

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR RUCKER PARK SETUP

- Mackey's father died when he was very young. In what ways was Stove like a father to him? Did Mackey owe it to Stove to tell him the truth about how J.R. died? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to Mackey to get the nickname "Hold the Mustard" from Acorn? Has anyone ever given you a nickname? What did it mean to you? How did having the nickname make you feel?
- "Money will never push us off our love for the game," J.R. says. If Greene had made his offer to J.R. instead of Mackey, do you think J.R. would have taken the money? Why do you think Mackey took it?
- "I don't know if I hate you or what," Stove says. "I don't blame you one bit. I can't figure it out about myself, either," Mackey replies. Do you think Stove will forgive Mackey? Should he? Will Mackey be able to forgive himself?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROOFTOP

- What do you think the dog symbolizes? Why is it so important for Clay to face his fear of the dog? Do you think he does overcome it in the end? Why or why not?
- Why does Clay look up to Addison? Have you ever looked up to an older friend or relative? What did that person's attention and approval mean to you?
- The police said they shot Addison because they thought he pulled out a gun. Do you believe that? A neighbor of Addison's says, "I'll tell you why they shot him—'cause he was young and black, and they could!" What do you think about that statement?
- Clay's father suggests that the money Addison was trying to collect from Clorox was drug money, even though it was money Addison had won gambling. Do you agree or disagree? How do you think Clorox got the money he owed to Addison? Does it matter?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR BLACK AND WHITE

- Why didn't Marcus tell the police about Eddie's involvement in the shooting? Do you think he did the right thing in not implicating Eddie? Would Eddie have done the same for Marcus?
- When Marcus is taken to Rikers Island, he makes the following observation: "It's black people, wall to wall. There are some Spanish inmates, too. But everybody else is black." Why do you think that is?
- Mackey thinks, "There was nothing between us now, except for the line that separates black and white. I didn't know if it could get erased, or if we could find a way around it." Do you think the line between the races can get erased? What changes in society would be necessary for that to happen?
- Given what happens to each of them at the end of the book, who do you think will fare better in the future: Marcus or Eddie?

LEFT BEHIND IN THE SUPERDOME

"We stepped out into the stadium, under the dome, and the noise hit me like a wave. There were people praying out loud, talking and shouting. Little kids were running through the stands, screaming after each other, and babies were crying their heads off. Almost everyone of those voices belonged to black people . . . and that sat like a rock in the pit of my stomach."

— from *Hurricane Song*

"Volponi writes the stories as he has come to understand them: through the eyes and experiences of young adolescents struggling to make it . . . to hear Paul tell it is like hearing it straight from the kids themselves."

—The *ALAN Review*

HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again! All you need is a little bit of organization and some friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

The best way to find people to be in your reading group is to ask your friends. Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your reading group, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a reading group. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians

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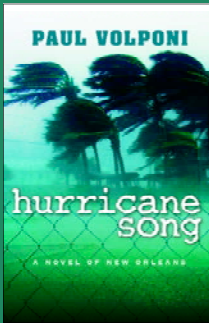
DISCUSSION GUIDE

PAUL VOLPONI



A NOVEL OF NEW ORLEANS

ABOUT THE BOOK



Gang fights, dead bodies, hunger, looting—these are all parts of Miles's experience as he seeks refuge from Hurricane Katrina in the Superdome. Miles, a high school sophomore, has only lived with his father in New Orleans for a few months when the hurricane hits, and he and Pops haven't exactly been getting along. To survive three nightmarish days in the Superdome, they'll have to set aside their differences—or find a way to work through them. The choices Miles is forced to make during this trying

time lead him to a deeper understanding of the people he thinks he knows best: his friends, his father, and himself. Paul Volponi masterfully creates a riveting portrayal of the depths to which humanity can sink, and the power of people to overcome life's most extreme challenges.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PAUL VOLPONI is a writer, journalist and teacher living in New York City. For six years he taught incarcerated teens on Rikers Island to read and write, and for six years he taught teens in drug day-treatment centers. These experiences have influenced many of his novels. He is the author of *Black and White* (winner of the IRA Children's Book Award for YA Fiction) and *Rooftop*. Both books were named Best Books for Young Adults and Quick Picks by the ALA. He is also the author of *Rucker Park Setup*, an ALA Quick Pick. Visit his website at www.paulvolponibooks.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you know about Hurricane Katrina's impact on New Orleans? Do you remember your reaction when you learned about what had happened? How does this story compare and contrast with what you know about Hurricane Katrina?
- Why do you think this is an important novel? What messages do you think Paul Volponi was trying to get across through this story?
- If you had to take refuge in the Superdome like Miles does, what would you bring with you and why?
- What are some of the factors that contribute to the situation becoming so terrible in the Superdome? Could anything have been done to make things better for the people inside?

- Describe the character of Cyrus and explain how he is affected by his experiences inside the Superdome. Why do you think Paul Volponi included Cyrus in the novel and why do you think he had Cyrus die?
- When Miles first meets Cain in the Superdome, how would you describe their relationship? How does Miles' impression of Cain change over the course of their time in the Superdome? Do you feel that Cain deserves what happened to him?
- Compare the ways in which Captain Hancock and Sergeant Scobie interact with people taking refuge in the Superdome. Why do you think the nature of their interactions is so different?
- Miles is passionately dedicated to football while his father is similarly immersed in the world of jazz music. What do football and music mean to Miles and his father, respectively? How do these interests help the characters define themselves and others? Do you feel that the hobbies you take part in help define who you are?
- Describe Miles's relationship with his father. How do Miles and his father change throughout the novel? How does their relationship change as a result?
- Each chapter begins with a verse of the song "When the Saints Go Marching In." What relevance do these lyrics have for each chapter? Why do you think Paul Volponi chose to feature this song so prominently in the book?
- What part or parts of the story are turning points for Miles? Describe the impact of these situations on him.
- In the epilogue, Miles says that what happened was too important "to give a free pass to anyone who helped cause it." Who helped cause what happened to Miles, his family, and others who were in the Superdome? What could have been done before Hurricane Katrina to prevent things from getting so bad?
- If you met Miles today, what would you say to him? What would you ask him?
- Picture Miles ten years after Hurricane Katrina. What is he doing? Where is he? What is important to him?
- There are many instances of despair and many instances of selflessness in the story. Which held the most meaning for you?
- What role does race have in the story? What roles do wealth and class have?
- What does this novel say about humanity and people's relationships with each other? Do you think that there is ultimately a positive or negative message?
- What defines a hero? Are there any heroes in this novel? Who would you say is a hero and what makes them heroic? Would you consider anyone you know to be a hero?



PAUL VOLPONI HURRICANE SONG

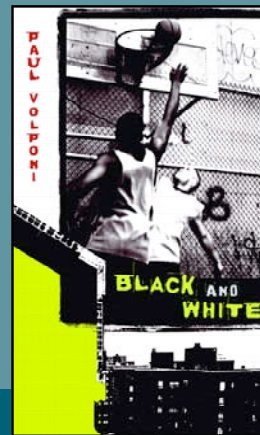
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$15.99
ISBN: 978-0-670-06160-0 (HC)

When Miles went to live with his father in New Orleans, the last thing he expected was to be trapped in the Superdome during Hurricane Katrina and its nightmarish aftermath.

In this gripping novel, Paul Volponi masterfully creates a shocking portrayal of the extent to which people can either turn against each other or come together.



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PAUL VOLPONI BLACK AND WHITE

Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$15.99 (HC) \$6.99 (PB)
ISBN: 978-0-670-06006-1 (HC)
978-0-14-240692-2 (PB)

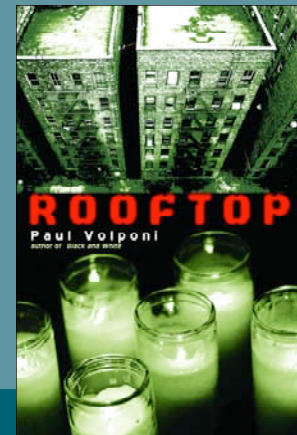
Marcus and Eddie are best friends and stars on the basketball court. One night, these two good boys make a bad mistake, but only one of them will have to pay. This is a heart-breaking look at the realities of the urban criminal justice system.

★ "The plotting is tight, the action is swift, and the troubling outcome... is, sadly, all too believable."

—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (starred review)



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PAUL VOLPONI ROOFTOP

Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$15.99 (HC) \$6.99 (PB)
ISBN: 978-0-670-06069-6 (HC)
978-0-14-240844-5 (PB)

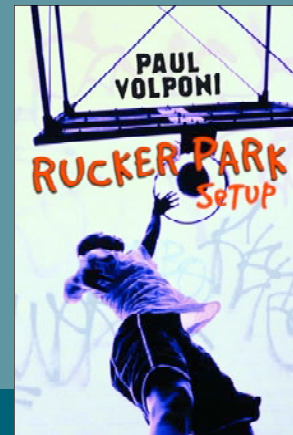
Clay and Addison, estranged cousins, are reunited at a drug treatment program where they're both trying to work out their problems. Soon afterward, Addison is shot by the police as Clay stands just a few steps away. This novel unflinchingly addresses justice, honesty, and what it means to be a man.

★ "[Rooftop] knits together a high-interest plot, a readable narrative... and complex personal and societal issues that will engage teen readers."

—*Booklist* (starred review)



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PAUL VOLPONI RUCKER PARK SETUP

Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$15.99
ISBN: 978-0-670-06130-3 (HC)

J.R. is fatally stabbed before an important basketball game and Mackey, his best friend, feels responsible even though he didn't wield the knife. Now Mackey has a score to settle, but the killer is watching his every move.

★ "Language is raw, the game is intense, and the contrast between the celebrated Rucker Park tournament and its fictional evil underbelly is richly imagined."

—*Booklist* (starred review)



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