

# CBLDF Discussion Guide

## ***Pride of Baghdad***

**by Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon**

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*Given their visual nature, comics are easy targets for would-be censors. CBLDF's Discussion Guides are tools that can be used to lead conversations about challenged graphic novels and to help allay misconceptions about comics.*



### **Synopsis**

During an American bombing of Baghdad in 2003, several lions escaped from the Baghdad Zoo. *Pride of Baghdad* is the fictionalized account of the pride roaming through the city before finally being shot by American soldiers. While yearning for freedom within their enclosure, the lions find that the outside world is far from simple as they seek food and safety while bickering amongst themselves. This story can easily be read as an allegory about the effects of war upon noncombatants. (It is recommended that students be given some background on the invasion of Iraq before this graphic novel is studied and discussed.)

### **Themes**

Warfare, freedom, political allegory

### **Reasons Challenged**

Sexual content

### **Suggested Age Range**

High school

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Remembering**

1. Describe the personalities of the four lions. How are they each unique?

#### **Understanding**

2. The word “pride” has several different meanings including a group of lions, a feeling of self-respect, and something that makes one proud. Explain how each of the definitions can be applied to the subject of this book.
3. Vaughan used several references to folktales throughout the story. Give an example of one reference and explain how it enhanced the tale.
4. If you flip through the book quickly, you will notice that the palette shifts dramatically. Why do you think Henrichon chose to vary the background colors so much? Select one example, and explain how the color choices influence the mood of the images.

#### **Applying**

5. *Pride of Baghdad* can be read as an allegory. What kind of people do each of the animals represent? Consider not just the lions but also the bear, the giraffes, the tortoise, the ape, and the white horses.
6. How would this graphic novel be different if the author had told the story using humans? Would it be easier or harder to empathize with the characters? Explain.

## Analyzing

7. Noor says, “Freedom can’t be given, only earned.” What does she mean by that? Do you agree with her statement? Why or why not?
8. What point is the author trying to make about the effects of war on civilians? Do you think the author supported the invasion of Iraq? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
9. The lions debate whether or not to eat the dead child. Which lion do you think makes a stronger argument? Why?

## Evaluating

10. This book has been criticized for its overtly sexual passages. How would the book have been different if those pages were removed? Defend the inclusion of Safa’s memories and Noor’s desires or argue for their omission.
11. How would this story be different if the final scene showed Iraqi soldiers killing the lions?

## Creating

12. Envision a different ending. Would it be true to the experience of people in war torn countries?

## Activities

### Illustration

Draw yourself as an animal. Which animal would you choose to represent you? Which of your characteristics would you emphasize?

### Research

Use databases to find news report of the actual events on which this story is based. Compare and contrast what actually happened to the lions of the Baghdad Zoo with the graphic novel’s depiction. Present your findings as a poster or as a digital presentation.

### Creative Writing

Imagine that one of the lions survived and was returned to the zoo. Write a brief short story or monologue detailing that lion’s thoughts and experiences as the lone survivor. Try to remain consistent with the lion’s personality as depicted in the book.

*For more about attempts to censor *Pride of Baghdad*, visit <http://cblddf.org/banned-comic/banned-challenged-comics/case-study-pride-of-baghdad/>*

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