

YHBA Novel Resource #1
The Stupendous Dodgeball Fiasco

I. Book Information:

Author: Janice Repka
Title: The Stupendous Dodgeball Fiasco
Copyright date: 2004
Publisher: Dutton Children's Books

II. About the Author:

Janice was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was the seventh of eight kids. Her parents did not have a lot of money and her father worked as a television salesman and also as a television repairman. She grew up in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, which is pretty much a Polish/American community.

Janice began writing as a journalist for the U.S. Army at Fort Hood, Texas. After that, she went to college at Point Park University. Janice did a magazine internship in New York City and realized that she had an interest in law. She later earned a J.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law.

Never losing the desire to write, Janice was hit with the plot for her first book, *The Stupendous Dodgeball Fiasco*. She found her work to be extremely funny and at times had trouble typing her novel.

She currently lives in South-central Pennsylvania., and has written many short stories appearing in the *Antietam Review* and *Writer's Journal*. <http://janicerepka.com>



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Author's connection to the book:

Janice grew up in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, which is very much like the town of Hardingtontown, the setting of the book.

Other books by same author: This is Janice's first book.

III. Annotation:

At one time or another everyone is faced with a decision centered on the actions of a bully. The choices made at that time can have tremendous repercussions on future of life. When Phillip Stanislaw, tremendously excited to finally be living a "normal" life of an eleven-year-old boy and not that of a circus performer, finds himself face-to-face with B.B. Tyson, the daughter of the gym teacher and best dodgeball player around, he must decide a course of action that will determine the rest of his life.

Phillip's parents are both performers in the Wendy Van Hooten Circus, the fat lady and Leo Laugh-a-Lot, and Phillip longs for the life of a normal child. His mother sends him to live with her sister in Hardingtontown, the unofficial dodgeball capital of the world. Phillip finds out that just about everything in the town revolves

around Dogeball. As he begins his school year, Phillip is struck in the head with a dodgeball, made in that very town, and his glasses are broken. His Aunt Veola replaces the glasses even though they are very expensive.

Phillip develops a relationship with Sam, the blind man who runs the snack counter at the courthouse where his aunt works. Sam gives Phillip many words of advice, but eventually ends up representing Phillip in a lawsuit against B.B., the girl who threw the ball; the school, that did not offer another sport for students who did not want to participate in the game; and the manufacturer of the ball, who chose not to make it softer as not to cause injury.

As Phillip was preparing his case he realized that the Great Dodgeball Fiasco was centered on his mother. She was involved in a direct hit by a dodgeball and allegedly caused the school to lose the game. Veola saw the event and did not stick up for her sister. It was this guilt that prompted Veola to support Phillip in his quest for justice.

Ultimately Phillip won his case but realized that by trying to leave the circus he was running away from himself. What he really wanted was to find a way to fit in. He made several friends in Hardintown and realized that his quest for justice brought him closer to many people who all cared about him. Phillip finally fit in.

Overall this is a wonderful book showing that nothing is truly normal except the desire to be liked by people and to feel needed.

IV. Booktalk:

Whaaaammmmmmmmm! That is the sound that the main character of The Stupenendous Dodgeball Fiasco, Phillip Sanislaw- rhymes with coleslaw, heard in one of the many games of dodgeball that he was FORCED to play in his new school. This was really something new to Phillip as he was the son of two performers in the Wendy Van Hooten Circus, the fat lady and Leo Laugh-a-Lot. Phillip’s parents wanted very much for him to join them in their life as performers, but all Phillip wanted to do was live a “normal life”. But is a “normal life” one where an eleven-year-old boy finds himself going through security every day, reading law books and going to court? Read this fantastically funny book to see how Phillip Whaaaaaaaammed the Unofficial Dodgeball Capitol of the World!

V. Characters

Main	Traits
Phillip Stanislaw: age 11	Phillip is a very well-meaning boy who is not particularly talented in any of the “circus-type” activities that his parents long for him to master. Phillip wants more than anything to do what “normal” children do. He is very honest and tries very hard to fit in with the crowd. He really does not like to call attention to himself and loves his parents very much but doesn’t want to be like them.
Supporting	Traits
B.B. Tyson	B.B. Tyson is the daughter of the gym teacher, a bully and is also in Phillip’s grade. She is an extremely aggressive dodgeball player and has decided that Phillip is her victim. She tries very hard to please her father by being the “best” dodgeball player.
Aunt Veola	Aunt Veola is Phillip’s aunt, and she is very mild mannered. Her job as a courthouse security guard is an outlet for her pent up aggressive feelings. When pushed to her limit she can be aggressive, but she lives with the tremendous guilt of not supporting her sister in a time of need.
Sam	Sam is a blind, black, retired lawyer, who works at the courthouse snack bar. Sam is Phillip’s confidant as he tries to figure out his place in the town. Sam gives Phillip great advice and eventually prepares him for court. Sam always believes in Phillip and this gives Phillip the courage that he needs.

VI. Conflict: Internal Conflict; Character vs. Self

The main conflict in this novel is internal, Phillip's desire to be normal. Phillip does not want to live the life of a circus performer nor does he want to live in the circus. Phillip wants to be normal. Ultimately Phillip's conflict is with himself as he must decide if normal is doing what everyone else does, or is normal deciding what you think is right and following your own path.

VII. Conflict Resolution:

The conflict in this novel is resolved when the judge of the trials orders the school to provide a different sport as an alternative to dodgeball and Phillip realizes that he is normal when he can provide the other sport, juggling. Phillip also finds a friend in B.B., and is proud of his family.

VIII. Genre:

The genre of this novel would fall under:

Contemporary Fiction

Humorous Fiction

Sports Stories Fiction

School Stories Fiction