protagonist is Swede Levov, a legendary athlete at his Newark high school, who grows up in the booming postwar years to marry a former Miss New Jersey, inherit his father's glove factory, and move into a stone house in the idyllic hamlet of Old Rimrock. And then one day in 1968, Swede's beautiful American luck deserts him. For Swede's adored daughter, Merry, has grown from a loving, quick-witted girl into a sullen, fanatical teenager—a teenager capable of an outlandishly savage act of political terrorism. Overnight Swede is wrenched out of the longed-for American pastoral and into the indigenous American berserk. Compulsively readable, propelled by sorrow, rage, and a deep compassion for its characters, *American Pastoral* gives us Philip Roth at the height of his powers.

August Wilson, ***Gem of the Ocean***: Set in 1904 Pittsburgh, *Gem of the Ocean* is chronologically the first installment in August Wilson's ten-play chronicle, *The Pittsburgh Cycle*, dramatizing the African American experience during the 20th century—an unprecedented series that includes the Pulitzer Prize-winning plays *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. It was actually the ninth play written for the ten play cycle. Aunt Esther, the drama's 287-year-old fiery matriarch, welcomes into her Hill District home Solly Two Kings, who was born into slavery and scouted for the Union Army, and Citizen Barlow, a young man from Alabama searching for a new life. In 2005, it garnered the Tony Award for Best Play.

New this year: There will be an adult group dedicated to facilitating better hearing.

This is the ADULT FORM:

----- (Detach Here) -----

Mail to: Great Books at Colby, PO Box 424, Newtown Square, PA 19073

APPLICATION (Make checks payable to Great Books at Colby) Name(s) _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip code _____ Phone () _____ Cell Phone () _____ Email _____ Rooming with _____ Rooming near (if possible) _____ We are commuting (names) _____	Please circle your choices. Lobster Bake: [Circle choice] Lobster Steak Halibut Vegetarian Previously attended Colby Great Books: Yes or No Prefer Leaderless Group: Yes or No Prefer Better Hearing Group: Yes or No Need Handicapped Access: Yes or No Need Bed Board: Yes or No Extra night choice: July 17 for \$90; July 24 for \$85
Emergency Contact (NOT at Colby) Name _____ Phone _____ Relationship _____	

Junior Great Books details are below.

This is the JUNIORS FORM:

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Mail to: Great Books at Colby, PO Box 424, Newtown Square, PA 19073

[Please use separate form for each Junior Great Books Registrant and sibling. ALL INFO IS REQUIRED.]

Junior Great Books Registration (Please make checks payable to <i>Great Books at Colby</i>) Name _____ Age in Sept. 2021: ____ * Grade in Sept. 2021: ____ Address _____ Phone () _____ Cell Phone () _____ Accompanying** Adult(s) Name(s) _____ Address _____ Phone () _____ Cell Phone () _____ Email _____ We are Commuting (names) _____	Please tell us your Hobbies: Favorite Book: Talent for Talent Show:
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For 2021, Wachs Great Books assumes responsibility for the hiring and management of counselors.

Junior Great Books at Colby College
Great Books at Colby Summer Institute
July 18 – July 24, 2021

OLDEST J-GB

Into The Wild

by John Krakauer

The Hollow Land

by Jane Gardam

Homeless Bird

by Grace Whelan

The Pearl

by John Steinbeck

MIDDLE J-GB

A Handful of Stars

by Cynthia Lord

Phineas Gage, A Gruesome But

True Story About Brain Science

by John Fleischman

Homeless Bird

by Grace Whelan

M C Higgins The Great

by Virginia Hamilton

YOUNGER J-GB

The Camping Trip That Saved America, Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and Our National Parks

by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

by Peg Kehret

The Hundred Dresses

by Eleanor Estes, illustrated by Louis Slobodkin

The Curious Lobster

by Richard W. Hatch

Junior Great Books at Colby is an excellent summer program for intellectually curious children and teens whose parents and/or grandparents enjoy the Great Books experience with them. Four afternoons are scheduled for discussions of the assigned books which are mailed to participants to be read BEFORE arrival.

Morning Sign In is no earlier than 9 AM at Pugh Center. Counselors supervise fun activities for all Junior Great Books attendees and siblings (age 3 to 16). **Parents sign out children directly from Pugh Center by noon.** Following lunch on Mon., Tues., Thurs., and Fri., participants walk to book discussions in Cotter Union, which start at 1 p.m. There are no Junior Great Books discussions on Wednesday nor on Saturday.

The On-Campus Registration fee covers accommodations in a dormitory room (single or double), meals, discussions and books, as well as swimming, tennis, counselor-supervised activities, and a real Maine lobster bake. The cost for commuters (people who participate in group activities but live off-campus) includes lunches and other activities and the lobster bake. All prices are on page 2 above. To register by June 30, 2021, please complete the form, send with the proper deposit per person to the address below. See all details and history at GreatBooks-atColby.org.

Below is a brief introduction to 2020 Junior Great books readings.

OLDEST GROUP

Into The Wild by John Krakauer

Immediately after graduating from college in 1991, McCandless had roamed through the West and Southwest on a vision quest like those made by his heroes Jack London and John Muir. In the Mojave Desert he abandoned his car, stripped it of its license plates, and burned all of his cash. With a new name, Alexander Supertramp, and unencumbered by money and belongings, he would be free to wallow in the raw, unfiltered experiences nature presented. Craving a blank spot on the map, McCandless simply threw the maps away. Leaving behind his desperate parents and sister, he vanished into the wild.

The Hollow Land by Jane Gardam

The barren, beautiful Cumbrian fells provide the bewitching setting for the adventures of Bell and Harry, two children who find enchanting wonder at every turn, as they explore *The Hollow Land*. Everyday challenges give a daring edge to this rural work and play. There are ancient mysteries to explore and uncover, like the case of the Egg Witch, and everyone is curious about the Household Name, a wildly famous Londoner moving in to the jewel of the territory, Light Trees Farm. With painterly ease, Jane Gardam's stories fly with a marvelous spirit that will delight readers of all ages!

Homeless Bird by Grace Whelan

Like many girls her age in India, thirteen-year-old Koly faces her arranged marriage with hope and courage. But Koly's story takes a terrible turn when in the wake of the ceremony, she discovers she's been horribly misled; her life has been sold for a dowry. In prose both graceful and unflinching, this powerful novel relays the story of a rare young woman, who even when cast out into a brutal current of time-worn tradition, sets out to forge her own remarkable future. Inspired by a newspaper article about the real thirteen-year-old widows in India today, this universally acclaimed best-selling novel, characterized by spare, lyrical language and remarkable detail, transports readers into the heart of a gripping tale of hope.

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

Like his father and grandfather before him, Kino is a poor diver, gathering pearls from the gulf beds that once brought great wealth to the Kings of Spain and now provide Kino, Juana, and their infant son with meager subsistence. Then, on a day like any other, Kino emerges from the sea with a pearl as large as a sea gull's egg, as "perfect as the moon." With the pearl comes hope, the promise of comfort and of security.

MIDDLE GROUP

A Handful of Stars by Cynthia Lord

When Lily's blind dog, Lucky, slips his collar and runs away across the wide-open blueberry barrens of eastern Maine, it's Salma Santiago who manages to catch him. Salma, the daughter of migrant workers, is in the small town with her family for the blueberry-picking season. After their initial chance meeting, Salma and Lily bond over painting bee boxes for Lily's grandfather, and Salma's friendship transforms Lily's summer. But when Salma decides to run in the upcoming Blueberry Queen pageant, they'll have to face some tough truths about friendship and belonging. Should an outsider like Salma really participate in the pageant-and possibly win? Set amongst the blueberry barrens and by the sea, this is a gorgeous new novel by Newbery Honor author Cynthia Lord that tackles themes of prejudice and friendship, loss and love.

Phineas Gage, A Gruesome But True Story About Brain Science by John Fleischman

Phineas Gage was truly a man with a hole in his head. Phineas, a railroad construction foreman, was blasting rock near Cavendish, Vermont, in 1848 when a thirteen-pound iron rod was shot through his brain. Miraculously, he survived to live another eleven years and become a textbook case in brain science. At the time, Phineas Gage seemed to completely recover from his accident. He could walk, talk, work, and travel, but he was changed. Gage "was no longer Gage," said his Vermont doctor, meaning that the old Phineas was dependable and well liked, and the new Phineas was crude and unpredictable. His case astonished doctors in his day and still fascinates doctors today. What happened and what didn't happen inside the brain of Phineas Gage will tell you a lot about how your brain works and how you act human.

Homeless Bird by Grace Whelan (See Oldest Group description, above)

M C Higgins The Great by Virginia Hamilton

Discover this masterpiece from Virginia Hamilton that was the first book to win the Newberry, the National Book Award, and the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award. Mayo Cornelius Higgins sits on his gleaming, forty-foot steel pole, towering over his home on Sarah's Mountain. Stretched before him are rolling hills and shady valleys. But behind him lie the wounds of strip mining, including a mountain of rubble that may one day fall and bury his home. M.C. dreams of escape for himself and his family. And, one day, atop his pole, he thinks he sees it—two strangers are making their way toward Sarah's Mountain. One has the ability to make M.C.'s mother famous. And the other has the kind of freedom that M.C. has never even considered.

YOUNGEST GROUP

The Camping Trip That Saved America, Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and Our National Parks by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein

Caldecott medalist Mordicai Gerstein captures the majestic redwoods of Yosemite in this little-known but important story from our nation's history. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt joined naturalist John Muir on a trip to Yosemite. Camping by themselves in the uncharted woods, the two men saw sights and held discussions that would ultimately lead to the establishment of our National Parks.

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio by Peg Kehret

This heartfelt memoir takes readers back to 1949 when the author, at age 12, contracted polio. In a riveting story of courage and hope, Peg Kehret writes about months spent in a hospital when she was twelve, first struggling to survive a severe case of polio, then slowly learning to walk again. She describes her seven-month ordeal—her diagnosis and quarantine, her terrifying paralysis, her slow and difficult recuperation—and the people she encountered along the way.

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes, illustrated by Louis Slobodkin

Eleanor Estes's *The Hundred Dresses* won a Newbery Honor in 1945 and has never been out of print since. At the heart of the story is Wanda Petronski, a Polish girl in a Connecticut school who is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has one hundred dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and bullies her mercilessly. The class feels terrible when Wanda is pulled out of the school, but by that time it's too late for apologies. Maddie, one of Wanda's classmates, ultimately decides that she is "never going to stand by and say nothing again."

The Curious Lobster by Richard W. Hatch

An American *Wind in the Willows*, *The Curious Lobster* stories have been delighting a small and devoted fellowship of readers for going on eighty years. Whether you are five or one hundred and five, chances are you've never met a lobster as learned and charming as Mr. Lobster—and he'd be the very first to tell you so. Mr. Lobster has evaded the fisherman's trap for decades, but life in his corner of the ocean seems duller by the day. The time has come to seek new adventures, new friends, and even new, *dry* lands. But Mr. Lobster has a way of turning every enemy into a dear friend and of escaping the scrapes his curiosity gets him into.