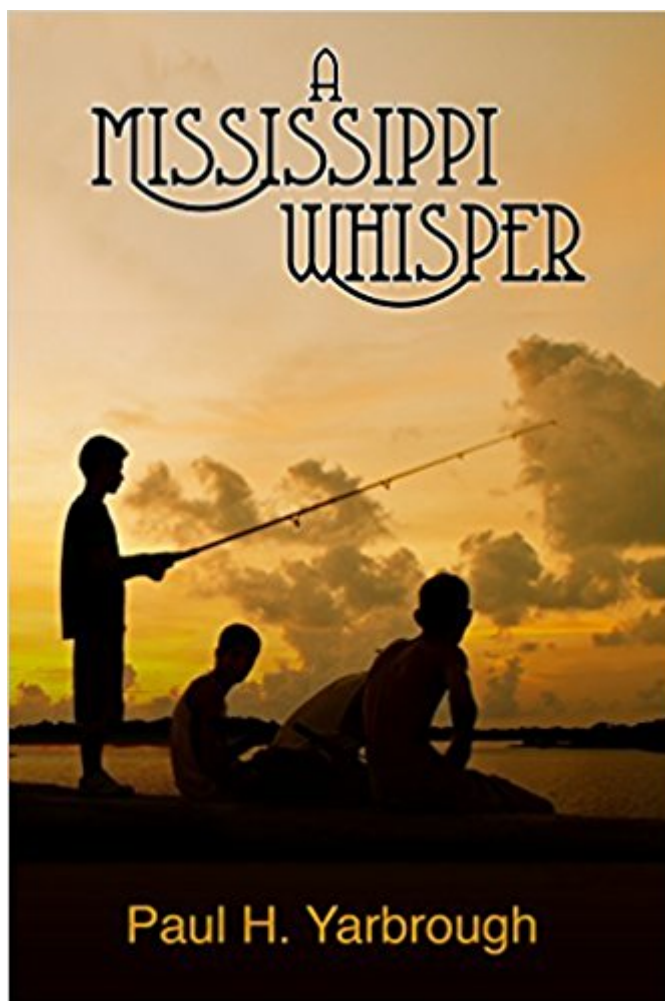


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A Mississippi Whisper



Synopsis

Paul H. Yarbrough once again perfectly and vividly captures the voice of a land and a people in his second novel, also set in Mississippi. This tale is not only about one boy's memorable year, but also examines the larger meaning of growing up Southern and American during a simpler era.

Ten-year-old Charlie McCoy and his friends are curious about the fire up at the abandoned house on the outskirts of town. Since the grown-ups aren't saying much, with anything really interesting spoken in shushed tones, the boys may need to do a little digging on their own. Meanwhile, they avoid the specter of school looming in their immediate futures while playing ball, fishing, and discussing which business to start: junk collecting or selling rabbit tobacco. Even more than the mysterious fire, Charlie is intrigued by Jackie Robinson, the first black baseball player in the major leagues. And by the new magazine his older brother keeps talking about, and what their mother would tell that Hugh Hefner if she weren't such a lady. While Charlie's hometown of Jackson is slowly changing around him, with Eisenhower's highway coming through to transform the face of the land, Charlie and his people hold on tight to their agrarian roots. And at the end of the day, his older sister Katy Jean is always there with a smile to listen to his ideas and opinions, even if she doesn't say a lot and mostly speaks in whispers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Southern stories, Southern writers, Southern writing, are indeed a study: From the fiction of Joel Chandler Harris to Margaret Mitchell and Caroline Gordon to Tom Wolfe, John Grisham and James Kibler. From the essays of the Vanderbilt Agrarians to Clyde Wilson (THE authority on John C.

Calhoun), the richness of Southern literature has been a devotion of my lifelong education. To love Magnolias and Roses is not to love flowers, it is to love beauty. And like these two, Southern Literature sometimes is pure and white, and sometimes dark red with thorns. But in my world, all, and both are striking, and didactic, and beautiful. I once told a friend that there were three books every Southerner should have in his library: Gone with the Wind, I'll Take My Stand, and the Bible. I did comment: "Not necessarily in that order." It isn't the case that all Southern prose, from Virginia to Texas, is captured by these. But they do reach into the Southern soul for a view of life, past present and future. And that is what I want to write and read about: the South and its life: past, present and future. The South is more than worthy of study.

Charlie McCoy, 10, lives in Jackson, Mississippi in 1953. He and his friends learn from a policeman that a skeleton was found after a fire in a cabin on an abandoned farm outside of town. Charlie thinks Joe Washington, an African-American junk/ice man, might know something about it, but the adults don't think it a fit topic for children, so the kids are left to speculate. When Charlie goes to the farm later to retrieve a knife he dropped in the Big House, he overhears Joe on the floor below talking to someone about Joe's father accidentally killing a man. Is this the answer to the mysterious skeleton find? While the question of how the skeleton came to be inside the burned cabin drives the rather leisurely plot forward, the mystery angle is secondary. The emphasis is on Charlie as a naïve narrator, presenting pre-integration Mississippi life from a white child's point of view. The book revels in 1950s nostalgia, with references to Korea, Eisenhower, Playboy, baseball, radio serials, polio scares, the agonies of boys forced to go school shopping, and concerns about what the planned interstate highway will do to the town. The Civil Rights movement has not yet begun, so Charlie's interactions with African Americans are mostly confined to Joe, the family maid Mary Hester, and July, the school janitor. References to Charlie's sister Katy Jean are cryptic - there is something odd about her, but it's not revealed until the final chapter. Readers who don't demand an exciting plot point in every single chapter and those nostalgic for their 1950s childhood will enjoy the trip back in time. An epilogue tells what happened to the characters in later life. ~B. J. Sedlock, Historical Novel Society

A good read depicting the life of a Mississippi town from a young boy's point of view, Paul Yarbrough tells of life typical in the early fifties with the separation of races and the friendships made that cross these lines, A Mississippi Whisper touches on bits and pieces of history making news that occurred

and the different ways people reacted to situations we once considered taboo, a well written book I would recommend to everyone looking for a good story not filled with extreme violence and bad language, but rather a true look back at life as it once was with just a hint of mystery in the mix.

Paul Yarbrough has done it again with this, his second book. If you enjoy stories about growing up in the 1950's or you grew up in the 1950's then you will enjoy this book as well as his first book "Mississippi Cotton". Add them both to your must have list. If Paul Yarbrough keeps writing great nostalgic books like these, I'll keep buying and reading them. I grew up in that era where children were "seen and not heard" and "spoke only when spoken too" and I turned out fine. Let today's spoiled iBRATS (and their 'no spank' liberated parents) chew on that a while. These stories are like opening a window in a stuffy room and letting in a breath of fresh air.

Anyone from Mississippi will love this book and will recognize places and events. The characters are like people you knew and grew up with. The things they do in the book---you remember doing. There is a gentle interaction of people of different races and cultures that is familiar to those of us who remember the real South.

I grew up in Jackson, so it was great to read about some of places that I used to inhabit. This is a good book for anyone who wants to vicariously relive life in the 50s. Gave a much better perspective to life in Jackson in the 50s than did The Help.

Once again Paul Yarbrough has done an excellent job in depicting a Mississippi childhood in the '50s. Though the setting is Mississippi, many of young Charlie's thoughts and experiences will resonate with people who grew up in other places. You will find this a good read.

This isn't as good as Mississippi Cotton in which I really enjoyed. Too much repeating which I have noticed a lot of other authors doing. Other than that it's a clean family book to pass to your children.

Wonderful southern story, about growing up in a time transition.

The real American that was in Mississippi of the 1950s.

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