

THE

# JOEY PIGZA

## SERIES TEACHER'S GUIDE

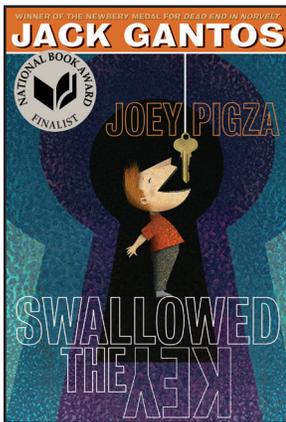
FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JACK GANTOS** was raised in Norvelt, Pennsylvania, and now lives in Boston. In addition to *Dead End in Norvelt*, winner of the Newbery Medal, and *From Norvelt to Nowhere*, he is also the acclaimed author of four other Joey Pigza novels, the Jack Henry story collections, the many Rotten Ralph books, and the Printz Honor memoir *Hole in My Life*.



### ABOUT THE BOOKS



Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9  
HC: 9780374336646  
PB: 9781250061683  
eBook: 9781429936262

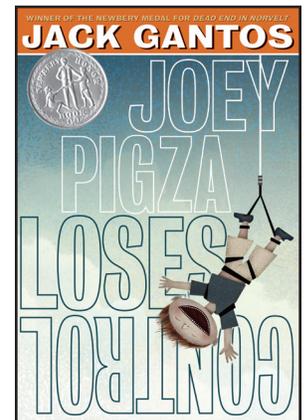
The hilarious, high-energy Joey Pigza quintet chronicles the setbacks and triumphs of an incredible kid whose off-the-wall family life makes his struggle with ADHD all the more of an endlessly unpredictable challenge.

#### JOEY PIGZA SWALLOWED THE KEY

Joey Pigza is wired—bouncing-out-of-his-chair, running-around-in-circles, talking-a-mile-a-minute wired. He lives with his mom, who understands how to handle him, but Joey’s teachers don’t always have patience with him. One day he swallows his house key, one day he cuts off the tip of a girl’s nose, and one day he sharpens his finger in the pencil sharpener. Joey needs help, so the principal sends him to a special school where he can be tested and can have his meds regulated. Life can only get better for Joey!

#### JOEY PIGZA LOSES CONTROL

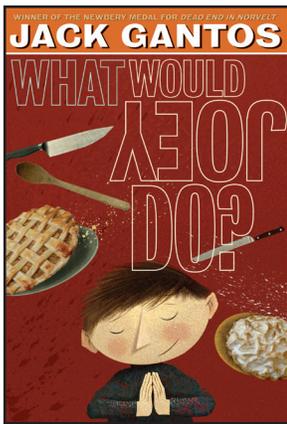
Joey desperately wants to get to know his father, so when summer rolls around, Joey’s mom takes him to his dad’s house to spend a month. Even though Joey has heard his dad is crazy, Joey is surprised by the way his father acts. First, his dad throws Joey’s medicine away because he wants Joey to be in control. Then, Joey discovers his father is coaching a baseball team, and he wants Joey to pitch. When his father puts a lot of pressure on him to win for the team—and without his medicine—Joey starts to unravel. As Joey’s old self returns, his father begins to drink too much, and Joey’s fear forces him to call his mom to pick him up. Joey learns that he isn’t as much like his father as everyone says—a lesson he has learned the hard way.



Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9  
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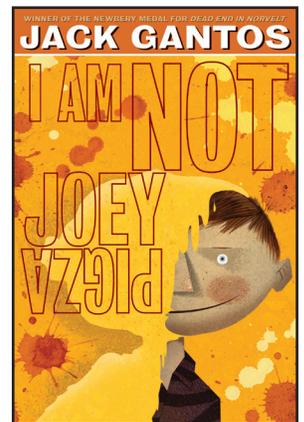
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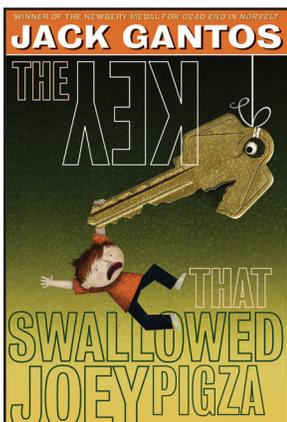
Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9  
HC: 9780374399863  
PB: 97812500616909  
eBook: 9780374706494

## I AM NOT JOEY PIGZA

Joey's parents are now officially off the chain. After Joey's father wins the lottery, he changes his name to Charles Heinz, remarries Joey's mother and changes her name to Maria, but, worst of all, Joey Pigza is now Freddy Heinz. Joey hates the name and does everything he can to prevent the change, but to no avail. His father also buys a diner and insists that "Freddy" quit school to help him, and then "Freddy" discovers his mother is pregnant. His father spends his days playing the lottery, his mother spends her days shopping, and Joey spends his days with his paintball gun, trying to stay out of trouble. Soon, baby Heinzie is born, and Joey's life changes once again.



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Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9  
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## WHAT WOULD JOEY PIGZA DO?

Joey's new self is put to the test as the craziness with his parents spins out of control. He just wants to help everybody he meets, so their lives will be better. He even tries to help his parents, but Joey's grandma tells him they are beyond help and to focus on helping himself. Joey loves helping at the grocery store, but when he attends homeschool with his neighbor, Olivia he's not sure how to help her. Olivia calls Joey a hyper-retard and refers to herself as blind-as-a-brat; she is just mean to Joey, but still he wants to help her. But when his grandma tells Joey bad things happen in sevens, Joey starts counting. And, sure enough, by number six and seven, Joey thinks his world is falling apart.

## THE KEY THAT SWALLOWED JOEY PIGZA

Joey proves to all those in his life, and, most importantly to himself, that he is not a messed-up kid. He is a caring son to his parents, a loving big brother to Junior, an amazing friend to Olivia, and a good student and classmate. Through his efforts, Joey reunites his family by confronting his father and then supporting his mother through an emotional breakdown. Joey assumes responsibility for Carter Junior, and he cleans and organizes the family home. He also encourages his girlfriend, Olivia, to be her true self. Joey finally discovers the key to living a contented life.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



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TEACHER'S GUIDE  
Joey Pigza Series  
Jack Gantos

# PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Invite an ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) expert to speak to students about the symptoms, causes, and treatment of ADHD. After the presentation, encourage students to ask questions and to discuss the impact of ADHD on all aspects of a child's life home and school life.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### JOEY PIGZA SWALLOWED THE KEY

1. Joey wants to follow the rules, but he just can't. Why does Joey make such poor decisions?
2. Joey's mother abandoned him. How does she prove to Joey that he can depend on her?
3. Why does Joey finally believe that he is a good kid? What role do other people play in helping him accept himself?
4. How does being placed in the special education class affect Joey's attitude about himself? How does it help him?

### JOEY PIGZA LOSES CONTROL

1. Why doesn't Joey listen when his dad starts talking? What does Joey want from conversations with his father that his father doesn't give him?
2. How does Joey's relationship with his grandmother change? What does she do that helps Joey? How does the reader know that Joey's grandmother truly has his best interests at heart?
3. What are the similarities between Joey and his father? How are the two of them different? What does Joey learn about his father that helps him understand himself?
4. What does Joey enjoy about playing baseball? When Joey is on the pitcher's mound, how does his father make him nervous? How does Leezy help make Joey's game time more enjoyable?

### WHAT WOULD JOEY PIGZA DO?

1. How does Joey's work at the supermarket help him relax and feel in control? How does Joey's label maker contribute to his new, unwired self?
2. What advice does Joey's grandma give him about his parents? What does she say that helps him understand why his parents fight?
3. How do Joey's parents demonstrate their lack of parenting skills? What effect does their selfishness have on Joey?
4. Why is it so important to Joey's grandma that Joey has a friend? How does Joey eventually convince Olivia to meet his grandma?
5. On page 200, Joey's Saturday thought is "to look as grown-up as I had become." What events contributed to Joey's being more grown-up? How does he show others around him that he is taking himself more seriously?



## I AM NOT JOEY PIGZA

1. How do the changes that Joey's parents make in their lives affect Joey? What does he think about his new life?
2. Why does Joey's mother think it is so important for Joey to forgive his father? How does Joey come to grips with forgiveness? What is his father's reaction when Joey finally forgives him?
3. Why is Joey so excited about the new baby? What does Joey do in preparation of Heinzie's arrival? How does Joey's dad influence the kind of brother Joey will be?
4. No one in the Pigza family ever really comes to grips with being a Heinz, but they all deal with it differently. Discuss how each family member reacts to the changes.

## THE KEY THAT SWALLOWED JOEY PIGZA

1. As Joey's mother declines emotionally, Joey must step up to take care of Junior and to assume adult responsibility for himself and their home. How does Olivia's arrival help Joey? What does Olivia learn about herself that will benefit her life?
2. Once again Joey confronts his father for his lack of responsibility and for stalking the family's home. What does Joey say that finally helps his dad understand the family's need for him to be responsible? What decision does his father make that could change all of their lives?
3. How does Carter Junior help those around him feel calmer and more at peace? What special gift does Joey possess? How do Junior's and Joey's gifts help others?
4. What is the key that swallowed Joey Pigza?

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; SL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1

## WHO IS JOEY PIGZA

Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the five Joey Pigza books. Then ask each group to write a character analysis of Joey based on the assigned book, including Joey's actions or behaviors, his words, his thoughts, his motivations, and how others react to him. Each student in the group should take one of the above topics and write a paragraph or two about it, including specific details from their book that enhance and support their character study. Then regroup the students by selecting one student from each group, forming new groups based on similar character topics, and have them write a paper, detailing the evidence that Joey changed in that particular area over the course of the books. Each group can then share their writing with the class. Encourage groups to present their analysis in creative or original formats.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; W.4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4

## A FRIEND TO DEPEND ON

Olivia and Joey form an amazing bond based on their need for each other. Their relationship is difficult because Olivia is so mean and Joey is so kind. Ask students to select a partner and to write a poem for two voices: one voice from Olivia's point of view and one voice from Joey's point of view. Students can use and/or adapt direct quotes from the book, and the poem should be true to both characters. Have students practice reading their poems and perform them for the class.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; W.4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 5.4, 6.2, 6.4.



# ADHD

Divide students into small groups and ask them to research attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD. Each person in the group should research one aspect of the disorder: symptoms, diagnosis, causes, treatment, or living with the disorder. Then have students write a short synopsis of the information they gathered from their research for two different audiences: parents and students. Have each group compile their information into a parent brochure and a student brochure. Present the brochures to the school counselor and the nurse for review and request that they place the information on the school's Web site as a resource for both students and parents. Rotate the brochures each month or two so that all group brochures will be made available to students and parents.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; W.4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4

## LOSING CONTROL—NOT!

In each book, Joey develops a different method of controlling himself and the symptoms of his ADHD. Ask each student to select one of the five books and to identify the method Joey uses to help him maintain control of himself and to calm down when he feels “spring.” Have students research the method in the selected book for information that would support this as a good focusing or stress-reducing strategy. Have students write a brief explanation of how the method works for Joey and his thought process in determining what helps him; they should include the information that they have found that agrees or disagrees with the usefulness of this strategy. Students can share their writing in groups of five with each member discussing a different Joey Pigza book. Post the writing in the classroom.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; W.4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 5.4, 6.2, 6.4

## TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

Joey learns so much about himself as he navigates the minefield that is his life. School and home are both difficult, and all of his relationships try his patience. Ask students to identify the lessons Joey learns about himself that have made him more confident and that have given him the ability to love himself. On a sheet of paper ask students to make three columns and label them: Lesson Learned, Conflict That Prompted the Lesson, and Relationships Affected. Upon completion of their prewriting, ask students to choose three of the lessons and to compose a letter from Joey's point of view to his parents, a school official, Olivia, his grandma, or another character about what he has learned. Students can share their letters with the class.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; W.4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4

## LITERARY ELEMENT—THEME

The theme is the main idea of a story, generally based on an insight about life or human nature. With a partner, ask students to write a one-sentence theme about the Joey Pigza series along with a brief justification of their theme. Then, using Internet quote sites, ask each pair of students to find a famous quote that exemplifies the theme. Have them write their quote, their theme, and the brief justification on a poster board. Have students add drawings and/or visual elements with captions to connect to scenes in the book that support the theme. Display the posters in the classroom.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; RL.4.2, 5.2; W.4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4



# ILLUMINATING QUOTES

Selecting from any of the five books, ask students to choose an idea that the author wants to convey to the readers and to find two or three quotes that help support this idea. The quotes can be spoken by the characters or taken from the narration. Students should write the quotes with the page numbers and explain the relevance each quote has to the novel and the meaning or idea the author is trying to convey. Working in small groups, have each student share their idea or understanding that the author is trying to convey and the quotes that they have found to support that idea. Have group members openly but respectfully discuss the aptness of the quotes to support the idea, offer additional suggestions of quotes, and reflect on the overall meaning of the idea and the quotes. Have each student revise their original thoughts based on the input from the group and post the revised writing in the classroom.

CCSS: L.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3 ; RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1; W.4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4

Common Core activities written by Susan Geye, the Everman ISD coordinator of library services.



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