

# CBLDF Discussion Guide



## ***Sandman: The Doll's House***

**by Neil Gaiman with art by Michael Zulli, Chris Bachalo, Mike Dringenberg, Malcolm Jones III, & Steve Parkhouse**

*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**

In the second volume of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, *The Doll's House*, Dream embarks on another quest: the retrieval of four escaped dreams. In doing so, Dream encounters a false Sandman, battles his most terrifying creation, takes down a convention of serial killers, and threatens the life of a young woman who can break down the walls between dreamers. The book also introduces three more members of the Endless: Destiny, Desire, and Despair.

### **Themes**

Deception and manipulation, spurned love, family, friendship, loneliness, sacrifice

### **Reasons Challenged**

Unsuited to age group

### **Suggested Age Range**

High school and up

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Remembering**

1. Describe each of the four dreams that Dream is trying to track down in *The Doll's House*. Which is most dangerous?
2. Why doesn't Hob Gadling die?

#### **Understanding**

3. What are some examples of visual or verbal puns in *The Doll's House*?
4. Why does Dream feel obliged to destroy Rose Walker?

#### **Applying**

5. In part four of *The Doll's House*, the relationship between Dream and Hob Gadling is explored. What visual cues portray the passage of time in the chapter?
6. What purpose does the Corinthian most likely serve in the Dreaming?

#### **Analyzing**

7. The character of Destiny is introduced in a text-based passage at the beginning of the book. Why do you think Gaiman decided to prose to introduce the character instead of artwork?
8. How does the artwork in the book change when depicting Rose's dreams? How does it change when depicting the Corinthians point of view?
9. Why is Dream offended when Hob Gadling suggests that their hundred-year visits are the result of friendship?

## Evaluating

10. Desire keeps symbolic totems representing each of the Endless of the walls of The Heart, which Desire calls home. Identify each symbol and which of the seven Endless is represented by the symbol.
11. Why do you think Desire tries to manipulate Dream?
12. How do the dreams of the various people who live in the house with Rose reflect who the characters are?

## Creating

13. What does the doll house represent? Who are the dolls that live in the doll house: mortals or the Endless? Explain your reasoning.

## Activities

### Illustration

The end of the prologue to *The Doll's House* alludes to a “women’s tale,” a different version of Nada and Dream’s tale that is told by women. Write and illustrate a short comic book that tells the story as if it is being told by a female elder to a young woman.

### Poster Project

The dreamworld that Brute and Glob build for Jed is modelled on the artwork of Windsor McCay, who is the creator behind *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, a comic strip that ran in newspapers in the early 20th century. Research McCay and Little Nemo and make a poster that presents your findings about the strip and its creator.

### Using Media

Birds are central to many myths and stories. In *The Doll's House*, a bird plays a key role in Nada’s quest to find Dream. Research myths and stories that are centered on birds. Based on what you learn, write a short screenplay that relates the story. Use animation or enlist friends and family to make a video based on your screenplay.

For more about attempts to censor Sandman, visit <http://cblddf.org/banned-comic/banned-challenged-comics/case-study-sandman/>

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