

CBLDF Discussion Guide

Dragon Ball (VIZBIG Edition, Vol. 1)

by Akira Toriyama

Discussion Guide by Eva Volin, Supervising Librarian, Children's Services, Alameda Free Library, Alameda, California



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

Dragon Ball follows the adventures of Son Goku and his friends as they embark on a quest for seven mystical orbs called Dragon Balls, each of which summons a wish-granting dragon when gathered. Loosely based on traditional Chinese storytelling and myth, this story is strictly played for laughs. (Note: The VIZBIG Edition, Volume 1, collects the first three volumes of the regular, 16-volume edition of the series.)

Themes

Friendship, rivalry, victory, loss

Reasons Challenged

Violence, nudity

Suggested Age Range

Middle school and up

Discussion Questions

Remembering

1. Name four characters from the book. Which ones do you consider heroes and which ones are villains?
2. Son Goku is a very unusual boy. Give examples of how he differs from other kids.

Understanding

3. Many of the characters in the story have respect for Son Goku's grandfather. What are some of the traits they find worthy of respect? What are some traits you find worthy of respect in the people in your life?
4. Son Goku and Kuririn follow the Turtle Hermit's instructions even though they don't feel like they're learning anything. What is the Turtle Hermit actually teaching them? How has his training made them stronger?

Applying

5. Bulma convinces Son Goku to help her find the hidden Dragon Balls by telling him he'd get his grandfather's Dragon Ball back. Have you stretched the truth to get what you wanted? How could you have handled the situation without stretching the truth?
6. Stories based on folk and fairy tales are not new. Can you think of other stories that are rooted in traditional storytelling? Why are these stories effective?

Analyzing

7. *Dragon Ball* has been challenged in school libraries for violence and nudity. How would this story change if the violent scenes were taken out and if the panels showing nudity were removed?

8. What role do women play in the story? How are the roles of the women different from the roles of the men?

Evaluating

9. Son Goku remains loyal to Bulma even when she betrays him. Do you think his loyalty is misplaced? Is there a limit to how far someone's loyalty should be tested? Explain your reasoning.
10. How does Toriyama's use of male and female stereotypes influence your reaction to and understanding of the story?
11. *Dragon Ball* is loosely based on the Monkey King myth. The Monkey King is a trickster god who figures in many Chinese folk tales. Other than Son Goku's tail, which elements of *Dragon Ball* most likely come from the original Chinese stories? Which do you think are made up?

Creating

12. *Dragon Ball* is one of the most popular manga series ever published, both in Japan and the United States. What elements of the series contribute to its popularity? How might these same elements also contribute to attempts to censor the series?

Activities

Writing

Research and identify a folk or fairy tale that also involves a quest. Change the story so it is set either in today's world or in an alternate universe. For what are your characters searching? What challenges will they have to overcome? Do your characters find what they're looking for? Write a plot outline for your story that includes rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Illustration

Research the Monkey King myth. Based on what you learn, create a profile for a new *Dragon Ball* character who has ties to the original Monkey King stories. What does the character look like? What powers will he or she have? Draw this character using a manga style of illustration.

Digital Presentation

There are several different iterations of the Monkey King story told in prose, traditionally illustrated books, the graphic novel format, and even movies. Use at least three different sources to create a digital slideshow that demonstrates the variety of ways in which the Monkey King story has been told. Your slides should include images, text, and source citations.

For more about attempts to censor *Dragon Ball*, visit <http://cblddf.org/banned-comic/banned-challenged-comics/case-study-dragon-ball/>

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the First Amendment rights of the comics art form and its community of retailers, creators, publishers, librarians, and readers. CBLDF provides legal referrals, representation, advice, assistance, and education in furtherance of these goals.
www.cblddf.org