

Peachtree Pointers

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Misfits Inc., No. 2: of heroes and villains

Written by Mark Delaney

ISBN: 1-56145-178-9 / Trade Paper / \$5.95
Young Adult Fiction, Mystery, ages 11-15 / Spring 1999



A Freestone Publication



About the Book

The Misfits are mysteriously summoned to a comic book convention, where they anticipate the premiere of the exclusive new Hyperman superhero. But the Jester, a comic book villain come to life, terrorizes the audience and commits a daring crime. When the Misfits attempt to solve the Jester's riddle, they discover that someone close to them may be involved in the heist. As they draw dangerously close to unmasking the villain, the Misfits uncover a longtime wrong that only they can right.

Themes

- ♥ Friendship
- ♥ Loyalty to family
- ♥ Does the end justify the means?
- ♥ Deductive reasoning, logic
- ♥ The Golden Age of comic books

Awards for OF HEROES AND VILLAINS

- ☆ 1999 ABA Pick of the List
- ☆ 2000 ABA Pick of the List

Praise for OF HEROES AND VILLAINS

Delaney obviously knows his stuff, from publishing companies' rivalries, marketing hypes, and artist exploitation to conventions and obsessive collectors. With a great ensemble cast, appealing villains and heroes, and lots of action and surprises, this is an excellent transitional bridge for reluctant readers from comics to novels. Comicbook fans will also enjoy Delaney's references to real-life people and characters in comic history, then and now.

—Booklist

Before You Read

Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions and issues:

☛ Is it all right to do something bad if your purpose is to achieve good? For example, if a bully wanted to beat up your best friend, would it be all right to lie to the bully and say you do not know where your friend is, even if you did know?

☛ Suppose a friend of yours was going to do something that would get him or her into terrible trouble. If telling on your friend would prevent the trouble from occurring, would you do so? Why or why not?

☛ Who are some popular comic book heroes? What are some qualities they share? Why do you suppose some comic book heroes, like Superman and Batman, have remained popular for so long?

☛ Suppose you had tried again and again to achieve a goal, but each time you failed. Would you continue trying? At what point would you give up? Would giving up change the way you were willing to try other things in the future?

☛ Until recently, the comic book has never been considered a serious form of literature. How is the comic book form different from other ways of telling a story—such as the traditional short story, a story with illustrations, a novel, a short film?

As You Read

Ask readers to consider the following questions:

☛ Peter insists that he and Robin could never have a romantic relationship. Do you agree? What clues can you find in the story to back up your opinion? In what ways are Peter and Robin alike, and in what ways are they very different?

☛ Byte and Robin become close friends as the story progresses. What draws them together? What qualities does each girl have that might cause the other to respect and like her?

☛ The novel draws some very clear distinctions between the comic book characters created by Mercenary Comics and characters created by other companies. What are some of these distinctions? What does the word *mercenary* mean? What

might the author be saying about some comic book companies by using this name?

☛ An odd romantic triangle develops in the story. How does Robin's presence in the story confuse Peter's feelings for Byte? How does Peter deal with this situation throughout the story? He insists he has no romantic feelings for Robin; does his behavior always bear that out?

☛ In this story of a fictional Hyperman, the author often refers to real characters from comic books and from movies. What references can you find? Why do you suppose the author has used these references?

After You Read

After discussing the following issues in class, ask students to write a paper or prepare a presentation for the class on their thoughts.

☛ What is your opinion of Robin's actions? Was she right in what she did? If you were Lieutenant Decker, would you have arrested Robin? Why or why not?

☛ At the end of the story, we learn something of Wilson Dominic's background. What were your feelings about Dominic earlier in the story? Did the scene at the end change your opinion of him?

☛ The Jester costume seems to have a striking effect on the people who see it. It creates great fear in Charles Leach at the dance. Describe the costume as you remember it. What about it might be frightening or disturbing?

☛ A great change has come over Joe Sutter by the end of the story. How does he change from the way he was at the story's beginning? What seems to have brought about this change?

☛ The legal battle between Joe Sutter and AC is very complex. How would you resolve it?

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies/Law

☛ What are *creators' rights*? Look at the legal situation that has arisen between Joe Sutter and AC Comics. Have Joe Sutter's rights been violated? Why or why not?

✎ Unlike Leach and Dominic, Robin Sutter is not prosecuted for her part in this crime. Is this a just outcome? Why or Why not?

Economics/History

✎ As very young men in 1938, Joe Sutter and Barry Nagel sold the rights to Hyperman for \$129. What are some important historical events from that time? Though the Great Depression was ending, might it have affected the men's decision to accept that offer? Adjusting for inflation, what would that \$129 be worth in current dollars? Considering all the circumstances, does this seem like a fair amount?

Psychology/Health

✎ Joe Sutter closed himself off from the world for years. How does his anger at AC affect his life? How does it seem to have affected his body as well? Is there really such a strong connection between the mind and the body?

✎ Both Joe Sutter and Robin are motivated by anger. Joe's anger leads him to give up, while Robin's prods her to strong action. Explore anger: Can it ever be a positive emotion? What are some helpful and positive ways for dealing with anger?

Classroom Activities

✎ Set up a classroom court. Try a civil case between Joe Sutter and AC Comics, with students serving as judge, jury, and attorneys for each side. What rights does AC have after having purchased them for Sutter's character? What rights, if any, does Sutter have?

✎ On a large poster board, have students make a collage of images from comic books, magazines, etc., to show their definition of *hero*. Have them show to the class the final images they have selected and explain why they chose each image.

✎ Peter often plays what he calls "The Game" to draw conclusions about people he sees. He carefully observes; then he makes deductions based on those observations. Have students bring in photos of people from magazines and encourage them to play "The Game" with the photos. What conclusions can they draw from the figure's clothing, posture/body position, facial expression, etc.?

Some Research Paper Topics

✎ Choose a comic book character that has been around for thirty or forty years. Trace the changes in the character from the time of its inception to today. Consider changes in the character's costume, the types of stories he or she appears in, and changes in the character's unique powers or abilities. Make some guesses about the reasons behind these changes.

✎ Research the history of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the creators of Superman. What is the history behind the beginnings of the character? How is Joe Sutter's story similar to, and different from, the story of these two men?

✎ Creators' rights are at the center of this story. Explore some other challenges to creators' rights, such as the pirating of U.S. CDs and audiotapes in foreign countries, the free (and illegal) copying of software, the downloading of new music off the Internet.

Notes

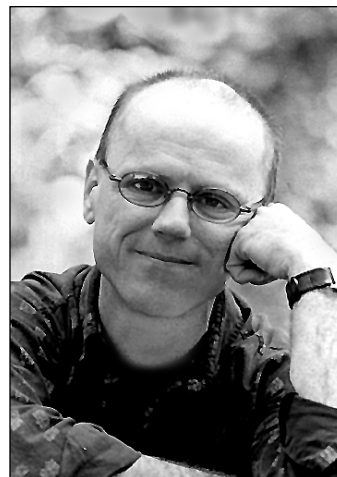
About the Author

Mark Delaney currently teaches at Hickman High School in Centerville, Tennessee. He holds a B.A. in Fine Arts and an M.A. in Comparative Literature, both from the University of California, Irvine.

He has published many articles and short works of fiction. This is his second book.

Mark writes, plays guitar and violin, and swing dances. He also enjoys playing in chess tournaments, and declares that he really is a better player than his rating would indicate.

He lives with his cats (Hamlet, Ophelia, and Horatio) outside of Nashville, Tennessee.



Additional Freestone Books for Young Adults

HERO by S. L. Rottman (1997)

- ★ 1999 YALSA Best Books for Young Adults
- ★ 1998 Oklahoma Book Award for Children's/Young Adult Literature
- ★ 1998 New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age

HOGSTY REEF by John Dowd (1999)

- ★ 1999 ABA Pick of the List

ROUGH WATERS by S. L. Rottman (1998)

- ★ 1999 YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
- ★ 1999 New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age

CHARLIE'S STORY by Maeve Friel (1997)

MISFITS, INC., NO. 1: THE VANISHING CHIP by Mark Delaney (1998)

And look for...

ELEANOR'S STORY: AN AMERICAN GIRL IN HITLER'S BERLIN by Eleanor Ramrath Garner

HEAD ABOVE WATER by S. L. Rottman

MISFITS, INC., NO. 3: GROWLER'S HORN by Mark Delaney

MISFITS, INC., NO. 4: THE KINGFISHER'S TALE by Mark Delaney

MISFITS, INC., NO. 5: THE PROTESTER'S SONG by Mark Delaney

MISFITS, INC., NO. 6: HIT AND RUN by Mark Delaney

RARE AND ENDANGERED by John Dowd

Peachtree Pointers for OF HEROES AND VILLAINS was prepared by Mark Delaney.



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