

Reading Guide Questions for Seeing in the Dark

1. Have you ever seen a really dark, starry night?
 - a. Describe what you saw.
 - b. Describe how you felt.
2. Have you ever looked through a telescope?
 - a. Compare how you feel when viewing the sky through a telescope versus seeing it with the naked eye?
3. What does the term “stargazer” mean to you?
 - a. How is it different than the term “astronomer”?
4. Several episodes in the book describe people who became intrigued by the stars at about age 12.
 - a. What similar transformations come to mind on your part?
 - b. ...On the part of others?
 - c. ...Involving one’s relationship to nature at that age?
5. Do you think that one moment can be transformational and inspire people to take up their life’s work?
6. Why do people find galaxies, nebulae and the rings of Saturn beautiful?
7. Observing the night sky long has inspired artists, composers, and poets.
 - a. What might be the correlation?
8. What personal proof do we need to believe what astronomers tell us?
 - a. Does actually seeing something with your own eyes make it more real or believable?
 - b. Does amateur astronomy give us a chance to experience science first hand?
9. What scene or character in the book made a strong impression on you?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Did anyone’s story surprise you?
10. British theologian Nicholas Lash uses the term “seeing in the dark” to discuss hope.
 - a. Do you think this influenced Ferris’ choice of title?
11. “Seeing in the dark” has also been used to describe dreams.
 - a. Compare viewing the universe and dreaming.
12. On a clear night, have you tried to see the stars from your home?
 - a. Why as a species do we need night?
 - b. Why is history filled with stories that include the night sky?

- c. Do you think that light pollution is a 21st C. issue?
- d. What approaches to light pollution might be taken to reduce light pollution in your community?

13. Might curiosity about one field lead you to curiosity about another, unrelated field?

- a. Did that happen to anyone in the book?

14. Imagine that when you are viewing the night sky you are really looking down.

- a. How does that affect your thoughts?

15. Next, imagine that when you see the stars you are really looking into the past.

- a. How does this affect your thoughts?

16. Is there still room for amateurs in science?

- a. In a world of million dollar budgets, how can an amateur scientist hope to make an impact?

17. Should government support science?

- a. Does science really belong to the private sector?
- b. Should taxpayers who do not agree with what science is doing be forced to pay for it?
- c. Should humans explore space?
- d. At what cost?

18. What can someone who is not a scientist or an astronomer take away from this book?

19. Do you think this book is well written?

- a. Is it also beautifully written?
- b. Does that surprise you?