

CHRONICLES OF A
**LIZARD
NOBODY**



TWICE CARNEGIE MEDAL WINNER

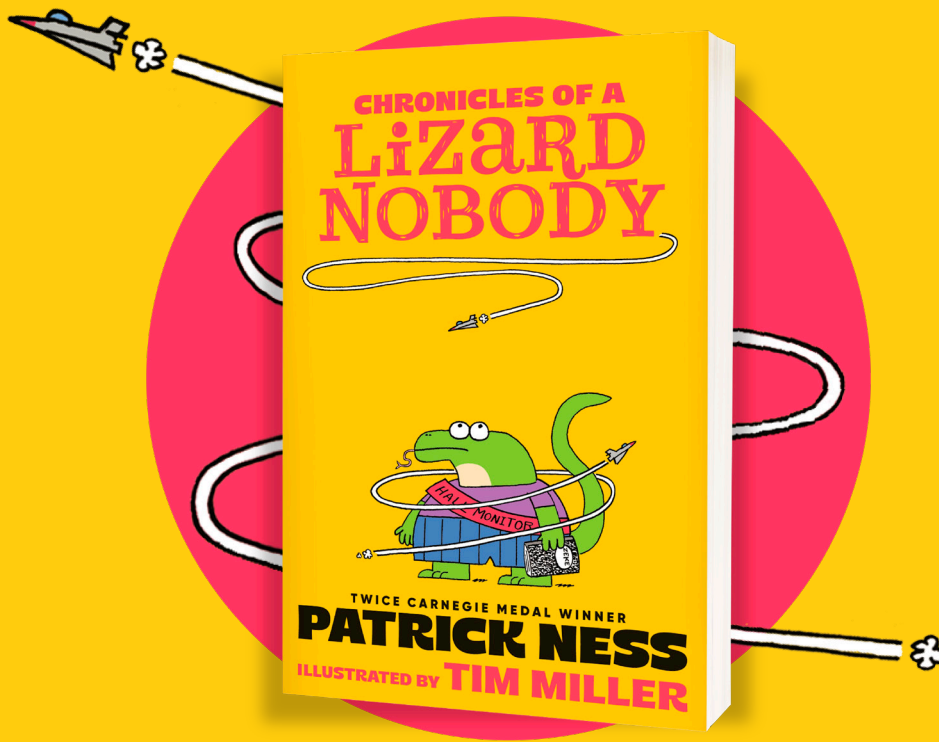
PATRICK NESS

ILLUSTRATED BY **TIM MILLER**

TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Romi Sharp

WALKER BOOKS



CHRONICLES OF LIZARD NOBODY
CREATOR: PATRICK NESS
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ABOUT THE BOOK

From the best-selling author of *A Monster Calls*, this funny, wise middle-grade series explodes every stereotype—including what it means to be a hero—in a brilliant reptilian take on surviving school.

Master storyteller Patrick Ness turns to middle grade in a hilarious adventure about a mismatched group of animals attending school together, brought to life by brilliantly funny illustrations.

Zeke and Daniel have just been made hall monitors by Principal Wombat. This has nothing to do with the fact that they are monitor lizards. And never mind the fact Alicia, the only other monitor lizard in the school, is also a hall monitor.

Somehow, the three hall monitors must impose order on arrogant lions, excitable seals and super-relaxed pandas. And worst of all, there is Pelicarnassus! A pompous giant pelican and the son of a major supervillain, who inexplicably has it out for the lizards. Can the hall monitor lizards and their new friend, a blind, fearsome red-tailed hawk, protect their school from all manner of outlandish threats?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Ness is the award-winning and bestselling author of the *Chaos Walking* trilogy, which inspired a major motion picture. He is also the author of critically acclaimed novels *A Monster Calls*, *More Than This*, *Release*, *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*, *And the Ocean Was Our Sky* and *Burn*. He has won every major prize in children's fiction, including the Carnegie Medal twice. He has also written the screenplay for the film version of *A Monster Calls* and *Class*, the BBC Doctor Who drama.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Tim Miller is the author-illustrator of *Moo Moo in a Tutu*, *What's Cooking*, *Moo Moo?*, *Tiny Kitty*, *Big City*, and *Izzy Paints*. He is also the illustrator of *Horse Meets Dog* by Elliott Kalan, *Snapsy the Alligator (Did Not Ask to Be in This Book)* and *Snapsy the Alligator And His Best Friend Forever! (Probably)* by Julie Falatko, *Margarash* by Mark Riddle, and the middle-grade series *Hamstersaurus Rex* by Tom O'Donnell. He lives in New Jersey with his wife and three rescue cats.

ABOUT THE TEACHER NOTES AUTHOR

Romi Sharp is a qualified Early Childhood and Primary School educator based in Melbourne, with a passion for art and children's literature. She currently works as a freelance publicist and digital marketer, copywriter, curriculum writer, video animator, book reviewer and picture book writer. Romi is the founder and director of the Australian support community for children's authors and illustrators, Just Write For Kids (est. 2014) and its subsidiary promotional service, Books On Tour PR & Marketing.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English (Language; Literature and Literacy) • Science (Chemistry) • Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography) • The Arts (Drama; Visual Arts)

THEMES

Heroism • Challenging stereotypes • Bullying/friendship
• Economic disparity • Depression • Body image



Teacher Notes

BEFORE READING

Ask students to discuss:

- What makes a supervillain?
- What makes a hero?
- What traits or characteristics would you typically attribute to each, supervillains and heroes?
- What is a Hall Monitor? What is their role and its importance to the safety and cleanliness of a school?
- What other kind of 'monitor' can you think of?
- Look at the cover of *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*. What connections can you make with the title, image and reference to a 'Hall Monitor'? What else do you notice about the cover that might give some clues as to what this story might be about? How does it make you feel? What do you wonder?
- Read the blurb. Discuss.
- Watch the video about a Hall Monitor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nFXHBPkvGw>. Discuss the benefits and challenges of the role. How do you think being a Hall Monitor could be dangerous?

DURING READING

CHAPTER 1:

Setting the scene

- How do the opening lines hook you in?
- What do we immediately learn about the main characters?
- What does the author intend for readers to think about?
- How does the author end the chapter? How does it make you feel?

Vocabulary

coincidentally, appreciatively, automatically

Discuss and write down the meanings of the vocabulary terms. These are all adverbs (describing verbs). Write these in your own sentences.

Literary Technique: Humour (Puns)

"I'm making you both Hall Monitors," Principal Wombat said, though she quickly added, "This isn't because you're monitor lizards." (p.7)

- The author has used puns for comedic effect. Can you spot the pun? In this instance, the author has used the term 'monitor' to describe both the role of Hall Monitor and the lizard kind of monitor. Brainstorm some synonyms for 'monitor' and write a 'punny' sentence. For example, 'watchdog', 'detector', 'scanner', etc.
- Illustrate.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

- Why does Principal Wombat want Zeke and Daniel to be Hall Monitors? What is the 'coincidence'? Do you think it really is a coincidence?
- What did we learn about Principal Wombat? Why is Daniel so curious about her butt?

CHAPTERS 2 - 4

Vocabulary

grubby, armoured, peach-throated, cold-blooded, voluminous

Write down the definitions of these adjectives (describing words). Write each term in a sentence.

Literary Technique: Metaphors

"... but then the lunch bell rang, every door opened, and they were suddenly stones in a river of their classmates." (p.15)

- A metaphor is a figure of speech to represent an object or action symbolic of something else.
- The Hall Monitors are described as 'stones in a river', however this is not literally the case. In reality, they can't suddenly turn into stones.
- How does this statement symbolise both the literal sense and the metaphorical sense in terms of what being in amongst the crowd of classmates represents?
- Write another metaphor or analogy to describe being stuck or overrun by a crowd. Be creative!

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Character Profile

Create a Character Profile sheet about one of the main characters – Zeke, Daniel, Alicia, Principal Wombat or Pelicarnassus. Include some adjectives, fun facts and a picture. To help with your character analysis, find parts of the text to show the way they Speak (How do they speak?), Think (Thoughts and feelings), Effect on others (How do others react to them?), Act (What do they do?) and Look (What do they look like?).

In Chapter 2, we learn more about the personalities/traits of Daniel and Alicia. What did you learn about their particular behaviours?

Questions

- How does Zeke's attitude towards the Hall Monitor role differ from that of Daniel and Alicia? Why do you think that might be the case?
- In Chapter 3, is the phrase, 'Birds held themselves above most of the rest of the school, and yes, that was literal' (p.22) considered a metaphor? How?
- What is Zeke's general attitude towards most birds? Why might he think this?
- What kind of behaviour makes Pelicarnassus a bully?
- Did Zeke do the right thing? What is your view on violence, and do heroes need to be violent to face supervillains?

CHAPTERS 5 – 7:

Vocabulary

expelled, protested, employed, flooded

Write down the definitions of these verbs (action words). Write each term in a sentence.

Literary Technique: Hyperbole

"Volleyball was the worst thing in the entire world." (p.45)

Hyperbole is an exaggerated statement, not meant to be literal, and used in emotive / emphasised situations or dialogue.

Highlight the part of the statement that are not meant to be taken literally or used as an emotive, exaggerated statement.

How does this language create a greater impact on the reader? Re-write this sentence using less emotive terms and compare its effectiveness. For example, 'Not many people like volleyball.'

Discuss Chapter 7 with its reference to France being on Zeke's knee and his feelings about it. ('He shouldn't have had to have France on his knee at his age.')

Do you think this is a form of hyperbole? Why or why not?

Do you think volleyball is really 'the worst thing in the entire world'? List some things that might actually be the worst things to have to live with/participate in.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Venn Diagram

Inside a Venn Diagram, compare the similarities and differences between Pelicarnassus and Miel the hawk. Think about their personality types, mannerisms, appearances, species, other qualities, etc.

Questions

Do you think Zeke deserved to be expelled? Do you think it was reasonable to take away his Hall Monitor responsibilities?

Do you think Principal Wombat might be right or wrong about Zeke and Pelicarnassus becoming close friends?

How is 'Everyone acts like that's the end of the world' (p.34) a hyperbole statement? What lesson is Alicia giving when she says, what you do after a mistake is the most important?

What did you learn about Miel? What is meant by the statement, '... there was still a big gulf in social status between them and a hawk.' (p.39)

Chapter 7 describes the idea of Zeke having the whole country of France on his knee, and that it is an inheritance through the boys of the family. Discuss the term 'patriarchy'. Why might this inheritance be a 'burden'? How does the author use humour in this scenario?

CHAPTERS 8 – 10:

Vocabulary

strength, brutality, conflict resolution, amity, enemy, invasion

Write down the definitions of these nouns (names of things). What do they all have in common? (ie. connecting with others). Write a sentence or short story including all of the terms.

Literary Technique: Idioms

"The day his father died, Zeke's mum came home with a black dog." (p.46)

An idiom is a phrase or expression that usually presents a figurative, non-literal meaning attached to the phrase.

- What are some examples of common idioms you know?
- Discuss the meaning of the idiom, 'the black dog', and find out if there are other terms or phrases that relate to someone being depressed/sad/melancholy. For example, 'down in the dumps', 'feeling blue', 'in a funk', 'depths of despair', 'hit rock bottom', and so on.
- Select an idiom and draw a picture to represent this feeling.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Persuasive Text

Students can choose the viewpoint of either Zeke or Principal Wombat and write a persuasive text either arguing for or against the need to apologise to Pelicarnassus.

Students need to include an introductory paragraph with their opinion, supporting arguments and a conclusion to sum up their reasoning.

Questions

In Chapter 8, how does Zeke describe 'the black dog' and its impact on his mum? How do you think this makes Zeke feel? What does he do to manage his own feelings? Discuss ways that we might be able to help someone with a 'black dog'.

In Chapter 9, Zeke is made to apologise to Pelicarnassus. What do you think of the way Principal Wombat handled this? Was it fair or unfair? Why?

What are the 'values' that Principal Wombat is trying to encourage at the school? Do you think she is enforcing these appropriately?

What does it mean to 'swallow your pride' (p.52) With a partner, discuss the scene in Chapter 10 between Zeke and Pelicarnassus. How is the pelican's bullying significant to the invasion of 'France', and how is Zeke's bravery significant to how the 'French' fought back? What does this make you wonder about 'France' on Zeke's knee? Could it be an analogy?

CHAPTERS 11 – 13:

Vocabulary

agog, loudmouth, bad-tempered, popular, downcast

Write these terms in sentences, adding more to the descriptions with extra adjectives.

Literary Technique: Similes

"But Zeke had a peach-coloured throat (as a peach-throated monitor lizard) and unfortunately could blush as easily as a piglet." (p.78)

A simile is a figure of speech comparing one thing with another of a different kind, using words such as 'like', 'so', 'as' than'.

- Thinking about the above simile (blush as easily as a piglet), write your own simile to show how Zeke felt in that moment. For example, 'as red as a beetroot', 'blush like a cherry blossom', 'pinker than a bald piglet', and so on.
- Illustrate your sentence.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: 3D Maps

Students hypothesise about the chemical reaction of mixing salt, flour and water together. Then, experiment with these ingredients to create a doughy consistency suitable for creating structures. Students can research and write an information report about Antarctica, and design and build a map of the region with the dough mixture. What other ingredients, materials or information can students add to improve their design?

Questions

- How has Daniel showed his friendship and loyalty to Zeke in Chapter 11?
- What is a 'redemption arc'?
- Why would Principal Wombat need Zeke to be both a Hall Monitor and a hero?
- Do you think Miel's reaction and feelings about falling off the pillar was justified? How might you feel, especially if you couldn't see?
- What did you learn about Mr MacPherson in Chapter 13? What sort of relationship does he have with the students?
- Why do you think Zeke's 'stomach sank' when asked to visit Ms Pfister in the stockroom? What impression does this imply for the following chapter?
- What do you like about the illustrations? How do they express the emotions/tension/mood of the characters and settings?

CHAPTERS 14 – 16:

Vocabulary

superior, haughty, scuttling, disdain, husky, bashful

Write down the definitions of these terms. Write each word in a sentence that relates to the behaviours and descriptions of the characters.

Literary Technique: Visual Literacy

"... blinking down at him over the bottom half of the door, her glasses halfway down her nose." ... "People often said a voice 'dripped with disdain'. Ms Pfister's gushed it." (p.95)

Imagine this moment in your mind. Highlight the specific parts of the language used that show the reader what Ms Pfister looks and sounds like, and also what impression she gives.

Write about a part of the story using visual imagery techniques for a partner to illustrate.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Identifying Stereotypes

Students draw a labelled diagram of an animal of their choice, pointing out all of its 'stereotypical' characteristics and behaviours. For example, ponies are friendly, timid, have beautiful manes, obedient, etc.

Questions

What impression did you get of Ms Pfister before discovering what kind of animal she is? Were you surprised when you found out? Why?

What does Chapter 14 encourage you to think about when making judgements about people (and animals)? Do you think we have natural unconscious biases, or unfairly / unknowingly judge or trust others before we know them? Identify the meaning of 'stereotypes' and discuss how we can challenge them.

What do you think about the interaction between Zeke and Ms Pfister in Chapter 15? Do you think he was too aggressive or did he appropriately stand up for himself? Why is this important?

Why is the 'power of truth and justice' important to Alicia? Do you think this makes Zeke a 'superhero'? Why or why not? Why does Zeke not feel good about his actions? How is he different to Alicia?

CHAPTERS 17 – 19:

Vocabulary

'wearing' as in 'his patience wearing thin' (p.111)
'spell' as in 'A Harlequin in court cast a spell' (p.115)
'impression' as in 'The flying and the killing make enough of an impression!' (p.121)

These terms are homonyms (words that share the same spelling and pronunciation but have different meanings). Write two sentences for each word that make sense with the correct meanings. Can you find more homonyms in the text, or add your own to a list?

Create a graphic showing the differences between homonyms, homophones and homographs, and students provide examples of each.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Short Story Narrative

Write your own short story about how France came to be a curse on Zeke's family's knee. What other 'history' can you make up for this occurrence? Who was involved? What are the problems and challenges? Is there a resolution?

Questions

Look at a map to find where France is situated in Europe. What are the countries on its borders? Retell the story of France from Zeke's narrative. What was/is the problem? What did Zeke's ancestor do? What are the benefits of having France on his knee? What could be some possible solutions to the curse?

In Chapter 19, Miel is trying to work Zeke out. He asks, 'You kind or weak? Brave or passive? Wise or afraid?' (p.122). Why does Alicia wonder if you could be wise and afraid? Is it possible to be all of the above?

CHAPTERS 20 - 22:

Vocabulary

squawked, complained, whimpered

Write the definitions for the vocabulary terms. Discuss that these are verbs to describe a specific action or feeling. Brainstorm and list synonyms and shades of meaning for these verbs.

Literary Technique: Metaphors

The author has used the metaphor of 'heavy burden' (p.133) to illustrate how Zeke's mum is struggling with her situation. Although she doesn't have heavy things to carry in a literal sense, what does this tell you about how she is feeling? What are some of the burdens that Zeke is feeling himself? (ie. worrying about his mum, bullying, France)

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Letter Writing

Write a letter to a loved one showing your appreciation and/or offering a helping hand for a responsibility or a chore at home, or an act of kindness. Alternatively, students might like to write a letter to a family member inviting them to a school event or special occasion.

Questions

Why do you think the egret, Norman, wanted to tell Zeke about Pelicarnassus's plans? What do you think might happen at school?

In Chapter 21, the black dog whimpers. What do you think this means about Zeke's mum?

Zeke would rather carry the burdens for his mum than have her suffering. Going back to what Miel wondered about him, do you think Zeke is kind or weak? Brave or passive? Wise or afraid? Or a combination of a few?

Why do you think Zeke wanted to talk about his dad to Alicia's mum? How is it helpful for him to have a trusted adult to talk to about his feelings?

CHAPTERS 23 - 26:

Vocabulary

school, scheme

Identify the common spelling pattern ('sch') in the terms above. Break down the words into sounds or syllables. List other words with similar spelling or phoneme patterns (such as 'schedule'), and ones that sound different. For example, the 'sch' in 'school' makes a different sound to the 'sch' in 'schmooze'.

Literary Technique: Humour (Sarcasm)

"'Oh, I hear you,' Pelicarnassus said, with a terrible, terrible smile. 'I hear you loud and clear.'" (p.144)
"'What are you?' Pelicarnassus said to him. 'The narrator?' No. He was not the narrator." (p.145)

The author has used sarcasm / tongue-in-cheek as one of the humour strategies for comedic effect, especially when Pelicarnassus speaks. This kind of dry humour usually takes place in a mocking tone and is a way to leave the other person amused, puzzled or contemplating an absurdity.

Discuss how the author uses different kinds of humour to show the characters' personalities, and to keep the reader engaged throughout the story so far.

Brainstorm more sarcastic statements that either Pelicarnassus or Zeke could have spoken to one another.

Activity: Role Play

Write a conversation script between the two and act it out or perform with props.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Challenging Stereotypes Poster

Students can create a poster or meme that portrays a superhero and/or a supervillain in a stereotypical fashion, but turning this idea on its head to challenge it. For example, a superhero wearing a cape but the hero is a mouse, or a supervillain that is a guinea pig. Students write a funny caption and illustrate.

Questions

What does Miel mean when he says, "*The tyrant cannot bear a bigger tyrant, so he must keep him small!*" (p.141)? Does he mean this literally or figuratively? Is he right?

What strategies is Pelicarnassus using to bully Zeke (and his friends)? Write these down.

Recall the definition of 'stereotype'. What makes cheese and wine a stereotype when people explain what France is famous for? List some other common stereotypes about people, places or things you're familiar with. Can these be challenged?

How does Pelicarnassus portray the lizards in Chapter 26? Is this a stereotype that he believes to be true for all lizards? How does this relate to the social status culture that exists in the animal kingdom and in our society?

If what Pelicarnassus (or other bullies) says is the truth, does it mean it is deserved? Discuss how the other students reacted to him. What might happen next?

CHAPTERS 27 - 29:

Vocabulary

scolding, yelling, smirking, sneered, smashing, cry

- Discuss the meanings of these emotive verbs. Write each of these in a compound or complex sentence, making sure to use the correct tense.
- For example, 'sneered' is past tense, 'scolding', 'yelling', 'smirking', 'smashing' are present tense, and 'cry' could be used in present and future tenses.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: How to Build a Robot Suit

In partners, students can invent their own giant robot suit. They will need to write a procedural plan on how to build it, including a labelled diagram, materials needed, an introduction on its purpose, step-by-step instructions and a conclusion with some helpful hints or additional information.

Questions

- Explain how Pelicarnassus planted the fighter planes on Zeke's knee aka France. What is his overall plan?
- What do you think of the giant robot pelican suit? Does this remind you of other stories about supervillains? Do you think this is meant to be a stereotypical example?
- Do you think Pelicarnassus is a good supervillain? Why or why not?
- What has Miel made Zeke realise about himself? How is this helpful for Zeke?
- Do you think there could be more than one superhero? Who else, and why?

CHAPTERS 30 - 33:

Vocabulary

supervillain, super powers, arch-enemies, hallway, sweetheart

Write the words and their definitions. Notice that these are compound words (a series of two or more words that collectively form a single word. They can have no space, a space or hyphenated). Break these into two words to write an equation. For example, 'super' + 'villain' = 'supervillain'. Write down other compound words beginning with 'super'. Find other compound words in the text.

Literary Technique: Show, Don't Tell

"Hi, sweetheart,' she said, and she came over, and she kissed him on the forehead, and she took him into a big, big hug." (p.205)

Given what we know about Zeke's mum, how does the language used 'show' the reader how the character is feeling, rather than simply 'telling' us? What words show how Zeke's mum is ready to take care of him again? How is this more effective than writing, 'Zeke's mum felt better.'? Write another sentence 'showing' a character who is feeling more spirited after not being well.

Discussion Questions, Comprehension and Activities

Activity: Comic Strips

Students can create an illustrated comic strip of the battle scene between Pelicarnassus and the friends. Students decide on a number of sequences, and include dialogue and onomatopoeia for effect. Refer to the illustrations in the book for styling and design ideas. Share comics with friends.

Questions

- What did Zeke learn about friendship? What did he learn about being a superhero?
- Were you surprised at how Zeke helped Pelicarnassus, or did you predict it?
- How does the author keep readers engaged? Is there specific language used to make the text funny/interesting/exciting/scary?
- What did you think of the battle scene between Pelicarnassus and the friends? How did the author shape the narrative to show rising action, a climax, a resolution and a conclusion in this scene?
- How do you feel about the ending? Do you think it's necessary for the black dog to still be with Zeke's mum, even though she is feeling better?
- What do you think might happen in Zeke's life after the story ends? Will he continue to have good days?

Characters:

- Principal Wombat
- Zeke
- Daniel
- Alicia
- Pelicarnassus
- The Normans
- Miel
- The Pandas
- Mr MacPherson
- Ms Pfister
- Mum / the black dog
- Other supporting characters

Who is your favourite character? Why?
Were there any characters you didn't like? Why?



FURTHER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Possible further topics to explore: stereotypes, bullying, social status and hierarchy, violence, positive self-image, lizards, food chain, depression/anxiety.
- What are the main themes of the story? What important messages does the author intend to portray?
- What did you learn about Zeke? What are the challenges that he is dealing with?
- What do you think Zeke learned about himself? What positive thoughts and strategies will help him in the future?
- What did you learn about friendship and bullying? Make a table comparing the behaviours of the characters (Friendship vs Bullying).
- What did you learn about 'the black dog'? Do you think there was anything more Zeke could do for his mum? Do you think Zeke could've done anything differently to manage his feelings about his mum's sadness?
- What do you like about the illustrations throughout the book? How do they support and add to the text? How do they convey humour and emotions? What kind of style or artistic media do you think the illustrator has used, and is this suitable for this story?
- What aspects of the story did you find the most humorous/exciting/stressful? Why?
- Is there a part or parts of the story you can relate to? These could include: dealing with bullying, self image, being a Hall Monitor, and so on. Write a recount about a difficult situation that you overcame.
- Do you like studying geography or history? Did the discussions around France help you to find out more and learn facts about the country or region?
- What did you learn about the role of the Hall Monitors? What happened to the school halls in the end? How were Zeke and his friends good Hall Monitors?
- How are Zeke, Daniel, Alicia and Miel (and Principal Wombat) all superheroes? Can you think of anyone else in the story that could be a superhero?
- Make a list of ways you'd like to be a superhero. Draw a picture of yourself as a superhero.
- Do you think the characters will have another adventure? What do you think their next adventure might be about?



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