



Wild Cards

Jeff Szpirglas

Illustrated by Dave Whamond

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About the Book

Matt loves Monster Zap cards. No, no, Matt LOVES Monster Zap cards. He has Monster Zap toys, reads Monster Zap books and wears Monster Zap underwear. Matt and his friends like to trade the cards at school, as the schoolyard is so empty and dirty, there isn't much else for them to do at recess. But when kids start fighting over Monster Zap and the cards are banned, Matt realizes that the school has big problems, maybe even bigger problems than the fights the cards caused. With the help of their teacher, and a superhero in disguise, Matt and his classmates set out to save Monster Zap and end up doing a lot more than that.

About the Author

Jeff Szpirglas has written several award-nominated nonfiction books and two terrifying novels for middle-grade readers, *Evil Eye* and *Dentures of Doom*. With his wife, Danielle Saint-Onge, he is the co-author of the Orca Echoes *Something's Fishy* and *Messy Miranda*. He's worked at CTV Television and was an editor at *Chirp*, *chickadee* and *Owl* magazines. He has twin children and two cats (the cats are not twins). In his spare time, he teaches second grade.

About the Writing

Jeff has been teaching grade 2 long enough to know how popular trading cards like Pokémon can be. They are all over his classroom—in desks, stuffed into the pockets of students, and being played with during recess or between lessons. He's worked in places where these cards were banned because of the problems they've caused, including fights over trading them. That was the inspiration for this story, in which a group of grade 2 students decide to do something to solve a school rule they didn't agree with.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

Prereading Idea

In *Wild Cards*, the main characters, Matt and Tyler, don't agree with a school rule. What are the rules in your school or classroom? Why do we have rules, and what happens when you disagree with them?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. In *Wild Cards*, Matt's peers take his idea of creating their own cards, but they use them to make fun of their principal. What would you do if you saw a friend doing or saying mean things about another student? Or a teacher?
2. In order to solve the big problem at school, Matt and Tyler need to collaborate with their class—and their principal. What things do you do to make sure you can collaborate with your peers?
3. There's not much to do at recess on Matt's schoolyard. What games can you play outside with your friends when there isn't any equipment to play with?
4. In the story, Matt loves Monster Zap cards. Mr. Leon loves comics. Both characters enjoy their hobbies of collecting cards and comics. Does anyone in the class collect things? What kinds of collections do students in your class have?

Suggested Activities

- Take a cue from Matt and Tyler and create your own range of Monster Zap cards. What will they look like? What kinds of details will you put on the back? More importantly, are you going to follow the rules of Monster Zap in the book, or create your own rules of play? Try to work as a class or group to write down the rules so that everybody understands them.
- Does your school need a Super Squad or Cleanup Crew? As a class, come up with a plan to do something to help around the school. Maybe it's taking an afternoon recess once a week to clean up the trash in the yard. Or working with your teacher to organize the gym equipment room. How will you let the rest of the school know about your goals, and inspire them to do the same?
- Monster Zap cards are an example of a popular fad. What are some other collectibles or fads you see now? Or, try to use books or the internet to research about other fads and popular collectibles—everything from comics to action figures to popular musical bands.

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Messy Miranda (with Danielle Saint-Onge)

Something's Fishy (with Danielle Saint-Onge)

X Marks The Spot (with Danielle Saint-Onge)

Reviews

“Whamond’s fast paced and energetic action of the students and staff illustrated with pen and ink adds a lot of energy into the scenes...Szipirglas cleverly shows us the struggle between kids, teachers and leading staff...What great lessons that the author has projected that instead of banning there are alternatives, even lessons to be learned. Putting minds together and listening can create a ‘Super Power’ result!”
—*Resource Links*

“A fine addition to a first chapter book collection. Young readers will be able to relate to these characters while reading at a level that promotes confidence.”
—*School Library Journal*

“A good choice for emergent readers who might like to promote improvements to their schools.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

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