

Nine Discussion Questions for *Fire Monks*

1. How did each of the characters in *Fire Monks* bring his or her own life experience as well as Zen practice into approaching the fire?
2. Why do you think the residents of Tassajara decided to return to the monastery after initially deciding to evacuate?
3. How did you feel about their decision?
4. Did you empathize with the positions of the firefighters that everyone must evacuate?
5. What do you think it meant to “meet” the fire as an old friend?
6. Is it possible to be as committed to saving the monastery as the monks were and also to practice nonattachment?
7. What did you learn about Zen Buddhism from this story?
8. How was the fire a teacher for the monks?
9. How can fire be a metaphor for any difficulty faced in life?