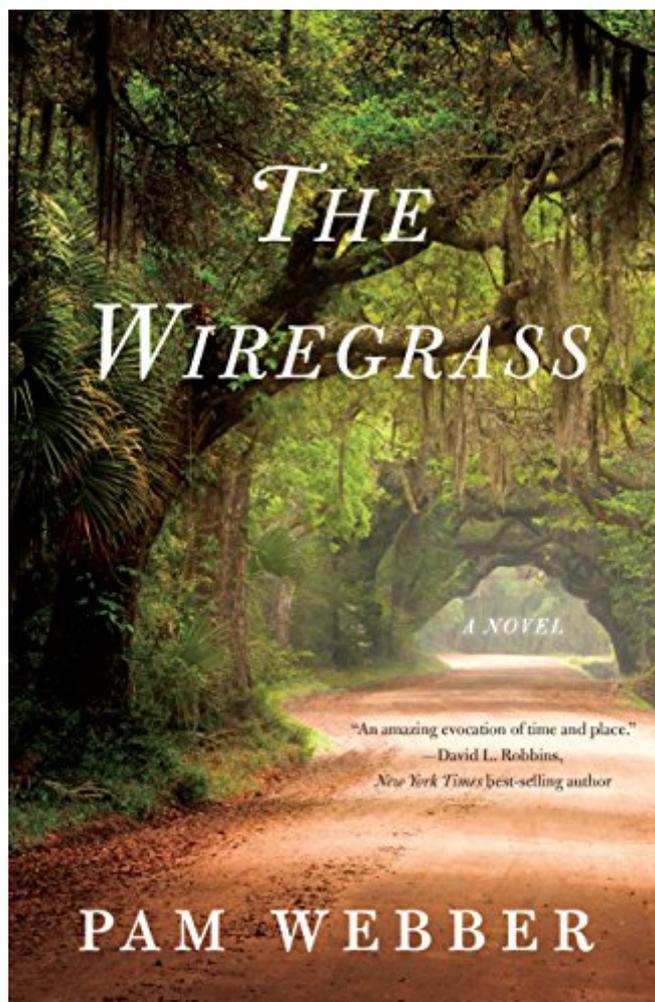


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The Wiregrass: A Novel



Synopsis

Reminiscent of the stories and styles of Harper Lee, Sue Monk Kidd, and Jan Karon, Pam Webber's *The Wiregrass* is an extraordinary tale about a magical time in an ordinary place full of lovable and unlovable characters. Infused with laughter, tears, love, loss, and hope, the story follows fourteen-year-old cousins Nettie, J.D. Eric, and Sam as they navigate the summer of their discontent, struggle with the physical and emotional turbulence of puberty and disappearing childhood, feel the excitement of first love, and run for their lives after they uncover an evil secret hidden in the shadows of the small town they love. Their story promises to stay with you a lifetime.

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Customer Reviews

As usual, my five point review: Let's start with the obvious: the sense of place in this book is phenomenal. Though I am now living in the South, the Wiregrass region was still unfamiliar to me until Nettie explained that it was both a part of the country [southeastern Alabama, southern Georgia, and the Florida Panhandle] and a type of bristly, razor-sharp grass that gave the region its name. Though I've never really been to the true Deep South, Webber's imagery made the area come alive like other Southern classics [To Kill a Mockingbird, for example]. The author truly

transplanted me from my lounge chair [oh yeahâ€”this is a great pool/beach read] to a place far, far away in geography, time, culture, and habits. Lovely. Another element of this book that made Webber, a first-time novelist, stand out to me was her use of language. Sometimes when novels that focus on children or adolescents, even when written for adults, dumb down the language. Not so with *The Wiregrass*! Every paragraph, sentence, and word was precise, smart, and interesting. Webber used sensory language to evoke that sense of place mentioned before, and her use of Southern dialogue was great. Nettieâ€™s cousins werenâ€™t just â€œcousins,â€• they were â€œcussinsâ€• [for more reasons than one]. Her â€œAinâ€™t Pittyâ€• was the key adult shaping Nettie and the cousinsâ€™ summerâ€”caring for them, loving them, instructing them, and guiding them through some very good and very bad times. There are countless other examples of language creating place and mood throughout the book. Truthfully for me, that sort of Southern language gets old after awhileâ€”but it does set this book apart and helps show the authorâ€™s talent. There are so many great characters in this novel.

THE WIREGRASS â€” Pam Webber
Crystal Springs, Alabama â€” 1969
Nettie lives for her summers. She canâ€™t wait for her parentsâ€™ car to head south from Virginia to her Ainâ€™t Pittyâ€™s house in the sleepy southern town of Crystal Springs. Every summer the â€œcussins,â€• Nettie and her Campbell cousins, would descend upon the little hamlet and spend the summer fishing, swimming, and playing pranks on the locals. The cussins consist of their leader, fifteen year-old J.D., Eric, next in line, Nettieâ€™s sister Sam, Nettie, their six year-old brother Lil Bit, J.D.â€™s sister Sandra, and Sharon, J.D. and Sandraâ€™s little sister. Everyone in town knew them, or knew of them, always suspecting, but never able to prove that they were the ones guilty of the various pranks pulled on those who gave their Ainâ€™t Pitty grief. The summer of 1969 begins with the growing realization to Nettie that she is changing physically, and emotionally. That becomes all the more real when she meets handsome Mitchell. While Nettie and the cussins dive head first into their high jinx, Mitchell works at a nearby business. He makes it clear to the cussins to steer clear of his father and his fatherâ€™s friend. Nettie and the others notice the bruises on Mitchell and figure that his warning has merit. They try and include Mitchell in their fishing and swimming trips, although theyâ€™re careful not to reveal their night time forays into TPâ€™n their chosen victims' properties. *Wiregrass* is a region of the deep south and this novel, **THE WIREGRASS**, is a coming of age tale for not only Nettie, but her older cousins as well. Childhood shenanigans turn to serious issues as the summer progresses, with Mitchell harboring many secrets, and the cussins having to face the consequences of their actions.

The Wiregrass was like no other place in the South, at least according to Momma. Named for the spidery, razor blade-like grass that thrived in the hellishly hot summers, the region was known for the uniqueness of its water. Belowground was an enormous underground lake that supplied clear water to hundreds of creeks, lakes and swimming holes. Aboveground, fierce thunderstorms frequently blanketed the region, flooding streets and pushing muddy water through the crisscrossing rivers toward the Gulf of Mexico. Nettie and her cousins have been spending summer vacations in the Southern Wiregrass region of Alabama for as long as they can remember. It is an idyllic life for the cousins, who enjoy the love and care of Ain't Pitty who opens her home to them every summer. They avail themselves of all that the Wiregrass has to offer: fishing, swimming, good food, and the wild abandon of children out from under parental scrutiny. But the summer of 1969 is different for them—and for the town's residents. Strange goings-on raise suspicion for law enforcement and residents alike. Odd sightings by the cousins spark over-active imaginations. And for Nettie, a chance meeting with new-comer Mitchell awakens feelings she's never had before. While the cousins enjoy life in the Wiregrass, not all of Ain't Pitty's neighbors enjoy the pranks they play on unsuspecting victims. When they ramp up the antics, some neighbors are no longer unsuspecting. With neighbors accusing them of being the culprits for everything that goes wrong, the cousins try to take the spotlight off of themselves while never abandoning their own pranking efforts. Webber has crafted a summer setting that is both magical and dangerous in this profound coming-of-age story. I laughed out loud. I held my breath.

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