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Jodi Picoult Papers

1984-2013
53 boxes (25.5 linear ft.)
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Read collection overview

Novelist Jodi Picoult is known for taking on compelling social and ethical issues and weaving them into the works of fiction that have won her a devoted readership. From her first novel, *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1992), to her recent bestseller *The Storyteller* (2013), Picoult has grappled with a range of topics: fractured families, eugenics, school violence, teen suicide, spouse abuse, a child's legal rights, childhood cancer, gay rights, the death penalty, war criminals, vengeance, justice, faith, the value of life. To Picoult, a passionate researcher, no issue is simple. Through her characters and her stories she engages the complications, considering provocative questions from different angles. Born in 1966, Picoult graduated from Princeton, where she majored in creative writing, and Harvard, where she earned her M.Ed. She and her husband have three grown children and live in Hanover, N.H.

The Jodi Picoult Papers, richly documenting the author's work process, include research files for Picoult's novels -- correspondence, notes, manuscript pages, and other background material -- as well as some drafts, editorial correspondence, clippings, publicity material, early stories, and student material. Also in Special Collections is a comprehensive collection of Picoult's publications, including the novels in American and foreign-language editions.

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[Literature and language](#)
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Background on Jodi Picoult

BACKGROUND ON JODI PICOULT

Jodi Picoult in Botswana

Born in 1966, Picoult grew up in the Long Island town of Nesconset, New York, knowing from a young age that she wanted to be a writer. The older of two children of a Wall Street analyst and a schoolteacher, she attended public school. She graduated with high honors from Princeton University, where she majored in English and creative writing, in 1987, and from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she earned a master's degree, in 1990. Before becoming a full-time writer, Picoult worked as a technical writer for a Wall Street brokerage firm, a copywriter at an advertising agency, a textbook editor, and an 8th grade English teacher who also directed school plays. New England has been her home for most of her adult life and frequently provides the backdrop for her fiction.

At Princeton, Picoult found a mentor in the travel and fiction writer Mary Morris, with whom she took several creative writing classes (she also studied with visiting professor Robert Stone). Two stories Picoult wrote as class assignments were bought by *Seventeen* magazine and appeared in 1987. She soon found a literary agent to represent her work. Picoult's senior thesis, a novel, sparked interest among publishers but was not sold. Her first published novel was *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1992), followed by a new book nearly every year. With its provocative themes and controversial ending, *My Sister's Keeper* (2004) drew enormous attention and a vast new readership. Picoult's first #1 bestseller was *Nineteen Minutes* (2007), which took as its subject a high school shooting and its aftermath. Since then, Picoult's novels regularly debut at #1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Research is fundamental to Picoult's fiction, informing how she conceives and shapes her plots and develops her characters. Not only does she address the complexities of a range of topics, often medical, legal, or social -- eugenics, school violence, teen suicide, spousal abuse, the legal rights of minors, childhood cancer, gay rights, the death penalty, war criminals, vengeance, justice, faith, and the value of life have all featured in her work -- but she also delves into history, myth and lore, religions and cultures, jobs and vocations, to enrich her stories. In addition to spending countless hours reading and interviewing, Picoult has lived with an Amish family, gone ghost hunting, joined police officers on patrol, worked with graphic artists, been fingerprinted, learned to bake bread, and more. But what is perhaps most striking about Picoult's fiction is the intensity of her characters and the determination with which they wrestle with their situations and seek answers. Depicting their vivid inner lives, their deepest memories, and their often complex relationships with other characters, Picoult allows them both to expose their vulnerabilities and to tap unexpected strengths.

Picoult has contributed to anthologies edited by Neil Gaiman, the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* team, and others. She co-founded Trumbull Hall Troupe, a Hanover, N.H.,-based musical theater group for teens that raises money for local and international charities through annual productions, and has written or co-written all of the original shows, the first of which was staged in 2004.

Picoult's work has been praised by fellow novelists Stephen King, Ann Hood, Elizabeth George, and Jacquelyn Mitchard, and by publications as diverse as *The Washington Post*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Glamour*, and *Ms.* Five of Picoult's novels have been dramatized: four (*The Pact*, *Plain Truth*, *The Tenth Circle*, and *Salem Falls*) as television movies and one (*My Sister's Keeper*) as a feature film. The musical *Between the Lines*, based on the novel she wrote with her daughter, Samantha van Leer, had its off-Broadway run in 2022. Picoult tours internationally promoting her books and is a sought-after speaker. Among her awards and honors are two honorary degrees (Dartmouth College, 2010, and University of New Haven, 2012); a New England Independent Booksellers Association (NEIBA) New England Book Award for Fiction (2003); a Young Adult Library Services Association Alex Award (2005); and the Sarah Josepha Hale Award (2019).

Jodi Picoult has long been an active supporter of LGBTQ+ issues and rights, especially involving queer youth, and speaks out against censorship and book bans. She and her husband, Tim van Leer, whom she met while at Princeton and married in 1989, have three grown children and live in Hanover, N.H.

List of published works:

- Novels
 - *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1992)
 - *Harvesting the Heart* (1994)
 - *Picture Perfect* (1995)
 - *Mercy* (1996)
 - *The Pact* (1998)
 - *Keeping Faith* (1999)
 - *Plain Truth* (2000)
 - *Salem Falls* (2001)
 - *Perfect Match* (2002)
 - *Second Glance* (2003)
 - *My Sister's Keeper* (2004)

- Vanishing Acts (2005)
- The Tenth Circle (2006)
- Nineteen Minutes (2007)
- Change of Heart (2008)
- Handle With Care (2009)
- House Rules (2010)
- Sing You Home (2011)
- Lone Wolf (2012)
- The Storyteller (2013)
- Leaving Time (2014)
- Small Great Things (2016)
- A Spark of Light (2018)
- The Book of Two Ways (2020)
- Wish You Were Here (2021)
- By Any Other Name (2024)
- Short fiction
 - "Keeping Count," published in Seventeen magazine (February 1987)
 - "Road Stop," published in Seventeen magazine (August 1987)
 - Wonder Woman (five issues published separately, #6-10) (2007)
 - Wonder Woman: Love and Murder (one-volume edition of the five issues) (2007)
 - "Weights and Measures," published in Stories: All-New Tales, ed. Neil Gaiman (2011)
 - Leaving Home: Short Pieces (e- and audiobook) (2012)
 - The Color War (e-book) (2013)
 - Where There's Smoke (e-book) (2014)
 - Larger Than Life (e-book) (2014)
 - Shine (e-book) (2016)
 - Mermaid (e-book) (2017)
- Essays
 - The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton (Penguin Classics edition: contributed introduction) (2006)
 - "The Second Shift," published in Chicken Soup for the Soul: Power Moms - 101 Stories Celebrating the Power of Choice for Stay-at-Home and Work-from-Home Moms by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Wendy Walker (2009)
 - Dear Me: A Letter to My Sixteen-Year-Old Self, ed. Joseph Galliano (contributed essay) (2011)
- Collaborations and other works
 - Over the Moon (musical play, with Jake van Leer and Ellen Wilber) (2011)
 - Between the Lines (young adult novel, with Samantha van Leer) (2012)
 - Off the Page (young adult novel, with Samantha van Leer) (2015)
 - Breathe (musical, co-librettist with Timothy Allen McDonald) (2021)
 - Mad Honey (novel, with Jennifer Finney Boylan) (2022)

Scope of collection

The Picoult Papers document the author's work process, with extensive notes and correspondence concerning plot ideas, character development, and the intersection of fiction and realism. Her early career is represented by handwritten and typed pages and drafts from stories Picoult wrote as a college student, including two stories accepted by Seventeen magazine for publication during her senior year, along with correspondence with her editor and copies of the issues in which they appeared. Showing the range and depth of Picoult's research are files containing plot notes, background reading, and other materials -- often annotated -- on the variety of subjects covered in her novels, as well as extensive correspondence and interviews with people whose expertise and/or experiences she taps, often for more than one book. There are partial and complete drafts of several of the novels, including sets of pages with comments from the author's experts and other consultants, and pages marked with Picoult's own notes. Smaller parts of the collection include scrapbooks assembled by Picoult containing clippings and other mementoes from some of the author's early novels, and promotional materials, book reviews, and published profiles.

Books that Picoult used for research are also held in SCUA. Picoult's own publications are represented by a comprehensive collection of American and foreign-language editions of her novels; her earliest published work, which appeared while she was still in college; the five Wonder Woman stories she wrote for DC Comics, and more.

Series descriptions

[Series 1: General correspondence and notes](#) 1992-2010

The correspondence in this series is of a general nature and not connected to Picoult's work on individual novels, although some of it pertains to author events and publicity. It is arranged chronologically. Correspondents include editors, publicists, and other publishing colleagues, readers, and fellow writers

including Chris Bohjalian and Picoult's mentor, Mary Morris. A few assorted, unidentified notes round out this series.

[Series 2: Writings](#)

1984-2012

Organized by work according to first publication date, and comprising the greater part of the collection, this series includes a range of material related to Picoult's creative process: plotting and research notes, correspondence with her wide network of experts and friends, files of research materials on an array of topics, transcripts of interviews with her consultants, and drafts and partial drafts of her novels. Most of the correspondence is in the form of printed emails, often with notes written by hand on the page. Also here are drafts of stories Picoult wrote for college fiction-writing classes, including multiple drafts and editorial notes and correspondence, the report from her readers on her creative senior thesis, and the early published stories that started her career. Several of Picoult's novels are not represented here.

[Series 3: Collaborations and contributions](#)

2002-2011

The works represented in this series by a small miscellany of material are those for which Picoult served as a co-creator or contributor. These include two musical plays for teenagers for which Picoult wrote or co-wrote the book and lyrics; the young adult novel *Between the Lines*, written with her daughter, Samantha van Leer; and some essays written for other publications.

[Series 4: Reviews, publicity, and marketing](#)

1992-2012

This series consists chiefly of articles and clippings -- book reviews, feature stories, and profiles of Picoult -- from a vast assortment of local, national, and international publications. There are also some promotional materials such as press kits, press releases, and marketing items for bookstores. A small amount of movie publicity material is also included, as are a few memorabilia. Most of this material is arranged chronologically, followed by the memorabilia, and then by a smattering of hardback and paperback book covers, mainly in proof versions, organized alphabetically by title.

[Series 5: Photographs and audiovisual](#)

1991-2011

Arranged chronologically, the photographs include publicity photographs from various stages of Picoult's career, including contact sheets from a photo shoot for the cover of her first novel; photographs taken during author appearances; and snapshots taken by Picoult herself in the course of her research. A few photographs are also found with correspondence in Series 1. Audiovisual material consists of materials connected to Picoult's research, most notably numerous microcassette recordings of interviews Picoult conducted (also represented in Series 2 by transcripts). There are also, on various formats, some interviews with Picoult. Finally, there are four scrapbooks, assembled by Picoult, containing material such as clippings, letters, and mementoes related to several of the author's early novels.

Inventory

Series 1: General correspondence and notes

1992-2010

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1992

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Correspondence

1996

Box 1: 2

Correspondence

2000

Box 1: 3

Correspondence

2001

Box 1: 4

Correspondence

2002

Box 1: 5

Correspondence

2003-2010

Box 1: 6

Correspondence

undated

Box 1: 7
Notes--assorted, unidentified
undated
Box 1: 8
Series 2. Writings
1984-2012
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Early and student work--creative writing class stories
1984-1985
Box 1: 9
Early and student work--creative writing class stories
1985
Box 1: 10
Early and student work--"Keeping Count" drafts and correspondence
1986
Box 1: 11
Early and student work--"Road Stop" drafts and correspondence
1986-1987
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Early and student work--senior thesis notes on grading
1987
Box 1: 13
Early and student work--Seventeen magazine
1987 Feb
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Harvesting the Heart

Harvesting the Heart--correspondence
1992 May-June
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Box 2: 5
Harvesting the Heart--notes
ca.1992
Box 46: 1
Harvesting the Heart--research and notes
ca.1992
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Harvesting the Heart--draft, partial
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Box 2: 7-9
Harvesting the Heart--draft, partial
1992
Box 2: 10-12
Harvesting the Heart--draft, partial
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Harvesting the Heart--draft, partial
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Harvesting the Heart--draft
1992

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Harvesting the Heart--draft
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Picture Perfect

Picture Perfect--correspondence
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Picture Perfect--notes
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Picture Perfect--research and notes, archeology
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Box 5: 10
Picture Perfect--research and notes, battered women
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Picture Perfect--research and notes, Los Angeles
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Box 5: 12
Picture Perfect--research and notes, Sioux/Indian myths
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Box 5: 13
Picture Perfect--research and notes, Sioux history
1993-1994

Box 6: 1
Picture Perfect--research and notes, Sioux history
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Box 6: 2
Picture Perfect--research and notes, modern Sioux
1993-1994

Box 6: 3
Picture Perfect--research and notes, modern Sioux
1993-1994

Box 6: 4
Picture Perfect--research and notes, modern Sioux
1993-1994

Box 6: 5
Picture Perfect--research and notes, modern Sioux
1993-1994

Box 6: 6
Picture Perfect--research and notes, modern Sioux
1993-1994

Box 6: 7
Picture Perfect--layouts
1994 Aug

Box 6: 8
Mercy

Mercy--correspondence
1994

Box 6: 9
Mercy--research and notes, plot
1994-1995

Box 6: 10
Mercy--notes, "Next one! My Better Half"?
1994-1995

Box 6: 11
Mercy--research and notes, floral
1994-1995

Box 6: 12
Mercy--research and notes, legal

1994-1995
Box 6: 13
Mercy--research and notes, legal
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Box 46: 2
Mercy--research and notes, medical
1994-1995
Box 6: 14
Mercy--research and notes, police
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Box 7: 1
Mercy--research and notes, Scotland
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Box 7: 2
Mercy--research and notes, Scotland: Jacobean uprising
1994-1995
Box 7: 3
Mercy--draft
ca.1995
Box 7, 8: 4-9, 1-2
Mercy--draft
ca.1995
Box 8: 3-9
The Pact

The Pact--Correspondence: Giaccone
1996
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The Pact--Correspondence: Goodhart
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The Pact--Correspondence: Greene
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The Pact--Correspondence: Keating
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The Pact--Correspondence: Lubrano
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Box 8: 16
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Box 9: 2
The Pact--research and notes
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The Pact--research and notes
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Box 9: 4
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Box 9: 5
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The Pact--research interviews: transcripts
1997
Box 9: 7

The Pact--research interviews: transcripts
1997

Box 9: 8

The Pact--research interviews: transcripts
1997

Box 9: 9

The Pact--draft
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The Pact--draft
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The Pact--draft
1997

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The Pact--draft
1997

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Keeping Faith

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Cluverius
1998

Box 12: 5

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Fagen
1997-1998

Box 12: 6

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Goodhart
ca.1997

Box 12: 7

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Greene
1997-1998

Box 12: 8

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Holbrook
1997-1998

Box 12: 9

Keeping Faith--correspondence/draft: Holbrook
1998

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Keeping Faith--correspondence: Taylor
1998

Box 12: 11

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Umlas
1997-1998

Box 12: 12

Keeping Faith--correspondence/draft: Umlas
1998

Box 12: 13

Keeping Faith--correspondence: Veresan
1997

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1997-1998

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Keeping Faith--correspondence/draft: Zerbarini
1998

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Keeping Faith--research and notes
1997-1998

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Keeping Faith--research and notes
1997-1998

Box 13: 1

Keeping Faith--research materials, atheism and agnosticism
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Keeping Faith--research and notes, Bible passages
1997-1998

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Keeping Faith--research and notes, literary quotations
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Box 13: 4
Keeping Faith--research and notes, literary quotations
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Keeping Faith--research and notes, religious belief: feminine and feminist
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Keeping Faith--research and notes, religious belief: God
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Keeping Faith--research and notes, religious belief: Judaism
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Keeping Faith--research and notes, religious visions
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Keeping Faith--research interviews: transcripts
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Keeping Faith--research interviews: transcripts
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Box 13: 12
Keeping Faith--draft, partial
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Anfang
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Horner
1998
Box 14: 10
Plain Truth--correspondence: Jerchau
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Kaye
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Plain Truth--correspondence/draft: Kaye
1999
Box 14: 13
Plain Truth--correspondence: Kraybill
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Laird
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Lewis
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Marshall
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Martin
1998-1999
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Plain Truth--correspondence/draft: Martin
1999
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Schouten

ca.1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Sheftel
1998
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Stoltzfus
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Box 15: 3
Plain Truth--correspondence: Toub
1998-1999
Box 15: 4
Plain Truth--correspondence/draft: Toub
1999
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Plain Truth--correspondence: Umlas
1998
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Plain Truth--research and notes, plot
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Plain Truth--research and notes, Amish
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Plain Truth--research and notes, ghosts
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Plain Truth--research and notes, medical examiner
1998
Box 15: 10
Plain Truth--research and notes, neonaticide
1998
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Plain Truth--research and notes, neonaticide
1998
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Plain Truth--research and notes, secret childbirth
1998
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Plain Truth--research and notes, trip to Lancaster
1998
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Plain Truth--research interviews: transcripts
1998
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Plain Truth--research interviews: transcripts
1998
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Plain Truth--research interviews: transcripts
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Plain Truth--research interviews, Lancaster: transcripts
1998
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Salem Falls

Salem Falls--correspondence: Atria Books
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Box 16: 1
Salem Falls--correspondence: Farina
1999

Box 16: 2
Salem Falls--correspondence: Horner
1999-2000

Box 16: 3
Salem Falls--correspondence: Ives
2000

Box 16: 4

Salem Falls--correspondence: Keating
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Box 16: 5
Salem Falls--correspondence: Keating
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Salem Falls--correspondence: Mapson
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Salem Falls--correspondence: Martin
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Salem Falls--correspondence/draft: Schiermeier
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Salem Falls--correspondence: Sternick
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Salem Falls--correspondence: Toub
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Salem Falls--correspondence/draft: Toub
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Box 16: 18
Salem Falls--correspondence: Wiggs
1999
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Salem Falls--research and notes, plot
1999-2000
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Salem Falls--notes
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Box 16: 21
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Box 16: 22
Salem Falls--research and notes, "The Crucible"
1999-2000
Box 16: 23
Salem Falls--research and notes, DNA
1999
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Salem Falls--research and notes, diner
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Salem Falls--research and notes, forensic/pathology
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Box 16: 26
Salem Falls--research and notes, legal
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Salem Falls--research and notes, "psych. stuff"
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Salem Falls--research and notes, sexual assault
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Salem Falls--research and notes, "trivia"
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Salem Falls--research and notes, trivia: "Jeopardy!"
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Salem Falls--research and notes, trivia: "Jeopardy!"
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Salem Falls--research and notes, witchcraft
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Salem Falls--research and notes, witchcraft
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Salem Falls--research and notes, witchcraft
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Salem Falls--research interviews: transcripts
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Salem Falls--research interviews: transcripts
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Salem Falls--research interviews: transcripts
1999
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Salem Falls--research interviews: transcripts
1999
Box 18: 1
Salem Falls--research interviews: transcripts
1999
Box 18: 2
Salem Falls--publisher's style sheet
2000 Aug
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Perfect Match

Perfect Match--correspondence: Arrick
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Perfect Match--correspondence: Bengtson
2000
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Perfect Match--correspondence: Daviss
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Box 18: 6
Perfect Match--correspondence: Fagen
2000
Box 18: 7
Perfect Match--correspondence: Gross

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Box 18: 8
Perfect Match--correspondence: Horner
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Box 18: 9
Perfect Match--correspondence: Mapson
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Box 18: 10
Perfect Match--correspondence: Martin
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Perfect Match--correspondence: Schiermeier
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Perfect Match--correspondence: Sternick
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Perfect Match--correspondence: Umlas
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Perfect Match--correspondence: unidentified
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Second Glance--correspondence: Bestler
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Second Glance--correspondence/draft: Dann
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Box 46: 5
Movie publicity
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Promotional materials
2005

Box 45: 6
Promotional materials
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Articles and clippings, oversized
2001-2004
Box 53
Memorabilia
2003
Box 45: 8
Memorabilia
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Memorabilia--Plain Truth movie call sheets
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Box 46: 7
Harvesting the Heart covers
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Keeping Faith covers
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Mercy covers
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My Sister's Keeper covers (UK)
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Plain Truth covers
ca.2002
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Salem Falls covers
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Second Glance covers
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Box 45: 14
Songs of the Humpback Whale covers
ca.2001
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Series 5: Photographs and audiovisual
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Research photographs--Plain Truth, Lancaster
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Research photographs--Second Glance, ghosts folder
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Publicity photographs
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Photographs from author appearances
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Promotional photographs
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Box 45: 24
Research interviews on microcassette audiotapes
ca.1997-2011
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North Atlantic Humpback Whales audiocassette
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Publicity materials: WADN-AM radio interview audiocassette
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Box 47
Publicity materials: RETN Roundtable #411 "Meet Jodi Picoult" DVD
2004
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Keeping Faith -- Research materials: 2 VHS tapes
ca.1998-1999
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Plain Truth -- Research materials: 3 VHS tapes
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Scrapbook: Songs of the Humpback Whale, Harvesting the Heart
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Box 49
Scrapbook: Picture Perfect
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Box 50
Scrapbook: The Pact
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Scrapbook: Keeping Faith, Plain Truth
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Box 52

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Jodi Picoult, 2013.

Processing Information

Processed by Caroline J. White, 2014.

Related Material

Published works by Jodi Picoult are separated, as are full-length works Picoult used in the course of her research.

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-

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Search terms

Subjects

- Fiction and reality.
- Fiction--20th century--Stories, plots, etc.
- Fiction--21st century--Stories, plots, etc.
- New England--Fiction.

Contributors

- Picoult, Jodi, 1966-. [main entry]
- Picoult, Jodi, 1966-.

Genres and formats

- Correspondence.
- Notes
- Research notes.
- Scrapbooks.
- Transcripts.

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