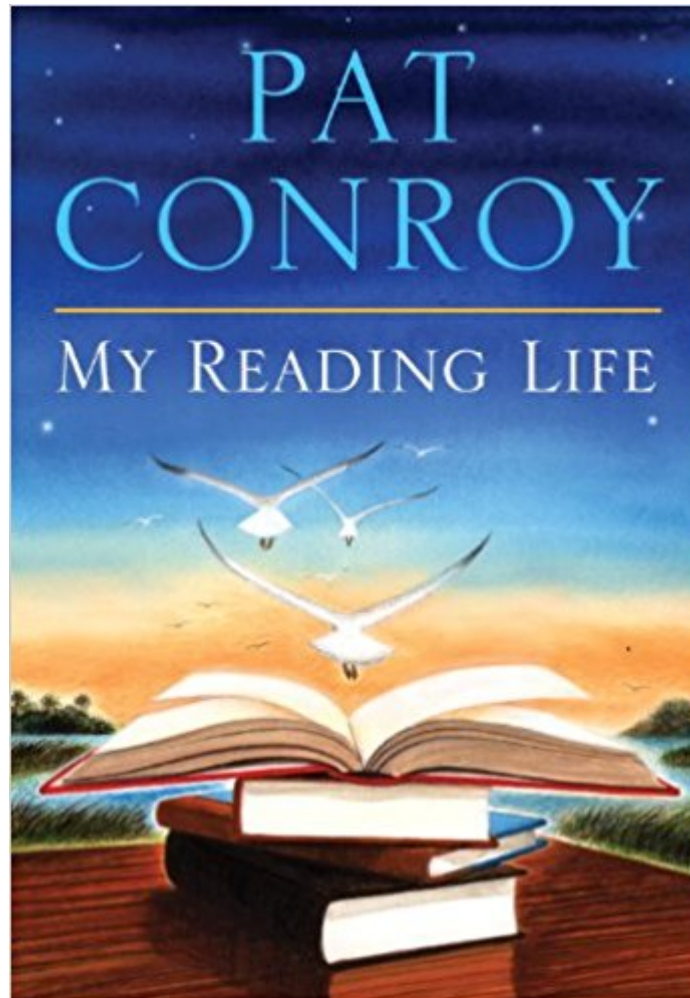


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My Reading Life



Synopsis

Bestselling author Pat Conroy acknowledges the books that have shaped him and celebrates the profound effect reading has had on his life. Pat Conroy, the beloved American storyteller, is a voracious reader. Starting as a childhood passion that bloomed into a life-long companion, reading has been Conroy's portal to the world, both to the farthest corners of the globe and to the deepest chambers of the human soul. His interests range widely, from Milton to Tolkien, Philip Roth to Thucydides, encompassing poetry, history, philosophy, and any mesmerizing tale of his native South. He has for years kept notebooks in which he records words and expressions, over time creating a vast reservoir of playful turns of phrase, dazzling flashes of description, and snippets of delightful sound, all just for his love of language. But for Conroy reading is not simply a pleasure to be enjoyed in off-hours or a source of inspiration for his own writing. It would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that reading has saved his life, and if not his life then surely his sanity. In *My Reading Life*, Conroy revisits a life of reading through an array of wonderful and often surprising anecdotes: sharing the pleasures of the local library's vast cache with his mother when he was a boy, recounting his decades-long relationship with the English teacher who pointed him onto the path of letters, and describing a profoundly influential period he spent in Paris, as well as reflecting on other pivotal people, places, and experiences. His story is a moving and personal one, girded by wisdom and an undeniable honesty. Anyone who not only enjoys the pleasures of reading but also believes in the power of books to shape a life will find here the greatest defense of that credo.

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Customer Reviews

In the South, women like to declare --- about the neighbor's new baby, their favorite reality show star, or a child they see in the supermarket checkout line --- "Oh, I could just eat him with a spoon!" This exuberantly cannibalistic sentiment expresses my feeling for the writing of Pat Conroy. I could just eat it with a spoon, and much as he himself once wanted not merely to study and worship Thomas Wolfe, but to be him, young writers could do worse than to ingest and become Pat Conroy. Through his reading choices over a lifetime of enjoying and producing literature, this new book reveals the private Conroy, the one who grew up in a now famously public dysfunctional family, the one who learned to be a man not from his brutal military father but from his refined, protective, shell-shocked mother. When he picks up a book, Conroy says, "I want everything and nothing less." The thing I like best about MY READING LIFE is Conroy's gutsy willingness to champion books and writers who have been royally panned by the critics over the years. First and foremost, for us Southern readers, is Margaret Mitchell's GONE WITH THE WIND. "According to Margaret Mitchell, the Civil War destroyed a civilization of unsurpassable amenity, chivalry, and grace.... If you could not defeat the Yankees on the battlefield, then by God, one of your women could rise from the ashes of humiliation to write more powerfully than the enemy and all the historians and novelists who sang the praises of the Union." Conroy's mother took him to the sites sacred to this huge and hugely successful novel, in Atlanta and elsewhere, and between them they parsed the universe according to Mitchell's view of a proud but defeated land and a determined, if not precisely moral, heroine.

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