

For Immediate Release

The Newburyport Literary Festival

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Book Groups a Focus of the Newburyport Literary Festival

This spring, the Newburyport Literary Festival will welcome many avid readers, among them, book-loving members of reading groups. The local area sustains dozens of such groups, some hosted by the Newburyport Public Library and many taking place in living rooms across the Merrimac Valley. Dick Ravin, co-chair of the festival's Program Committee, said, "We planned much of the festival with book groups in mind. We're hoping local groups will want to read something by a festival author. By planning ahead, book group members will be able to meet the authors of books they've just finished, to hear them read and talk about how and why they write what they do. Every festival reading and program concludes with question and answer sessions, so local book group members will have the chance to join the conversation with the authors themselves."

Among the events that book groups will find appealing are:

When Writers Read: Ten Titles Your Book Club Will Love

There are few pleasures greater than losing yourself in a good book—unless you count sharing with fellow readers how that book moved you or gave you a different outlook on life. Discussions about books have animated conversations for centuries, from the coffeehouses of early modern England and the salons of Enlightenment France to Oprah's Book Club and the reading groups that gather in living rooms across the country.

Novelists read for escape and catharsis, too, but they also experience reading as a continuing education in their chosen craft. Join celebrated novelists Julia Glass and Jennifer Haigh as they share with the audience—and with each other—some of their favorite books. They'll discuss how and why they find these works inspiring, not just for

the writing but for the rich, illuminating, even contentious discussions they engender with friends. Glass and Haigh will discuss how being a reader informs their writing process—and how being a writer changes how they feel about what they read.

Julia Glass won the 2002 National Book Award for her first novel, *Three Junes*. Her highly regarded newest book, a compelling and richly drawn tribute to the extraordinary complexities of love, *The Whole World Over*, was published in 2006. Jennifer Haigh is the author of the award-winning novel *Mrs. Kimble*. Her moving and intimate exploration of love and family, *Baker Towers*, won the 2006 Pen-Winship Award for best book by a New England author.

The conversation will be moderated by Newburyport native Kate Bolick, senior editor at *Domino* and a contributing writer for the “Ideas” section of *The Boston Globe*.

Anita Diamant Reads from *The Last Days of Dogtown: A Novel*

“A lovely and moving portrait of society's outcasts living in an unforgiving and barren but harshly beautiful landscape....The book affirms the essential humanity of its poor and stubborn residents, for whom each day of survival is a victory.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

Cape Ann in the early 1800s is peopled by widows, orphans, spinsters, scoundrels, whores, free Africans, and “witches.” Among its inhabitants are Black Ruth, an African woman who dresses as a man and works as a stone mason; Mrs. Stanley, an imperious madam whose grandson, Sammy, comes of age in her rural brothel; Oliver Younger, who survives a miserable childhood at the hands of a very strange aunt; and Cornelius Finson, a freed slave whose race denies him everything. At the center of it all is Judy Rhines, a fiercely independent soul, deeply lonely, who nonetheless builds a life for herself and inspires those around her to become more generous and tolerant themselves.

The Last Days of Dogtown is a story of hardship and resilience—and an extraordinary recreation of an untold chapter of early American life. With a keen ear for language and profound compassion for her characters, master storyteller Anita Diamant has written her most moving and powerful novel.

***Finn*—A Literary Debut**

“A memorable debut, likely to make waves...”

“...a brave and ambitious debut novel.”

The praise for Jon Clinch’s *Finn* has been as enthusiastic as any for a first novel in recent memory. Reviewers have praised the new life and meaning that he brings to Mark Twain’s famous and controversial masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn*, through his vivid imagination of the life of Huck’s alcoholic and bigoted father.

Literary masterpieces don’t just happen, however. *Finn* is the product of a highly effective collaboration between a talented writer and editor working to make a book stand above the crowd. Join author Jon Clinch and his editor Will Murphy in a conversation about the journey of a book from unpublished manuscript to literary sensation along with a reading from the work.

Jon Clinch is a native of upstate New York and a graduate of Syracuse University. He has taught American literature, worked as creative director for a Philadelphia ad agency, and run his own ad agency. He lives in Pennsylvania. Will Murphy is a senior editor for Random House, where he works with both fiction and serious nonfiction. His authors include Bernard-Henry Levy, Jeff Shaara, Jan Gross, Senator Joseph Biden, Mark Halperin, and Timothy Garton Ash.

Michael Lowenthal Reads from *Charity Girl*

Frieda Mintz, a Jewish seventeen-year-old bundle wrapper at Jordan Marsh in Boston, spends one impulsive night with Felix Morse, an army private. Soon after, Mrs. Sprague from the Committee on Prevention of Social Evils Surrounding Military Camps, hounds Frieda at her workplace because Felix, during an inspection that uncovers he has an infection, names Frieda as his “last contact.” After her case of “the whites” flares up and she loses her job, Frieda follows Felix to Camp Devens, where she's arrested and put into quarantine.

Charity Girl examines one of the darkest periods in our history, when patriotic fervor and fear led to devastating consequences. During World War I, the U.S. government went on a moral and medical campaign, quarantining and incarcerating young women who were

thought to have venereal diseases. Most were called "charity girls"—working-class girls who happened to have had relationships with infected men. Told through the eyes of Frieda, *Charity Girl* lays bare an ugly part of our past, when the government exercised unchecked authority at the expense of its citizens' rights, and explores the most important, urgent questions of desire, freedom, and identity.

Michael Lowenthal is the author of *The Same Embrace* and *Avoidance*. He has written for the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Washington Post Book World*, the *Boston Globe*, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, and many other publications. *Charity Girl* was inspired by a line in Susan Sontag's *AIDS and Its Metaphors*.

Anne Easter Smith Reads from *A Rose for the Crown*

In *A Rose for the Crown*, we meet one of history's alleged villains, Richard III, through the eyes of Katherine Haute, who may have been the mother of his illegitimate children, a woman who chose to remain anonymous when the court rewards for a king's mistress would have been great, a woman who loved him for who he really was, no matter what the cost to herself.

Highly praised for its rich narrative and historical accuracy, many readers have confessed that *A Rose for the Crown* turned them into historical fiction junkies. Happily for them, they will get their next fix in February 2008, when Smith anticipates publication of *Daughter of York*. Join Anne Easter Smith as she reads from her acclaimed first novel and offers the audience an advance reading of *Daughter of York*.

Claire Messud Reads from *The Emperor's Children*

Claire Messud's fourth novel, *The Emperor's Children*, begins at a precarious moment in history—after the 1990s economic bubble burst and before September 11. At age 30, her three central characters also face a void—they are no longer young, but not quite grown-up. There is beautiful, sophisticated Marina Thwaite—an “It” girl finishing her first book; the daughter of Murray Thwaite, celebrated intellectual and journalist—and her two closest friends from Brown: Danielle, a quietly appealing television producer; and Julius, a cash-strapped freelance critic. The delicious complications that arise among them become dangerous when Murray's nephew, Frederick “Bootie” Tubb, an idealistic

college dropout determined to make his mark, comes to town. It is Bootie's unexpected decisions—and their stunning, heartbreaking outcome—that will change each of the characters' lives forever.

A richly drawn, brilliantly observed novel of fate and fortune—of innocence and experience, seduction and self-invention, *The Emperor's Children* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Ron Charles said the book was, “flawlessly drawn,” and the *New York Times Book Review* called it “a penetrating testament to the power of the human imagination... a splendid novel.”

About the festival

The 2007 Newburyport Literary Festival (NLF) runs from Friday, April 27, through Sunday, April 29. A three-day celebration of reading, writing, and the love of books, this year's festival features more than 70 writers of distinguished fiction and non-fiction—including short story writers, children's authors, biographers, nature writers, critics, screenwriters, poets, novelists, and journalists—who will read and discuss their work in venues throughout Newburyport's historic downtown.

The vision of the Newburyport Literary Festival is shared by many individuals and organizations. The NLF is especially grateful for the generous support of our founding sponsors, the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank Charitable Foundation and the Institution for Savings, who have made it possible for the festival to take root and flourish. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Newburyport Cultural Council, a local agency that is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

All festival events are wheelchair accessible and open to the public. All events are free, except for the opening night gala. For complete information about the festival, including event times and venues, please visit: www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org.