

The Gentle Way

An Autobiographical Essay for *VSA arts*

by Lynn Manning

Discussion Questions

1. The author does not mention his disability until several paragraphs into the story. Even so, he establishes a very big clue right in the beginning. Do you know what that clue is? Was it obvious to you before this question? Why, or why not?
2. Why does the author title the story, “The Gentle Way?” What is it about the opening of the story that makes the title ironic? What is irony?
3. How does the author differentiate being blind from being visually impaired? Why do you think he does this? Are you, or is anyone you know, blind or visually impaired? Please elaborate.
4. What is it about judo that makes it particularly well suited for practice by people with visual impairment? How might those things benefit others who practice judo?
5. What is “grappling?” Name another popular grappling martial art.
6. What is the first tenet of judo? How is it applied in the martial art? How might it be applied in your everyday life?
7. The third tenet of judo is, “Strive to make society better through the perfection of self.” Give an example of how one person’s pursuit of self perfection can benefit society.

8. The Paralympic Games, the Olympic Games, and the Special Olympics World Games are three international competitive sporting events. When and where do they take place? How are they similar? How do they differ?
9. Has anyone ever underestimated your ability to do something? How did you feel? If you had the opportunity to prove them wrong, how did you feel afterward? What did you learn from the experience?

Writing Activities

- Blindness and visual impairment are often categorized as a “sensory disability.” What does this mean? Can you name another well-known sensory disability? How might someone with that particular disability describe the activities at a judo tournament? Write an example paragraph.
- The author chose to tell his story in both past tense and present tense. Why do you think he did this? How did it affect your experience of the story? Think of an everyday example of present tense story telling? Write a paragraph demonstrating this. Rewrite the paragraph in the past tense.

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