



Eighth-Grade Superzero

By Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

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After the worst first day back *ever*, Reggie's been nicknamed "Pukey" McKnight at his Brooklyn school. He wants to turn his image around, but he has other things on his mind as well: his father, who's out of a job; his best friends, Joe C. (who's a little too White) and Ruthie (who's a little too intense); his ex-best friend Donovan, who's now a jerk; and of course, the beautiful Mialonie. The elections for school president are coming up, but with his notorious nickname and "nothing" social status, Reggie wouldn't stand a chance, if he even had the courage to run.

Then Reggie gets involved with a local homeless shelter. Inspired by the clients there--especially Charlie, a five-year-old kid who becomes his official "Little Buddy"—he begins to think about making a difference, both in the world and at school. Pukey for President? It can happen . . . if he starts believing.

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Eighth-Grade Superzero By Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, January 2010 They don't call it middle school for nothing. Reggie McKnight (aka "Pukey") is trying hard to stay under the radar after a really embarrassing start to the school year. But, he's somehow been drawn into the middle of a big school election, a volunteer project at the local homeless shelter, and the role of "Big Buddy" for a kid in the neighborhood. How will he ever find time to finish his comic book, *Night Man*? Reggie might see himself as a wimpy kid, but he's anything but as steps up to new challenges and confronts big questions about doing the right thing in a tough world. Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich's debut novel is a smart and satisfying read for teens and 'tweens. --Lauren Nemroff

QA with Author Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

Q: What inspired you to write *8th Grade Superzero*?

A: I was always inspired by the young people that I've met, taught, and interacted with along the way. Two groups in particular, The "Tara Belle Girls", 7th-10th grade students who participated in a discussion and creative arts group with me, and the "Peace of My Mind" crew, a faith-based teen discussion group that I led for a couple of years, were instrumental in the story's development. We had such rich, wonderful talks about our 'public' and 'private' lives -- who we'd been, who we were, who we wanted to be, and what we thought about our places in the world. In developing Reggie's story, I knew that I wanted to share what I'd learned from those teens who cared deeply about justice, friendship, community, and love in all of its forms.

Q: In *8th Grade Superzero*, Reggie goes through some difficult experiences with his classmates at school. What did you find hardest about being in 8th grade?

A: There was definitely a "me" that I wanted to be, and sometimes that girl just didn't materialize when I wanted her to! When I was 13, there was a lot about me that was unusual in the context of the community in which we lived--my name, my cultural heritage, etc.--that made me stand out, and I constantly lived with that tension of simultaneously dreaming of being 'discovered' as someone special and desperately wanting to blend in.

Q: You have also mentioned that you were the "new kid" at school many times. How did you deal with it?

A: I sharpened my observation skills, and remember moments from childhood quite vividly, which I think continues to help me as a writer. I'd spend my initial few days at a new school trying to get the 'lay of the land', learning the social hierarchy and figuring out the best survival system. Once, I drafted a "popularity plan" that included notes-to-self like saying "Hi!" with a smile all day long, dotting my i's with hearts as much as possible, not rising to my feet whenever an adult entered the classroom, and avoiding use of the metric system. I don't think the plan worked. I went to one school in the U.S. at which I was the only Black person in the building; that experience brought considerable pain, and my first successful class election campaign. Two of my favorite school experiences were in Nigeria and Kenya; I remember those periods with such joy, I'd love to write about them one day. Even with the usual "Will I fit in?" questions that came with every move, I looked forward to the challenge of finding my place in a new school. I enjoyed moving

around; we lived in communities that varied widely, and those experiences taught me a lot about tolerance, respect, and appreciation for community in both a local and global sense.

Q: Reggie finds great satisfaction in helping a local homeless shelter build community. How did your own experiences with service shape this aspect of Reggie's story?

A: Reggie had the opportunity to see, as I did, that any type of service is a two-way street. He did not 'save' or 'rescue' anyone, and no person that he encountered acted as a talisman or magical figure whose primary purpose was to ease his guilt or facilitate his transformation to hero. He entered into relationships, with multi-dimensional people (I hope). The themes of small victories and personal action in the book were also major lessons learned in my own life. I found that there was just as much value (perhaps more) in being the person who offers a loving listening ear and a snack as there is in being the Big Speechmaker and shiny celebrity.

Q: Were any authors or books particularly inspirational to you growing up?

A: Such a hard question...There were so many! We had piles and piles books wherever we lived, and I could just go down and explore the shelves and discover new worlds on my own; I'm so grateful to my parents for that. *A Wrinkle in Time* is definitely one. My mom read it aloud to me when I was nine; I enjoyed those story times so much, and loved Meg Murry's warts-and-all courage and spirit. (And it was so encouraging to see someone like her 'get the Guy')! *The House at Pooh Corner* is one of the early books that made me laugh out loud. I loved mysteries, and I was obsessed with Nancy Drew until I started wondering why she had the luxury of driving around in that little car all of the time and having a 'housekeeper' at her age. Agatha Christie was a favorite whose depictions of race and ethnicity honed my critical reading skills. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* fed my hunger for 'hidden princess' stories, and I read them over and over again... I read and loved *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* when I was very, very young (so young that I wanted to marry him when I grew up. I didn't quite get how the story ended at first.). I also read *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* when I was too young to really understand all they contained, but again, I was devastated and awed by their power. I've always loved a story with heart, and a character with soul.

From [Booklist](#)

Ever since his nervous stomach betrayed him on the first day of school and he threw up on the principal's shoes, Reggie has been universally known as "Pukey." No wonder his main goal is now to be as invisible at school as possible. This starts to change when his church youth group becomes involved with a volunteer project at a neighborhood homeless shelter and Reggie discovers the value of community activism. Before you know it, he's declared himself a candidate for class president, become a Big Brother and an oral historian, and more. It may be an overstatement to call Rhuday-Perkovich's large-hearted first novel agitprop, but there's no question about the didactic purpose. Unfortunately, in her quest to persuade her readers to her point of view, she sometimes lapses into lecturing instead of creating, and a few too many subplots slow down the narrative pace. Nevertheless, she manages to bring both passion and compassion to a story that has its moments of humor and genuine emotion, and will be highly useful for classroom discussion. Grades 6-9. --Michael Cart

Review

"Rhuday-Perkovich delivers a masterful debut, telling a layered middle-school tale filled with characters who are delightfully flawed and, more importantly, striving to overcome those flaws. Reggie McKnight has been saddled with the nickname "Pukey" thanks to a disastrous incident on the first day of school. Attempting to get through the rest of the year unnoticed, he spends his time with his best friends, political activist Ruthie

(who shares Reggie's Jamaican background) and aspiring rapper Joe C. While working on a project at a homeless shelter with his church's youth group, he becomes increasingly interested and involved in the community, leading to his participation in his school's presidential race, first as an adviser to a classmate, eventually as a candidate. Rhuday-Perkovich doesn't take shortcuts, forcing Reggie to deal with a world in which he doesn't always get the answers or successes he wants, and the book shines as a result. Messages of social justice—whether through church projects, parental discussions, or recognition of racial biases among his friends—complement the story and characters, rather than upstage them." -- *Publisher's Weekly*, starred review

"Though he imagines himself a superhero, Reginald McKnight threw up on the first day of school and acquired the less-than-cool nickname "Pukey"—now, he just wants survive the year "under the radar and on the sidelines." Readers might legitimately fear this will be just another middle-school tale of plastic vomit, "puke-worthy" cafeteria food and snorting milk out of nostrils, but when Reggie gets involved with a service project at the Olive Branch Shelter to document the lives of the homeless, he realizes that "[e]ighth grade isn't all there is to life." When Reggie runs for class president, his platform becomes getting students involved in the community, with the shelter as a good place to start—as tutors, painters, babysitters, walking partners and after-school helpers. A good-hearted, nuanced story of a young man who dares to be more than his place in a middle-school social hierarchy, a tale rooted in religious faith and social conscience, related with lively good humor." -- *Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Archie Williams:

What do you in relation to book? It is not important along with you? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what the ones you have problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to accomplish others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have free time? What did you do? All people has many questions above. They must answer that question simply because just their can do which. It said that about guide. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is appropriate. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this kind of Eighth-Grade Superzero to read.

Floyd Hatfield:

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always try to and must have the time or they will get lots of stress from both day to day life and work. So , when we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to you of course your answer may unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the book you have read is definitely Eighth-Grade Superzero.

Lynette Cavanaugh:

Eighth-Grade Superzero can be one of your basic books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology,

easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing Eighth-Grade Superzero although doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial imagining.

Cheri Tow:

That book can make you to feel relax. This particular book Eighth-Grade Superzero was colorful and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book Eighth-Grade Superzero has many kinds or type. Start from kids until adolescents. For example Naruto or Investigator Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. Therefore not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it can make you feel happy, fun and loosen up. Try to choose the best book in your case and try to like reading that will.

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