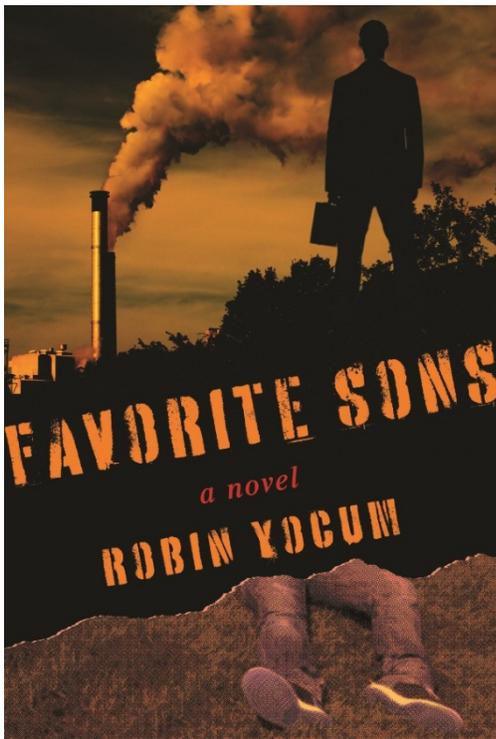


# Favorite Sons

by Robin Yocum  
A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



## About the Book

Hutch Van Buren was a carefree fifteen-year-old boy searching for arrowheads in a small industrial town in Ohio with his three closest friends when an altercation between his comrades and Petey Sanchez, a troubled seventeen-year-old, led to Petey's accidental death. Together, Hutch and his friends become ensnared in a web of secrets. One-Eyed Jack, a local ne'er do-well and child molester, goes to prison for the crime while the boys keep their pact of silence, each shouldering the burden of truth in his own way.

Thirty-three years later, Van Buren is the prosecuting attorney in Summit County, Ohio, and a candidate for state attorney general when he learns that he and his boyhood friends weren't the only ones keeping a secret about Petey's death. One-Eyed Jack has been released from

prison and, facing new charges as a sex offender, attempts to blackmail Van Buren in exchange for his continued silence.

Van Buren must decide between his political career and the duty of the office he has sworn to uphold. With the clock ticking, Van Buren has a week to seek out his boyhood friends and search his soul while he sorts out three decades of deceit he helped create.

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## Book Details

**Favorite Sons: A Novel** by Robin Yocum.

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<http://www.arcadepub.com/book/?GCOI=55970100233850>



<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>



## About the Author

Robin Yocum was born in 1955 in Steubenville, Ohio, and grew up in the Eastern Ohio village of Brilliant. He received a bachelor's degree in journalism from Bowling Green State University in 1978. After two years at the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette and the Martins Ferry Times Leader, Robin spent eleven years as a crime and investigative reporter with the *Columbus Dispatch*. He received numerous writing awards, including those from the Associated Press and the Press Club of Ohio. Robin is the author of two nonfiction books: ***Dead Before Deadline***, and ***Insured for Murder***, which he co-authored with *Dispatch* reporter Cathy Candisky. He is

the founder and principal of Yocum Communications, a public relations and marketing firm in Westerville. ***Favorite Sons***, his first novel, was named the 2011 Book of the Year for Mystery/Suspense by USA Book News. His second novel, ***The Essay***, was published in 2012.

*Biographical information courtesy of Ohioana Library Association. Photograph courtesy of Robin Yocum.*

### Author Resources:

#### Robin Yocum's official website

<http://robinyocum.com/>

#### Author page on Arcade website

[http://www.arcadepub.com/book/?GCOI=55970100233850&fa=author&person\\_id=52](http://www.arcadepub.com/book/?GCOI=55970100233850&fa=author&person_id=52)

#### Author Robin Yocum Interviewed (Novel Rocket)

<http://www.novelrocket.com/2011/07/author-robin-yocum-interviewed.html>

#### Fine Print: Guest Blogger Robin Yocum

<http://wcplfineprint.blogspot.com/2012/08/guest-blogger-robin-yocum.html>

Yocum discusses ***Favorite Sons*** in this post to the Washington-Centerville Public Library blog.

### For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Nina Boutsikaris at Arcade/Skyhorse  
212-643-6816 x223 or [nboutsikaris@skyhorsepublishing.com](mailto:nboutsikaris@skyhorsepublishing.com)

## Talk About It!

*Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key events in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.*

- The first part of ***Favorite Sons*** is set in a very specific and memorably depicted time and geography. How does the setting of Crystalton (a fictionalized version of Yocum's hometown of Brilliant, Ohio) influence the story and your experience of the story? How might a similar sequence of events have played out in an urban setting?
- The lives of Hutch Van Buren and his three friends change dramatically and irreversibly on the day they encounter Petey Sanchez on Chestnut Ridge. What would you have done if you were Hutch, Pepper, or Deak? Weigh the capacity to do the right thing against the strength of friendship, fidelity, and fear.
- Hutch describes the moment of Adrian's throwing the maul: "We sometimes make decisions in a span of time so infinitesimal that it cannot be comprehended by our own minds. Yet the impact of the decision is life-altering." How has a snap decision altered your life or the life of someone you know?
- Hutch states that he believes Adrian meant to kill Petey. Do you agree?
- ***Favorite Sons*** has two very distinct parts. The first depicts Hutch's adolescence, particularly the death of Petey Sanchez and its aftermath. The second takes place 33 years later, with Hutch now a successful prosecuting attorney poised to become the state attorney general. Discuss the narrative's jump in time. What, if anything, would you have liked to know about Hutch, Deak, or Adrian in the intervening years? Why do you think the author chose to bypass much of his characters' adult lives?
- Part II opens with the shocking and upsetting story of Ricky Blood and Tina Westmoreland. The narrator introduces this story as evidence supporting the death penalty and demonstrating that truly evil individuals exist. How does this side story impact your view of the main events in ***Favorite Sons***? What do you believe about retribution in the face of evil?
- Compare the character of Hutch as a teen and as an adult. Does he retain your sympathy in the second half of the book? Are the characters of Deak or Adrian as adults surprising to you, or are they as you would have expected?
- What do you think of Hutch's decision, at the end of the book, to once again obscure the facts of a murder? By protecting Deak's reputation and the peace of mind of Deak's family and congregation, does he perform a redemptive act? Is there irony to this ending?
- What does ***Favorite Sons*** say to you about truth and justice?



<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>

## Explore More!

Additional ideas and resources to use with **Favorite Sons**.

### **Favorite Sons: The Genesis**

<http://robinyocum.com/2011/07/the-crystalton-post/>

Robin Yocum shares the inspiration for Favorite Sons on this post to his blog.

### **The Story Behind the Story: Favorite Sons by Robin Yocum**

<http://therapsheet.blogspot.com/2012/01/story-behind-story-favorite-sons-by.html>

Yocum's guest post on the "Rap Sheet" blog offers more insights into the origins of **Favorite Sons** and how the story changed from his original concept as he wrote it.

### **Welcome to Historic Wells Township**

<http://www.wellstownship.net/>

Learn about the town of Brilliant and Wells Township in Jefferson County, Ohio.

### **Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce**

<http://www.jeffersoncountychamber.com/>

Plan a daytrip to the Steubenville area to explore the geography that inspired the places depicted in **Favorite Sons**.

### **What Do Prosecuting Attorneys Do?**

<http://www.ohiopa.org/prosecutors.html>

Learn about the role of the county prosecuting attorney in this overview from the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association. This website also covers topics including the death penalty and DNA testing in its "Ohio's Judicial System: What you should know" section.

### **Check out Robin Yocum's second novel, *The Essay*.**

The first chapter is available for you to read here:

<http://robinyocum.com/books/>

## About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio and the Ohioana Library Association, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>.

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