

**Bowdoin College  
Commencement 2015**

**Jill Lepore**, David Kemper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard University, gifted pedagogue, award-winning scholar of social and cultural history, and public intellectual *par excellence*, you enlighten us about how history informs, in often surprising ways, our most troubling contemporary dilemmas. Writing for both academic and public audiences, moving effortlessly between historical periods, with a storyteller's knack for the pitch perfect narrative, you shed light on understudied episodes, such as the late seventeenth-century King Philip's War, a ferocious conflict between Native Americans and Massachusetts colonists, whose embittered legacy poisoned relations between indigenous peoples and Europeans for years to come. Or of a largely forgotten slave conspiracy in 1740s New York City, the tragic aftermath of which saw dozens burned at the stake and hanged, and hundreds more imprisoned, which enables us to draw parallels to recent examples of racial scapegoating. As staff writer at *The New Yorker*, in lucid essays on everything from the struggle for equal rights, the Tea Party, and how Americans have thought about matters of life and death, you remind us of how the use and abuse of the past can be more revealing than what actually transpired. You said it best: "what people will tell you about the past is very often malarkey." We also are in your debt for rescuing from what the historian E. P. Thompson called, "the enormous condescension of posterity," two of the most delightful and feisty woman we will ever encounter: Ben Franklin's sister, Jane Franklin Mecom, and Wonder Woman.

President Mills, on behalf of the College, I am honored to present Jill Lepore for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

Presented by Jennifer R. Scanlon, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of the Humanities#

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