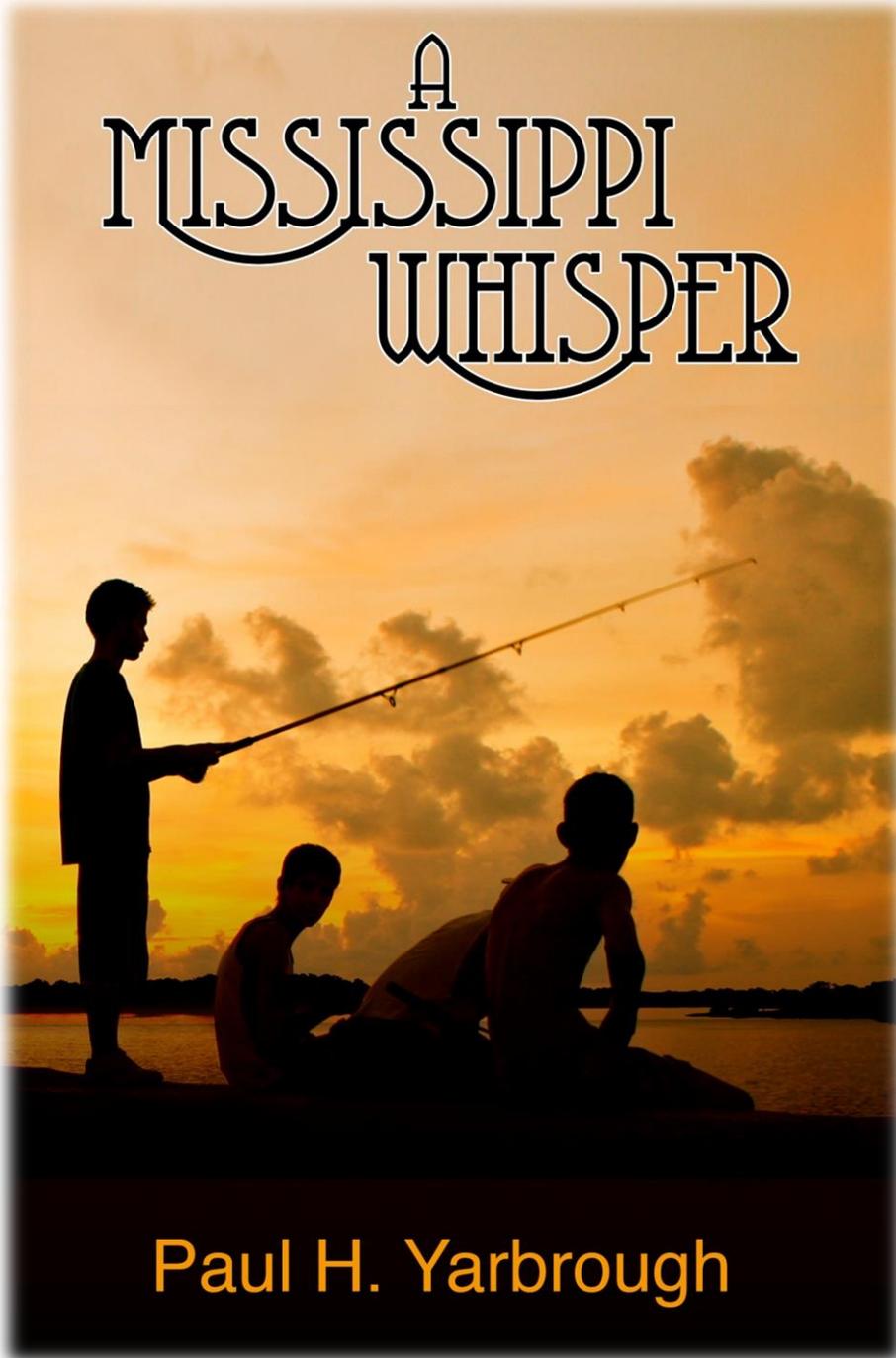


Reading Group Guide

A  
MISSISSIPPI  
WHISPER



*ISBN 978-1-937178-58-1; 298 pages; Fiction; Trade paperback; \$16.95*  
[WiDo Publishing](http://www.wido.com)

**Selected Praise for**  
***A Mississippi Whisper.***

*There's a lot of Tom Sawyer or Harper Lee's Scout in this tale.*  
—*Delta Magazine*

“With *A Mississippi Whisper*, Paul Yarbrough brings readers deep into the sweet, endless bliss of a southern childhood. On the bridge between boyhood and manhood, his characters deliver delight, inspiration, and humor in every scene. If you like *My Dog Skip* or *Because of Winn Dixie*, Yarbrough's stories are for you.”—**Julie Cantrell**, *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling author of *Into the Free* and *When Mountains Move*

“ . . . an engaging coming-of-age tale.  
”—**Denise Weimer**, author of *The Georgia Gold Series*

“... *A Mississippi Whisper* transports the reader to a time and place cherished in every heart that recalls childhood with fondness. A superb read.”—**Fred Miller**, author, short story collections

“ . . . through his journey, Charlie discovers a lot about life, reality, and friendships.”—*Mississippi Magazine*

“...those nostalgic for their 1950s childhood will enjoy the trip back in time.”  
—*Historical Novels Review*

## About the Author:



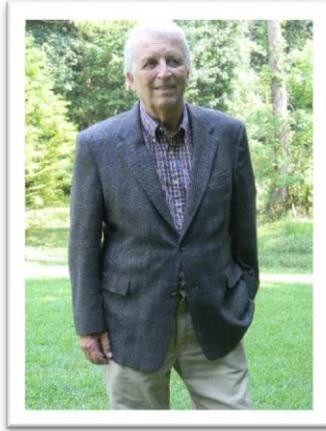
**Paul H. Yarbrough** is originally from Jackson, Mississippi. For the past forty years, he has lived in Houston, Texas, where he has worked for two oil companies and been an independent consultant in the oil business, mostly as a landman. He is married with one son. Paul has published a handful of short stories, flash fiction and essays in a variety of forums. His first novel, *Mississippi Cotton*, was published by WiDo Publishing in 2011. His second novel, *A Mississippi Whisper*, was published by WiDo in December 2014.

Learn more about Paul Yarbrough at his website, [www.paulhyarbrough.com](http://www.paulhyarbrough.com).

## Discussion Questions:

1. There is a core mystery in this novel—about whose body is found in the debris after the fire at the abandoned home. But this book is also about the mystery of adulthood, as seen from a boy right on the cusp of growing up. Discuss.
2. What does Katy Jean bring to the novel? Why is her character important to the story?
3. Yarbrough weaves humor throughout this story. How does the humor shape the book?
4. This is a coming-of-age story about a young boy, Charlie McCoy. How is it also the story of a community and a time period?
5. Does it matter whose body is in the fire?
6. What does this novel say about friendship?
7. How does this novel depict family and family loyalty?
8. Is this book a Southern novel? Could this story have been set anywhere or is the South critical to the plot?
9. Why do you think the book's cover was chosen? What does it evoke?
10. What do you think the title reflects?

## An Interview with Paul H. Yarbrough:



1. What inspired *A MISSISSIPPI WHISPER*?

*Nostalgia.*

2. Your first novel was *MISSISSIPPI COTTON*. What about Mississippi itself inspires you?

*Though my home has been in Texas for 40 years, my roots will always be in Mississippi. I have friends there who date back to grade school and kindergarten. Most of my family is buried in Mississippi.*

3. Do you consider yourself a Southern writer?

*Only that.*

4. Are you working on another Mississippi novel?

*Not right now. Actually I am working on another Southern story that is set in Louisiana. Much of my family, including my wife, Marion, has roots there.*

5. What are the challenges of writing historical fiction?

*As the old saying goes, "Truth is stranger than fiction" I try to make sure my fiction (novels and short stories) is believable. Good Southern novels e.g. *The Yearling* (not the movie—too sappy, too crybaby) and *The Optimist's Daughter* are wonderful Southern stories that are believable.*

6. Setting and place are obviously important to you as a writer. What other things matter to you when you are crafting a story—voice? Historical accuracy?

*The voice is, to me, the most important aspect. The narrator must come across as telling a genuine story—not a foolish one. Without throwing about titles, there are award winning novels about the South that are beyond foolish.*

7. Did you have to do any research for this novel?

*No. I have been blessed with a great memory of home and past. But I think most Southerners have this distinction due primarily to their roots of home and family.*

8. Do you have any tips for aspiring writers?

*Just the same things I have been told: read a lot; write a lot.*

9. What is your writing routine?

*Without order.*

10. You work in the oil business and live in Texas. Will you ever write about your work or another region of the country?

*All of the South, from Virginia to Texas, has a wealth of story potential. I am, if I have the time, going to redo a YA novel set in Tennessee. Also I have scribbled a beginning to a Texas novel.*

11. What do you hope readers come away with after finishing **A MISSISSIPPI WHISPER?**

*That though the South has industry and monster interstates, it still has an agrarian soul which, I believe, was a gift from God.*