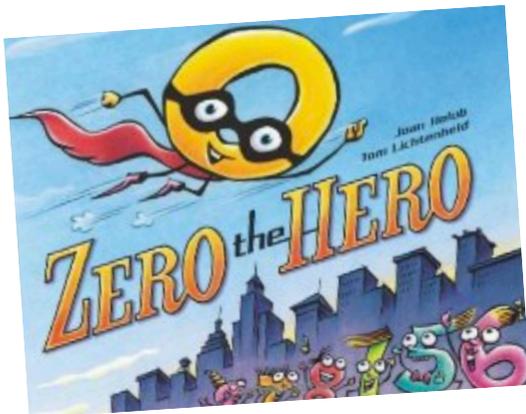


## **Zero the Hero**

**By Joan Holub**

**Zero the Hero** is a great book about; you guessed it, the number zero. This poor, round, donut looking numeral doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. He is convinced that he is a hero and a great one at that, but all the other numbers make fun of him. Integrating a lesson on acceptance of others into a math lesson would be a natural connection with this story.



Zero didn't make any difference when he was adding or subtracting with them; allowing really good discussion of identity property in their terms. Dividing? Forget about it.

Trying to explain why you can't divide by zero?

<http://www.mathsisfun.com/numbers/dividing-by-zero.html>



Zero's real powers come out when he multiplies. Things and numbers around him start to disappear! Scared and questioning his heroic abilities, he rolls away. However, the other numbers realize his value when they need to be rescued from the Roman Numeral Soldiers that have captured them. Zero saves the day and understands that the way he uses his powers is what makes him truly heroic.

Multiplying by Zero is one of the first places elementary students face the misconception that when you multiply, the answer is always larger than the factors. This is a good place to meet them at their level and explain that works with positive integers but that numbers smaller than one have more than just the operation to consider when making sense of the answer. In the earlier years these discussions open the door to possibilities when they encounter math in the coming years and is less stressful for them than trying to chip away at a rule they considered set in stone. Are you an intermediate teacher about to introduce multiplying fractions? This book would be a great start point to recap properties and then to start the discussion that will soften that stone that some of the students have built around rules that they only had to use previously with whole numbers.

*What's the best part of reading this story? You get to slip into your superhero cape, put on your mask and have a super time!*

YouTube has a great, animated, Book Trailer to engage the students.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjj7I2t5\\_Kc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjj7I2t5_Kc)



There is also a Teacher Guide written by the author of the book.  
<http://www.joanholub.com/Teacher%20Guide.pdf>

“Inspired by Kindergarten” blog shows how this teacher using the book to introduce zero on the tenth day of school. She has all her resources listed, as well as the videos she uses embedded on her site. *I had forgotten about School House Rock’s zero video, retro but still amazing!*  
<http://inspiredbykindergarten.blogspot.com/2012/09/zero-hero.html>



**Zero Our Hero**

LESSON	1	2	3	4	5	6
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UNIT: [Let's Count to 5](#)  
GRADE: Pre-K-2  
PERIODS: 1

STANDARDS:



<http://illuminations.nctm.org/Lesson.aspx?id=498>

In my search for lessons using this book, I came across several for Primary. There are several that use this as a book that introduces, and gets students excited about, the number zero. This makes me very happy, but on the flipside, I am sad that there aren't lessons that capitalize on the intermediate, and even middle school, concepts that are connected in this book. So, ***I am issuing a challenge to Oklahoma intermediate math teachers.*** Come up with an amazing lesson using this book and share the experience with us. Tell us the successes and the failures so that, together, we can sculpt some great lessons and activities to share with other intermediate teachers. If you haven't connected with the almost 2000 Oklahoma Math Teachers who are on Facebook and/or Twitter, you can find them by searching OKMath. Join the conversations, share ideas and find support. We are our own best resource!

