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South of Broad by Pay Conroy, Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2009

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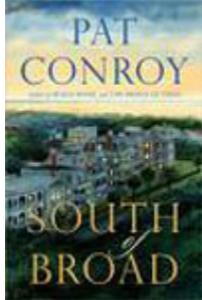
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Recommended Readings



South of Broad

by Pat Conroy, Knopf Doubleday Publishing 2009

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

Pat Conroy's first novel in 14 years is, as is all of his writing, beautifully written and full of evocative description of his beloved Charleston, South Carolina. He tells a good story, too. The novel's narrator Leo King is a Charleston newspaper columnist who is emotionally damaged, as are many of Conroy's previous main characters. This story, which moves back and forth between 1969 and 1989, follows the lives of Leo's family and tight circle of friends. In 1969, Leo, as a high school student, gathers a motley group of misfits and outcasts as friends, including a black football player, a few scions of Charleston aristocracy, a pair of Appalachian orphans, and a set of stunningly beautiful twins living in an abusive home. This group reunites in 1989 when Sheba, one of the twins, now a Hollywood star, shows up in Charleston, claiming to want to see her old friends. In fact, her brother Trevor, who has integrated himself into the gay community in San Francisco, hasn't been heard from for some time and she wants help finding him. Leo's voice describes the lives, loves and affairs of the group, both during high school and in the intervening years. Fans of Conroy will relish the lush prose and the emotionally wrenching stories of damaged psyches and friendships that endure. Even if you are not a particular fan of Conroy's, you will enjoy the ride.

- Judi Morrel is interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University.