



Zeroes

By Scott Westerfeld, Margo Lanagan, Deborah Biancotti

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X-Men meets *Heroes* when *New York Times* bestselling author Scott Westerfeld teams up with award-winning authors Margo Lanagan and Deborah Biancotti to create a sizzling new series filled with “cinematic nonstop action,” (*Booklist*) romance, and adventure.

Don't call them heroes.

But these six California teens have powers that set them apart.

Take Ethan, a.k.a. Scam. He's got a voice inside him that'll say whatever you want to hear, whether it's true or not. Which is handy, except when it isn't—like when the voice starts gabbing in the middle of a bank robbery. The only people who can help are the other Zeroes, who aren't exactly best friends these days.

Enter Nate, a.k.a. Bellwether, the group's “glorious leader.” After Scam's SOS, he pulls the scattered Zeroes back together. But when the rescue blows up in their faces, the Zeroes find themselves propelled into whirlwind encounters with ever more dangerous criminals. At the heart of the chaos they find Kelsie, who can take a crowd in the palm of her hand and tame it or let it loose as she pleases.

Filled with high-stakes action and drama, *Zeroes* unites three powerhouse authors for the opening installment of a thrilling new series.

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Zeroes By Scott Westerfeld, Margo Lanagan, Deborah Biancotti Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—This may not be the first tale of a group of crime-fighting teenagers with supernatural powers, but its talented writing team get points for creating some fresh and original superpowerd abilities. Scam has a seemingly omniscient inner voice, which can speak for him and get him out of trouble or, all too often, into it. Flicker is blind but can perceive what others see. Crash can take down any computer and finds the experience embarrassingly—and dangerously—enjoyable. Bellwether can control the energies of the group and unite them in a common purpose. And Anonymous—well, never mind, no one seems to remember anything about that guy. These five, plus one unpredictable new addition, make up the Zeroes, a team that split up due to infighting but get called back together to fight a baddie and come to terms with their talents and their place in the world. Told from six different points of view, the plot of this hefty tome slows down at times, but the effort taken to develop each character pays off. With two sequels planned, readers can look forward to spending more time with the Zeroes in the future. VERDICT For fans of superhero fiction looking for a character-driven tale and those who enjoy stellar writing.—Eliza Langhans, Hatfield Public Library, MA

Review

Westerfeld (*Afterworlds*), Lanagan (*Yellowcake*), and Biancotti (*Bad Power*) weave a sprawling adventure about a group of superpowered teenagers who call themselves Zeroes. When one of their number, named Scam for his ability to tell people exactly what he needs them to hear, is detained after being in the wrong place at the wrong time, the others reunite after months apart, some less eager than others. Events quickly escalate, and soon half the group is in hiding, while the authorities and the mob hunt for them. The plot meanders, but the authors give their characters plenty of depth, skillfully blending human dilemmas with superhuman abilities. With the exception of Crash, who can bring down technology with a thought, these aren't flashy, cinematic powers; subtle yet powerful, they largely revolve around coercion and manipulation. Mob and Bellweather can influence the emotions of crowds; Anonymous is nearly impossible to perceive or remember; and blind Flicker telepathically sees through the eyes of those around her. With action, romance, and thorny ethical questions, it's a book with a little something for everyone. (Publishers Weekly May 25, 2015)

This may not be the first tale of a group of crime-fighting teenagers with supernatural powers, but its talented writing team get points for creating some fresh and original superpowerd abilities. Scam has a seemingly omniscient inner voice, which can speak for him and get him out of trouble or, all too often, into it. Flicker is blind but can perceive what others see. Crash can take down any computer and finds the experience embarrassingly—and dangerously—enjoyable. Bellwether can control the energies of the group and unite them in a common purpose. And Anonymous—well, never mind, no one seems to remember anything about that guy. These five, plus one unpredictable new addition, make up the Zeroes, a team that split up due to infighting but get called back together to fight a baddie and come to terms with their talents and their place in the world. Told from six different points of view, the plot of this hefty tome sometimes gets bogged down, but the time taken to develop each character pays off, and with two sequels planned, readers can look forward to spending more time with the Zeroes in the future. VERDICT For fans of superhero fiction looking for a character-driven tale and those who enjoy works by the three capable authors. (School Library Journal, *STARRED REVIEW July 2015)

Science fiction powerhouse writers Westerfeld, Lanagan, and Biancotti join forces to create a group of teen superheroes living in Cambria, California. Socially awkward misfits, the six protagonists have

powers ranging from crowd control, the ability to crash computer systems, a voice that can talk anybody into anything, and more. "Glorious Leader" Nate uses his powers of persuasion to reunite the group after a disastrous rant by Ethan (code name Scam) in which he alienates every member. They succeed in rescuing Scam from police questioning and acquire a sixth member in the process. There is a comfortably predictable flow to the cinematic, nonstop action; the multiple and intersecting story lines; and the archetypal characters. These heroes see themselves as zeroes, but by the story's end, they have realized their powers are in fact valuable gifts, formed alliances and romances within the group, and seem poised for more adventures. It's a fat but quick read, whose abrupt ending will leave fans ready for a sequel. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Westerfeld's name alone draws a crowd, following the success of his *Uglies* series, *Leviathan* series, and *Afterworlds* (2014). Add Printz Honor Book author Lanagan, Biancotti, and a major marketing campaign to the mix, and this collaboration will fly off the shelf. (Booklist June 1, 2015)

A sextet of mutant superhero teenagers just want to be safe in this weighty tome. Last summer, Ethan had so antagonized his fellow Zeroes that their friendship ended. Now his own carelessness has made him a material witness in a bank robbery, and only the Zeroes can rescue him. Ethan, you see, has a secret power: "the voice." The voice knows more than Ethan himself ever could and uses Ethan's mouth to tell people what they need to hear in order to get Ethan out of the frying pan—though there's often a nearby fire. The other Zeroes have equally strange abilities, including Nigerian-American Chizara's ability to crash the myriad technological gadgets that cause her chronic pain; rich, Latino Nate's "Glorious Leader" charisma; and blind, white Riley's (overdone and too-obvious) extraordinary vision. The teens undergo no particular quest; the story's driving force is the desire to escape drug-dealing mobsters. Given the fizz superhero teens could contribute to any narrative, this tome is oddly weighty in both tone and heft. These solidly characterized 16- and 17-year-olds all have younger siblings who seem quirky enough for sequel-bait; hopefully they won't become more noise in the already-crowded premise. In this series opener by three acclaimed authors, intriguing protagonists and cinematic powers will surely please adventure fans who don't mind an ensemble developed at the expense of the individual. (Kirkus June 15, 2015)

"Fresh and original superpowered abilities." (School Library Journal, starred review)

"Intriguing protagonists and cinematic powers." (Kirkus Reviews)

"With action, romance, and thorny ethical questions, it's a book with a little something for everyone." (Publishers Weekly)

"Cinematic, nonstop action" (Booklist)

Each of the five teens in "the Zeroes" has a unique supernatural ability; Thibault, for instance, is impossible for people to remember or even notice without serious effort. Leader Nate ("Bellwether") gives the Zeroes code names—Thibault's is "Anonymous"—and runs simulated training missions (training for what, exactly, is not immediately clear, and never really becomes so). An opportunity for a real mission arises when a Zero gets himself into serious trouble: Ethan ("Scam") uses his preternaturally persuasive voice first to obtain a duffel bag full of cash, and then again in an ill-advised attempt to outmaneuver some bank robbers. The Zeroes jailbreak Ethan, who's being questioned by the police, and in the process they cross paths with Kelsie, another gifted teen. At five-hundred-plus pages, with six main characters' stories to follow (the third-person chapters rotate perspective), this series opener occasionally struggles to maintain its pace, although curiosity about the various characters and how their storylines relate—prior to the introduction

of the Zeroes as a team—will keep pages turning. There's plenty of time to flesh out each of the teens'

individual motivations, their unusual abilities, and the repercussions of using these powers carelessly: with great power comes great... you know. (The Horn Book October 6, 2015)

? Powerhouse fantasy/science fiction author Scott Westerfeld leads a team of talented authors in this impressive reworking of the superhero genre. This character-driven twist on the standard super-powered teen group focuses on the problems powers create. The powers themselves are unique. For example, Anon is invisible, but not physically. No one remembers him, giving him the freedom to move about as if invisible, but he is miserable. Switches between multiple perspectives are handled seamlessly and, though the characters are what will draw the reader in, the pacing is fast and the plot satisfying. This is the first book in a series, but comes to a satisfying conclusion and can stand alone. The diversity of the characters insures that this title will appeal to more than just fans of the superhero genre, though there are enough of those to make this book worthy of adding to any young adult collection.

Recommended (School Library Connection March 2016)

About the Author

“Fresh and original superpowered abilities.” (School Library Journal, starred review)

“Intriguing protagonists and cinematic powers.” (Kirkus)

“With action, romance, and thorny ethical questions, it’s a book with a little something for everyone.” (Publishers Weekly)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Qualls:

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