



King of the Armadillos

Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *King of the Armadillos*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *King of the Armadillos*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. In the opening paragraph, readers immediately sense that Victor is about to embark on a journey into the unknown. How does the theme of migration/movement inform the novel from this opening scene?
2. Victor is sent to Carville after his diagnosis. What do you know about leprosy or Hansen's disease? What did you learn from Victor's experience?
3. The title of the book references armadillos, which appear in both the popular belief of the time that armadillos spread Hansen's disease and in the Mardi Gras celebration. What do you think the armadillo symbolizes?
4. The first friend that Victor makes at Carville is Herb, and their friendship evolves throughout the novel. Why do you think they are drawn to one another? What does Victor learn from Herb?
5. Over the course of the novel, Victor gains confidence in himself and his musical ability. How does Victor's artistic journey inform his sense of self and worldview?
6. Sam, Henry, and Victor all have different relationships with both Ruth and Mei Wan. Describe these similarities and differences. Are there any patterns or overlaps in their behaviors towards the women in their lives?
7. There are several romantic relationships in this story – Sam and Ruth, Henry and Winnie, Victor and Judy, and Donny and Judy. Describe the challenges that each pair face. What changes over the course of their relationship?
8. Is Dr. Behr an adversary or an ally in Victor's story? How so?
9. How does Donny's unfortunate accident create tension in Judy and Victor's relationship? What would an alternate ending look like for them had Donny resurfaced in the water?

10. Whose character arc surprised you and what was the most memorable part of their journey?
11. Even though this book is set in the last century, it feels quite timely. What are the parallels between then and now?