

# PS 238

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## The Review:

*Reviewed By Gordon Feiner*

The Upside:

PS 238 is a Superheroic Setting based on the comic of the same name. The book includes information on the PS 238 school, and running a Champions game as a group of first graders. Though it should be noted that the comic, and therefore the approach of the book, is not aimed at kids. It's just about kids.

This is also the first Hero Setting Book to include the rules with the setting, making this an all-in-one book suitable for beginners to the system. The ruleset in the book is essentially the same rules in the Hero System Sidekick book, which is a slimmed down version of the full rules.

The book is divided into two main parts, Chapters One through Four focus on PS238, setting up and running games at the school. Chapters Five through Nine are the System Rules.

*Chapter One - Welcome To PS238.* This is a short introduction chapter introduces the school and world of the comic in brief. While it goes over all the major aspects of the world of PS238, the more familiar with the comic one is the better.

*Chapter Two - Faculty And Staff.* This chapter goes right in and provides full Character Sheet Write-Ups for all the major staff of the school, including backgrounds. A few of the minor staff are listed at the end of the chapter as well.

*Chapter Three - The Student Body.* The first part of this chapter is a very brief look at the rules and schedule of a PS238 Student. However, since this is supposed to be about superheroes and not classrooms, the schedule leaves a lot of time open to adventure in. After that it provides Character Sheets for all the main characters of the comics, and descriptions of all the minor characters that have appeared to date. The minor character's don't have full write-ups but they do have a short listing of some meta-capabilities along with them in case you want to use their powers in a game.

*Chapter Four - Gamemastering PS238.* This is one of the more useful chapters for actually using the setting in a game. Starting with setting up adventures that fit within the general theme of PS238, as well as just some general advice on good adventures for seven year old superheroes. Sixteen adventure ideas are presented right off the bat. Next is the GMs Section which provides some background information on the PS238 World. As well as Character Sheets for the comics main villains, and NPCs.

If you own the comics a lot of this first part of the book helps consolidate all them issues into a single decent source of information. If you're just interested in some general advice on setting up and

running grade school level superheroes then the first part of Chapter Three and most of Chapter Four will be the most useful.

*Chapter Five - An Introduction To The Hero System.* The chapter introduces the Hero System, the underlying concepts and ideas behind the system and briefly covers all the elements of playing with the system itself.

*Chapter Six - Character Creation.* This chapter covers all the elements needed to create a Character using Hero. It is also the longest chapter in the book. Character Creation in Hero can be the most time consuming aspect of the system as a whole, but once you're done with that it helps to facilitate easy game play. Before the book gets into the mechanics of Hero it starts out with some solid advice on Character Origin. Starting with Archetype, it includes twelve types of characters (actually, eleven and advice on not using Archetypes at all). And then it goes into one of the biggest elements of the Genre - the Revealing Flaw, a personal difficulty the character has to face, deal with, or otherwise make sure isn't revealed to the wrong people. Character Points is PS238 specific, covering the basic block of a Hero Character - Points to buy abilities with. The rest of the Chapter covers all the same rules contained in the Sidekick Rulebook; Skills, Powers, Perks, Talents and other game elements. Before it gets into the Powers themselves, the book does provide a section of prebuilt Superpowers and Gadgets. Most of these are very simple mechanical builds that you can use to speed up character creation a great deal.

*Chapter Seven - Combat And Adventuring.* This section covers all the aspects of getting into Combat. For the most part this chapter is really the Rules For Playing using Hero. It covers all the major elements; Senses, how combat is organized, how damaged is dealt with, the different choices and elements of combat itself, and recovering from being hurt.

*Chapter Eight - The Environment.* This very short chapter of the book covers all the dangerous stuff that isn't combat oriented. Most notably the effects of interacting with dangerous elements (electricity, fire, etc) and how to break stuff.

*Chapter Nine - Equipment.* This final Rules Chapter covers how to create Vehicles, Weapons, and Armor in the Hero System. This is the most truncated aspect of the rules, leaving out several aspects of Equipment found in the main rules (notably Bases, Automatons and Computers).

One of the things about the book is it's hard to tell if the organization of the book is helpful. By starting out with the Setting, and presenting a large number of Character Sheets right at the start the experienced Hero Player will be able to jump right in. But a novice will find themselves starting with the middle of the book first. Since the book is aimed at new players by including the Rules instead of referencing the main rules like most supplements it might have been better to introduce the System first, then the Setting. As it stands, if you have no Hero experience half of the setting section is not immediately useful to you.

The Downside:

The Equipment section really should have included at least Computer and AI construction rules in them. The other missing elements aren't going to much of an issue in this type of game.

The Otherside:

The source book is about using the PS238 Universe as a game setting, to that extent it has very little information regarding genre conventions of mixing grade schoolers and superpowers. If you're a fan of the comics, and always wanted to run a game in that universe then this is going to be the book you

want.

And if you aren't a regular hero Player, or are new to Hero, by including the rules it assures you don't have to pick up any other books to begin playing.

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