

Reading Guide

Discussion questions for readers, reading groups, and librarians (and anyone else interested in good conversation!)

1. Arcturus feels like an outsider in both Rome and native society. In what ways is he “too Roman” for the natives? How is he “too native” for the Romans?
2. NOX DORMIENDA is the first “Roman Noir.” What similarities does it share with noir or hardboiled literature? How is it like the films noir you may have seen?
3. Who is your favorite character in NOX DORMIENDA? Why?
4. The title of the novel means “a long night for sleeping” ... an eternal night. Kelli has described it as “Latin for ‘The Big Sleep.’” What do you think the title means in terms of the book’s events?
5. The countryside and city are contrasted and juxtaposed in NOX DORMIENDA. What are the differences, according to Arcturus? Is one setting more “noir” than the other?
6. Manipulation is a key theme of the novel ... how easily people are used. What do you feel true villainy is—committing an act, or persuading others to commit it, as Shakespeare’s Iago did?
7. Who was your favorite secondary character in NOX DORMIENDA? Why?
8. Humor is a way Arcturus deals with the world, even though NOX DORMIENDA is not generally a humorous novel. Did you laugh out loud in any sections? Smile? How did you interpret the humor, and did you enjoy it?
9. After reading NOX DORMIENDA, did you feel you learned more about Roman culture and history? Did you want to discover more? Did you expect that you’d want to?
10. Ken Bruen described NOX DORMIENDA as moving like “a gladiator on speed.” Did you find the pace fast or slow? Was there time for adequate character development?
11. NOX DORMIENDA is the first of the Arcturus Series. What do you think is going to happen in the next novel ... to Arcturus, Gwyna, Bilicho and Stricta? What do you think will happen with Agricola?