

**Activities &  
Discussion Guide  
inspired by**

# **Dragon Hoops**

**by  
Gene Luen Yang**

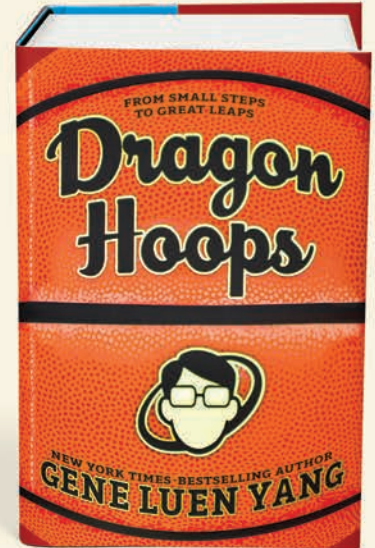
# Step out. Walk tall. Discover your legacy.

**About the Book:** In his latest graphic novel, *Dragon Hoops*, *New York Times* bestselling author Gene Luen Yang turns the spotlight on his life, his family, and the high school where he teaches.

Gene understands stories—comic book stories, in particular. Big action. Bigger thrills. And the hero always wins.

But Gene doesn't get sports. As a kid, his friends called him "Stick" and every basketball game he played ended in pain. He lost interest in basketball long ago, but at the high school where he now teaches, it's all anyone can talk about. The men's varsity team, the Dragons, is having a phenomenal season that's been decades in the making. Each victory brings them closer to their ultimate goal: the California state championship.

Once Gene gets to know these young all-stars, he realizes that their story is just as thrilling as anything he's seen on a comic book page. He knows he has to follow this epic to its end. What he doesn't know yet is that this season is going to change not only the Dragons' lives but his own life as well.



**About the Author:** Gene Luen Yang writes, and sometimes draws, comic books and graphic novels. *American Born Chinese*, his first graphic novel from First Second Books, was a National Book Award finalist, as well as the winner of the Printz Award and an Eisner Award. His two-volume graphic novel *Boxers & Saints* won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was a National Book Award finalist. His other works include the *Secret Coders* series (with Mike Holmes), *The Shadow Hero* (with Sonny Liew), *New Super-Man* from DC Comics (with various artists), and the *Avatar: The Last Airbender* series from Dark Horse Comics (with Gurihiru). He was the fifth National Ambassador for Young People's Literature and in 2016 he was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow.



# 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?



# Dragon Hoops

## Write Your Story

Gene is inspired to write *Dragon Hoops* during a conversation with Coach Lou, even though he feels out of his depth in the world of basketball. Use these questions to interview someone with an interest that is different than yours (for example, a favorite subject, or TV show, or hobby).

1. If you were to explain this topic to someone who had never encountered it, how would you do it?

2. What are some things that a stranger to this topic should know?

3. What kinds of skills and abilities are required for this topic?



4. Were there any barriers that you encountered with your interest in this topic?

5. What is your favorite part of this topic?

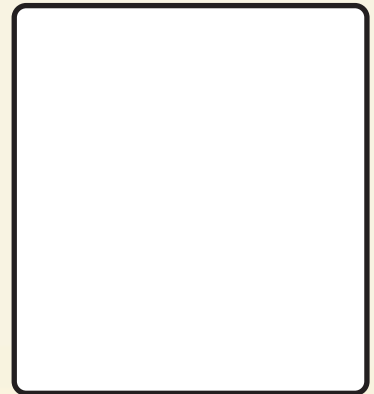
6. If I want to learn more about this topic, where do you suggest I start?



# Dragon Hoops

## Draw Your Story

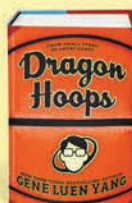
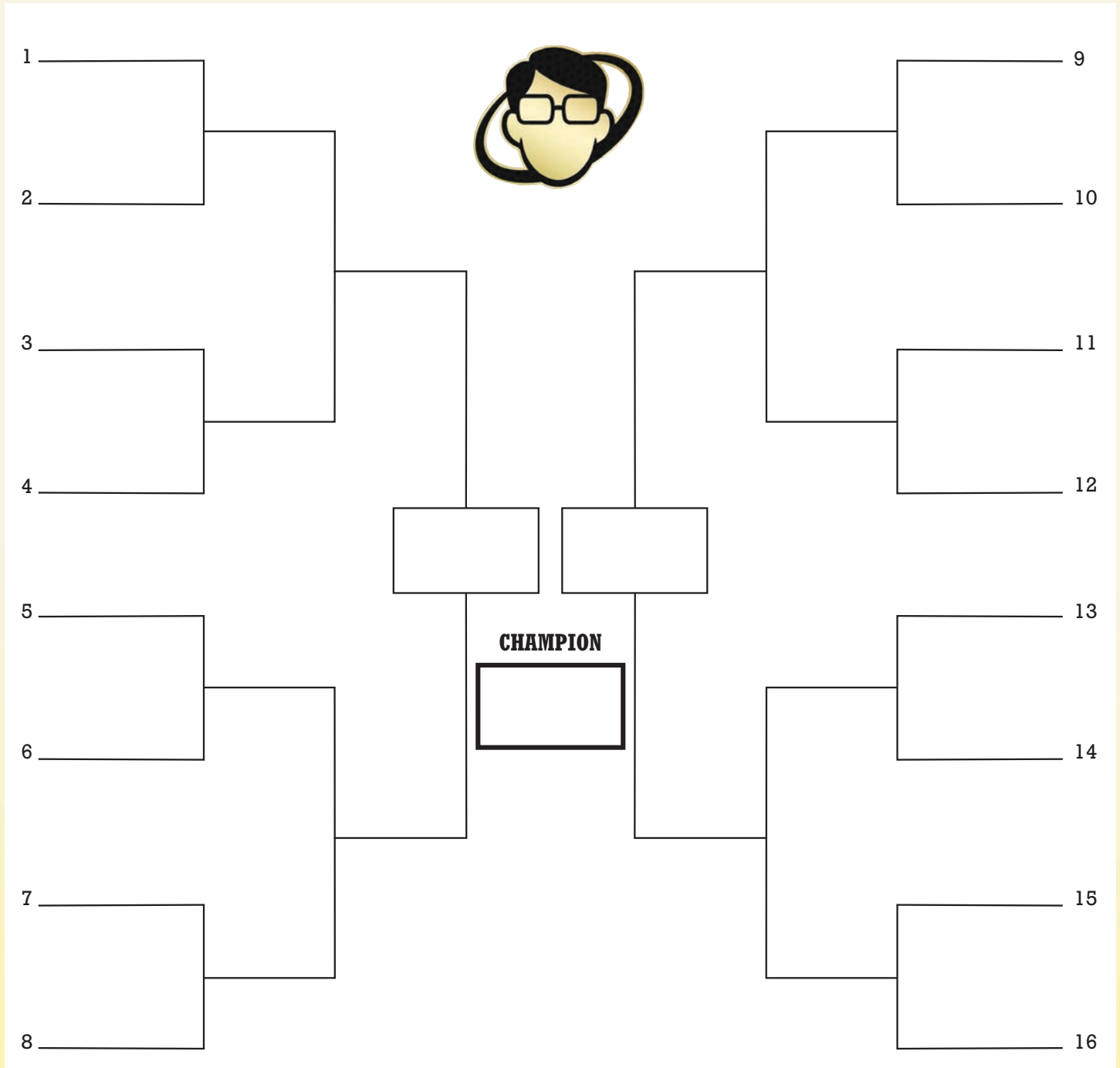
Now take what you learned in that interview and begin to draw it. Was there a fun story or somewhere exciting to start? For inspiration, look at chapter 1 of *Dragon Hoops* to see how Gene illustrated his interview with Coach Lou.



# Dragon Hoops

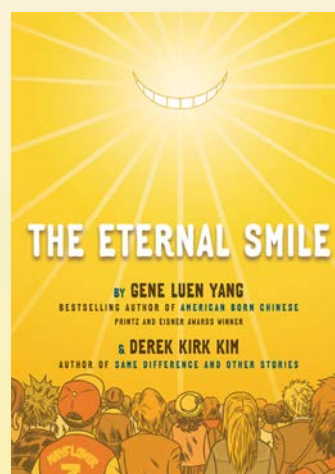
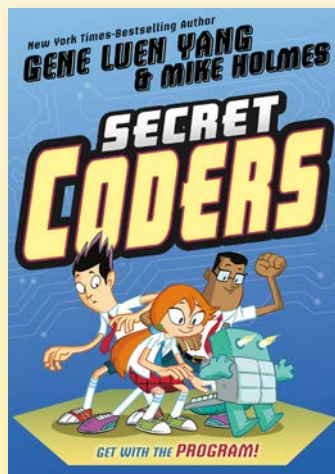
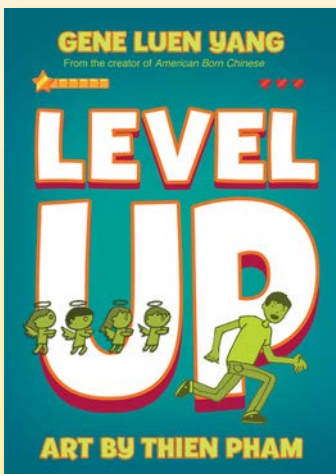
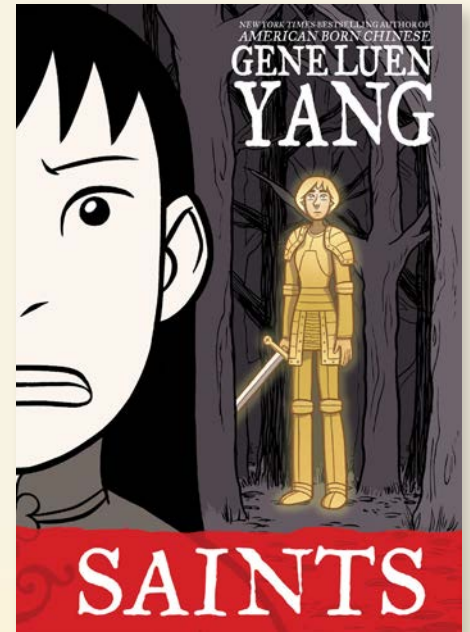
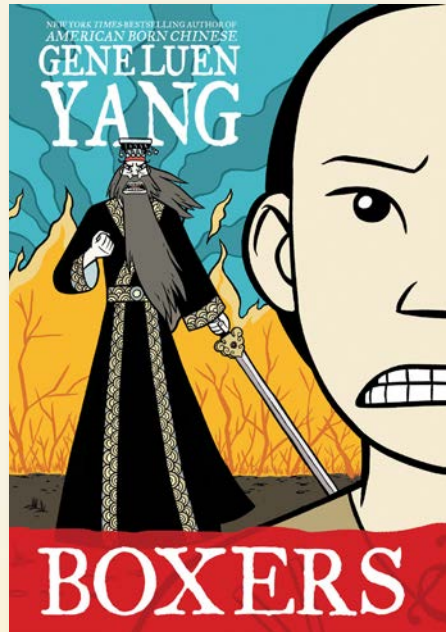
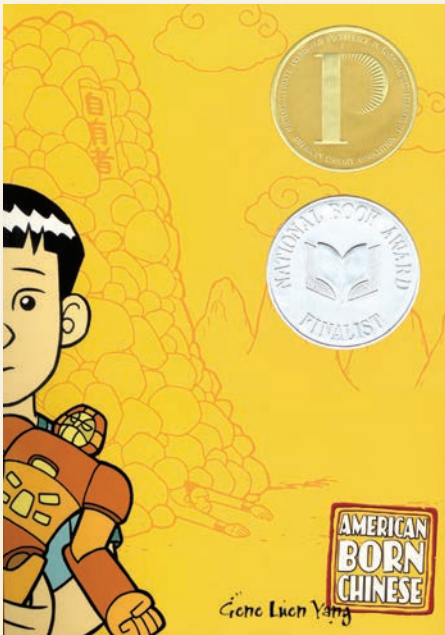
## March Madness Bracket

Host a March Madness competition in your event space using this template.  
Pick books from across all categories or select from the following list to get started:  
memoir, graphic novel, young adult books, nonfiction, science fiction, or thriller.



Great Graphic Novels from the  
New York Times Bestselling Author

# GENE LUEN YANG



[ReadDragonHoops.com](http://ReadDragonHoops.com)

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First Second

An Imprint of  
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