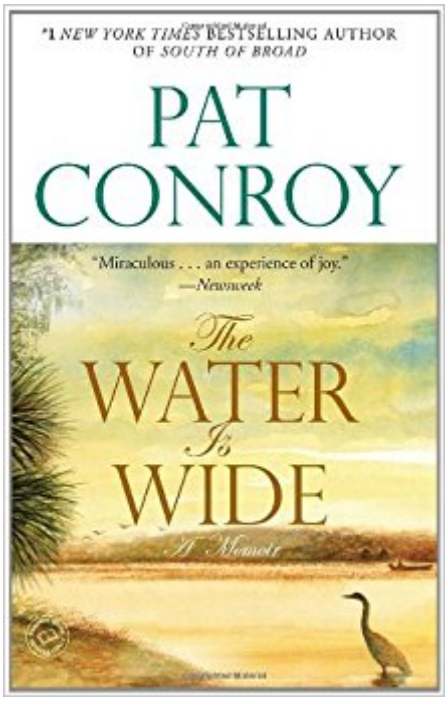
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The Water Is Wide: A Memoir



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Synopsis

A Ã¢â ¬Å“miraculousÃ¢â ¬Â• (Newsweek) human drama, based on a true story, from the renowned author of The Prince of Tides and The Great Santini Ã Â The island is nearly deserted, haunting, beautiful. Across a slip of ocean lies South Carolina. But for the handful of families on Yamacraw Island, America is a world away. For years the people here lived proudly from the sea, but now its waters are not safe. Waste from industry threatens their very existence unless, somehow, they can learn a new way. But they will learn nothing without someone to teach them, and their school has no teacherÃ¢â ¬â •until one man gives a year of his life to the island and its people. Ã Â Praise for The Water Is Wide Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Miraculous . . . an experience of joy.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Newsweek Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A powerfully moving book . . . You will laugh, you will weep, you will be proud and you will rail . . . and you will learn to love the man.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Charleston News and Courier Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A hell of a good story.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Few novelists write as well, and none as beautifully.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Lexington Herald-Leader Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“[Pat] Conroy cuts through his experiences with a sharp edge of irony. . . . He brings emotion, writing talent and anger to his story.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Baltimore Sun

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The island is nearly deserted, haunting, beautiful. Across a slip of ocean lies South Carolina. But for the handful of families on Yamacraw island, America is a world away. For years the people here lived proudly from the sea, but now its waters are not safe. Waste from industry threatens their very existence-unless, somehow, they can learn a new life. But they will learn nothing without someone to teach them, and their school has no teacher. Here is PAT CONROY'S extraordinary drama based on his own experience-the true story of a man who gave a year of his life to an island and the new life its people gave him.

I read this book a long time ago and have just re-read it. It is a poignant reminder of the realities of "the good old days" for many of us. It is also a reminder that being able to read and write are necessary but not sufficient skills for living successfully in a bigger world. It also prompted me to ask how many of us still live in the confines of our own Yamacraw Island?

Brilliant story-telling of a true changing life experience by one of my favorite writers. The space between black and white, poverty and middle-class was wide at the time, and remains a factor until our country faces the education challenge that "pidgeon-holes" each child instead of providing true learning experiences that opens and engages the mind.

A white teacher takes a job on an island, and is amazed at what these black children don't know. His unorthodox teaching methods and ways he gets to know the children and their families, causes trouble withe school board on the mainland. Very interesting story. As it is hard to believe things and lives like theirs exist in the 60's.

As a retired teacher myself, I could readily identify with the huge challenge Pat faced as he went to teach on a remote island. He is faced with middle school aged children who can't read or write their names. They know nothing of the world outside their island. He makes a valiant effortto bring them into this century.

A timely read, now that racism awareness is with us again. Mr Conroy is explicit about the attitudes of both white and black residents of the island where he taught. He is honest too about his naÃƒÆ'Ã Â vetÃƒÂ© in his early days. The efforts he exerted trying to teach the children were admirable, certainly beyond the call of duty. Readable and memorable.

While I learned a great deal about teaching these poor uneducated children of the south, I did not get as much from this book as I imagined I would have from the description of it before purchase. However, I am very glad there are teachers that devote themselves to challenges like this.

Pat Conroy does it again. He takes the reader into the South, first the old entrenched South that has some very negative qualities. But the protagonist has an Ephiny and undergoes change, the change I've witnessed so many people undergoing in the South. He starts teaching blacks in a two room school house on Yamacraw Island. They are dreadfully behind and have been horribly mistreated all of their lives. He introduces them to music, film, art, learning and eventually to life itself.The powers that be cannot stand his unorthodox methods, albeit successful methods. In time, what starts out as a disagreement, ends up in a full fledge war. Having been a teacher of multi-aged second, third, and fourth graders, I could so identify with the pains and passions of his classroom. This is a must read book about the metamorphosis of the South. Not to the stage of a butterfly, but at least from the destructive catepillar into the peace of a caccoon.

Very interesting story of the hardships of a very poor school and the love that Mr. Conroy as a teacher had for them. I love the insight he gives the reader into himself as a teacher in this situation, and it saddened me to learn of the great disinterest and obvious lack of concern that the school administration had in these underprivileged (and minority) youngsters and their needs. Great book.

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