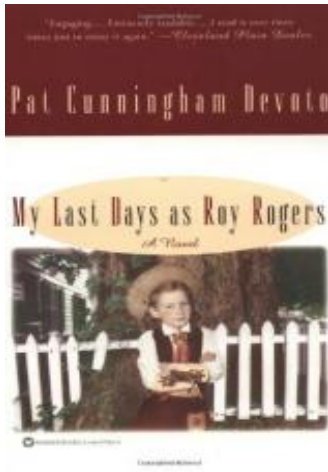


# My Last Days as Roy Rogers

by Pat Cunningham Devoto

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## About the Book

In an Alabama town in the early 1950s during the last polio summer before the Salk vaccine, ten-year-old Tabitha "Tab" Rutland is about to have the time of her life. Although movie theaters and pools have been closed to stem the epidemic, Tab, a tomboy with a passion for Roy Rogers, still seeks adventure with her best friend Maudie May, "the lightest brown colored person" she knows. Now as they meddle with the local bootlegger, Mr. Jake, row out on the Tennessee River to land the biggest catfish ever, and snoop into the town's darkest secrets, Tab sets out to be a hero...and comes of age in an unforgettable confrontation with human frailty, racial injustice, and the healing power of love.

## Discussion Guide

1. What does the title of the book imply?
2. Do you think that the fear of polio in the 1950s compares with the present-day fear of AIDS? Also, do you think that great fear of a disease can sometimes have a devastating effect that is equal that to the disease itself?
3. At what point in the story does Tab begin to have some recognition of Maudie May as a black person as opposed to her simply being a friend?
4. Do you think that Tab's grandmother wants Tab's mother to fit in because she is afraid her daughter-in-law will embarrass her or is she trying to be helpful?
5. When Tab goes down to the fish camp she realizes that "like so many things that summer, I had seen it, but I had never really seen it." What other things do you think she is referring to?
6. The Reverend Mengert makes a speech at John's mother's funeral. Why does the Reverend Mengert choose to make

the speech at that point? What effect do you think his speech has?

7. The Reverend Mengert plays several roles in the novel: friend to Tab's father, confidant, almost co-conspirator to Grace Poovey, moral conscience for the town. Do you think these roles are important for the church representative to fulfill? Which role is the most important?

8. Do you think the Reverend Mengert does the right thing covering up for Grace Poovey? What about when you take into account what happens to Ben?

9. How do you feel about the character of Ben? What does he represent?

10. There are two fires in the story. What is the significance of each fire; what results from each? Do the fires have a common purpose or result?

11. When Maudie May says her dream is to be a famous teacher, what is her motivation? Do you think that she fulfills her dream, whether or not she had polio?

12. Who in the story is afraid of being a nonconformist? Compare Tab's conformist tendencies with her nonconformist tendencies. Which do you think are stronger?

13. Tab's mother finished college, got married, moved to a small town where she didn't belong, and had a family. Do you think she is happy at heart or do you think she is discontented? And how is this manifested in the story?

14. Some sociologists think the primary socializing factor for children in the fifties and sixties was family and today it is the media. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

15. What do you think really happens to Maudie May?

## Author Bio

PAT CUNNINGHAM DEVOTO was born and raised in Alabama and lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and Alabama.

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