



### Discussion Questions

1. *The Wedding Shroud* deals with the concept of putting duty to family and the state above love and individual fulfilment. Is this something to which a modern reader can relate? How would you personally respond if asked to put the welfare of others above self interest when it is to the detriment of happiness?
2. Caecilia is at first intolerant of the Etruscans when comparing them to the austere and pious Romans. Do you find her character too judgemental? Is she justified in wanting to remain true to her upbringing? Can you compare her attitude to issues of prejudice in a modern multicultural society?
3. *The Wedding Shroud* explores the construct of bisexuality in the ancient world and the issue of status in sexual relations. How do these concepts translate to modern day sexual politics? What part do you think the influence of religion has had in altering perceptions of sexuality?
4. Caecilia is a strong female protagonist who comes of age over the duration of the novel. What do you consider to be her strengths and weaknesses?
5. Do you sympathise with Caecilia even when she tries to defer the birth of a child? How do you think her character could have evolved differently given her background and circumstances?
6. The lives of women of Rome, Greece and Etruria are explored in the novel. In what way do they differ to ours? Why is the worth and status of women often based on the degree of sexual freedom afforded to them? Can the concept of feminism ever be applied in the context of women of the ancient world?
7. Both Romans and Etruscans considered themselves to be extremely pious. What do you consider 'piety' to involve? In relation to the religion of the Etruscans, do you think that the concept of the after life held by the worshippers of the cults of Calu and Fufluns could ever be reconciled?

## Discussion Questions (Cont.)

8. Mastarna claims to be accepting of Fate yet he taunts the goddess Nortia to take him before his time. Are his actions any different to Caecilia seeking to control her fate? What is your attitude towards a belief in destiny as opposed to self determination?
9. Caecilia comes to embrace the freedoms offered by Etruscan culture but is repulsed by the Dionysian excesses of the Fulvius cult and the human sacrifice practised by the followers of the Calu cult. What would you do when confronted by such choices? When should a person impose a limit on succumbing to temptation based on their definition of morality?
10. The ending of *The Wedding Shroud* is left open. Are you disappointed by the lack of resolution or do you think it advances the theme of destiny versus self determination? What type of ending would you have written?
11. The Roman and Greek view of the practice of pederasty is described in the novel. Discuss whether it is suitable to condone a custom that is taboo in one culture while accepted in another. Should a society attempt to place its own value system on another?
12. Due to the lack of extant contemporary literature by the Etruscans themselves, the author has made certain assumptions about Etruscan culture for the purposes of plot and character development (see author's note). Should expectations as to historical authenticity differ when reading historical fiction as opposed to a history book?
13. The author has used the device of circularity of imagery and scenes e.g. the concept of kissing a dead person to retain their soul. What are other examples of this within the book? How does this device extend themes?
14. Etruscan tomb art served as inspiration not only for the book itself but also certain scenes within it. What are examples of other novels that have used art for inspiration? Do you think this is a successful approach? Does it inspire you to discover more about the art upon which a novel is based?
15. What devices does the author use to sustain interest in the plot? Is the structure of the novel formulaic? Is the use of 'tight' third person viewpoint any more effective than first person? Would multiple viewpoints have helped to develop the characters further?

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