

Title: *Zen and the Art of Faking It*
Author: Jordan Sonnenblick
Perspectives Category: Religion and Belief

Respondent Name and Grade: Matthew J., 9th Grade

Response Date: March 24, 2021

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

The plot of *Zen and The Art of Faking It* by Jordan Sonnenblick is about a boy named San Lee who moves towns and pretends to be a Buddhist. San falls in love and has to juggle between his actual life and his new pretend life.

2. *Which character did you identify with the most and why?*

I identify most with the character of San because he is an introvert and struggles with socialization. According to the text, "I didn't actually hear the beat of a different drummer, but maybe I could pretend to be unique. Be unique? It was so crazy it just might work. But what was unique about me? I was poor. I was Chinese. I was adopted." (Sonnenblick 13). This shows how San is struggling to fit in.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I think the main message of this book is be yourself because, according to the text, "It's the end of summer, and I'm brushing my teeth before bed, looking in the mirror. High school starts tomorrow. Yikes! High school. I don't know what classes I'll like. I don't know what clubs I'll join (although I'm thinking I might go out for basketball). I only know one person I'll be hanging out with. But maybe that's enough. I really think I'll be OK. Np, I know I'll be OK. Trust me."(Sonnenblick 264). This shows how San has come to terms with who he is and is ready for high school.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "Preachy"?*

The main message of this book didn't come across as "preachy", but is well integrated into the story.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

I agreed with the belief that attachment to desire is the origin of all suffering. Because, for the most part, it is true. Almost all the world's problems come from someone's desire for something. For Example, World War 1 was caused by a Serbian who killed the ruler of Austria-Hungary, because he wanted his people to be free.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs changed or reaffirmed through reading the book?*

My beliefs weren't changed that much, I don't believe in a god, and if I were too, I don't think reading a book would alter my viewpoint. At most, it would persuade me to research further.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I'd like to see the perspective of someone who disagrees with the Buddhist beliefs, and I don't think this book showed enough skepticism for it to be realistic, with the exception of Peter

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, ect. And if so, how?*

This book made me want to read up a little more on Buddhism. The author actually suggests a book, within the text, "If you are interested in learning more about the theory and practice of Zen, you might want to start where I did, with a little charming book called *The Little Zen Companion*, by David Schiller. Many of the quotations in my book may be found collected in Mr. Schiller's fascinating work. Of course you can't really become a Zen practitioner by reading a book, but reading up on the subject will certainly give you a lot of food for thought." (Sonnenblick 265). This book got me interested in the topic of Zen Buddhism.

9. *What type of reader (Based on age, interests, perspectives, ect.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend this book to someone who is 13+, and interested in Eastern Religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism.

10. *What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Many of the books that I have read don't go too deep into perspectives, so I can't really say. However, I am excited to read more from the perspectives of Buddhists, as the book was interesting and thought provoking.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Tatjana T., Grade 11

Date Reviewed: April 10, 2023

1. The main plot of "Zen and the Art of Faking It" revolves around San Lee, a middle school boy who pretends to be a Zen master to impress his classmates and gain popularity. He creates a fake persona and begins leading meditation sessions, but as he delves deeper into his charade, he starts to question his own authenticity and struggles with the consequences of his actions.
2. I most identified with Julia, San Lee's classmate and love interest, because she challenges San Lee's facade and encourages him to be true to himself. She questions his motivations and pushes him to confront his own insecurities and fears, which resonated with my belief in being genuine and authentic in relationships.
3. The main message of this book is about the importance of being true to oneself and embracing authenticity. It highlights the dangers of pretending to be someone you're not and

the consequences that can arise from trying to conform to societal expectations or seeking superficial validation.

4. The main message of the book was effectively integrated into the story through San Lee's character arc and the challenges he faces as he grapples with his fake persona. It did not come off as preachy, as it was conveyed through San Lee's internal struggles and realizations, rather than through overt moralizing or lecturing.

5. One perspective explored in the book is the idea of authenticity and the pressure to conform to societal norms. I agreed with the perspective that being true to oneself and embracing authenticity is important, as shown through San Lee's character arc. It reinforced my belief in the value of being genuine and true to oneself.

6. Through reading this book, my belief in the importance of authenticity and being true to oneself was reaffirmed. It reminded me of the consequences that can arise from pretending to be someone you're not and the importance of being genuine in relationships and interactions with others.

7. One perspective that may have been missing from the book is a more nuanced exploration of the societal pressures that contribute to the desire to conform and the challenges that individuals may face in resisting those pressures. The book focuses more on San Lee's internal struggles, and additional exploration of external factors could have added depth to the story.

8. This book encouraged me to further explore the topic of authenticity and the societal pressures to conform through more reading and research. It prompted me to reflect on my own beliefs about being true to oneself and the challenges that individuals may face in embracing authenticity in a world that often values conformity.

9. I would suggest this book to middle school or early high school readers who are interested in stories about identity, authenticity, and the challenges of navigating social expectations during adolescence. It may also appeal to readers who enjoy realistic fiction with relatable characters and themes of self-discovery.

10. "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger and "Speak" by Laurie Halse Anderson would make good additions to this category of Perspectives biography, as they also explore themes of authenticity, identity, and the challenges of navigating societal expectations during adolescence from the perspective of teenage protagonists.