



Reviews and Activities by Anna Stewart

Joey Pigza Loses Control *by Jack Gantos*

Age: 9-12

Challenge: ADHD, medication, divorce

Tip: Written as a trilogy, readers can meet likable Joey in any of these books. Younger kids may not be able to put themselves in Joeyes' shoes so it's best for third-graders and up. Recommended for parents who have kids like Joey as well.

Joey Pigza Loses Control is a contemporary tale of a boy with Attention Deficit Disorder that he takes medicine to control. He spends the summer with his father, who is also hyper but medicates with beer and compulsions. His father, in one of his manic modes, flushes Joey's medicine down the toilet, spiraling Joey into his disorder. Joey, craving a relationship with his absent father, tries to please him but without his medication, he only disappoints everyone.

Gantos writing changes as Joey loses control, becoming more bouncy like Joey's brain and his father's. "So we each jumped (bungee-jumping) five more times and all the fear and falling and screaming wiped out every hyper feeling I had and when we got home I was exhausted and went directly to my room and threw myself onto my bed and it was as if I had fallen one more time, only straight down an endless black hole."

Gantos portrays Joey as real and ordinary. Joey wants to have friends, play baseball, please his father, love his Chihuahua, Pablo, and let his mom take care of him.

Gantos makes Joey engaging and keeps readers interested in what's going to happen to him. It's a powerful way to learn about a mental disorder through the eyes of a boy who's really just a regular kid, as long as he has his meds.

Write: Write a page about your morning routine as it normally is- write what you do, the order, your state of mind. Do you jump out of bed ready to go or do you hate to talk before 9 am? Then, write about the same situation but with your speed either much faster or much slower. Play with matching the writing to the speed you choose. You can also do one more round with the opposite speed as the second time through. Which one do you like the best? Would you lie to be slower, faster or are you moving just right?