

# Joey Pigza Swallowed The Key

by Jack Gantos

## Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

A Perma-Bound Production

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### SYNOPSIS

**Chap. 1** When the novel opens, Joey Pigza is sitting in his fourth grade class. He suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and has a great deal of difficulty concentrating in class. This day, it is after lunch and his medication has worn off. Although Joey knows all the answers to the math questions asked by his teacher Mrs. Maxy, he is unable to get the answers out. As a result, every time Mrs. Maxy calls on Joey, he says, "Can I get back to you on that?" rather than the correct answer. He soon loses all control and starts spinning wildly. Joey spends the rest of the day in the principal's office sorting crayons.

**Chap. 2** Joey's dad ran off when Joey was in kindergarten and his mom soon followed. Joey was left in his grandmother's care. She abused Joey: for example, she tried to lock him in a refrigerator and she often made him beg and bark like a dog. Joey describes himself as "a wired-up mess" by the time his mother finally returned. Grandma goes to live with her son. Joey describes himself as being in "cartoon hell standing on hot coals with little red devils poking me in the bottom with pitchforks as I jumped from one fiery place to another." Joey's mother has many rules, but their life remains chaotic.

**Chap. 3** Over the summer, a big meeting is held at school about Joey. The teachers agree that he should be held back, but no one wants to have him in class again because he is so disruptive. Joey is medicated, but his morning pill wears off mid-way through the day and he loses all self-control. One day, for example, he starts sharpening pencils. When he reduces them all to nibs, he puts his finger in the sharpener. Mrs. Maxy talks to him but he is unable to concentrate on her words. Joey's mother drinks heavily; she calls the alcohol her "medicine."

**Chap. 4** The kids in Joey's neighborhood are mean to him and he has no friends. Joey wears his house key on a string around his neck. One day in class, he swallows the key and tugs it out again. Mrs. Maxy gets annoyed and cuts the string. On a \$1 bet from classmate Seth Justman, Joey swallows the key, forgetting the string has been cut. The nurse forces him to throw up, but the key doesn't come up. Joey is sent to the special education classroom, which he says makes him feel "like some kind of bad dog that had pooped all over the carpet, eaten the slippers, and attacked the mailman." He is put in the time-out chair, which he kicks until he falls asleep from exhaustion.

**Chap. 5** Joey expels the key, which he again swallows in class. Joey is sent back to the special education class. The

teacher, Mrs. Howard, is kind to him. When his classmate Harold cannot blow out the candles on his birthday cake, Joey does it for him. Joey is motivated by kindness, but the rest of the class is shocked at his presumption. At home, Joey questions his mother about her drinking, and she responds resentfully. Although many of Joey's problems are a result of her poor parenting, she refuses to accept responsibility.

**Chap. 6** During a field trip to an Amish farm, Mrs. Maxy won't let Joey have any shoofly pie because the sugar will make him even more hyper. She also refuses to let him carve a pumpkin because she fears he will hurt someone with the knife. Hurt and angry, Joey steals a shoofly pie and eats it all. Buzzed on sugar, Joey climbs to the top of the barn and jumps into the hay. Miraculously, he has only minor injuries.

**Chap. 7** Joey sneaks into an assembly for the gifted and talented students and decides that he is one of them because he is "special." Joey decides to improve the world by making bumper stickers. He takes Mrs. Maxy's scissors to cut the heavy board, but trips and the scissors cut off the tip of Maria's nose. Joey is very sad about the injury.

**Chap. 8** The principal, Mrs. Jarzab, meets with Joey and his mother about Joey's behavior. The principal decides to send Joey to the district's Special Ed center.

**Chap. 9** Left alone while his mother is working at the beauty parlor, Joey visits Maria to apologize. Maria's father, furious, throws Joey out. Joey's mother promises him a puppy if he behaves well at the Special Ed Center.

**Chap. 10** Joey meets some of the other special ed students on the bus. At the center, Joey is greeted by Ed Vanness, his social worker. Ed's nickname is "Special Ed." Ed kindly explains how he and the other people at the special ed center will help Joey.

**Chap. 11** Joey's mother is very angry that Joey has told Ed about their chaotic home situation. Not only does she drink and neglect him, but she does not feed him a balanced diet and resists all his efforts to eat right. Mrs. Maxy brings Joey his lessons so he can keep up with his regular class and rejoin them soon. Ed sends Joey to Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh to get a brain scan to rule out abnormalities, but he feels that Joey's problems are caused by behavioral issues and ADHD.

**Chap. 12** Joey has the brain scan. He remembers his grandmother's cruelty, how she tortured him by saying that his mother would come home if only Joey wasn't such a bad boy. Joey's mother reveals that she wanted to come home earlier but could not stop drinking.

**Chap. 13** Joey's brain scan is normal, but in the hospital gift shop he loses control and spins the postcard rack, sending the

cards flying. He and his mother sightsee, and Joey reveals his great desire to see his father. His mother says that his father is a bum and will not be returning to the family.

**Chap. 14** Joey is given a patch to regulate his medication. His mother buys him a dog, which Joey lavishes with love. Pablo the puppy is like Joey: messed up but lovable.

**Chap. 15** The medicine and behavioral therapy help Joey and he is placed back into his regular classroom. Joey is allowed to say the "Pledge of Allegiance" over the loudspeaker. He feels good about himself now.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in 1951 in Pennsylvania, Jack Gantos had a rough start just like Joey Pigza: as a first grader, Gantos was in the reading group for the slow children. Nonetheless, he started keeping a diary when he was very young, a habit he continues to this day. While still in high school, Gantos decided to become a professional writer. He told an interviewer from *Amazon.com*, "My diary and journal writing background gave me a lot of confidence that writing was something I had loved all my life." But after receiving his first rejection letters, Gantos became frustrated.

"Then," he recalled, "I remembered what one of my teachers had told me. She said, 'Write about what you know.' His cat became Rotten Ralph, and a new character was born. Gantos's first book, *Rotten Ralph*, was published in 1976, the year that he received his B.F.A. in creative writing from Emerson College and decided to become a freelance writer. Gantos remembers, "It was a great day when I saw that first published book. All the hard work had paid off." Gantos was a college professor for many years before devoting himself full-time to writing.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

In 1998 Gantos published what would become one of his most critically acclaimed works: *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*. *Horn Book* critic Jennifer M. Brabandee noted that Joey's "own brand of goodness has an unaffected charm and an uncloying sweetness. Joey is always explaining to people that he's a good kid; readers of this compelling tragicomedy will know almost from the start that Joey's not just a good kid—he's a great kid." Susan Dove Lempke wrote in *Booklist*, "Most teachers and students know at least one child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and this book will surely help them become more understanding, even as they enjoy Gantos's fresh writing style and tart sense of humor." Writing in *School Library Journal*, Shawn Brommer commented, "From the powerful opening lines and fast-moving plot to the thoughtful inner dialogue and satisfying conclusions, readers will cheer for Joey, and for the champion in each of us."

### OTHER CHILDREN'S BOOKS BY JACK GANTOS

*Aunt Bernice* (1978)  
*Back to School for Rotten Ralph* (1998)  
*The Christmas Spirit Attacks Rotten Ralph* (1998)  
*Fair-Weather Friends* (1977)  
*Happy Birthday Rotten Ralph* (1990)  
*Heads or Tails: Stories from the Sixth Grade* (1994)  
*Jack's New Power: Stories from a Caribbean Year* (1995)  
*Jack's Black Book* (1997)  
*Jack on the Tracks: Four Seasons of Fifth Grade* (1999)  
*Not So Rotten Ralph* (1994)  
*The Perfect Pal* (1979).  
*Red's Fib*

*Rotten Ralph* (1976)  
*Rotten Ralph's Halloween Howl* (1998)  
*Rotten Ralph Helps Out* (2001)  
*Rotten Ralph's Thanksgiving Wish* (1999)  
*Rotten Ralph's Rotten Christmas* (1984)  
*Rotten Ralph's Rotten Romance* (1997)  
*Rotten Ralph's Show and Tell* (1989)  
*Rotten Ralph's Trick or Treat* (1986)  
*Wedding Bells for Rotten Ralph* (1999)  
*Worse than Rotten, Ralph* (1978)  
*Rotten Ralph Plays Fair* (2002)  
*Sleepy Ronald* (1976)  
*Swampy Alligator* (1980)  
*The Werewolf Family* (1980)  
*Willy's Raiders* (1981)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*ALAN Review*, winter, 2001, Gail P. Gregg, "Jack Gantos: On Domestic Craziness and Big-Hearted Kids," pp. 25-28.  
*Booklist*, September 1, 2001, S. D. Lempke, review of *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, p. 114.  
*Children's Literature Review*, Volume 18, Gale, 1989, pp. 140-43.  
*Fifth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*, edited by Sally Holmes  
Holtze, H.W. Wilson, 1983, pp. 123-24.  
*Horn Book Magazine* November-December, 1998, Jennifer M. Brabandee, review of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, pp. 729-30

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the importance of kindness and understanding
2. To probe family issues
3. To understand the difficulty of self-control
4. To assess each character's personality
5. To recognize the novel's theme
6. To probe the effects of being different on individuals and society
7. To see how people mature
8. To understand the novel's title
9. To sympathize with the main character's plight
10. To describe the author's use of slang

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explore how Joey's actions affect the people around him
2. To identify with Joey's efforts to modify his behavior
3. To explore Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
4. To understand why Joey is placed in the Special Education Center
5. To explore how Joey's family has failed him
6. To probe the relationship between Joey and his mother
7. To see the effect of setting on Joey's life
8. To understand the plot structure
9. To see how Joey's teachers and social worker try to help him
10. To appreciate the story's pathos and tragedy

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Jack Gantos' style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

**setting** is the time and place where the events take place. The setting may be stated outright, or you may have to infer it from details in the story. To infer the setting, look for words that tell

when and where. Setting is important to *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* because Joey's chaotic home life causes many of his behavioral difficulties.

**style** is the author's unique way of writing. Style is comprised of diction, sentence variety, sentence length, and figures of speech. Gantos uses slang to tell the story through Joey's eyes. For example, Joey says that he is "wired bad, or wired mad, or wired glad." The term "wired" is slang for *born*. The slang creates an informal, personal tone that helps readers sympathize with Joey and perhaps even identify with him.

**theme** is the main idea in a literary work, the author's general statement about life. The theme of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* concerns the importance of persistence, caring, and constancy. Abused by his grandmother, abandoned by his father, and neglected by his mother, Joey manages to learn to modify his behavior through the help of his teachers, principal, and social worker. They teach his mother about parenting and help Joey get the right medication.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

#### Nonfiction

Glasser, Howard. *Transforming the Difficult Child: The Nurtured Heart Approach*

Hallowell, Edward. *Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood*

#### Novels

Joan Bauer, *Water*

Louise Borden, *Good Luck, Mrs. K!*

Eve Bunting, *Blackwater*

Nancy Butts, *The Door in the Lake*

Lynn E. McElfresh, *Can You Feel the Thunder*

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Maggie Lewis, *Morgy Makes His Move*

Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

Linda Arms White, *Comes a Wind*

#### Audiocassettes

*Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos

*Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* by Jack Gantos

*Joey Pigza Loses Control* by Jack Gantos

*What Would Joey Do?* by Jack Gantos

#### Videos/DVDs

*All About Attention Deficit Disorder* (1990)

*Medication for Attention Deficit Disorder* (1994)

*Why Can't Michael Pay Attention? Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder*

#### Internet

"BookWeb Features: Jack Gantos,"

<[www.bookweb.org/news/features/](http://www.bookweb.org/news/features/)>

"Learning Disabilities OnLine,"

<[www.idonline.org/kidzone/books](http://www.idonline.org/kidzone/books)>

"Achuka Feature: Jack Gantos,"

<[achuka.com/features/gantos.htm](http://achuka.com/features/gantos.htm)>

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Jack Gantos' *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- abuse
- behavior modification
- confusion

- illness
- family disorder
- hardship
- kindness and compassion
- self control
- special education

#### Motifs

- being compassionate and kind to others
- dealing with ADHD
- the importance of family love and support
- coping with abuse
- using self-control
- feeling different
- accepting help from others
- self-awareness and maturity
- growth and change
- family break-up

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. "I wouldn't hurt anyone." (Chap. 3, p. 25)  
(*Joey's teacher, Mrs. Maxy, is concerned that Joey will hurt other people in the school. Her concerns are real, but Joey is unable to listen to her because he cannot concentrate. This scene is important because it lays the groundwork for Joey's accident with the scissors, which results in his placement in the Special Ed Center.*)
2. "Mrs. Maxy, I ate my key!" (Chap. 4, p. 33)  
(*The book's title comes from this incident: Joey is fooling around in class and swallows his key. The scene shows his inability to see the results of his actions: while amusing, they are also quite dangerous.*)
3. "Did you drink a lot when you were pregnant with me?" (Chap. 5, p. 49)  
(*Joey suspects that his mother's alcoholism is responsible for his ADHD, but his mother becomes extremely defensive when questioned. This scene shows that Joey understands that his home life is chaotic and harmful, but lacks the tools and resources to improve it.*)
4. "That pie is not good for you, Joey." (Chap. 6, p. 58)  
(*Mrs. Maxy won't let Joey have any of the shoofly pie because it is loaded with sugar, which exacerbates his ADHD. Joey is so angry at being denied the pie that he steals one, wolfs it down, and does indeed lose control of himself as a result of the sugar surge.*)
5. "Special people have to do special things for others less fortunate," she said. (Chap. 7, p. 68)  
(*The speaker for the gifted and talented children links intelligence to what she calls "exceptional character." The implication is that less intelligent people are lacking in character, a cruel judgment indeed.*)
6. But I didn't and my hand collided with the side of her face and I went tumbling down the aisle. (Chap. 7, p. 74)  
(*While running with scissors, Joey trips and runs right into Marie. The scissors cut off the tip of her nose. This accident is terrifying not only because of the serious injury Joey caused but also for his potential to accidentally cause far more damage.*)

7. "I spoke with a diet lady today and she said I don't eat right for my body too." (Chap.11, p. 106)  
*(We see in this scene that Joey's problems are also caused by a poor home life, especially poor nutrition. His mother lacks the skills and knowledge to meet his needs.)*
8. And she made me do puppy tricks. (Chap. 12, p. 122)  
*(Joey has been horribly abused by his grandmother, and the abuse haunts him. Joey's social worker encourages him to talk about it, but his mother shuts him out. Joey is filled with self-hatred as a result.)*
9. With her other hand, she reached for me as if she were searching for something in the dark. (Chap. 14, p. 142)  
*(In this symbolic scene, we see that Joey's mother wants to help him, but she does not know how—she is "in the dark.")*
10. "You are naturally good." (Chap. 15, p. 153)  
*(When Mrs. Howard, the special education teacher, praises Joey, he is filled with pride. She is one of the few people to recognize his innate goodness. This praise goes a long way toward helping him cope with his family and behavioral issues.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

#### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

- How is Joey Pigza different from other students?  
*(Joey suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. As a result, he is unable to sit still in class, pay attention to his lessons, and thus learn. He acts out and causes harm to himself and others.)*
- What happens at the Amish farm?  
*(When denied the shoofly pie, Joey steals one, eats it all, climbs to the top of the barn, and jumps down. He causes a great commotion and comes very close to causing himself serious physical harm.)*
- How does Joey injure Maria?  
*(He trips while carrying a scissors and cuts off the tip of her nose.)*
- In what ways does Ed Vanness help Joey?  
*(Ed Vanness gets Joey a brain scan and a physical exam to rule out illnesses. Ed also teaches Joey about the importance of eating healthy food, keeping himself clean, and staying away from drugs like alcohol.)*
- How does Joey change at the end of the novel?  
*(Joey learns to control his behavior better, to cope with his disorder, and to deal with his chaotic family. His self-esteem gets boosted as a result of these positive steps.)*

#### Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

- Why does Joey swallow the key?  
*(Possible responses: To get attention; because he cannot help himself.)*
- In what ways does Joey's mother contribute to his problems? In what ways does she help him?  
*(Joey's mother makes his problems worse by not helping him face past abuse, by not providing good food, and by drinking to excess. She helps him by loving him and sincerely trying to overcome her own problems with parenting and alcohol abuse.)*

- Why does Joey misbehave? What is wrong with him?  
*(Joey's problems are a result of inherent ADHD and a poor home life. There is no stability in his life, which makes his medical condition worse.)*

#### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

- Do you think Joey should have been placed in the Special Education Center? Why or why not?  
*(Possible responses: Yes, because he was a danger to himself and to others. At the Special Ed Center, he could get the help he needed. No, because he was sincerely trying to control his behavior.)*
- What does Joey's mother's drinking symbolize?  
*(Possible response: Her drinking might be a form of self-medication, a way to control her own ADHD. It might also be a way to escape her loneliness and difficulty controlling her son.)*

#### Question 11 (Creative Level)

- Argue that Joey's problems were a result of his poor home life, not any medical condition. Discuss some ways that you might have coped with Joey's situation in his place.

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Art/Music

- Create a new cover for the novel. Explain how your cover art captures the novel's theme.
- Choose a memorable quote from the novel and paint or draw it on a plaque.
- Find a song that captures Joey's personality. Share it with the class and explain what it reveals about him.
- Draw the key that Joey swallows. Tell how it is a symbol for Joey.

#### History/Social Studies

- Joey visits the Amish. Find out more about these Pennsylvania Dutch people and share your findings with the class.
- The novel is set in Pennsylvania. Draw a map of Pennsylvania and report on its climate, topography, and population.
- Joey refers to "Mother Teresa." Explain who she is and why she is famous.
- Joey feels like a mummy during his brain scan. Find out how the Egyptians made mummies.
- Joey holds the door open like "Samson." Who was Samson?

#### Language Arts

- Joey mentions "Hansel and Gretel." Read the fairy tale and explain why Joey might feel like those characters.
- Recast one chapter from Mrs. Maxy's point of view.
- Joey enjoys the book *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. Read the book and write a report on it. Decide if you agree with Joey's assessment.
- Joey touches his nose to make sure it is not growing like Pinocchio's nose. Explain the reference.
- Joey's mother advises him to think of something good every time he thinks of something bad. Write more good advice for Joey.
- Write 5 adjectives to describe Joey's personality.

#### Mathematics/Science

- Joey does not eat right. Create a weekly diet of healthful foods for Joey.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

2. The nurse gives Joey *Ipecac* so he will throw up the key. Make a list of over-the-counter medications that every home should have on hand.
3. Write Joey's medical diagnosis. What is wrong with him?
4. Find out what different kinds of brain scans are given.

### ***Speech/Drama***

1. Improvise a scene in which you are trying to counsel Joey.
2. With a partner, role-play a scene between Joey and his mother in which you discuss the abuse that Joey has endured from his grandmother.
3. In a team, improvise a scene in which Joey meets his father.

### **ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT**

1. Make a character list and describe each character.
2. List examples of difficulties that Joey faced and rank these hardships on a scale from most to least difficult.
3. Write a brief sequel to the novel in which you explain what has happened to Joey fifteen years later.

## VOCABULARY TEST

Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.

- |       |                  |  |
|-------|------------------|--|
| _____ | 1. disruptive    | A. large meeting room                          |
| _____ | 2. Amish         | B. tattled on someone                          |
| _____ | 3. Tornado       | C. harsh                                       |
| _____ | 4. molasses      | D. the Pennsylvania Dutch people               |
| _____ | 5. static        | E. type of embroidery                          |
| _____ | 6. jolt          | F. type of restraint                           |
| _____ | 7. ricochet      | G. type of candy, usually a red or black color |
| _____ | 8. licorice      | H. a tissue made of fabric                     |
| _____ | 9. stern         | I. electric charge                             |
| _____ | 10. velvet       | J. Hawaiian dance                              |
| _____ | 11. throb        | K. bounce off                                  |
| _____ | 12. rigid        | L. very stiff                                  |
| _____ | 13. needlepoint  | M. sayings                                     |
| _____ | 14. handkerchief | N. windstorm                                   |
| _____ | 15. snatched     | O. shock                                       |
| _____ | 16. substitute   | P. take the place of                           |
| _____ | 17. straitjacket | Q. pulse with pain                             |
| _____ | 18. slogans      | R. soft fabric                                 |
| _____ | 19. hula         | S. rebellious                                  |
| _____ | 20. auditorium   | T. liquid sugar                                |

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| ___ 1. Joey's father; he is not part of the family  | A. Mrs. Maxy        |
| ___ 2. little boy who does not have arms            | B. Joey Pigza       |
| ___ 3. class president                              | C. Pablo Pigza      |
| ___ 4. school nurse                                 | D. Carter Pigza     |
| ___ 5. young boy with ADHD                          | E. Mrs. Holyfield   |
| ___ 6. guest speaker                                | F. Ed Vanness       |
| ___ 7. Joey's regular classroom teacher             | G. Mrs. Cole        |
| ___ 8. school principal                             | H. Charlie          |
| ___ 9. Joey's social worker, nicknamed "Special Ed" | I. Mrs. Jarzab      |
| ___ 10. Joey's puppy                                | J. Maria Dombrowski |

### Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Underline the correct word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. Joey Pigza suffers from (missing arms, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).
2. When Joey was in kindergarten, he was taken care of by (his grandmother, his older sister).
3. One day in class, Joey puts his finger in the (pencil sharpener, hamster cage).
4. Joey's mother drinks heavily and calls the alcohol her ("baby," "medicine").
5. Joey wears his (wallet, house key) on a string around his neck.
6. One day, Joey helps his classmate Harold by (blowing out the candles on his cake, holding the door open for him).
7. During a field trip to an Amish farm, the teacher won't let Joey have any (ice cream, shoofly pie).
8. Joey decides to make the world a better place by making (bumper stickers, large posters).
9. Joey's mother promises him a (bicycle, puppy) if he behaves well at the Special Ed Center.
10. Joey goes to the hospital in Pittsburgh to get (a brain scan, artificial arms).

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. When Joey's teacher calls on him, instead of giving the answer, he says, "Can I get back to you on that?"
- \_\_\_ 2. Joey's teachers agree that he should be put in a special school because he is very smart and successful in class.
- \_\_\_ 3. The kids in Joey's neighborhood are nice to him and he has many friends.
- \_\_\_ 4. Joey's teacher refuses to let him carve a pumpkin because she is afraid that he will hurt someone with the knife.
- \_\_\_ 5. Joey sneaks into an assembly for the special education students and decides that he is badly handicapped.
- \_\_\_ 6. Joey's mother is very angry when Joey tells Ed about their confused home situation.
- \_\_\_ 7. Joey's mother drinks too much and neglects her son.
- \_\_\_ 8. There is never any plan for Joey to return to his regular classroom.
- \_\_\_ 9. In the hospital gift shop, Joey spins the postcard rack, sending the cards flying.
- \_\_\_ 10. At the end of the book, Joey is allowed to say the "Pledge of Allegiance" over the loudspeaker. He feels good about himself now.

**Part IV: Essay (40 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Which character in the book did you find the most admirable? Why?
- 2. Describe how Joey acts out.
- 3. Analyze Joey's relationship with his mother.
- 4. Explain the novel's theme or insight about life.



## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase to complete each of the following statements. Place your answers in the blanks provided in the sentences.

1. Joey Pigza is a student in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade in elementary school.
2. Joey has a medical condition called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When he was in kindergarten, Joey lived with his \_\_\_\_\_ rather than his parents.
4. Then Joey went to live with his \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Joey wears a \_\_\_\_\_ on a string around his neck.
6. In the school's special education class, Joey is put in a time-out \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Joey and his class visit a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ farm in the Pennsylvania Dutch area.
8. Joey eats an entire pie, called a \_\_\_\_\_ pie.
9. He climbs to the top of the barn and jumps into some \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Joey's mother promises him a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ if he behaves well at the Special Ed Center.

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| _____ 1. The school nurse                     | A. Maria Dombrowski |
| _____ 2. Joey's puppy                         | B. "Special Ed"     |
| _____ 3. Joey's 4 <sup>th</sup> grade teacher | C. Mrs. Holyfield   |
| _____ 4. The little boy without arms          | D. Mrs. Jarzab      |
| _____ 5. The school principal                 | E. Pablo Pigza      |
| _____ 6. The novel's narrator                 | F. Joey Pigza       |
| _____ 7. Ed Vanness                           | G. Carter Pigza     |
| _____ 8. The guest speaker                    | H. Mrs. Maxy        |
| _____ 9. Joey cuts off the tip of her nose    | I. Mrs. Cole        |
| _____ 10. Joey's father                       | J. Charlie          |

**Part III: Motivation (20 points)**

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. Joey doesn't give correct answers to math questions because
2. Joey spends part of the day in the principal's office sorting crayons because
3. Over the summer, the teachers agree that Joey should be held back, but
4. The nurse forces Joey to throw up because
5. Joey blows out the candles on Harold's birthday cake because
6. Mrs. Maxy refuses to let Joey carve a pumpkin because
7. Joey decides to make bumper stickers to
8. The principal decides to send Joey to the district's Special Ed center because
9. Joey goes to Maria's house to
10. Joey returns to his regular classroom because

**Part IV: Essay (40 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how Joey changes as the novel progresses.
2. Analyze what influence Joey's home life has on his behavior.
3. Argue that the novel's title does or does not suit its theme.
4. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. S | 6. O  | 11. Q | 16. P |
| 2. D | 7. K  | 12. L | 17. F |
| 3. N | 8. G  | 13. E | 18. M |
| 4. T | 9. C  | 14. H | 19. J |
| 5. I | 10. R | 15. B | 20. A |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. G  |
| 2. H | 7. A  |
| 3. J | 8. I  |
| 4. E | 9. F  |
| 5. B | 10. C |

#### Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

1. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
2. his grandmother
3. pencil sharpener
4. medicine
5. house key
6. blowing out the candles on his cake
7. shoofly pie
8. bumper stickers
9. puppy
10. a brain scan

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. fourth      | 6. chair   |
| 2. ADD or ADHD | 7. Amish   |
| 3. grandmother | 8. shoofly |
| 4. mother      | 9. hay     |
| 5. key         | 10. puppy  |

#### Part II: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. F  |
| 2. E | 7. B  |
| 3. H | 8. I  |
| 4. J | 9. A  |
| 5. D | 10. G |

#### Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. he is unable to concentrate
2. he is disrupting his class
3. no one wants to have him in class again because he is so disruptive
4. he has swallowed his house key and she is trying to get him to expel it
5. Harold cannot blow out the candles himself and Joey is trying to help him
6. she fears he will hurt someone with the knife
7. help make the world a better place
8. he has hurt Maria and people are afraid of him
9. apologize for accidentally cutting off the tip of her nose
10. his behavior has improved

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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