

Discussion Questions for CITY OF DRAGONS

1. CITY OF DRAGONS has received praise for its evocation of a time and place ... notably, from Robert B. Parker. How does San Francisco emerge as its own character in the novel? Do you think of the city any differently after reading it?
2. George Pelecanos and Michael Koryta both commented that CITY OF DRAGONS is at once faithful to classic noir and hardboiled literature and yet highly original. In what ways does it pay homage to the classics, like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, or modern masters like Paretsky? In what ways do you find it unique?
3. Miranda Corbie is a complex character, and Stanley has promised to reveal more of her back story in subsequent prequels to CITY OF DRAGONS. What do you think is in store for Miranda? What do you think of her as the protagonist, or—as Stanley has called her—a femme fatale in the hero's role?
4. "Hidden" racism is one of the themes of CITY OF DRAGONS ... were you aware of Sino-Japanese war before reading CITY OF DRAGONS? Did reading it make you more interested in the events leading up to World War II?
5. Stanley has said that she wanted to write about women feeling like "prey" once they hit puberty. How do the women in CITY OF DRAGONS deal with their sexuality? How are the different levels of sexual threat conveyed in the book?
6. Stanley has also stated that she wanted to write about the past in a way that preserved both its beauty and its ugliness ... a way to counterbalance natural nostalgia, but recognize the differences, both good and bad, between our contemporary era and the America of seventy years ago. In what ways does she accomplish this? Did reading the book change the way you feel about the time period?
7. 1940 was an audio-based era ... radio, not television, was the mass communication tool. In what ways does the novel convey this sensibility? Were you able to feel this aspect of the period when you read it?
8. CITY OF DRAGONS was inspired by film noir, as well as classic literature. What film inspirations do you see reflected in it? And if you were casting a movie, using either '40s stars or contemporary actors, whom would you cast and why?

9. Miranda refers to herself as a "soldier", and there are a number of references to being at war in the novel. What do you think she is fighting for—or fighting against?

10. 1940 was the year of the Dragon in the Chinese horoscope. What are the other dragons of the title?