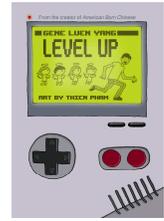




LEVEL UP – READING GROUP GUIDE



Book Description:

Dennis Ouyang's father always wanted him to be a doctor. But Dennis is passionate about video games, and has the chance to make a career out of the games that he loves. *Level Up* tells a story about the difficulties inherent in following your own dreams or the dreams your family has for you.

For Discussion:

Level Up 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?

The cover of *Level Up* very specifically alludes to the look of a Nintendo Gameboy, one of the seminal hand-held video game systems. How did the cover affect your perceptions of the kind of story you expected *Level Up* to be? Was the book what you expected?

The dedication of *Level Up* reads; 'Dedicated to our brothers Jon and Think, both of whom work in the medical field, for being the good Asian sons.' What does this say about the author and illustrators' attitude towards their own families and professions? Do you think their families and career choices affected the way they told this story?

At the beginning of the book, on page 19, Dennis starts out with three heads, or lives, hovering in the corner of his screen. This symbolic marker reappears throughout the story. What meaning do you think it conveys? Is it an effective storytelling tool?

What do you think you would do if four angels showed up to inform you of what your destiny was? Would you go along with them, or would you want to make your own choices?

"Choose your own destiny," says Dennis' friend Kat. But his friend Ipsha tells him that he's surrounded by family, friends and influences, and that he can never really make a decision without taking all of them into account. Which of the two viewpoints about destiny do you think is more accurate?

Level Up (and the angels' desire for Dennis to become a gastroenterologist) was inspired by the high incidence rate of liver cancer among Asian Americans. How would you feel if there was a medical problem or condition that affected your specific demographic and you had the potential to be able to treat it or find a cure? Would you feel pressured to follow that road in life even if it wasn't the life you dreamed of?

At the end of the book, Dennis decides to leave the world of video games and re-enroll in medical school. Do you think that was the right decision? What decision would you have made in his place?