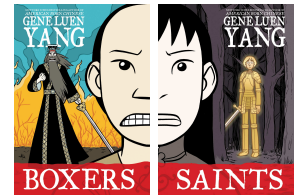




BOXERS & SAINTS – READING GROUP GUIDE



About the Book:

In two volumes, *Boxers & Saints* tells two parallel stories. *Boxers* follows Little Bao, whose village is plundered by Western missionaries. Inspired by visions of the Chinese gods, he joins a violent uprising against the Western interlopers. In *Saints*, Yang lays out the opposite side of the conflict. A girl whose village has no place for her is taken in by Christian missionaries and finds a home with them. As the Boxer Rebellion gains momentum, Vibiana must choose between her country and her faith.

Boxers & Saints offers a penetrating insight into not only one of the most controversial episodes of modern Chinese history, but into the very core of our human nature.

For Discussion:

Boxers, through Little Bao, presents the Boxers' perspective of the Boxer Rebellion. What does this perspective reveal about the conflict of the rebellion? What do you come to understand about the historic conflict from this point of view?

What problem do the foreigners and Christian converts represent? What about them or their actions make them the villain of the Little Bao's story? Are they the true villains?

What is the importance of the Chinese gods and idols? Why do Little Bao and the Brother-Disciples take their form when fighting? What does it mean that Little Bao and the Boxers take the form of the Chinese gods throughout the story?

What are Little Bao's motives in becoming a Boxer and getting others to join him? Is Little Bao fighting for justice, for his nation, or for some other reason? Are his motives noble?

Little Bao has a recurring dream where he is drowning and encounters Ch'in Shih-huang. Why do think he has these dreams? Also, the line between dream world and reality is blurred throughout the graphic novel. What do you think is the purpose of this?

Was Little Bao Right to violently attack ALL the foreigners and Christian converts? First he only attacked those who were doing wrong, then only the men, and then he decides every foreigner/Christian convert is his enemy. Why does he change his mind and do you think he was right to?

As the leader of the Brother-Disciples of the Righteous and Harmonious Fist, Little Bao has to make many decisions, some he comes to regret. How do Little Bao's actions blur the line between right and wrong? If you were in his shoes, what would you do differently?

Saints, through Four-Girl, presents the perspective of a Christian convert, opposed to the Boxers and their rebellion. What does this perspective reveal about the conflict of the Boxer Rebellion? What do you come to understand about this historic conflict from this point of view?

Why do you think Four-Girl converts to Catholicism (besides for the free food)? What do you think the texts has to say about religion after reading about Little Bao and his gods and Four-Girl and her Catholic faith? What is the importance of religion in both volumes?

Why do you think Four-Girl has visions of Joan of Arc? How is her story – and her interactions with the God she believes in – similar to Little Bao's story? How do those visions shape Four-Girl?

The idea of a warrior or being a warrior appears in both texts. What is the significance of the image of the warrior? Why do Vibiana and Little Bao decide to become one? What does it mean that they both desire to become warriors though they are fighting for different things?

In the end Vibiana decides not to give up her faith even though it means death. What does this reveal about Vibiana? What does this moment reveal about Little Bao? Would you have done the same in their shoes? Do you believe either of them made the right decision?

Does the perception you had of the foreigners and Christian converts from *Boxers* change after reading *Saints*? How about your perception of the Brother-Disciples of the Righteous and Harmonious Fist? How is your perception of both texts affected by reading both points of view?

First Second Books