

**FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX**  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**I AM NOT JOEY PIGZA**

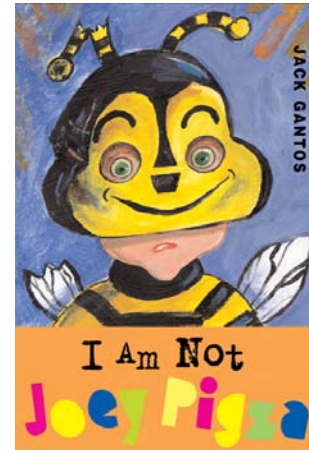
by Jack Gantos

**Reading Level**

Grades 5 up

**About the Novel**

Joey Pigza is knocked for a loop when his good-for-nothing dad, Carter Pigza, comes back into his life claiming to be a new man. Carter Pigza has just won the lottery and he has a new outlook on life. He's even renamed himself Charles Heinz and wants Joey and his mom to join his happy Heinz family plan: new names, new home, new family business. To Joey's surprise, his mom goes along with it, encouraging Joey to forgive his father. But Joey is not convinced that his father has changed. And Joey is afraid that in changing names and going with the new plan, he will lose sight of who he really is.



In this seriously comic novel, the fourth book in the award-winning series, Jack Gantos pushes his acclaimed hero into new territory, where he wrestles with the issue of identity and forgiveness.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Carter Pigza / Charles Heinz tells Joey, “You have to dig deeper than just your name to know who you are” (p. 14). What do you think he means?
2. Do you think Joey knows who he is at his core?
3. Being Freddie Heinz causes Joey to doubt who he is at the core. Is he really different?
4. On many occasions, Joey tries to use his better judgment (p. 18)—sometimes he's successful, sometimes he's not. Find examples and discuss.
5. For private reflection, think about who you are at the core—your qualities, interests, and talents. Are there moments when you doubt yourself or don't use your better judgment? What might you do to bolster your self-awareness and good judgment?
6. Why is Joey convinced that the only thing his dad has changed is his name?
7. How has a windfall of money changed Joey's dad? His mom?
8. Throughout the book, Joey is asked to forgive and forget his father's actions. Why does Joey struggle with this? How does Joey feel after he has forgiven his father?

## I AM NOT JOEY PIGZA

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### About the Author

Jack Gantos is also the author of the Jack Henry book and the Rotten Ralph beginning readers. He is known nationally for his educational creative writing and literature presentations to students and teachers. A frequent conference speaker, he lives with his family in Boston, Massachusetts.

### For more information on Jack Gantos:

#### Web sites:

[www.fsgkidsbooks.com](http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com)

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about his books as well as excerpts and other teachers' guides.

[www.jackgantos.com](http://www.jackgantos.com)

Contains more information about the author and his books as well as excerpts and downloadables.

<http://www.bookexpocast.com/authors-studio/2007/06/25/i-am-not-joey-pigza-by-jack-gantos/>

A podcast interview with the author about I AM NOT JOEY PIGZA

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