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Swan Peak by James Lee Burke, Simon & Schuster, 2008

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Recommended Readings

**Swan Peak**

by James Lee Burke, Simon & Schuster, 2008

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

If you have never read two-time Edgar-Award-winning novelist James Lee Burke, you are in for a treat, especially if you fancy well-developed characters together with intricate plotlines and big splashes of local color.

Swan Peak is the latest in a series of mysteries with a protagonist who is one of the most flawed yet heroic characters in the genre. Dave Robicheaux, recovering alcoholic, trying-not-to-be-lapsed Catholic and former New Orleans homicide detective, has opted for a supposedly quieter, less dangerous life living on a bayou, working as a deputy sheriff and running a bait shop.

While most of this series is set around New Iberia, Louisiana, in Swan Peak Dave, his wife, and his former NOPD partner, Clete Purcell (another fascinating and complicated character), are vacationing in Montana, where trouble finds them when two college students are murdered near their cottage. As the story plays out, all manner of characters swirl about the pages—an evil oil tycoon, a sexually deviant minister, an escaped convict, and a former country music singer, just to name a few. Equally as compelling as the plot, as in all the Robicheaux novels, is Dave’s inner dialogue, while he wrestles with his own demons and attempts to right the wrongs he encounters.

Once you read Swan Peak, you will want to dive into the entire series, currently at 17 titles.

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