

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



Stories are best when shared.

This guide is designed to help your book club dive deeper into *The Curious Trial of Josiah Wren*.

Use it as a starting point, not a script. Let the conversation wander, circle back, and take unexpected turns—just like a good story.



1. BEFORE YOUR MEETING

- **Read the book.** Encourage all members to read the novel at their own pace. There are no right or wrong interpretations.
- **Preview the guide.** Skim the synopsis, themes, and questions to choose the ones that fit your group's interests and time.
- **Set the tone.** Create a welcoming space where every voice is heard and all opinions are respected.



2. DURING YOUR MEETING

- **Start with one question.** Ease in with a warmer question (see page 5) to get everyone comfortable.
- **Follow the conversation.** Let the discussion flow naturally. It's not necessary to go in order.
- **Invite different voices.** Encourage quieter members to share and listen with curiosity.
- **Bring in the world of Carroway.** Use the setting, characters, and themes to connect the story to your own experiences and community.



3. AFTER YOUR MEETING

- **Reflect.** Take a few minutes at the end to share final thoughts or big takeaways.
- **Extend the conversation.** What questions are still lingering? What would you like to explore next?
- **Explore more.** Check out the Activities on page 8 for creative ways to keep the story alive between meetings.
- **Share the book.** If you enjoyed your discussion, consider recommending the book to a friend or another club.

* MEETING TIPS *



✓ **Ideal length:**
60–90 minutes



Best group size:
4–12 people



**Have snacks, tea,
or coffee—
Carroway style!**



It's okay to disagree.
Great books are meant
to spark conversation.



GET YOUR COPY OF
The Curious Trial of Josiah Wren

Scan the QR code to visit the book's Amazon page.
Add it to your library, read a sample,
or share it with a friend.

amazon



BOOKS FROM CARROWAY ISLAND



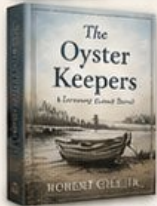
Explore more stories, guides, and journals from Carroway Island—where history, legend, and everyday life intertwine.



THE MARSH BELL

A CARROWAY ISLAND NOVEL

When a mysterious bell begins to ring across the marsh at night, rumors spread, loyalties are tested, and the truth is harder to find than anyone imagined.



THE OYSTER KEEPERS

A CARROWAY ISLAND NOVEL

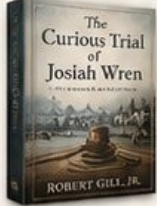
A community bound by the tide and tradition faces storms, sabotage, and change as they fight to protect their oysters—and their way of life.



THE PHANTOM SKIPJACK

A CARROWAY ISLAND TALE

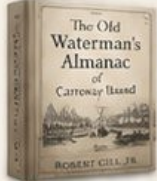
In the winter of 1857, a skipjack appears where no ship should sail. Told by Crazy Jack, this illustrated tale blends history, legend, and a touch of the supernatural.



THE CURIOUS TRIAL OF JOSIAH WREN

A CARROWAY ISLAND NOVEL

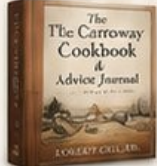
In a small coastal town, a trial for an incident that never happened reveals more about the people than the crime. A story of rumor, judgment, and the choices that define us.



THE OLD WATERMAN'S ALMANAC OF CARROWAY ISLAND

ALMANAC & REFERENCE

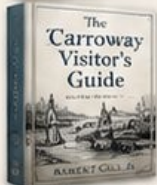
Tide tables, weather lore, nautical wisdom, and island traditions—a year-round companion for watermen and dreamers alike.



THE CARROWAY COOKBOOK & ADVICE JOURNAL

COOKBOOK & JOURNAL

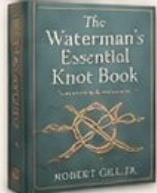
Recipes from the island kitchen paired with old-fashioned advice, practical tips, and space for your own notes and memories.



THE CARROWAY ISLAND VISITOR'S GUIDE

TRAVEL GUIDE

Your guide to the sights, stories, and quirks of Carroway Island—ferry schedules, maps, local spots, and things you won't want to miss.



THE WATERMAN'S ESSENTIAL KNOT BOOK (NOT BOOK)

REFERENCE & PRACTICAL GUIDE

A hands-on guide to the knots every waterman should know—clear instructions, illustrations, and a bit of dockside humor.



ONE ISLAND.
MANY STORIES.
ALL CONNECTED
BY PLACE,
PEOPLE, AND
THE POWER OF
STORYTELLING.



*A story of truth, justice,
and the courage to be heard.*



JOSIAH WREN

BOOK CLUB
DISCUSSION GUIDE



A novel by

DAWN MORIARTY



THE WORLD OF
CARROWAY ISLAND

*A place of tides, traditions, and truths
that are never simple.*

Tucked along the Chesapeake, Carroway Island is a place where the wind knows every roof and the tide remembers every story. It is small—close enough to be a community, yet old enough to have layers. Generations of watermen, shopkeepers, ministers, and mayors have built a life here shaped by sea and season, faith and family, work and worry.

Carroway is a weathered coastal community shaped by sea, work, and tradition. Its docks creak with history, its marshes hold their secrets, and its people carry both pride and caution in equal measure.

★ A COMMUNITY THAT REMEMBERS

In a place like Carroway, memory is a currency. People remember kindnesses—and slights. They remember who helped in a storm and who did not. Reputation is earned over a lifetime and can be lost in a moment. *Here, everyone is both witness and observed.*

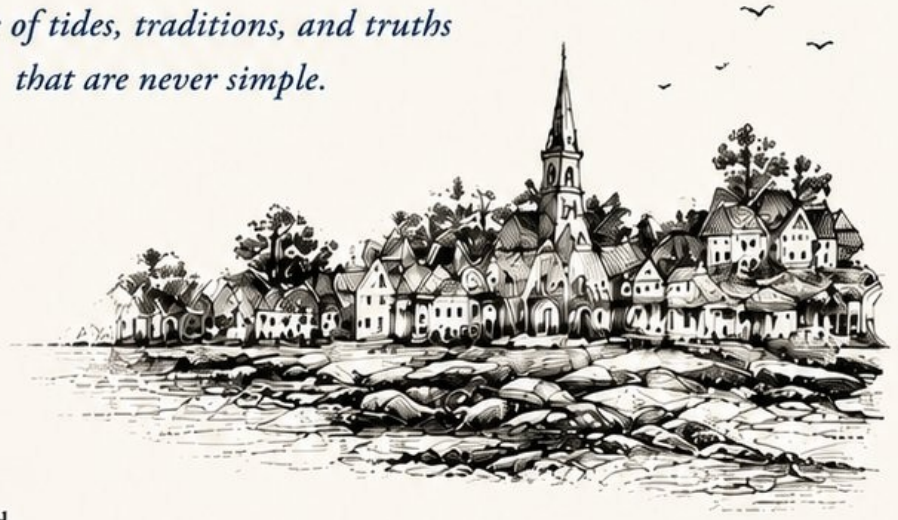
★ THE ISLAND AND THE TRIAL

The trial at the heart of this novel does not take place in a vacuum. It unfolds inside a community where loyalties run deep, silence can protect or destroy, and truth is rarely seen through a single pair of eyes. *The courtroom is only the final place where the island's questions are heard.*

★ WHY PLACE MATTERS

Carroway Island is more than a backdrop—it is a living force in the story. Its geography shapes the lives of its people. Its history shapes their choices. And its character shapes the way justice is sought, questioned, and judged. *To understand the trial, you must understand the world that produced it.*

*In a place like Carroway, the question is never only what happened—
but who is believed.*



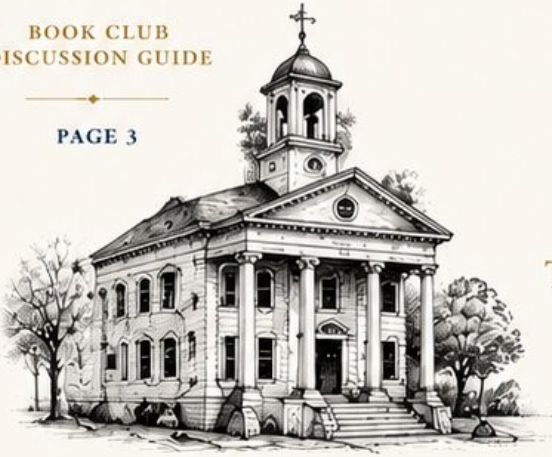
*On Carroway Island,
stories travel faster
than facts.*



JOSIAH WREN

BOOK CLUB
DISCUSSION GUIDE

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SYNOPSIS

THE STORY OF JOSIAH WREN

(Spoiler-Conscious Overview)

Josiah Wren is a story shaped by truth that refuses to stay still.

Set on Carroway Island, the novel unfolds within a tightly bound coastal community where history, reputation, and memory carry as much weight as evidence itself. When an unexpected trial becomes the center of island attention, long-held assumptions begin to fracture, and ordinary lives are drawn into questions they never intended to answer.

At the heart of the story is Josiah Wren—an individual whose name becomes inseparable from the unfolding proceedings. What begins as a matter of local concern gradually expands into something more complex: a study of how communities decide what they believe, who they trust, and what they choose to silence.

As testimony is given and recollections collide, the boundary between truth and perception grows increasingly uncertain. Each voice adds a new layer, yet none feels entirely complete. In Carroway, certainty is never simple, and justice is never untouched by memory.

The trial does not merely reveal events—it reveals people.

And in the end, the question is not only what happened, *but how many versions of the truth can exist in the same place at the same time.*

“The trial does not reveal the truth. It reveals the community.”



THEMES OF THE NOVEL



At its heart, *Josiah Wren* is more than a courtroom story. It is a reflection on the choices people make, the stories they tell themselves, and the truths they are willing—or afraid—to face. These themes invite deeper conversation and reflection.



TRUTH VS. PERCEPTION

In Carroway Island, what is believed often matters more than what actually happened. The novel explores how perception shapes reputations, influences decisions, and can overshadow even the clearest facts.



JUSTICE AND MORAL AMBIGUITY

The trial at the center of the story forces readers to sit with uncomfortable questions. What is fair? What is right? And can justice ever be truly impartial in a community where everyone has something at stake?



MEMORY AND TESTIMONY

Memory is never perfect. Each witness brings a past, a perspective, and a motive. The novel examines how recollections are shaped by time, emotion, and the stories we tell ourselves.



COMMUNITY PRESSURE AND SILENCE

In a close-knit place, speaking out can be dangerous. This theme explores the weight of expectation, the cost of disagreement, and the power of silence to protect—or to harm.



LOYALTY AND CONFLICT

Family, friendship, and duty often pull in opposite directions. The novel considers how loyalty can inspire great courage—or lead to difficult compromises.



THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Amid the trial and its consequences, characters are forced to confront who they are when the world is watching. Identity is tested, reshaped, and ultimately reclaimed.

*These themes
are not answers—
they are invitations
to look more closely
at the choices we make
and the truths we
choose to believe.*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PART 2: DEEPER QUESTIONS

These questions invite a closer look at the novel's layers, craft, and enduring meaning.



1

What symbols or recurring images stand out to you, and what might they represent in the novel?

Consider places, objects, natural elements, or phrases that carry meaning beyond the surface story.

2

How does the narrative structure shape your experience as a reader?

What effect does the use of multiple perspectives, interruptions, or layered timelines have on the way the story unfolds?

3

In what ways does the novel explore the limits of knowing the truth?

How does the story suggest that truth can be partial, subjective, or unknowable? Why might the author have chosen this approach?

4

What is the significance of silence in the novel?

Who chooses silence, who is silenced, and how does silence influence the outcome of the trial and the community?

5

How does the ending shape (or complicate) what the novel has explored?

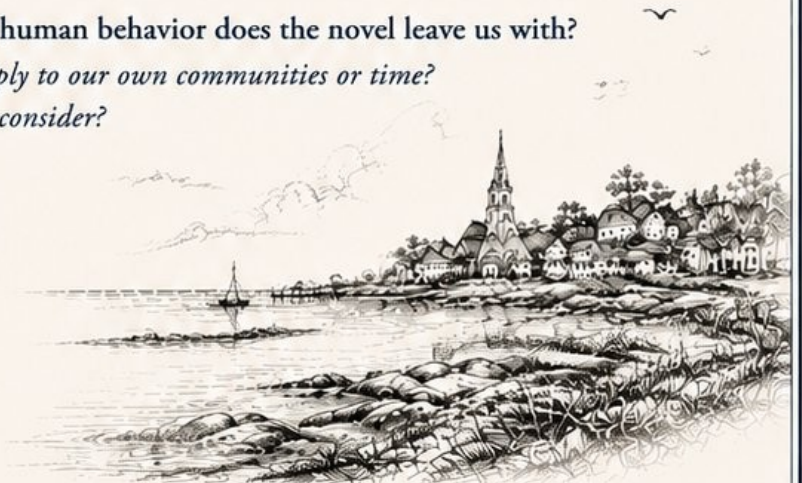
Do you find it satisfying, unsettling, ambiguous, or unresolved? What does the ending suggest about the nature of justice—and of human nature?

6

What larger questions about society or human behavior does the novel leave us with?

How might the themes of Josiah Wren apply to our own communities or time? What is the novel ultimately asking us to consider?

*In a place like Carroway,
the truth is never simple—
and the story is never only about the past.*



AUTHOR'S LENS

*Insights into the story, its origins,
and the questions that remain.*



WHAT INSPIRED THIS BOOK

I have always been drawn to small communities—places where history is lived, not just remembered. Carroway Island came from my love of the Chesapeake, its watermen's stories, and the layered past that still lingers in its shores.

The idea for Josiah Wren began with a question: What happens when a community must confront something that threatens the story it has always told about itself? From that question, the trial—and the people in it—began to take shape.

WHAT I WANTED READERS TO QUESTION

I wrote this novel to invite readers to look closely at how we form beliefs—and how easily those beliefs can harden into certainty. I want readers to question assumptions, to consider the cost of silence, and to ask how often justice is shaped by perception rather than truth.

THE HISTORICAL AND MORAL FRAMEWORK

Though a work of fiction, Josiah Wren is rooted in the moral and cultural realities of the 19th-century Chesapeake—an era when honor, reputation, and community loyalty often outweighed legal fact. The novel explores timeless questions: *What is justice in a close-knit place? Who gets to speak—and who is expected to stay silent? And what is the responsibility of those who witness?*

WHAT READERS OFTEN MISS

Many readers focus on solving “the mystery” of what happened. But beneath the surface, the novel is less about the event itself and more about the forces that shape how the event is understood. Readers sometimes overlook:

- The quiet ways power and influence operate in the community
- The motives behind silence—not just speech
- The shifting nature of memory over time
- The moral complexity in characters who are easy to judge

If you read it a second time, you may find the novel is asking different questions of you each time.

“Fiction allows us to ask the questions history cannot answer and to explore the spaces where truth, memory, and conscience meet.”

— Robert Gill Jr.



BOOK CLUB ACTIVITIES AND CLOSING



*These optional activities are designed to deepen conversation,
spark fresh insight, and bring new layers to the story.*



1. REWRITE A SCENE FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Choose a key moment in the trial and retell it from the viewpoint of a character who was not present—or from someone whose account differs.

How does the story change when perspective changes?



2. DEBATE THE VERDICT TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND INTERPRETATION

Divide into two sides and debate the outcome: Was justice served? Was the truth uncovered? Or is the verdict less important than what the community learned about itself?

Use evidence from the novel to support your case.

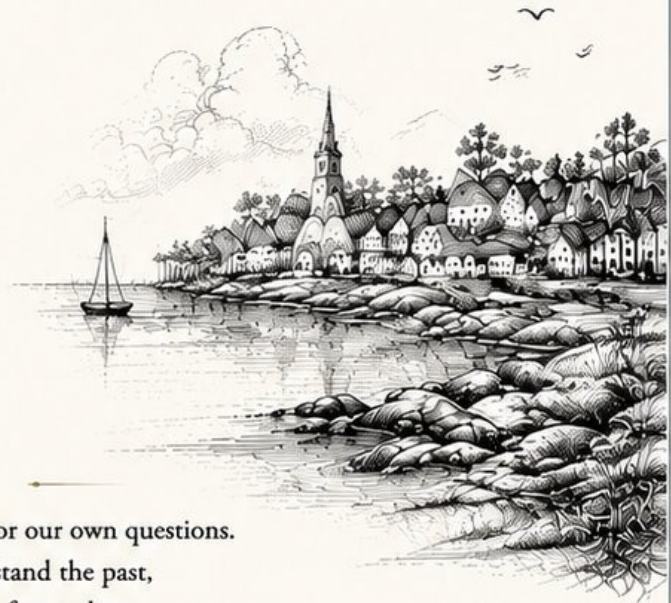


3. IMAGINE AN ALTERNATE ENDING ANOTHER PATH, ANOTHER TRUTH

What if one choice had gone differently? What if a key character had spoken—or stayed silent? Write or discuss an alternate ending or explanation for what ultimately happened.

How might a different ending change the meaning of the story?

*A good discussion
does not close the book.
It opens it wider.*



CLOSING REFLECTION

Stories like *Josiah Wren* stay with us because they mirror our own questions.

In the end, the novel asks us not just to understand the past,
but to look more honestly at the choices we face today.

What will you carry from Carroway Island?

OTHER BOOKS IN THE CARROWAY CHRONICLES

Continue your journey on Carroway Island.

More stories of its people, its past, and its enduring mysteries await.
The Marsh Bell | The Oyster Keepers | The Phantom Skipjack

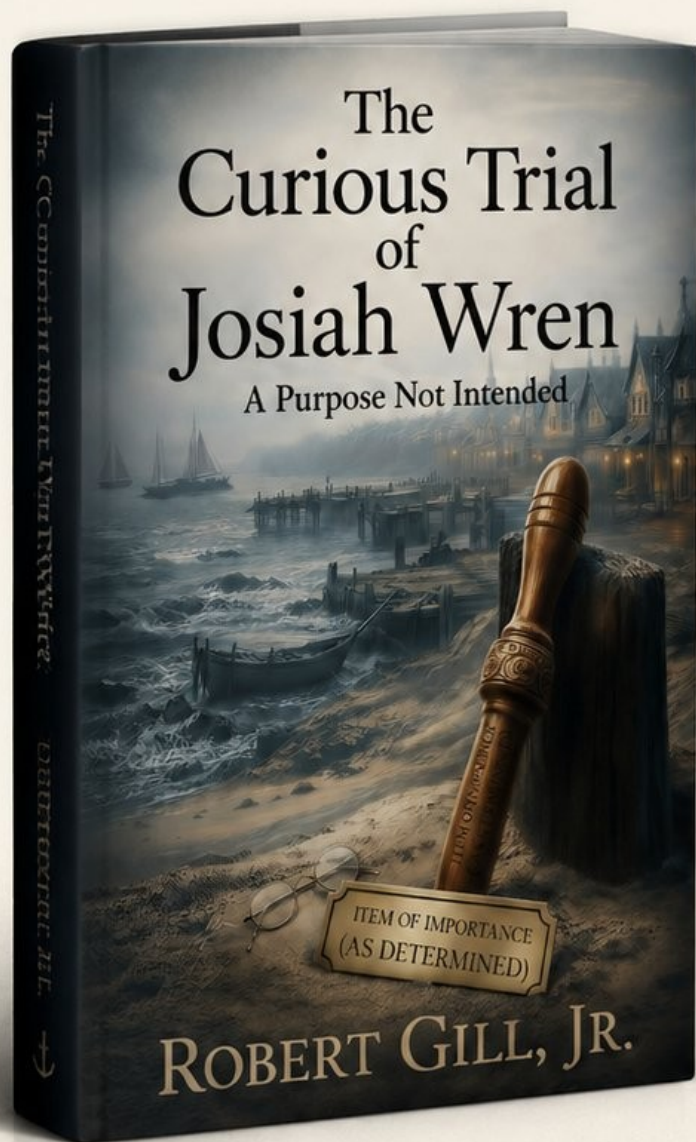


JOSIAH
WREN

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THE STORY READERS LOVE



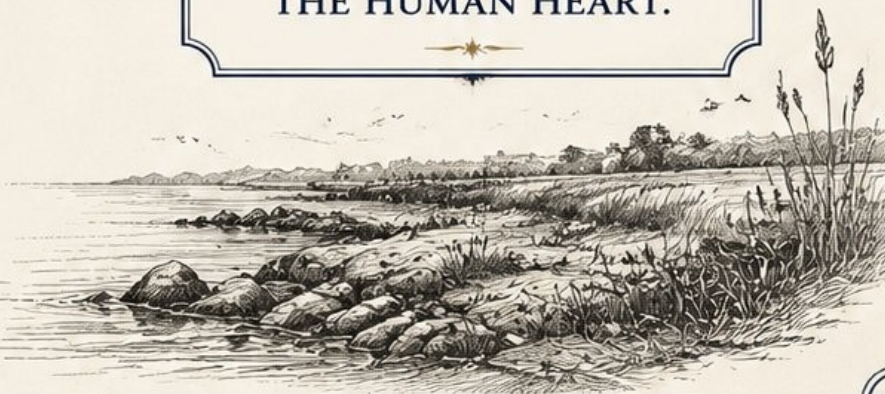
WHAT READERS ARE SAYING

“A clever, charming, and thought-provoking read with a rich small-town atmosphere. The story shows how rumors and assumptions can take on a life of their own, and how quickly belief can replace understanding.”

“With memorable characters, subtle humor, and a strong sense of social satire, it explores how people behave when they believe they are right—even when they do not fully understand the situation.”

“It makes you think.”

A STORY OF TRUTH,
RUMOR, AND
THE HUMAN HEART.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



STORIES ROOTED IN PLACE, PEOPLE, AND TRUTH.

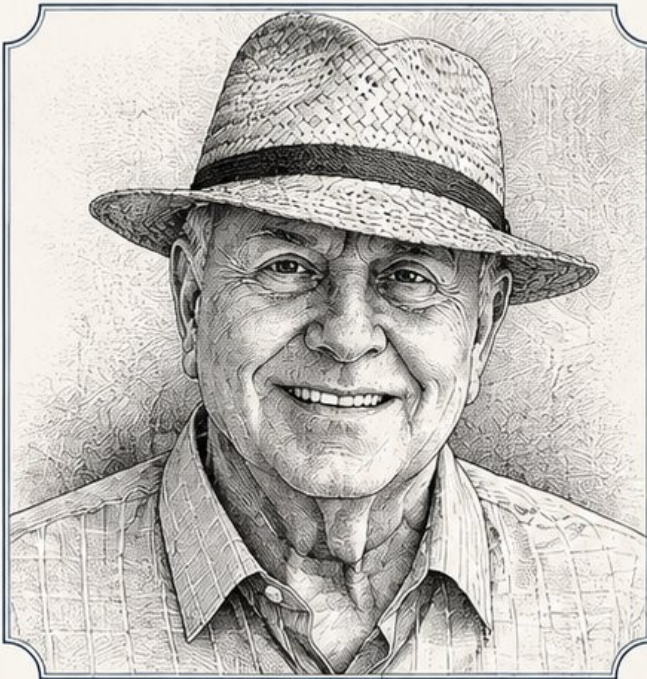
Robert Gill, Jr. is the author of the Carroway Island chronicles, a series of stories inspired by the history, traditions, and legends of a fictional Chesapeake Bay island. His work blends historical detail, local folklore, and gentle satire to explore timeless questions about truth, judgment, community, and the human heart.

A lifelong lover of history and the water, Robert has spent decades researching maritime life, coastal communities, and the people who shaped them. His writing brings these worlds to life with authenticity, warmth, and a touch of dark humor.

When he's not writing, Robert enjoys life on the Eastern Shore, nautical history, and conversations with the kind of characters who could only come from a place like Carroway.

The *Curious Trial of Josiah Wren* is his first novel.

*"The past is never really past.
It just waits for someone to listen."*



ROBERT GILL, JR.



THE CARROWAY ISLAND CHRONICLES NOVELS & TALES

The Curious Trial of Josiah Wren
(Novel)

The Marsh Bell
(A Carroway Island Novel)

The Oyster Keepers
(A Carroway Island Novel)

The Phantom Skipjack
(A Carroway Island Tale)

AND MORE CRAZY JACK TALES TO COME

