



## Discussion Questions

### *The Tin Roof Blowdown*

by James Lee Burke

**Source: Madison Public Library**

1. The mystery takes awhile to reveal itself in this novel of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Perhaps the first third of the book details the time leading up to Katrina's landfall and the days after. Was that a problem for you? Were you impatient for the mystery to kick-in? Did it enhance your feeling of suspense as you wondered what parts of the early pages would be germane to the mystery?
2. Did Burke's description of the ruin of New Orleans transport you back to September 2005? Did you watch much of the television news coverage from that time? Were the images he presented consistent with your recollections?
3. Could you understand Otis Baylor's reaction to the boat of black men that came around his house? In light of what happened to his daughter, could you empathize?
4. Have you read this series before? Were you aware of Dave's past as an off-the-rails alcoholic? Can you understand the bond that ties Dave to Clete despite their differences regarding drinking and recovery?
5. One reviewer felt there were too many plotlines and characters in this novel. Did you find it hard to follow? Do you think it was intentional on Burke's part to crowd the narrative with confusion, as New Orleans post-Katrina really was confused and chaotic?
6. In the days following Katrina, police themselves were in a desperate situation emotionally and physically. At least a thousand officers did report for duty. Some of them had to scavenge themselves for food and water. Two officers committed suicide immediately after Katrina, some turned in their badges and others failed to report for duty.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/09/04/katrina.police.ap/index.html>)

How does Burke portray the difficulties faced not just by civilians but by the police in dealing with this aftermath? Is he generally sympathetic to their plight as well?

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7. What does Molly, Dave's wife, bring to the narrative? If you've read the previous Robicheaux novels, is she similar to his previous wives/lovers? How does her status as an ex-nun effect Dave and their relationship?
8. How did the storyline about the junkie priest Father LeBlanc strike you? Was it believable that Burke would create a priest with such fatal flaws? Were you satisfied with the resolution of that story?