

The Mitford Years Book I: *At Home in Mitford*

1. What role does Barnabas play in Father Tim's life? What other characters seem to invade Father Tim's already busy life, only later to prove enriching elements? Are there any that are a permanent drag on his spirits? How does Father Tim come to terms with them?
2. Dooley appears on the scene untamed and uninvited. What is it that finally makes Father Tim and Dooley aware that they need each other? How does Dooley contribute to Father Tim's life? Have you had "Dooleys" in your own life?
3. Choose two of your group members to read the dialogue between Dooley and Puny in the middle of Chapter Seven — the scene where they first meet. How does the dialect differ in your part of the country? Try reading a brief part of a Dooley speech in the dialect of your own region.
4. Which characters did you dislike at first, only to later come to appreciate or at least understand them? What characters in the book react that way to someone new?
5. Compare Miss Sadie and Miss Rose. They are very different characters, but both make a powerful contribution to the books. What makes them such vivid characters? What would Mitford be like without them? What unique contributions do they make?
6. Priests seldom have people they can confide in. Who are Father Tim's confidants? What secrets does he entrust to them? What role does prayer play in giving Father Tim a chance to truly vent his feelings?
7. "Mitford takes care of its own," says Mayor Cunningham. How does this happen in the book? Is this limited only to small towns? What other types of communities can it take place in?