



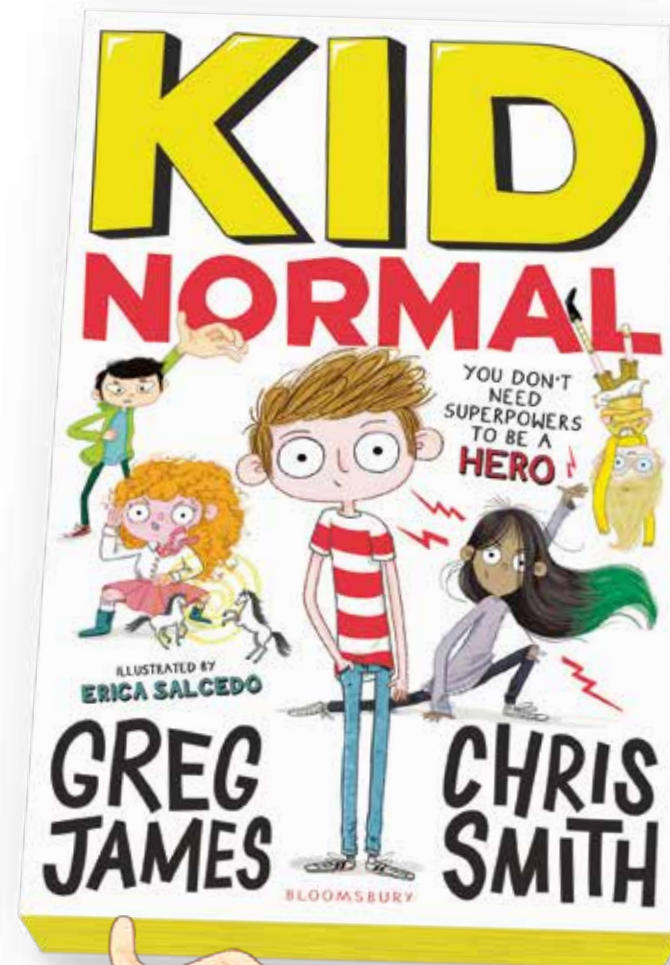
ONE CITY.
ONE BOOK.
A THOUSAND
CONVERSATIONS.

KID NORMAL

GREG & CHRIS
JAMES SMITH

READING GUIDE

YOU DON'T NEED
SUPERPOWERS
TO BE A **HERO** ...



*'So funny it's
almost criminal'
Independent, i*

cityreads.co.uk



KID NORMAL READING GUIDE



YOUNG CITY READS

What Is Young City Reads?

Imagine sharing a book with your best friend, your teacher, your family or your bus driver. Reading a book together is a fun experience. Everyone should try it! Young City Reads is a BIG READ for children – a giant book group for schools.

Authors Greg James and Chris Smith, Brighton Festival and Young City Reads invite you to join us in a citywide read of *Kid Normal* from 1 March to 18 May 2018.

Who Is It For?

Young City Reads is for everyone: whether you're an avid adventurer, budding bookworm or a simply terrific teacher ... even mums and dads can join in. It doesn't matter who you are, Young City Reads is about opening up the world of words and ideas to everyone.



How Does It Work?

It couldn't be simpler. The idea is to get young readers (and grown-ups) everywhere reading *Kid Normal* between now and the end of May. All you need to do to get involved is pick up a copy from your local library or bookshop and start reading!

If you're a teacher you can sign up your whole class to receive class emails and free themed literacy resources, then read the book together in school.

SPECIAL OFFER: The Book Nook in Hove is offering participating schools 20% off the selected title and FREE DELIVERY straight to your school. To order please contact them on 01273 911988 / info@booknookuk.com

The Guide

This guide provides you with everything you need to know about Young City Reads. Taking you on a whistle-stop tour of *Kid Normal*, providing background information, reading hints, biographical facts and ideas for further reading.

Young City Reads Is a Collected Works CIC Project

Collected Works is a Brighton- and Hove-based social enterprise, devoted to reader development through the shared act of reading fiction in the community. The organisation is led by Artistic Director Sarah Hutchings.

For up-to-the-minute information visit cityreads.co.uk.



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Murph Cooper has a problem.

His new school is top secret and super weird. His classmates can all fly or control the weather or conjure tiny horses from thin air. And what's Murph's extraordinary skill? Um, oh yeah - he hasn't got one.

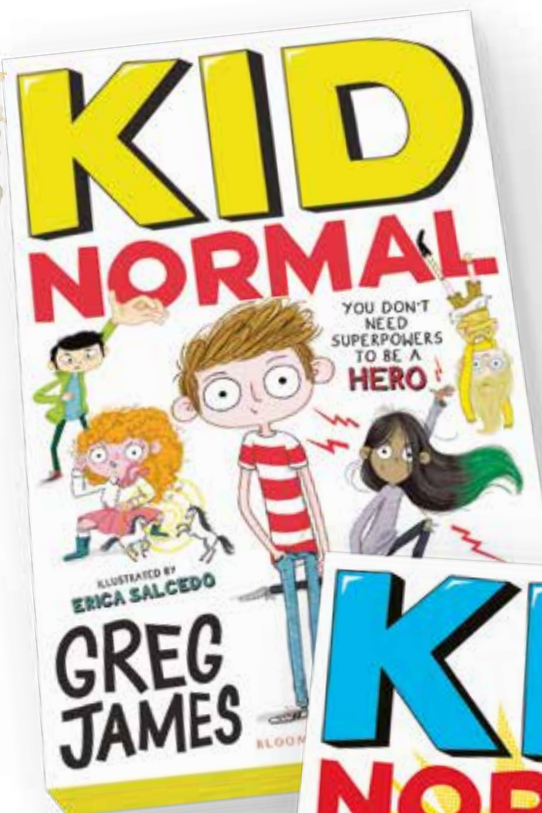
Just as well there are no revolting supervillains lurking nearby, their minds abuzz with evil plans. There are!? Right. Ok, then ...

It's time for **KID NORMAL** to become a hero!



'This spoof superhero epic certainly delivers: deliciously dastardly villains, capes, tights and mild-mannered heroes. Yet it also explores familiar school anxieties that everyone else is smarter, stronger, better. Here, even Kid Normal has superpowers!'

BookTrust



Don't miss the next hilarious **KID NORMAL** adventure!



KID NORMAL READING GUIDE



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Spotlight on GREG JAMES

GREG JAMES is a familiar voice and face on radio and TV. He's the host of BBC Radio 1's award-winning Drivetime show and presents the UK's Official Chart every Friday. On screen, Greg has hosted a variety of shows, most recently seen fronting BBC Children in Need. He is also the face of BT Sport's cricket coverage and in 2016 raised over a million pounds for Sport Relief by completing five triathlons in five cities in five days. Greg has no superpowers. In his spare time he enjoys the idea of having hobbies. But in reality, he's made all of them into work.

Spotlight on CHRIS SMITH

CHRIS SMITH is an award-winning journalist and broadcaster who delivers the news to millions of people every day as the presenter of Newsbeat on BBC Radio 1. Chris enjoyed a previous, glittering literary career as the winner of the H.E. Bates Short Story Competition 1981 (under tens category) with his tale 'Where Are the Brandy Snaps?' Chris has no superpowers either, although he enjoys pretending his cat Mabel can fly by picking her up and running around.

Together on Greg's show and in their weekly podcast, Chris and Greg are responsible for some of radio's most ludicrous games and characters, which genuinely wouldn't make any sense if we tried to explain them here.

Spotlight on ERICA SALCEDO (illustrator)

ERICA SALCEDO is a freelance illustrator living in Cuenca (Spain) where she was born. After studying Fine Arts in Castilla-La Mancha University, she specialized in graphic design and illustration doing a masters degree at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Her work is focused on children's illustration and is inspired by everyday life, and her imagination does the rest.

Erica loves drawing (obviously), travelling, animals, drinking tea every day, eating sweets and not taking life too seriously.

'We know that Brighton is full of superpowers: seagull evasion, shingle navigation and dolphin racing, to name but three. And now we're looking forward to adding a few new ones with the help of your awesome powers of creativity. We hope you enjoy meeting Murph and his friends in *Kid Normal*, and we can't wait to meet you all to make up some new stories!'

Greg James and Chris Smith

EVENTS

Greg James and Chris Smith LIVE at Brighton Festival

Interactive Schools Event

Fri 18 May, 10.30-11.30 a.m. (book signing afterwards)

Brighton Dome Concert Hall

Tickets £3 (early bird offer £1.50)



Young City Reads 2018 Launch

Selected schools celebrate World Book Day

Thurs 1 March

Library Visits for Your Class

Participating schools can book a FREE class visit with Brighton & Hove City Libraries.

To book please contact Jo Rosenberg on 01273 296977 / libraryclassvisits@brighton-hove.gov.uk



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ALL KINDS OF HEROIC

Further Reading from Brighton & Hove Libraries

If you loved *Kid Normal*, you'll love these other awesome adventures and tales of real-life heroes, available from Brighton & Hove Libraries: * =ebook available + =audiobook available

Fiction

Rosie Revere, Engineer by Andrea Beaty
Dr Vlogger by Tony Bradman
Electrighirl by Jo Cotterill
Flora and Ulysses by Kate DiCamillo *
Superhero Street by Phil Earle
Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly *
Super Daisy by Kes Gray
Mold and the Poison Plot by Lorraine Gregory
The Big Book of Superheroes by Bart King *
Superhero Mum by Timothy Knapman
Superhero Hotel by Abie Longstaff *
The Unlikely Adventures of Mabel Jones by Will Mabbitt +
Superhero School by Alan Macdonald *
The Accidental Secret Agent by Tom McLaughlin
Samira the Superhero Fairy by Daisy Meadows
The Magma Conspiracy by Alex Milway
Perijee and Me by Ross Montgomery
Julius Zebra: Bundle with the Britons! by Gary Northfield +
Dog Man and Cat Kid by Dav Pilkey
Varjak Paw by S.F. Said +
My Brother is a Superhero by David Solomons *
My Evil Twin is a Supervillain by David Solomons
Hamish and the WorldStoppers by Danny Wallace *



Extraordinary Ernie & Marvelous Maud by Frances Watts *
Supercat vs The Chip Thief by Jeanne Willis
Star Wars: Return of the Jedi by Ryder Windham
Supergirl at Super Hero High by Lisa Yee +
Dr Who: Time Lord Fairy Tales by various authors +

Non-Fiction

Sporting Heroes by Jane Bingham
How to Draw Comic Book Heroes by Mark Bergin
Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 tales of extraordinary women by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo *
Ellie Simmonds: Champion Swimmer by Clive Gifford
Mo Farah: Olympic Hero by Simon Hart
Rosa Parks by Lisbeth Kaiser
Animal Superheroes by Raphaël Martin
Stephen Hawking: Pioneering Scientist by Sonya Newland
Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World by Kate Pankhurst
David Attenborough by Sarah Ridley
What's So Special About Shakespeare? by Michael Rosen
Malala Yousafzai by Claire Throp *



You can search for more books, ebooks and audiobooks on the Brighton & Hove Libraries website:
brighton-hove.gov.uk/libraries

Did you know? Brighton & Hove Libraries offer free class visits to any of their libraries for local schools.
Email libraryclassvisits@brighton-hove.gov.uk or phone 01273 290800 to find out more.



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CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER 1

Murph Cooper hates the house he has just moved into with his mum and his brother Andy. The family is always having to move because of Mum's job, and Murph is fed up with it. His mum tries to reassure him that she's sure this move will turn out to be for the best. In fact, she suspects that 'it's going to be ... super.'

CHAPTER 2

Murph's mum can't find him a new school. Just when they've nearly given up hope, they discover a nondescript building at the end of a shabby road. It is called simply 'The School'. But neither Mr Souperman, the head teacher, nor his assistant Mr Drench, seem keen to talk to them. Not, that is, until Murph's mum says she is sure that with a little bit of help Murph 'could really fly'. This seems to change their minds. Murph can start on Monday!

CHAPTER 3

It's Murph's first day, and he quickly realises that there is something very unusual about The School. For example, before classes start, he spots a yellow canary-like figure with an umbrella float down from the sky. He follows it, and discovers that the canary is in fact a girl called Mary. She's in his year, and she kindly shows him the way to class.



CHAPTER 4

Apart from their teacher, Mr Flash, who is very loud and looks like he has spent decades at the gym, the classroom seems normal enough. Murph begins to relax.

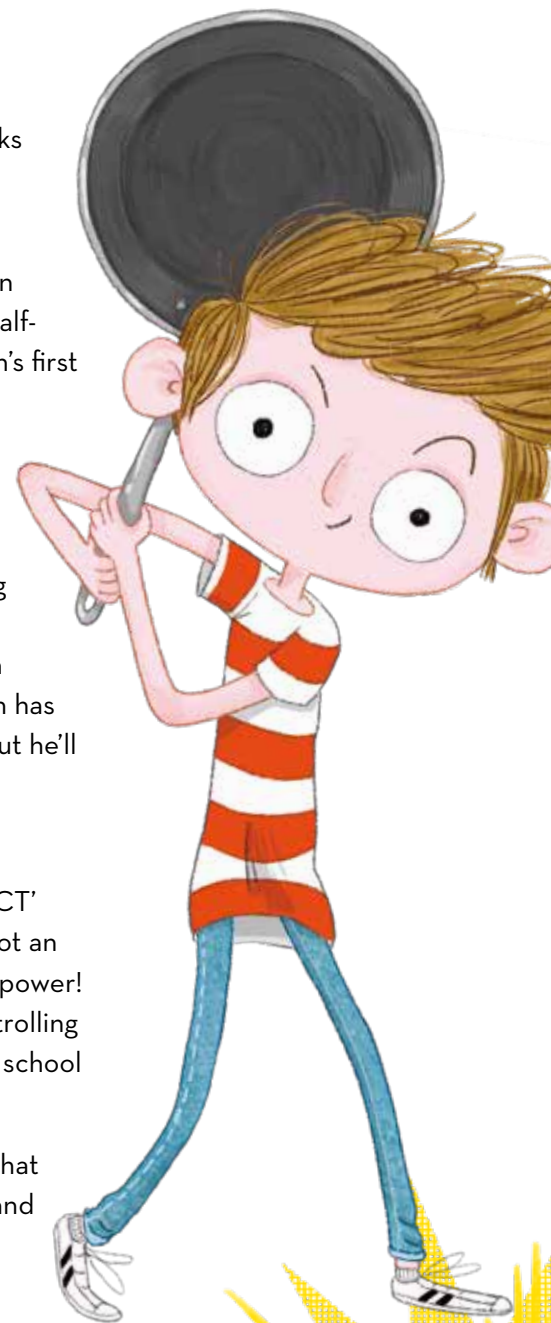
There's no time for readers to relax, however, as we are given our first glimpse of the book's baddy, Nektar – a disgusting half-man half-wasp creature – before the action returns to Murph's first lesson.

The lesson has a mysterious name: 'CT'. Murph doesn't understand anything that happens in it. First a boy called Timothy gets up and stares at a television for a while, then a shy girl called Nellie is called to the front and does nothing (although at the same time a strong breeze blows a window shut). Plus everyone keeps talking about capes, even though nobody's wearing one. Then Mr Flash calls on Murph! Murph has no idea what he's supposed to do! He's saved by the bell – but he'll be first up tomorrow.

CHAPTER 5

Mary spots Murph looking bewildered and explains things. 'CT' stands for Capability Training, and at this school a Cape is not an outer garment. It is a Capability – or, in other words, a superpower! Timothy's Cape is controlling electronics, and Nellie's is controlling the weather. Murph thinks back to what his mum said at the school gates. UH-OH! Do these people think he can actually fly?

The next day Murph summons the courage to tell Mr Flash that he can't fly. He is just a normal kid. Mr Flash roars in shock, and in the excitement several members of the class lose control of their Capes, including Hilda, a girl who can summon two tiny horses from thin air, and a tall boy who can balloon bits of his body to several times their normal size. Soon the class is chanting 'Kid Normal! Kid Normal!' Murph is mortified.



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Later, Mr Flash tells Mr Souperman the shocking news. Now Mr Souperman has a decision to make – keep Murph at the school, or admit that he made a mistake in admitting a normal boy to a top-secret school for children with Capes?

CHAPTER 6

On this cliffhanger, the authors take us back in time to learn how Nektar came to exist. Six months before, Clive Meeke was working in his lab at the Ribbon Robotics factory. He had been trying to use insect DNA to create a brilliant robot brain but after a year of no success, his boss, Arabella Ribbon, was demanding results. Finally, Meeke tried fusing his own brainwaves with those of a wasp. The experiment was a disaster: when Arabella Ribbon came into his lab, she found a crazed man-wasp hybrid in Meeke's chair. Nektar advanced on her, his new wrist stingers raised ... Nobody has seen Arabella since.

CHAPTER 7

Back at The School, Mr Souperman has sent Deborah and Dirk, two cool, older students, to collect Murph and bring him to the head's office. Murph is convinced he's about to be kicked out. In the waiting area, Murph meets Flora, the school secretary, a kind older lady with an open smile. Murph finds himself telling her his worries, and she offers him some heart-warming reassurance.

In the meeting with Mr Souperman, Murph is told that he will be allowed to stay as long as he keeps everything he sees at The School a complete secret from everybody. Even his mum.

CHAPTER 8

At Ribbon Robotics, Nektar is now in charge. He's buzzing with evil schemes and needs a loyal second in command to help. Nicholas Knox, a confident man with hair like an oily wave, gets the job. Knox has invented something incredibly useful for a supervillain – a mind-control helmet!

CHAPTER 9

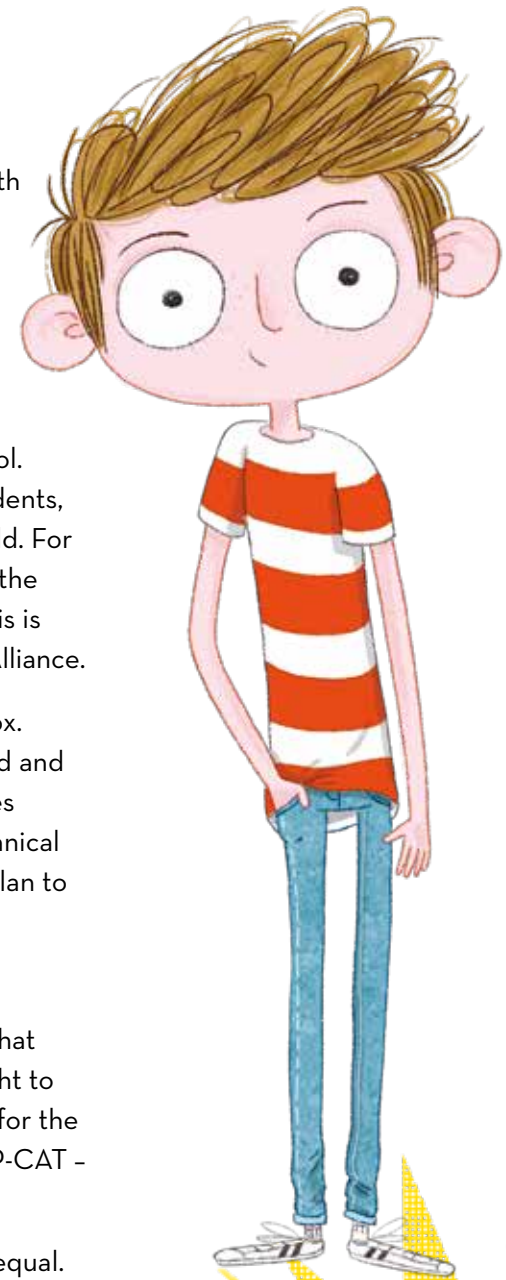
Mary and Hilda are happy that Murph is staying at The School. They tell him more about the school's purpose: for most students, it exists to help them hide their Capes from the outside world. For a select few, though, it could lead to becoming a member of the Heroes' Alliance, a top-secret crime-fighting organisation. This is very rare, but it happens – Deborah and Dirk belong to the Alliance.

Back at Ribbon Robotics, Nektar reveals his evil plans to Knox. He wants to ... destroy all picnics! Knox is less than impressed and offers an alternative – to take over the country! Nektar agrees and demands that Knox release his drones – a fleet of mechanical spying wasps – to find the perfect people to help bring the plan to fruition.

CHAPTER 10

One day in CT, Mr Drench joins the first years and explains that soon they will be split up: most will join his class and be taught to hide their Capes, while a few will stay with Mr Flash to train for the Heroes' Alliance. The new groups will be decided using the P-CAT – the Practical Capability Aptitude Test.

Murph is quickly learning that not all Capes are considered equal. Mr Flash ridicules Hilda for her tiny horses Capability and insists she'll never pass the P-CAT. Mary and Murph comfort her – Hilda is desperate to be a Hero.



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CHAPTER 11

Murph arrives home to hear his mum on the phone to her boss. It sounds like they might be made to move again! Murph goes for a walk to clear his head. He spots a mysterious green light and goes to investigate. It's Deborah and Dirk on an Alliance mission to foil a purse snatcher! Murph tries to help but fluffs it up. This makes him feel down about his own abilities, but further piques his interest about the Heroes' Alliance.

At school he asks Mr Flash about working Heroes. The teacher tells the class about the most powerful and most mysterious Hero of the golden age. A Hero who would swoop in to save the day when all hope seemed lost ...

CHAPTER 12

It's 1965 and secret agent James James has just been told that Doctor Nuke has planted a bomb underneath London. James rushes to stop it being detonated, but Doctor Nuke is ready for him. Just as it looks like Nuke has James at his mercy, a mysterious figure in a blue suit who has the power of invisibility rushes in, saving James James, London and the day. The unknown Hero tears off in a magnificent flying car, but leaves a note: 'You just got saved by the Blue Phantom.'

CHAPTER 13

Murph's Christmas holidays pass uneventfully - except for reports in the paper of an unusual amount of winter wasp sightings.

After the festive break, Mary is keen to find out more about the Blue Phantom, so she quizzes Mr Drench. Mr Drench reveals that he used to be a Hero known as the Weasel.

He was Mr Souperman's sidekick - in those days the head teacher was called Captain Alpha. The Blue Phantom once saved Mr Drench and Mr Souperman too, as they faced off against an

evil villain who had stolen some of Mr Drench's super-hearing Capability.

Later in the lunch queue, an older boy pushes in front of Murph. Murph confronts him and his gang, but the bully uses his Cape to push Murph into a pile of dirty plates. They topple onto Mr Flash. The CT teacher is incensed and blames Murph's classmate Billy, the boy who can inflate parts of his body. Thankfully, Flora the school secretary diffuses the situation.

CHAPTER 14

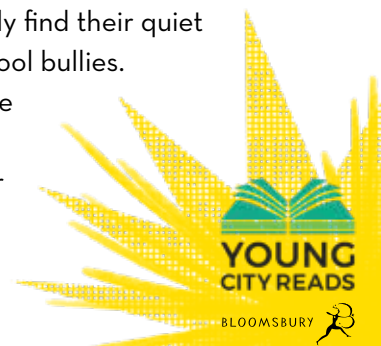
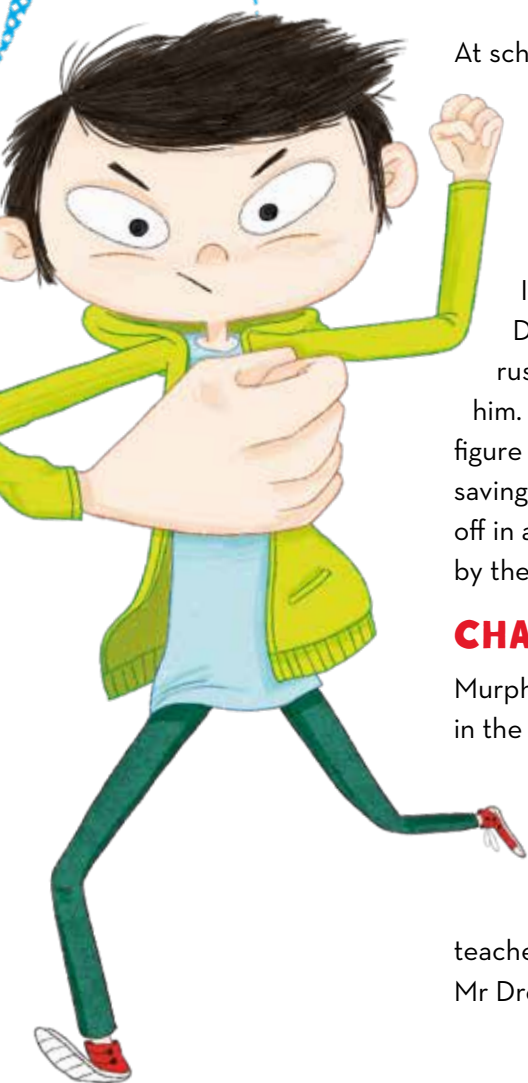
Since the lunch incident Billy has become friends with Murph, Mary and Hilda. Murph's glad that he's found so many friends - he feels like he's truly fitting in. But his happiness is shattered when Mr Flash tells him that because he has no Cape he will no longer attend CT. Instead he will help Carl, the school caretaker.

Carl puts Murph on sweeping duty in his workshop. Murph finds a box of old photographs, and one catches his eye: a picture of a young Mr Souperman dressed as Captain Alpha, standing proudly with Carl in front of an amazing-looking car. But before Murph can rummage further, Carl interrupts and Murph returns to sweeping.

CHAPTER 15

At Ribbon Robotics, Knox is surveilling the town using his tiny wasp spy drones. He's searching for powerful people who he can recruit to form an army of servants, using the mind-control helmets he has invented ...

At The School, Murph, Mary, Hilda and Billy find their quiet classmate Nellie being taunted by the school bullies. They stand up for her. Annoyed by this, the bullies come up with a nickname designed to embarrass the five first years: the Super Zeroes.



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CHAPTER 16

Later that morning, Murph sees Mr Flash and the rest of his class approaching as he helps Carl on the playing fields. They have come outside to watch Natalie demonstrate her Cape - magnetic manipulation - using a bucket of nails. When Natalie successfully attracts some nails towards her, something else comes too: a wasp. Natalie panics. Mr Flash crushes it. Murph wonders why the wasp flew to her hand - could it be made of metal?

Back at Ribbon Robotics we find Nicholas Knox. The wasp was one of his spy drones and he has watched the CT lesson avidly. He sends all of his wasps to investigate.

Soon Knox has seen everything he needs to know: the school is the perfect place to gather an army of super-powered mind-controlled slaves. He shares this information with Nektar and the evil duo decide to mount an attack on the day of the P-CAT, when the whole school will be watching the first years.

Later, Murph is devastated to learn that his mum isn't being kept on at work. The whole family is going to have to move. Again.

CHAPTER 17

The day of the P-CAT dawns. Knox and Nektar are making the final preparations for their attack. They

have developed four huge attack wasps to help round up the students and teachers.

Back at The School, Murph is feeling sad and he takes it out on Mary. Thoroughly downhearted, Murph decides there's no point being in school. Instead of staying for the P-CAT, he walks home.

CHAPTER 18

The scene is set for the P-CAT - it's a massive assault course! As the first years begin, Nektar's trucks crash through the gates and with the help of his attack wasps the villain puts mind-control helmets on Mr Flash, Deborah, Dirk, Mr Drench and the school bullies. With such strong Capes on his side, all the students and teachers are soon rounded up and taken prisoner.

All except for Mary, Hilda, Nellie and Billy. They have escaped detection by flying away on Mary's umbrella ...

CHAPTER 19

At home, Murph is terrified when an attack wasp bursts in! Knox sent it - he saw Murph leaving The School and wants no witnesses to the attack. Murph battles the wasp valiantly, and Mary arrives in the nick of time to polish it off - but not before the fight has destroyed Murph's house.

Mary, Hilda, Billy and Nellie tell Murph what has happened at The School. What can they do to save everyone from Nektar? Murph thinks he knows someone who can help, and they all hotfoot it back to The School because Murph is convinced that Carl is the Blue Phantom. Carl insists he's not, but then a voice from behind them intones: 'I am the Blue Phantom!' They are about to discover the identity of history's most secretive superhero ...



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INTERLUDE

... But not before the authors interrupt the action with a sweet interlude about a rabbit called Alan, to help their readers calm down!

CHAPTER 20

The Blue Phantom is none other than Carl's wife Flora! The sweet school secretary agrees to help save the day and they all jump into her flying car.

They zoom off towards Ribbon Robotics but are attacked by Nektar's huge drones in mid-air. In the ensuing battle the car's engines are damaged. Carl and Flora realise they must make an emergency landing, so they tell the Super Zeroes to jump to safety using Mary's umbrella. The gang must continue their mission alone!

CHAPTER 21

At Ribbon Robotics, Murph comes up with a plan to use his friends' unique powers to enter the factory and defeat Nektar.

Mary and Nellie are first to spring into action, flying to the roof, where Nellie summons a lightning bolt to cut the power. But there's a hitch – she accidentally summons a second bolt, knocking herself out cold and destroying Mary's umbrella!

Waiting for their friends' signal and realising something's wrong, Murph, Hilda and Billy decide to forge ahead and break into the building. They are met by the mind-controlled school bullies, who have been put on guard outside. The bullies prepare to attack!

Inside the building, though, Nellie's lightning has done its job. As the lights go out, Knox and Nektar realise that an attack is being mounted. Nektar heads to his tower lair to wait out the action. Knox stations guards around the building before retreating to watch events on his surveillance screens.

CHAPTER 22

Up on the roof, Nellie is awake, but Mary's umbrella is beyond repair. Meanwhile, at the front gates, Billy is panicking. He triggers his Cape and to everyone's surprise inflates a tyre on one of Nektar's trucks. The truck keels over, stopping the bullies in their tracks. The tide of the fight turns – all five Super Zeroes are able to reunite and enter the building!

CHAPTER 23

Knox has stationed guards throughout the building to protect against intruders, but the Super Zeroes keep their wits about them and succeed in working as a team to immobilise Dirk, Deborah and Mr Drench. The way to Nektar's lair lies before them, unguarded!

CHAPTER 24

Reluctantly, the Super Zeroes realise that they must split up to be able to confront Nektar and find where the members of the school have been imprisoned.

Hilda and Billy head down to the basement, where they discover Mr Flash guarding the prisoners. Billy keeps the CT teacher distracted while Hilda's horses steal the keys to the cell and release all of the teachers and students.

Meanwhile, Murph, Mary and Nellie continue upwards – to the revolting wasp's nest that Nektar has made at the very top of the Ribbon Robotics tower. Incensed that the Super Zeroes have managed to evade his guards, Nektar summons his remaining attack drones. It looks like Murph, Mary and Nellie are wasp-meat! In the nick of time, Billy



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and Hilda rejoin them. Billy uses his Cape to turn Hilda's horses into huge stallions, which rear up at Nektar and send him tumbling over the edge of the tower. But not before Nektar orders the wasps to attack!

Determined to save his friends, Murph leaps over the edge after Nektar to retrieve the remote control unit used to direct the attack wasps. He plunges towards the concrete below ...

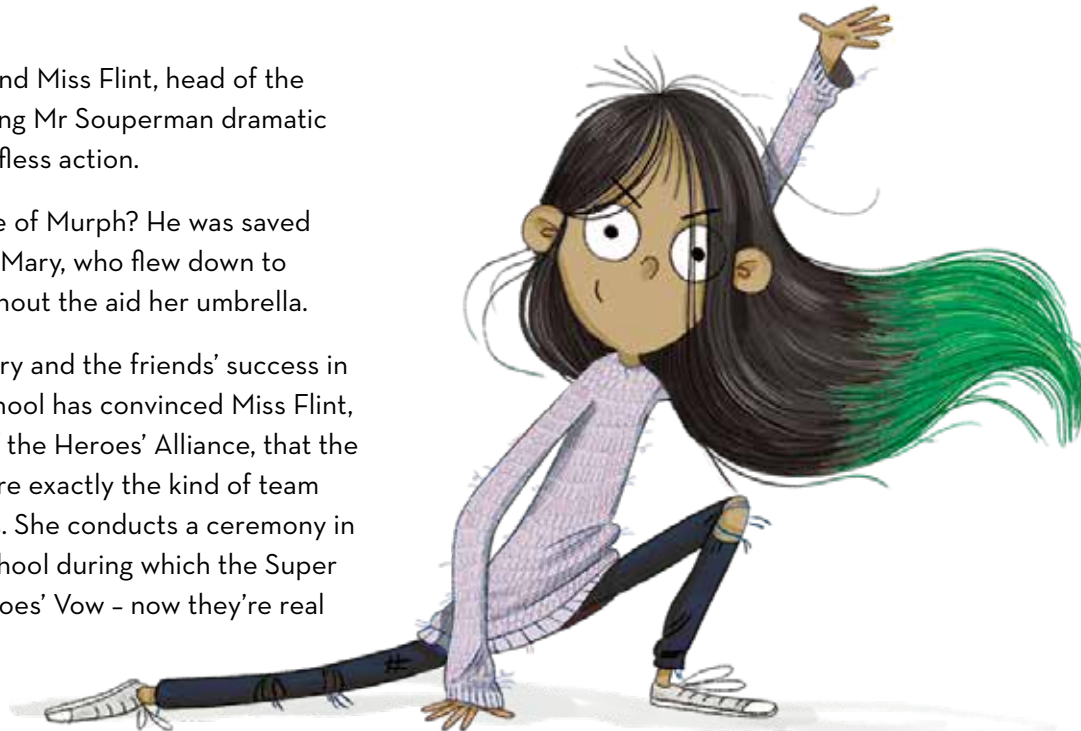
CHAPTER 25

Fast forward to the next day and we find Miss Flint, head of the Heroes' Alliance, at The School, showing Mr Souperman dramatic footage of Murph's selfless action.



And what became of Murph? He was saved from the fall by Mary, who flew down to rescue him without the aid her umbrella.

Murph's bravery and the friends' success in saving The School has convinced Miss Flint, chief officer of the Heroes' Alliance, that the Super Zeroes are exactly the kind of team the Alliance needs. She conducts a ceremony in front of the whole school during which the Super Zeroes take the Heroes' Vow - now they're real Heroes!



CHAPTER 26

Murph's joy is short-lived. How can he lead the Super Zeroes when he's leaving town? But when his mum meets him at the school gates she's wearing a huge grin. Not only is she being kept on at work, but they have an amazing new house to live in! Murph suspects that the Heroes' Alliance must have had something to do with that. But before he can ask any more questions, the Super Zeroes receive their first mission! Murph's life as a superhero has begun ...



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THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

NORMAL OR NOT?

Murph is given the nickname 'Kid Normal' because he does not have a capability. How do you think he felt about this? Have you ever felt like the odd one out? What does the word 'normal' mean to you? Is anyone really normal?

APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING

It's easy to assume things about a person because of the way they look or act, but people aren't always what they seem.

What assumptions did the Super Zeroes make about the Blue Phantom's real identity? Have you ever met someone who has surprised you when they've not been the type of person you expected?

SUPER ZERO OR SUPERHERO?

'You can't be a superhero without superpowers!' thunders Mr Flash on page 365. But Murph and his friends certainly proved him wrong! In order to defeat Nektar, what qualities did the Super Zeroes show? Can you think of a time when you or your friends have had to be heroic?

MURPH ALONE

Murph has changed schools four times, and has got used to moving on and starting over. Why is he so upset when his mum tells him they will have to move again (page 211)? What is different this time? Have you ever moved house or joined a new school? How did you feel?

SUPERHERO STORIES

From Batman to Wonder Woman, superheroes are more popular than ever! Why do people of all ages find them so fascinating? Do you have a favourite? Do all superheroes have superpowers? The first costumed crimefighters appeared in comics about 80 years ago. Who did people look to for superhero excitement before these characters came along?

CO-WRITING A BOOK

Kid Normal was written by a team of two authors. Can you think of the advantages and disadvantages of writing a novel with someone else?

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