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The Bod Squad

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The Bod Squad is a children’s book that mixes two of the best things in the world together: superheroes and healthy lifestyles. Many previous studies have documented the correlation between lifestyle and health. These studies oftentimes cite the importance of childhood on the development of healthy habits. This, in addition to an abundance of evidence demonstrating how vital reading is in early education, served as the main premise for this project.

Building on the rationale of this project, the primary goal of this project was to inform elementary students of the importance of a well-balanced lifestyle and the implications it can have on their health. Moreover, this project served to provide an introduction to the immune system, a simple way to understand nutrition, and potential entertainment value for young children. As a tertiary goal, all proceeds from book purchases were donated to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics to aid in the response to COVID-19.

The project initiated with research into the immune system, the resources that would be utilized to publish the book, and how to write children’s books. In addition to online research, much

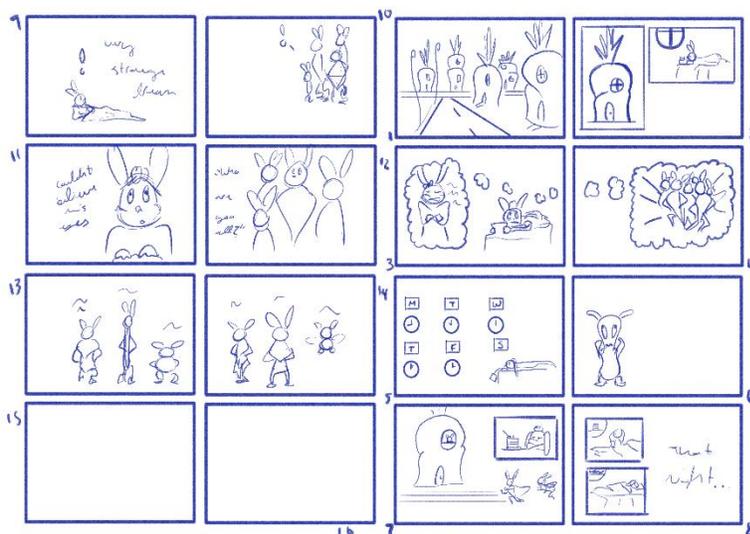


Figure 1: Storyboard showing the thought process behind the creation of the story, plotline, and characters.

of this preliminary information was obtained by meeting and interviewing people who were well-versed in their respective topics. Once enough materials were collected, a storyboard was created to layout the ideas of the plot. It was at this time that rabbits were chosen to be the characters through which the story would be told. It was also at this time that a superhero squad was

connected to the ideas presented in the story. Inspiration for this decision was provided by the author’s nephew, who had a great interest in superheroes at the time of the drafting process. This

was a vital turning point in the creation of the book, and served as a launching point for the rest of the ideas that would follow.

Once a completed draft was created, the illustrator began working creating the pages. This process took up most of the time regarding the implementation of this project. During this time, the author worked on understanding the software used to publish the book: Kindle Direct Publishing. Learning how to use this software proved to be tricky, and served as a great obstacle in the completion of the book. More specifically, the pages were in the incorrect orientation when they were first added to the publishing program. This obviously caused several issues, but learning how to overcome these difficulties served as a method of growth during the overall process.

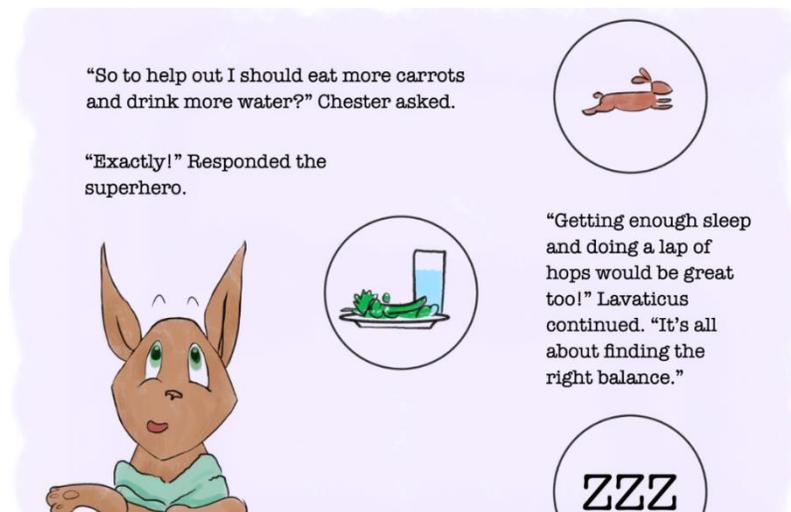


Figure 2: Detailed image of completed page as seen in the book.

Upon completion, uploading, and publishing of the book; steps were taken to engage community members with the published material. The original plan was to conduct several book readings in local libraries and schools, but these plans were ultimately thwarted by COVID-19. In response to this, a virtual book reading was conducted via Zoom. This was done by connecting to a classroom and reading the book to students virtually. Feedback was then collected by asking students what their favorite part of the story was.

In addition to virtual book readings, a video playthrough of the book was also created. This was done by asking friends and family across the globe to narrate a few pages of the book, followed by stitching these audio clips together. The audio was then overlaid on images of the book to create a "realistic" reading of the book. This book was shared on Facebook and YouTube, and the general reception of this product tended to be positive.

The final publication increased how aware children were of their habits, and how these habits have a great impact on their overall health. This takeaway was most exemplified by the reception of the book on social media, which widely included parents presenting anecdotes of their child's reaction to the story. While this data was only qualitative in nature, the quantitative measures also point toward a positive reception. At the time of this publication, more than 50 books have been purchased on Amazon. This number widely exceeds the goals that were set at the beginning of the project.



Figure 3: Graph representing the number books sold from April 4, 2020 through April 30, 2020.

The future of this project includes continuing to market and sell the book, as well as pursuing additional avenues to explore in the world of children's books. The next books published will likely focus on the same main character, but will focus around other aspects of science and society. Overall, *The Bod Squad* served as a way to get children interested in their world, and sequential books will aim to build on this fascination.