

ANZU AND THE REALM OF DARKNESS



Discussion Notes

- Anzu's family are celebrating Obon, a festival to honour the spirits of their ancestors. Why do you think Anzu is reluctant to join her parents and brother in celebrating this year?
- Anzu tells her new neighbour Fig that her name is Anne. Which name do you think Anzu prefers to use? Do you think her answer would change in different times or places?
- Anzu says, 'I'd rather disappear than feel like this. Like a nobody.' Then Anzu does disappear, into Yomi. Do you think she meant it when she wished to disappear? How does she feel when she realises she is no longer at home?
- Obaachan, Anzu's grandmother, tells Anzu about *musuhi*, which is the energy of life that ties all things together. She says Anzu has a lot of *musuhi*. What parts of the story show that Anzu is full of life's energy?
- Queen of Yomi, Izanami no Mikoto, starts off being kind to Anzu – but then she gets angry and frightening. What clues are there that Izanami is not quite what she seems?
- How is sound used in this graphic novel? How many different sound effects can you find?
- When Anzu first starts to feel fuzzy and notice her hands are turning black, the first person she realises she has forgotten the name of is her brother. Who do you think would be the first person you'd think about if you were in her position?
- Anzu ends up in Yomi because she is trying to get her precious necklace back. It had been given to her by her grandmother. What item would you travel to the underworld to get back?
- The tanuki at the night market tells Anzu that 'black dogs only bring bad luck'. Do you think this is true for Anzu and the Gatekeeper?
- Anzu says, 'In my world, standing out feels like getting the air squeezed out of me.' Can you understand how she feels? Have you ever felt like this?
- Anzu stands up to Izanami and says she won't return to her. Can you think of a time you have stood up to someone who tried to make you do something you knew was wrong or you didn't want to do? If not, can you think of a time you wish you had?
- The end of the book lists some Japanese kami (gods) and yokai (monsters). Which do you like best and why?