

Dragon Hoops

Discussion Guide

Use these questions to get your conversation started.

1. In sports stories, Gene realizes, you have no control over the ending. At one point, he says to the team, “When you step out onto that court, no matter how prepared you are, you don’t really know if you’re gonna win or lose. But you step out anyway.” How do you think the book would have been affected if the final results been reversed? Would it have been different?
2. Gene starts out the story not being interested in basketball, but soon finds himself fully invested in the game. Did you like basketball before reading this book? If not, how did this book change your view?
3. The history of basketball plays a large role in *Dragon Hoops*. One of the constants is that the game was defined by limiting factors. Sometimes the limits were physical, like needing to not break the windows in the gym, or cultural like certain elements of play not being deemed being appropriate for women. What other limiting factors shaped the Dragons’ season and the story of *Dragon Hoops*?
4. Throughout the book, Gene realizes he has more in common with Coach Lou than he initially anticipated. Have you ever had a similar experience in your life? Where did you find common ground?
5. Throughout *Dragon Hoops* there is constant tension created by the stakes the characters face. Sometimes the stakes are high, like playing in a state championship game, but there are also smaller decisions that have could have big outcomes, like choosing who gets more playing time or whether or not to play in a given game. Is there a meaningful difference between the two, or are playing basketball to establish a career and choosing to write a book with an undetermined outcome the same?
6. Do you think the graphic novel format allowed Gene to better showcase the suspense and action of the basketball games? How do you think the book would have been different if it was written only in prose?
7. At the start of the book, Gene identifies himself as a “nerdy teacher,” but during his time with the team he explores interests and experiences that were totally new to him and becomes a sports fan. Similarly, at the end of the book Austin Walker decides that he wants to stop playing basketball to focus on being a student. Do other characters in *Dragon Hoops* change the way they think about themselves? Have you ever gone through a similar change?
8. Coach Lou says throughout the book, “You have to know your past if you want to know your future.” What do you think he means? How do you think Gene interprets that saying? How would you interpret it in your own life?

