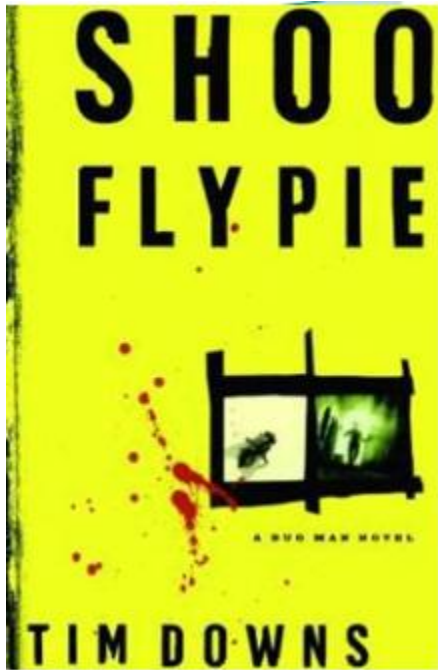


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Shoofly Pie:
A Book Club Discussion Guide



Shoo Fly Pie (2009) by Tim Downs is the first book in a series of Bug Man murder mysteries. They were published by Howard Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Mr. Downs is the founder of the Communication Center, affiliated with the Campus Crusade for Christ and has also authored numerous books on Christian relationships and communication. Additionally, while attending Indiana University he created a comic strip, *Downstown*, which was published in several college newspapers and was eventually made into three published collections. It was also syndicated into 46 national newspapers where it ran from 1980-1986.

The protagonist Nick Polchak, a forensic entomologist, is hired by Kathryn Guilford to investigate the death of her friend. Kathryn, due to a childhood trauma, has an intense fear of insects. Polchak, known as the Bug Man, reluctantly becomes involved and in doing so, uncovers another connected murder that occurred years earlier. The story uses real forensic science to uncover the murders and explains it in non-technical language, making the book a fast-paced murder mystery that will keep you hooked until the finale.

1. The title of the book *Shoo Fly Pie* is also a Pennsylvania Dutch pie created in 1876 to celebrate the 100th signing of the Declaration of Independence¹. Different versions of this pie are found in other parts of the country. Look up regional recipes and each member of the book club can bring their version to the meetings to share.
2. This question will be asked twice. Once before beginning the book and again after the book is finished. What, if anything do you know about forensic entomology? What preconceptions or misconceptions from television or movies do the readers have? Did they change any after reading the book?
3. The prologue brings together a fairly large group of people, all with different intentions, to the same spot. Do you think this is a likely scenario? Would a truck driver carrying an expensive load of beehives behave in the manner described? Would a father really allow his daughter to ride in a vehicle like this?
4. Talk about how Nick Polchak is described. Does this fit your idea of what an entomologist or any scientist would look like? Why or why not?
5. In Chapter 1, the Bug Man just walks into a crime scene, takes over and a la Agatha Christie, solves the crime with just a few questions. Do you think this would have actually occurred in 1999? Did the way the book started cause you to have misconceptions about the rest of the book?
6. Kathryn Guilford has a complicated history with the three boys from her childhood. At what point did you figure out, if you did, which one was responsible for the crimes? What tipped you off? What was the motivation behind the actions of the three men?
7. Discuss the relationships between Kathryn and the three men. Were any of their actions her fault? Was she responsible for the death of her husband? If this was you in 1999,

would you have reacted to the relationship scenario the same way? How about now in 2021?

8. Why do you think the book is called *Shoo Fly Pie*? What did you like or dislike about the book or its characters?
9. Does reading a book about forensic entomology encourage you to learn more about it or insects in general? Will you read the rest of the Bug Man series?

References

1. Byrn, Anne (2016). *American Cake: From Colonial Gingerbread to Classic Layer, the Stories and Recipes Behind more than 125 of our Best-Loved Cakes*. Rodale. p. 73