Joey Pigza’s Most Triumphant Misadventure Yet!

JACK GANTOS

THE KEY THAT SWALLOWED JOEY PIGZA

Read the entire JOEY PIGZA series from the NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING author of Dead End in Norvelt
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 Special Ed help Joey?

About the Book: Joey Pigza is wired—head-to-toe in his chaotic, running-around-in-circles, and talking-a-mile-a-minute way. His life is filled with shapes, and he understands how to handle the shapes, but Joey’s teachers don’t always have patience with him. One day he swallows a key on his way to class. He spits it out of his mouth, and one day he chases his father’s finger in the pencil sharpener. Joe is really wired and the principal sends him to a special school where he can be taught to deal with his wired regulation. Life can still be very good for Joey.

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 school counselor and nurse for review and request that they place the information on the school’s website 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.


Losing Control—WII!
In this book, Jack Gantos 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 the hero uses to help him maintain control of himself and to calm himself down when he feels “spring.” Have students research the method in the selected book for information that would support this as a good focusing activity 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, and how this method can be related to students with ADHD. Ask students to share their writing in a group setting, with each member discussing a different Joey/Pigza book. Post the writing in the classroom.


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 by his presence. Ask students to identify the lessons Joey learns about himself that have made him more confident and that give 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 Learned, Conflict That Prompted the Lesson, and Learned, Conflict That Prompted the Lesson, and


Literary Element—Theme
The theme is the main idea of a story, generally based on an insight about life or human nature. Have students pair up to write a one-sentence theme about the Joey Pigza series and to write a brief justification of their theme. Then, ask each pair of students to research a famous quote that exemplifies the theme. Have students write their quote, their theme, and the brief justification on a poster board. Have students add drawings and visual elements with captions to connect to the book that supports the theme. Display the poster boards on the walls of the classroom.


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 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 adapt direct quotes from the book, and the poem should be true to both characters. Have students practice reading their poems and performing them for the class.


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 that topic, including specific details from their book to 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.


A Common Core Teacher’s Guide
The Common Core activities written by Susan Geye, Everman ISD Coordinator of Library Services.