

Level Up

Gene Luen Young

Reviewed by: Justin 15

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Level Up tells the story of a young Asian American boy named Dennis Ouyoung. You could say that he's addicted to video games; he plays them all day and all night. One day, his father, who had always had a rough relationship with him, dies. On the day of his death his father gives Dennis a card, which contains 4 angels and a wish for Dennis to pursue medical school. Caught between his life of video games and his father's dying wishes, Dennis decides to stop gaming and enroll in medical school. He soon makes many friends, but doesn't feel like medical school is for him. Perhaps, he was destined to be a gamer.

Dennis's struggles to cope with his father's wishes and his destiny are manifested in extraordinary ways in this comic book; the illustrations are deep and convey important emotions. After reading this book, I've realized that a main message that the author is trying to convey is the struggle of Asian Americans and the myth of the model minority, which, although isn't as widely known and protested against as other types of racism, is extremely prevalent in our society and extremely damaging to Asian American students and adults.

I would strongly recommend this book to anyone from elementary school to high school; the words and graphics are simple but the message is deep and extremely beautiful. When I read the book, I literally couldn't put it down and had to finish the entire thing in one sitting. One thing about the book that let me down was the ending. If I told you the ending it would spoil the book, but the ending was disappointing in that it fed back into the myth of the model minority. All in all, this is a great book.

Recommended Titles:

The Secret Coders Series by Gene Luen Yang (This book is written by the same author as Level Up. The series has many books, all of which are very interesting.

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang (This book is also written by Yang and is also about Asian American struggles)