

# Joey Pigza Loses Control

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**Subject Area** : Language Arts

**Reading Level** : 5.2

## Book Summary

Joey Pigza is about to meet his match — in the form of his estranged father, Carter Pigza. After being separated from his dad for many years, Joey now has the opportunity to spend an adventurous summer with him and his crazy grandma. Obviously, Joey has mixed feelings about the trip. He's heard plenty of less-than-glorious stories about his dad — particularly from his mom, who calls his father "wired" and "like you, only bigger." And Joey knows exactly what his mom means: Before Joey started taking his new medication for hyperactivity and attention-deficit disorder, he used to be "wired" like a light bulb, too. But Joey still clings to the hope that his dad can change, and he dreams of a day when his family will be reunited again. Can people ever really change? This is the powerful life lesson Joey (and the reader) learns after a wild and woolly summer with Dad.

## Objective

Students will understand and explore a major conflict in the novel through personal reflection, class discussion, and poetry writing.

Standard: *Understands specific devices an author uses to accomplish his or her purpose (e.g., establishing a conflict)*

## Warm-up Activity

Read students the passage on page 52 in which Joey talks about "becoming two Joeys" — "one Joey for Mom and a different Joey for Dad."

As a class, discuss what Joey means in the above quote. Ask students: Have you ever felt this way? When? Why? They may wish to share their personal stories of feeling like two different people; for example, a student may feel like one person with their friends and a different person with their parents or teachers. What problems does this cause for you? What problems does this cause for Joey?

## Teaching Plan

1. Once students know that "becoming two Joeys" is a big problem for the main character, explain that it is one of the main conflicts in the novel. If needed, define the term *conflict* — a central problem in a story, often an internal or external struggle for the main character that is resolved by the end. Brainstorm examples of other conflicts Joey faces (e.g., Joey's hope that his father can change vs. his realization that his dad is still the same difficult person) to further explain this concept.
2. Ask students to imagine the "two Joeys" having a dialogue or conversation. What would they say to each other? What is on the mind of "Mom's Joey"? What is on the mind of "Dad's Joey"? Make a list of the different thoughts, concerns, and opinions of the two Joeys.
3. Tell the class they are going to write a "Poem for Two Voices" for the two Joeys. Read and show them examples of this poetic form so they better understand the model. (See *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleischman.) Explain that their poems will resemble a dialogue or conversation between the two Joeys, in which they speak and respond to each other. For instance,

Dad's Joey might ask a question, and Mom's Joey would answer. During the writing process, students will draft, revise, edit, and publish their work.

### **Follow-up Activity**

Organize a class Poetry Reading in which students share their "Poems for Two Voices." After the reading, discuss how the individual poems illustrate and express Joey's internal conflict in the book.

#### Other Books About Family Issues

Jack

*by A. M. Holmes*

The humorous, heartwarming story of a boy who finds out his father is gay, and how he grapples with his desire to be a "normal" teenager.

Tangerine

*by Edward Bloom*

When Paul's family relocates to Tangerine, Florida, his life is anything but normal. As he adapts to his surroundings, Paul soon uncovers a terrible secret that leads directly to his brother.

#### **Other Books by Jack Gantos**

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

The Rotten Ralph Series

Teaching plan written by Lauren Gold

- Subjects:

Main Idea and Details, Family Life, Literature, Plot, Character, Setting, Literature Appreciation, Listening Comprehension, Public Speaking, Revision, Poetry Writing, Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking

- Skills:

Main Idea and Details, Plot, Character and Setting, Problem and Solution, Listening Comprehension, Public Speaking, Poetry Writing