THE SHADOW HERO – READING GROUP GUIDE

About the Book:

In the comics boom of the 1940s, a legend was born: the Green Turtle. But this mysterious masked crusader was hiding something more than your run-of-the-mill secret identity . . . The Green Turtle was the first Asian American superhero. The original Green Turtle comic only had a short run, but now Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew have revived the character, creating an origin story for a forgotten hero.

For Discussion:

*The Shadow Hero* is a graphic novel, a story told in words and pictures. How do you think this story would be told differently if it was a novel, with only words? How would it be different if it was a movie, with just pictures?

Why does the author stress the importance of The Green Turtle being the first Asian superhero, and how does racism affect this story and its characters?

Why does racism need to be addressed in literature? Is that answer the same one that you would give if you were answering this question in the 1940s, when the Green Turtle was originally created and when this story was set?

Have you ever felt singled out or treated unfairly? How is that treatment similar to and different from racism?

Hank’s mother is very unhappy throughout most of the graphic novel. Why is transforming her son into a superhero so appealing to her, and why does Hank agree to it? Have you ever done something you didn’t want to for your parents and why?

The graphic novel offers the reader many different kinds of heroes, and a range of ideas about bravery. In your opinion, who is the bravest character in the story and why?

The Shadow Spirits that travel from China to America have polarizing ideas about the future of the Chinese people. How does the author use these two characters to illustrate the clash between cultures and generations in this story?

How does fantasy and reality interact in this story? Why does the author use supernatural elements (superheroes, spirit shadows, wishes)? What is he trying to convey about the harsh realities of Hank’s world in dangerous Chinatown?

*The Shadow Hero* is based off of an original comic book series published in the 1940s. What is so special about the comic book as a format, and why does it lend itself so to superhero stories? Why do you think the author wanted to base his own graphic novel on these comics?