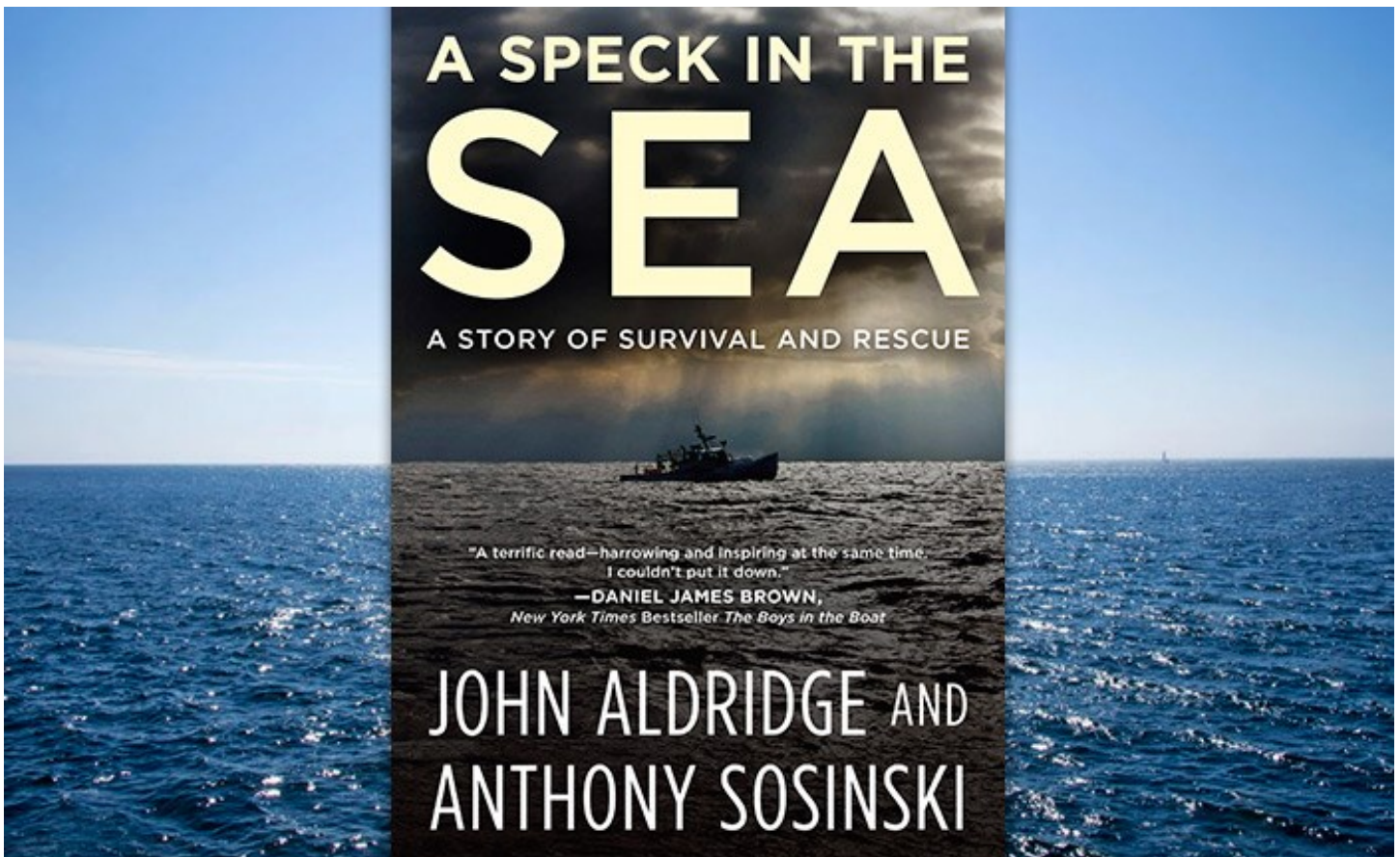


**LONG ISLAND READS**  
One Island—One Book

# 2023 Reader's Guide



**Long Island Reads**  
is sponsored by the **Nassau Library System**  
and the **Public Libraries of Suffolk County**

Reader's Guide compiled by: Mara Zonderman, Westhampton Free Library



## *One Island-One Book*

### About Long Island Reads

**One City, One Book** projects are community-wide reading programs. Seattle librarian Nancy Pearl, NPR book critic and author of *Book Lust* and *More Book Lust*, spearheaded the **One City, One Book** phenomenon and hosted the first **One Book** project at the Seattle Public Library's Washington Center for the Book in 1998. Since then, the concept has spread across the United States and around the world.

To see a listing of **One City, One Book** projects, visit the Library of Congress website at [www.read.gov/resources/](http://www.read.gov/resources/). Projects can be viewed by city and state or by author. While at the Library of Congress site, check out their Center for the Book.

The **Long Island Reads Committee** is a group of librarians and book discussion leaders from Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island who volunteer to work on this island-wide reading initiative. Each spring readers from across both counties read the same book, participate in discussions of the selection, and enjoy related events in public libraries.

Many Long Island Reads events take place during  
**National Library Week, April 23 - 29, 2023**

For more information about **Long Island Reads One Island - One Book** visit  
[www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)



## About the Authors



Photo credit: Daniel Shea



Photo credit: Daniel Shea

**John Aldridge** and **Anthony Sosinski** co-own and operate the *Anna Mary*, a lobster boat, in the open ocean surrounding Montauk. Best friends for decades, Aldridge and Sosinski are seasoned sailors and fishermen.

# Synopsis of the Book

“A rich backstory—including complicated personal lives and deep family histories—adds depth to this page turner. ”

- *Publisher's Weekly*

“the authors offer a richly detailed but not overburdened view of how sea rescue operations are mounted and conducted ” - *Kirkus*

“...pulses with dramatic excitement ... memorably captures a moment in time when people cared about other people and Nature ”- *WSHU*

The harrowing adventure-at-sea memoir recounting the heroic search-and-rescue mission for lost Montauk fisherman John Aldridge, which Daniel James Brown (author of *The Boys in the Boat*) calls “A terrific read.”

“I am floating in the middle of the night, and nobody in the world even knows I am missing. Nobody is looking for me. You can't get more alone than that. You can't be more lost.

I've got too many people who love me. There's no way I'm dying like this.”

In the dead of night on July 24, 2013, John Aldridge was thrown off the back of the *Anna Mary* while his fishing partner, Anthony Sosinski, slept below. As desperate hours ticked by, Sosinski, the families, the local fishing community, and the U.S. Coast Guard in three states mobilized in an unprecedented search effort that culminated in a rare and exhilarating success.

A tale of survival, perseverance, and community, *A Speck in the Sea* tells of one man's struggle to survive as friends and strangers work to bring him home. Aldridge's wrenching first-person account intertwines with the narrative of the massive, constantly evolving rescue operation designed to save him.

# John Aldridge, Anthony Sosinski and *A Speck in the Sea*

## REVIEWS

*Kirkus*: <https://tinyurl.com/bde72zbe>

*Publishers Weekly*: <https://tinyurl.com/3v29u9n2>

*Summit Daily*: <https://tinyurl.com/y9kn3mxx>

WSHU: <https://tinyurl.com/fwpaHR2k>

## IN THE NEWS

*CBS News*: <https://tinyurl.com/3v57r5pr>

*People*: <https://tinyurl.com/wwezDysw>

*New York Times*: <https://tinyurl.com/mu7fkx2h>

Montauk Lobsterman Tells His Survival Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaStn0GS5fY>

Lobsterman rescued after 12 hours at sea: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck72L9hMU08>

U.S. Coast Guard rescues John Aldridge: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Jeuc\\_bF7Bg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Jeuc_bF7Bg)

Fisherman swept off boat survives 12 hours with no life vest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5HRMlImhngk>

Overboard: A tale of survival at sea: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5el-B6Sflp0>

## PAST INTERVIEWS

Montauk Library: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyjK\\_\\_QsG90](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyjK__QsG90)

Dan's Literary Festival: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K80FYxKMx8>

Stony Brook University: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzmvOCfki0E>

*A Speck in the Sea* is available as an e-book and an e-audiobook on Libby. Many of the other books mentioned in this Guide are also available digitally from Libby or Hoopla. Ask your Librarian for more information.



# 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 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 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 to which you might want to refer again. 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.** 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 author's messages.** As with any skill, critical reading improves with practice. A good author uses every word in a text deliberately. Try to be aware of what the author is revealing about themselves and what they want you to learn about life from their perspectives.

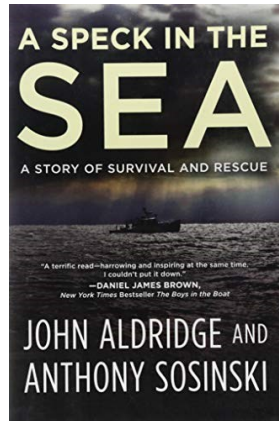
**Analyze themes.** Analyze the important themes of a story & to consider the premises with which the author started. Imagine an author mulling over the beginnings of the story, asking, "what if" questions.

**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.

**Make comparisons to other stories and works.** Compare the book 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.

# Suggested Book Discussion Questions

Developed by Fran Cohen, Book Talk Leader  
Donna Diamond, Book Talk Leader  
Mara Zonderman, Westhampton Free Library



- 1) John and Anthony were childhood friends, but were also polar opposites in many ways. Discuss ways in which their different natures allowed them to work well together.
- 2) Commercial fishing is a difficult occupation, and has been called one of the most hazardous professions in the U.S. Why are some people drawn to it? What drew John and Anthony to this life?
- 3) Discuss John's family and their role in his life and this story.
- 4) There are several threads to this book, including Johnny's recollection of what it was like at sea, his family and friend's anxiety and actions to contribute to the search, and the Coast Guard search procedure. Did you find any thread more compelling or interesting than the others? Why?
- 5) Anthony was determined to be a part of the search and rescue mission and took control of the volunteer fleet of commercial fisherman. He never stopped believing that his friend and partner was still alive. Discuss Anthony's actions and demeanor when he discovered that John had gone overboard, and his role in the search.
- 6) What did you learn about Montauk, commercial fishing, and the Coast Guard from reading this book?
- 7) What made this story particularly vivid for you?
- 8) What parts of this story will remain with you after having read this book?
- 9) [WSHU's reviewer](#) said that the information about the Coast Guard's Search and Rescue plan was "overly detailed". What did you think? Was it too much information, or did you appreciate learning about the intricacies of the operation.

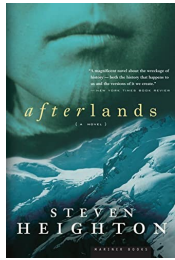
# If you enjoyed *A Speck in the Sea...*

## Look for these Fiction Picks



### ***When Captain Flint Was Still a Good Man* by Nick Dybek (2012)**

Every fall, the men of Loyalty Island sail to the Bering Sea to spend the winter catching king crab. Their dangerous occupation keeps food on the table but constantly threatens to leave empty seats around it. Cal is too young to accompany his father, but he is old enough to know that everything depends on the fate of those few boats thousands of miles to the north. When the owner of the fleet dies suddenly, leaving the business in the hands of his son, who seems intent on selling away the fishermen's livelihood, Cal stumbles on evidence that his father may have taken extreme measures to salvage their way of life. As his suspicions deepen and his moral compass is shattered, Cal is forced to make a terrible choice.



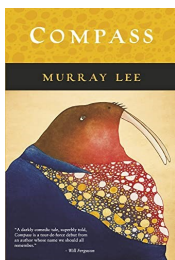
### ***Afterlands* by Steven Heighton (2005)**

In 1871, nineteen men, women, and children, were cast adrift on a large ice floe. This is the story of these castaways as they try to survive a six-month ordeal, struggling with the elements and with one another, as the group splinters into factions along ethnic and national lines. Throughout the novel, Heighton incorporates actual passages from one survivor's contentious account, then daringly imagines the aftermath of the ordeal, following three survivors as they attempt to move beyond their searing memories and resume their lives in the larger world.



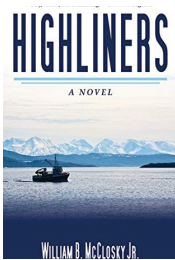
### ***Our Homesick Songs* by Emma Hooper (2018)**

After the fish mysteriously disappeared from the waters near Big Running, most families had no choice but to relocate and find work elsewhere. Aidan and Martha Connor now spend alternate months of the year working at an energy site up north to support their children, Cora and Finn. But soon the family fears they'll have to leave town for good. Eleven-year-old Finn Connor thinks he may have discovered a way to find the fish, and in turn, save the only home he's ever known. Hooper paints a gorgeous portrait of the Connor family, brilliantly weaving together two generations of Connors, full of wonder and hope.



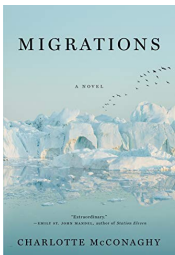
### ***Compass* by Murray Lee (2017)**

*Compass* recounts the adventures of a man who, after traveling the world shilling stories about historic expeditions and explorers for a major magazine, sets out on an adventure of his own--an ill-advised and poorly planned trip to the Arctic floe edge under the disorienting twenty-four-hour summer sun. When the ice breaks and his guide disappears, the narrator ends up alone and adrift in the hostile northern sea. He draws on his knowledge of historic expeditions to craft his own, inept, attempt at survival. *Compass* draws heavily on true historical adventures, Inuit mythology, and its Arctic setting.



### ***Highliners* by William B. McCloskey (1979)**

Highliners are the elite of the fishing world, the skippers and crews who make the biggest catches--salmon, king crab, halibut, shrimp--and deliver them first to the bustling canneries of Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. For these men--and for their women--the safe eight-hour day does not exist. This novel follows Hank Crawford, a young greenhorn who first comes to Alaska to work in a cannery to earn money while on summer vacation from college. He is quickly hooked by the fisherman's life and succeeds because he is young enough, strong enough, and brave enough. He learns the brutal business from hard-fisted skippers, penny-pinching cannery managers, and the pirates of the fishing world.



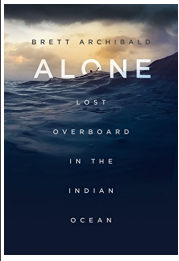
### ***Migrations* by Charlotte McConaghy (2020)**

Franny Stone is determined to go to the end of the earth, following the last of the Arctic terns on what may be their final migration to Antarctica. As animal populations plummet and commercial fishing faces prohibition, Franny talks her way onto one of the few remaining boats heading south. But as she and the eccentric crew travel further from shore and safety, the dark secrets of Franny's life begin to unspool. Haunted by love and violence, Franny must confront what she is really running towards - and from.



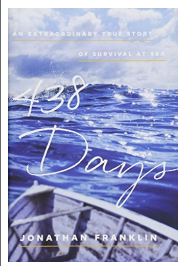
## If you enjoyed *A Speck in the Sea...*

### Look for these Non-Fiction Picks about Shipwrecks and Rescues at Sea



#### ***Alone: Lost Overboard in the Indian Ocean* by Brett Archibald (2017)**

In April 2013, Archibald was on a charter boat in a remote part of the Indian Ocean. In the middle of a storm, ill with food poisoning, he blacked out. When he came to, he found himself in the raging sea, miles from shore. It would be hours before his friends realized he was missing. A search began, but the rough weather meant that no planes or helicopters could assist. According to the experts, he should have died within ten to fourteen hours. Instead, he battled Portuguese man o' war and jellyfish, sharks, seagulls, and the stormy seas for more than 28 hours. *Alone* is the remarkable tale of his miraculous survival and rescue.



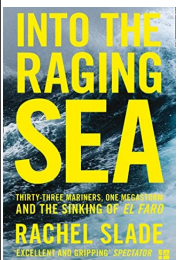
#### ***438 Days: An Extraordinary True Story of Survival at Sea* by Jonathan Franklin (2015)**

Fourteen months after setting off for a weekend fishing trip and being ambushed by a violent storm, Salvador Alvarenga, now a hairy, wild-bearded and half-mad castaway, washed ashore on a nearly deserted island. Based on dozens of hours of exclusive interviews with him, and the many people involved in the search and rescue operation, *438 Days* is an unforgettable study of the resilience, will, ingenuity and determination required for one man to survive more than a year lost and adrift at sea.



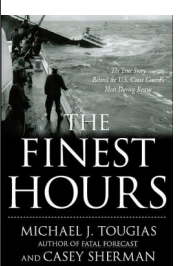
#### ***Soul of the Hurricane: The Perfect Storm and an Accidental Sailor* by Nelson Simón (2021)**

Nelson Simón didn't want to sign up as a last-minute crew member to transport a schooner from Brooklyn to Bermuda. It was October 1991 and what awaited them was Hurricane Grace, the southern end of what came to be known as the "Perfect Storm." Here is an unlikely tale that begins with an unexpected invitation and ends in the dead of night somewhere far from home, with a Coast Guard helicopter above and a dark, angry sea below.



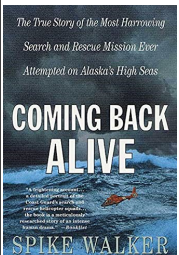
#### ***Into the Raging Sea: Thirty-Three Mariners, One Megastorm, and the Sinking of El Faro* by Rachel Slade (2018)**

When Hurricane Joaquin barreled into the Bermuda Triangle, it swallowed the container ship *El Faro* whole. Relying on hundreds of interviews with maritime experts, as well as the words of the crew members themselves--whose conversations were captured by the ship's data recorder--Slade vividly depicts the officers' anguish and fear. Taking a hard look at America's aging merchant marine fleet, she also reveals the truth about modern shipping--a cut-throat industry plagued by razor-thin profits and ever more violent hurricanes fueled by global warming.



#### ***The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue* by Michael J. Tougas and Casey Sherman (2009)**

On the night of February 18, 1952, during one of the worst winter storms that New England has ever seen, two oil tankers just off the shore of Cape Cod were torn in half by the force of the storm. *The Finest Hours* tells the story of a harrowing Coast Guard rescue when four men in a tiny lifeboat overcame insurmountable odds and saved more than 30 stranded sailors. This is a fast-paced, uplifting story that puts readers in the middle of the action. It's a gripping story of heroism and survival with the same intensity as the bestselling book and movie *The Perfect Storm*.

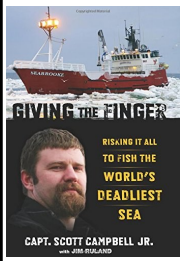


#### ***Coming Back Alive: The True Story of the Most Harrowing Search & Rescue Mission Ever Attempted on Alaska's High Seas* by Spike Walker (2001)**

When the fishing vessel *La Conte* sinks suddenly during a savage storm in January 1998, her five crewmen are left to drift without a life raft in the freezing Alaskan waters. One hundred fifty miles away, in Sitka, Alaska, an H-60 Jayhawk helicopter lifts off in the hopes of tracking down an anonymous Mayday signal. A fisherman's worst nightmare has become a Coast Guard crew's desperate mission. Meticulously researched, this is the true account of the *La Conte*'s final voyage and the relationship between Alaskan fishermen and the search and rescue crews who risk their lives to save them.

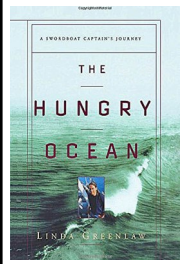
## If you enjoyed *A Speck in the Sea...*

### Look for these Non-Fiction Picks about Seafarers and Marine Life



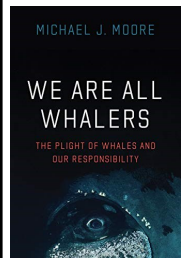
#### ***Giving the Finger: Risking it All to Fish the World's Deadliest Sea* by Capt. Scott Campbell, Jr. with Jim Ruland (2014)**

A prequel to the newest “Deadliest Catch” star's rise to fame-- Captain Scott Campbell Jr. recounts working as an Alaskan crab fisherman, the most dangerous job on the planet, and dealing with injury and death on the Bering Sea, enormous riches, and a stormy home life.



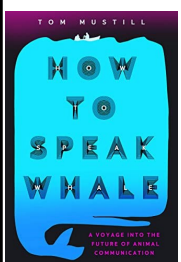
#### ***The Hungry Ocean: A Swordboat Captain's Journey* by Linda Greenlaw (1999)**

Greenlaw tells a riveting story of a thirty-day swordfishing voyage, complete with danger, humor, and characters so colorful they seem to have been ripped from the pages of *Moby Dick*. While at sea, she must cope with nasty weather, equipment failure, and treachery aboard ship, not to mention the routinely backbreaking work of operating a fishing boat. Displaying a true fisherman's gift for storytelling, Greenlaw offers an exciting real-life adventure tale filled with the beauty and power of the sea.



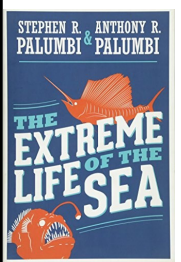
#### ***We Are All Whalers: The Plight of Whales and Our Responsibility* by Michael J. Moore (2021)**

Marine scientist Moore says we are all whalers, but we don't have to be. Eating fish leads to whales' entanglement and death. Buying goods made around the world requires global shipping routes, which do not consider whale breeding and feeding sites, leading to collision. Moore puts together over thirty years' worth of fieldwork to write a hopeful book that shows us that we can change and tells us how.



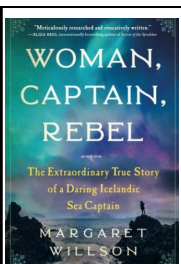
#### ***How to Speak Whale: A Voyage into the Future of Animal Communication* by Tom Mustill (2022)**

Pioneers in a new age of discovery have cutting-edge developments in natural science and technology and are taking us to the brink of decoding animal communication - and whales, with their mammalian brains and sophisticated vocalizations, offer one of the most realistic opportunities for us to do so. But what would it mean if we were to make contact? How would contact alter our approach to the natural world? Original and entertaining, this is an unforgettable look at how close we truly are to communicating with another species - and how doing so might change our world beyond recognition.



#### ***The Extreme Life of the Sea* by Stephen R. Palumbi & Anthony R. Palumbi (2014)**

This book exposes the eternal darkness of the deepest undersea trenches to show how marine life thrives against the odds, describes how flying fish strain to escape their predators, how predatory deep-sea fish use red searchlights only they can see to find and attack food, and how a mother octopus dedicates herself to raising her batch of young. This highly accessible book shows how ocean adaptations can inspire innovative commercial products, such as fan blades modeled on the flippers of humpback whales, and how future extremes created by human changes to the oceans might push some of these amazing species over the edge.



#### ***Woman, Captain, Rebel: The Extraordinary True Story of a Daring Icelandic Sea Captain* by Margaret Willson (2023)**

A daring historical nonfiction account of Iceland's most famous female sea captain who constantly fought for women's rights and equality--and who also solved one of the country's most notorious robberies. Captain Thuridur, born in Iceland in 1777, became an acclaimed fishing captain brilliant at weather-reading and seacraft. In the Arctic seas where drownings occurred with terrifying regularity, she never lost a single crewmember. Weaving together fastidious research and captivating prose, Margaret Willson reveals Captain Thuridur's fascinating story, her extraordinary courage, intelligence, and personal integrity.

# The Long Island Reads 2023 Committee

Deborah Kinirons, Long Island Reads Nassau Chair, Uniondale Public Library  
Mara Zonderman, Long Island Reads Suffolk Chair, Westhampton Free Library

Azurée Agnello, West Babylon Public Library

Samantha Alberts, Suffolk Cooperative Library System

Fran Cohen, Book Talk Leader

Pam Cook, Riverhead Free Library

Donna Diamond, Book Talk Leader

Ellen Getreu, Hewlett-Woodmere Library

Marlene Gonzalez, Middle Country Public Library

Lisa Jones, Jericho Public Library

Jocelyn Kaleita, Book Store Owner

Lisa Kroitor, Smithtown Library

Diane Malkin, Manhasset Public Library

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Jacqueline Ranaldo, Syosset Public Library

Noel Reich, Lindenhurst Memorial Library

Janet Schneider, Retired Librarian

Nicole Scherer, Nassau Library System

Carol Stern, Glen Cove Public Library

Sally Stieglitz, Long Island Library Resources Council

Kristin Thorvaldsen, Book Blogger

Rosa Todaro, Brentwood Public Library

Emily Van Allen, Oceanside Library



Contact your public library for more information about  
Long Island Reads events during  
National Library Week, April 23-29, 2023

## Long Island Reads 2023 Evaluation

1. Have you read, or do you plan to read, *A Speck in the Sea*? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Have you visited the Long Island Reads website at [www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Which library do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Please let us know what you thought about today's program.

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5. Have you participated in any Long Island Reads events in the past? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

6. Are you in a book club? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Is it a library book club or independently run? \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you would like to suggest an author or title for Long Island Reads 2023, please do so below.

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Are you a library employee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Do you reside in Nassau \_\_\_ Suffolk \_\_\_ or Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments:

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

Mara Zonderman, Westhampton Free Library

7 Library Ave.

Westhampton Beach, NY 11977

You can also give this form to a librarian at your home library and ask them to have it delivered.

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