

BATTLE OR GRATITUDE? ATTITUDES CONVEYED TO CHILDREN BY
POKÉMON, BAKUGAN, AND MAGIC TREE HOUSE BOOKS

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Although research has been done on the violence of children's television and video games, less attention has been paid to recent children's books. The Bakugan and Pokémon games (owned by Sega and Nintendo, respectively) include a series of books for young readers published by the educational publisher Scholastic. Bakugan and Pokémon teach children that the default position in their daily interactions with others should be the battle stance. The emphasis that toys like Bakugan or Pokémon place on the issue of power disrupts the complex and delicate processes of aesthetic, moral, and intellectual discernment just beginning to take shape in young children. Psychologists and peace activists often encourage parents to replace TV cartoons and games with reading, an activity that ordinarily helps children to develop imaginative solutions, verbalize rather than act out, and acquire skills in symbolic conceptualization. However, the creative power of the book, just as with other media, can be infiltrated and appropriated by commercial and warlike causes. This paper contrasts Bakugan and Pokémon entertainments with the Magic Tree House books by Mary Pope Osborne, which feature attributes that children prize: adventure, physical courage, independence, and the collection and categorization of information. In addition, Osborne's constructive and benevolent books instill the value of gratitude.
