



THE OFFICIAL PLATYPUS POLICE ACADEMY HANDBOOK

A Read-Aloud
Program for
On-Duty Librarians,
Police Officers,
and Communities

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USING THE PLATYPUS POLICE ACADEMY HANDBOOK

Thanks for participating in the Platypus Police Academy, a community read-aloud program featuring characters from Jarrett J. Krosoczka's *PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD* book series. As you probably know, reading aloud is widely recognized as the single most important activity leading to language development. Among other things, reading aloud builds word-sound awareness in children, a potent predictor of reading success, which in turn is directly connected to success in school. This read-aloud program is designed to serve several important aims:

- 🛡️ To model literacy for children;
- 🛡️ To promote a sense of trust and connection between children and police officers;
- 🛡️ To help children see police officers as readers themselves.



GETTING STARTED

For Police Officers:

- 🛡️ Most public libraries have regular read-aloud programs for kids and a space they use for this activity. Get a schedule and visit a program "off-duty," to see how children respond, and to see someone who's accustomed to reading to children in action. This is important.
- 🛡️ Consult with the head of your public library's children's department about possible future openings for reading aloud within the library's schedule.
- 🛡️ We hope you will participate in uniform, and will take the time to tell the kids about your work, and to answer any questions they might have.
- 🛡️ A great first visit to the library could include a reading of the book excerpt included in this kit from *PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD: THE FROG WHO CROAKED*. It has been formatted as a play for easier reading aloud by a group. If two officers are present, perhaps they can play the roles of Zengo and O'Malley with a librarian as a narrator.
- 🛡️ Practice reading the scene aloud before you actually read the scene to kids. Read slowly!
- 🛡️ Read seated in a chair so that when you read aloud you are closer to the same size as the kids.
- 🛡️ We encourage you and your department to donate books to your local school and public libraries, and to make "hand deliveries" of the new stories.

For Librarians:

- 🛡️ Speak with the volunteer officer or officers well ahead of the read-aloud time; offer practical advice about protocol, kids' behavior, read-aloud tips, etc.
- 🛡️ Play "bad cop" if needed — that is, you handle behavior and rule enforcement. This is, after all, your "beat."

For Librarians & Police Officers:

- 🛡️ Make sure this isn't a one-off. Plan ahead to continue to hold these read-aloud sessions. You might continue reading from the books in the *PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD* series, or choose another police-themed story such as: *Police Officers on Patrol* by Kersten Hamilton (illustrated by R. W. Alley); *Robert the Rose Horse* by Joan Heilbroner (illustrated by P. D. Eastman); *A Day In the Life of a Police Officer* by Linda Hayward; or *Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathman.
- 🛡️ Of course, this program can include kids of all ages. It can be expanded to incorporate school and summer vacation activities, older-younger reading partners and more.
- 🛡️ We hope this is the beginning of a great community partnership between police officers, libraries and kids everywhere.



A Letter from PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD creator Jarrett J. Krosoczka:

In 2004, a spark of inspiration coupled with some doodling in my sketchbook lead to the birth of Platypus Police Squad. Around the same time, two dear friends of mine, Corey McGrath and Chris Zengo, were graduating the police academy. I named the duck-billed detectives after my pals and I would often seek out advice from them as I developed the book series. What was it like to be a police officer? What are some things that you've seen? While learning about radio dispatches and other protocol was interesting, what really inspired me was their passion and dedication. Here were two guys that I knew as teenagers now bravely protecting and serving their communities. While the Platypus Police Squad books are filled with silly puns and humorous antics, at their core they're about community and selflessness.

That's why I am so excited about this program. When we come together around literature, we grow stronger as a community. When we can laugh together, we grow closer.



Author and Illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka, creator of the Platypus Police Squad (center) with his friends and real-life inspirations, Trooper Chris Zengo (left) and Officer Corey McGrath (right).

FEATURED CREATURES OF KALAMAZOO CITY



NAME:
Detective Rick Zengo

OCCUPATION:
Youngest member of the
Platypus Police Squad

CHARGE: A little too eager to
take down the bad guys.



NAME:
Detective Corey O'Malley

OCCUPATION:
Twenty-year veteran of the
Platypus Police Squad

CHARGE: Has a weakness for
a steaming Frank's Frank
with extra onions.



NAME:
Sergeant Plazinski

OCCUPATION:
Chief of the Platypus
Police Squad.

CHARGE: Any trouble on
the squad gets his bill
boiling.



NAME:
Jo Cooper

OCCUPATION:
Newest member of
Platypus Police Squad

CHARGE: Always gets the
perp, way too excited about
the paperwork.



NAME:
Frank Pandini Jr.

OCCUPATION:
Owner of Pandini Enterprises

CHARGE: Has his paws in
many honey pots—too
many?



READER'S THEATER

KALAMAZOO CITY STREETS, 11:00 A.M.

From **PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD:** **THE FROG WHO CROAKED**

By Jarrett J. Krosoczka

NOTE: This scene requires 3 readers:

1) a **NARRATOR**, 2) **ZENGO** and 3) **O'MALLEY**

NARRATOR: *Veteran detective Corey O'Malley has a new partner -- rookie detective Rick Zengo. This is their first patrol together driving in their unmarked squad car. Zengo can barely contain his excitement as they drive to the docks. The unmarked squad car is totally sweet. There are sirens and an intercom, and a flashing light that can be stuck on the roof with a magnet. The squad car is even outfitted with the most up-to-date laptop. Zengo eyes the police-band radio and the dashboard like it is his birthday party right there in the car. As he looks at it, the radio crackles to life. (With a radio voice) "CAR ONE FIFTY-THREE, OFFICERS ON THE SCENE ARE REQUESTING AN UPDATE ON YOUR POSITION. OVER." O'Malley, eyes on the road, reaches for the mouthpiece, but Zengo is quicker.*

ZENGO

That's a big ten-four,
Dispatch, car one fifty-three
is currently --

O'MALLEY

(Quietly, to Zengo but furious)

-- GIVE ME THAT MOUTHPIECE!

(Then louder, into the mouthpiece)

Car one fifty-three here, coming
up on the Coliseum now. We'll be
pulling into the
shipping area
in six minutes!
*(Pause, then to
Zengo)* Rule
number one,
Rookie:
No one touches
the radio but
me, got it?!



NARRATOR: Zengo slumps down, frustrated. They are probably moving about five miles an hour. He HATES being stuck in traffic. The Kalamazoo Coliseum looms large up ahead. A huge billboard beside the stadium reads: IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO NAME THE NEW HOME OF THE KALAMAZOO CITY SHARKS! A PANDINI PROJECT -YOUR SHARKS, BETTER!

ZENGO

Look at that billboard! What is it with Pandini? I can't get him out of my fur!

O' MALLEY

He's been pretty busy the last year or so.

NARRATOR: Traffic slows to an even slower pace. Making the traffic problem worse, a huge crowd trying to get to the ticket window has spilled out onto the street.

ZENGO

What's up with this?

O' MALLEY

Pandini is selling off parts of the old stadium to raise money for the children's hospital. Totally forgot that was happening today.

ZENGO

(Scoffing)

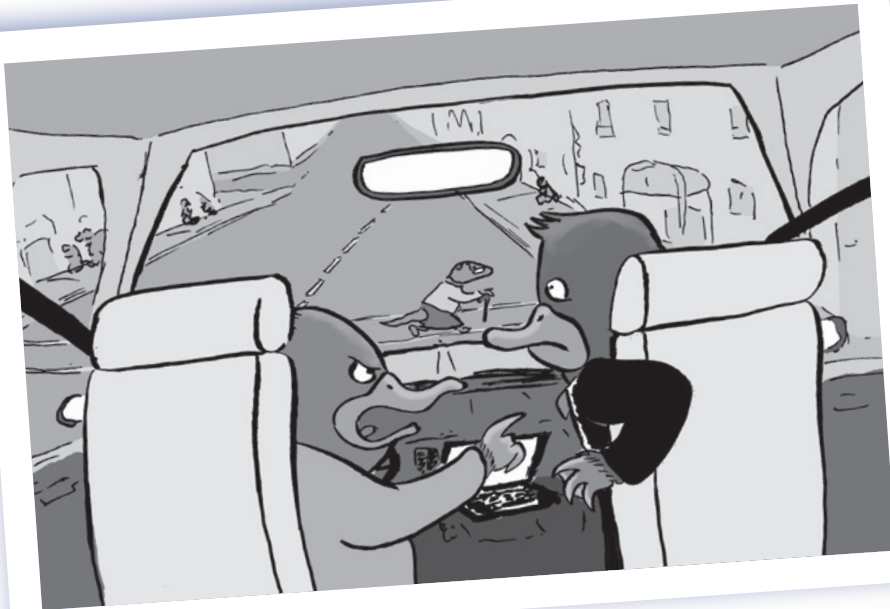
REALLY? A children's hospital?

O' MALLEY

What? You don't think sick kids need medicine? It's a win-win. The hospital gets the funds it needs, the die-hard sports fans get a piece of history. And the new stadium is going to be beautiful. I think it's great that our athletes are getting a stadium that they and their fans can be proud of. And the tickets are --

NARRATOR: By now the squad car has stopped completely. Zengo taps his foot. They are never going to get to the docks. He wishes O'Malley would do something.





ZENGO

Or maybe it is up to me.

NARRATOR: *Zengo slaps the light onto the roof and flips on the siren. The cars in front of them instantly start moving out of the way, and like a stampeding herd, the crowd outside the coliseum scatters, shoving and knocking one another over.*

O' MALLEY

(Shouting)

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, ROOKIE?!

NARRATOR: *Maybe that wasn't such a good move. Zengo turns off the siren.*

ZENGO

Sorry, partner, thought we were in a hurry is all.

O' MALLEY

Rule number one: I'm the senior detective in this car. I say how fast we go, not you. Especially when I'm driving.

ZENGO

I thought rule number one was no one touches the radio but you.

O' MALLEY

Rule number two: we're on a case.

We're trying to travel below the radar here. You want everyone in town to know that we're cops? The key is to keep as low a profile as possible.

(Turning to Zengo)

Got it, rookie?

ZENGO

Yep.

O' MALLEY

Rule number three, and this is where your real education begins, Junior: we need to stay tuned in at all times. We stay focused on the city, listen to its sounds, smell its smells, feel its pulse.

We need to know what it's thinking, anticipate what it's about to do next. Detective work is about using your instincts, staying a few steps ahead of the unexpected.

ZENGO

Yeah, I know but --

O' MALLEY

No buts! Detective work is all about keeping your bill to the ground.

ZENGO

(Pointing, his throat tightening)
Old lady.

O' MALLEY

What did you just call me?
A little old lady? There's a --
Are you even listening
to me, rookie?

ZENGO

LITTLE OLD LADY CROSSING THE ROAD!
O'MALLEY, WATCH OUT!!!

NARRATOR: *Zengo pulls at the wheel, and the squad car swerves just in time. O'Malley's heart rate quadruples. Sweat pops off his head. He unbuttons his jacket.*

O' MALLEY

YOWZER! That was a close one!

NARRATOR: *O'Malley glances in the earview mirror to see a little old lady shaking her cane. Zengo folds his arms and smirks --*

ZENGO

What was that last bit, about paying attention?

NARRATOR: *The radio crackles again. (With a radio voice) WHERE ARE YOU, ONE FIFTY-THREE? YOU'RE TAKING ALL DAY! WHAT'S YOUR ETA?*

O' MALLEY

P.D.Q.!

NARRATOR: *He flips the sirens on, throws the light onto the roof, and steps on the gas.*

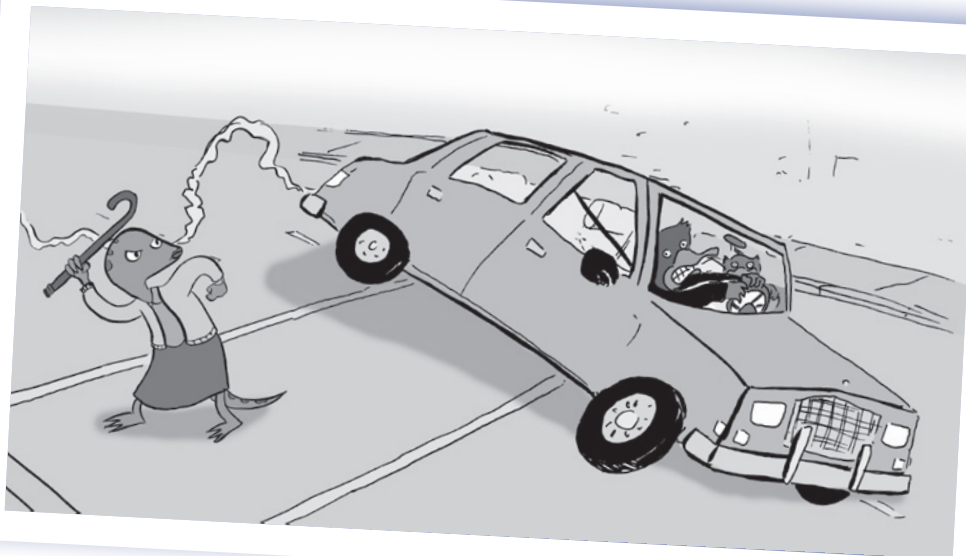
O' MALLEY

Rule number four, you gotta know when to put pedal to the medal. They're expecting us at the docks!

NARRATOR: *As they finally speed through the streets, Zengo thinks --*

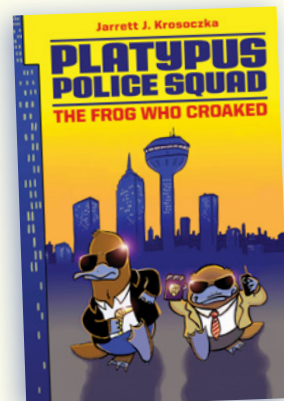
ZENGO

Sheesh!
I would have
been there a
half hour ago!



PLATYPUS POLICE SQUAD BOOKS

by Jarrett J. Krosoczka



Platypus Police Squad: The Frog Who Croaked

ISBN: 978-0062071644

Case #1138

Detectives of record: Rick Zengo and Corey O'Malley

Case brief: A local schoolteacher is missing, and the only thing fishier than the circumstances surrounding his disappearance is the smell coming from the bag he left behind. All clues point to billionaire businessman Frank Pandini Jr.—but why would Pandini get his paws into the illegal fish trade?

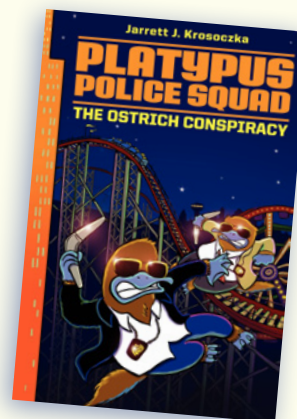
Platypus Police Squad: The Ostrich Conspiracy

ISBN: 978-0062071668

Case #1644

Detectives of record: Rick Zengo and Corey O'Malley

Case brief: The opening of the Kalamazoo City Dome—the world's largest indoor/outdoor amusement complex—has everyone in the city buzzing, especially because it's going to be the shooting site for Chase Mercy's new blockbuster film. But that's when things start to go haywire, and Mayor Saunders suspects foul play. Who would want to sabotage the Dome, and why?



Platypus Police Squad: Last Panda Standing

ISBN: 978-0062071682

Case #1876

Detectives of record: Rick Zengo and Corey O'Malley

Case Brief: The Kalamazoo City mayoral race is heating up, and Frank Pandini Jr. has been threatened by a mysterious assailant. He requests a special Platypus Police Squad protection detail: Detective Rick Zengo. This leaves O'Malley to be partnered up with Jo Cooper, the newest detective on the force. Can Zengo get to the bottom of the attacks—without O'Malley backing him up?



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