



## The Rise of the Legends

**Jake Zortman**

Good Harbor Entertainment

Softcover \$14.99 (353pp)

979-898967210-3

*The Rise of the Legends is a horizon-expanding ensemble adventure novel that's filled with STEM-related action and inquiries.*

In Jake Zortman's riddle-filled quest novel *The Rise of the Legends*, a new student makes a fresh group of friends.

Mikaela is new at Benjamin Franklin School in Good Harbor, but it's not a novel situation for her. She's prepared to do what she always does: sit back and observe, and try to be unobtrusive until she is settled. But before she is even finished unpacking, a drone crashes on her roof. In this way, Mikaela meets her neighbor George, who introduces her to the coolest, smallest club in school, the Drone Legends. Its ranks include a science teacher, Mr. Singh; George; an ace drone pilot, Kendall; and quiet Collin. What Mikaela doesn't know when she joins is that she and her fellow students won't just be drone legends, but legendary.

Thwarting the Drone Legends at every turn is Malcolm, a formidable if familiar villain who acts as the book's secretive mastermind, stirring up trouble. The son of the biggest businessman in town, Malcolm is the leader of the Chaos Club, a "shadowy syndicate for bullying and bad behavior." And he is determined to take revenge on Mr. Singh, who kicked him out of the Drone Legends for using school drones to advance his father's business interests. He uses his extensive command of surveillance technology and an unlimited budget to steal from and spy on the Drone Legends so that he can beat them to their goals.

The book's heroes are a diverse and inspiring group who exemplify a love of research and experiments. Each child's hidden strengths are drawn into the action, teased forth by the hundred-year-old riddles that only they can solve. They are also aided by a mysterious AI-powered split-personality drone from the future. George learns to tap into his problem-solving skills and resourcefulness; Collin's sensitivity, which is so well tuned that he has to wear noise-cancelling headphones, saves the day more than once; Kendall's derring-do is reliable at all times; and Mikaela's leadership abilities and courage don't stay hidden for long. Indeed, Mikaela stands up to bullies and is brave enough to offer compassion and a friendly hand even to those against whom she has to use her black-belt karate skills.

This is a horizon-expanding story that's filled with action. It winds advanced vocabulary and STEM concepts into its imagination-sparking prose. Its excitement is generated through informed sequences in which the club members analyze the tasks at hand and brainstorm what components will be needed to design a solution. There's illuminating coverage of how crystal set radio receivers work and information about beaching a small boat in heavy seas. Also complementing the story and making it feel interactive are the riddles and puzzles included throughout; these incorporate physical and technical knowledge of factors like tides and compass headings. Further, the abundant inclusion of intriguing plot factors like secret passages and cool technology keeps the book's appeal feeling fresh and continual.

In the series-opening STEM-adventure novel *The Rise of the Legends*, a smart newcomer becomes part of an exciting club at her school.

PAULA WILLEY (January 18, 2024)

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