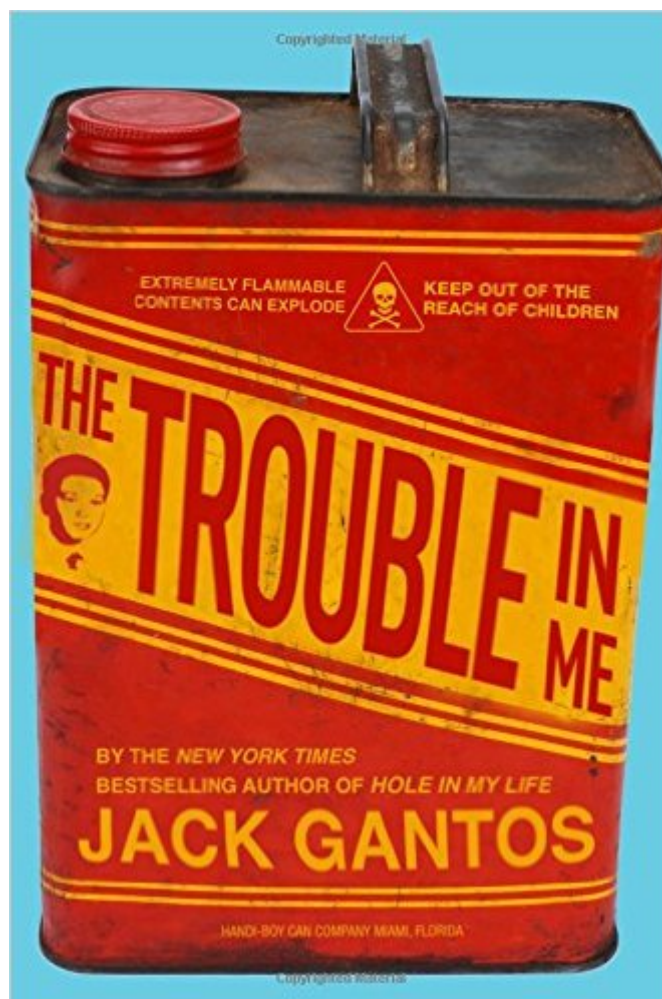


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The Trouble In Me



Synopsis

This fiery autobiographical novel captures a pivotal week or two in the life of fourteen-year-old Jack Gantos, as the author reveals the moment he began to slide off track as a kid who in just a few years would find himself locked up in a federal penitentiary for the crimes portrayed in the memoir *Hole in My Life*. Set in the Fort Lauderdale neighborhood of his family's latest rental home, *The Trouble in Me* opens with an explosive encounter in which Jack first meets his awesomely rebellious older neighbor, Gary Pagoda, just back from juvie for car theft. Instantly mesmerized, Jack decides he will do whatever it takes to be like Gary. As a follower, Jack is eager to leave his old self behind, and desperate for whatever crazy, hilarious, frightening thing might happen next. But he may not be as ready as he thinks when the trouble in him comes blazing to life. This title has Common Core connections.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 970 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 224 pages

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ISBN-13: 978-0374379957

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 0.9 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #155,604 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Biographical > United States](#) #71 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Peer Pressure](#) #82 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > United States](#)

Age Range: 12 - 16 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

Customer Reviews

The Trouble in Me is an autobiographical novel written by Newbery Medalist Jack Gantos. Centered around a week or two in 14-year-old Jack Gantos's childhood, *The Trouble in Me* is the story of how the people around him and his experiences shaped Jack and later led to his decline down a dark path, as featured in the memoir *Hole in My Life*. The book follows Jack's relationship with his bad,

dangerous, and gangster-like neighbor Gary Pagoda, whose life is made up of visits to juvie, shoplifting and dating. Gary's lifestyle starts to rub off on Jack as he gets closer and closer to his notorious neighbor. Soon enough, Jack wants to be just like Gary, and starts mimicking his ways, dressing like him, and doing whatever Gary asks. But will Jack have what it takes to fully become Gary? Or will he suppress the trouble in him for another time? My favorite part of the book was when Gary made Jack try out his daredevil stunts in the Pagoda Olympic Games. Other readers, especially tweens, teens, and young adults, will enjoy this book because of its relatable thoughts about life and growing up, as well as its humor and crazy excursions. Overall, *The Trouble in Me* is a great novel about growing up and the influences others can have on us, and Jack Gantos's unique voice will have you begging for more stories about his life. Owen L., age 14, Delaware Valley Mensa

A skilled writer of children's books, Jack Gantos pours his careful mix of humor, insight and advice into his newest endeavor, *THE TROUBLE IN ME*. Jack didn't have to look far for the inspiration of his new coming-of-age novel --- all he had to do was take notes on his 14-year-old self. Capturing the span of a week, *THE TROUBLE IN ME* reveals the journey that led Gantos spiraling down the wrong paths. Set in warm, sunny Fort Lauderdale, Gantos recounts his early teen years with a direct and straightforward honesty. Unlike a normal autobiography, Jack writes his encounters very personally, and above anything else, with incredible humor. Although the story drags on at a slow pace, at times, and is bogged down by unnecessary insight, it makes up for this with its balance of action, adventure and wittiness. With the unlikely arrival of Gary Pagoda, who is newly freed from juvie following his conviction of car theft, Jack is mesmerized and infatuated with becoming someone he is not. Gantos showcases his thought process at this time, and his desire to break the rules just to fit in with the new cool guy in town. I liked how the author explained some of the decisions he made, and it helped the reader understand the book and the characters better. Throughout the story, Gantos begins to lose the most important things to him. As he continues to be Gary's disciple, he becomes desperate enough to do whatever it takes to be like him. When he realizes that this comes with great sacrifices --- like when he stands on the wrong side of a jail cell in a federal penitentiary --- it makes the reader speculate if the "trouble in him" will keep blazing out of control. *THE TROUBLE IN ME* might just be a perfect fit for those who can relate to becoming someone they're not and listening to the wrong voices or are looking for a story of redemption. Reviewed by Ariel G.

Joey Pigza remains my favorite of all the books of Jack Gantos. I can't remember a character like Joey. Joey Pigza showed up just as our collective awareness of ADHD was growing, but Joey is just an impulsive kid who can't sit still. He doesn't need a label; he just needs understanding and acceptance and patience. Later Jack Gantos is asked about his brush with the law in author interviews, and Gantos decides to talk...candidly. This book is a continuation of that candid conversation. In this book, Gantos explores the pivotal relationship with an older neighbor kid whom he has often referred and how that relationship changed his life forever. It's not just an autobiography or a true-life coming-of-age story. Gantos uses his own story to explore and reveal what happens when a kid "turns bad." It isn't that his story speaks of something largely human; it is that he purposefully uses his story to explore questions of what motivates us, why do some people draw us in, why do we follow, what makes some of us more vulnerable to risks than others, and so forth. I love his mission. His prose isn't as clear as his purpose though. I wish the story was as stripped down as his aims. Instead, the story is loaded up with metaphor after metaphor, description after description, and his words are as thick as that murky canal in the sweltering Florida afternoon. Worth the read but wish the ride was a bit more slippery like the story itself.

THE TROUBLE IN ME is a book that took me some time to read, but not because it was too long or too complex. It took me a while because I wanted to really savor it. Whether writing for adults or now a younger audience Jack shows us that no matter where you are from or where you come from you can make changes in your life not just for yourself but that will impact others. We're also able to see that no matter what your age you can have an impact both positively or otherwise on those around you. That is what Jack realized at a young age, and because being the bad guy is sometimes seen as the cool thing to do, he realized that what really matters is to love you and do what is right for you. I applaud him and his candor, and the way he makes you reflect on your own life by reading about his own. I also like the fact that he is able to see himself how his choices brought about the consequences that they did: a great reminder for us all when it comes to the things that we do. Love this book and have already been telling others about it. The Trouble that Jack dealt with confronts us all. May be find the courage to rise above it.

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