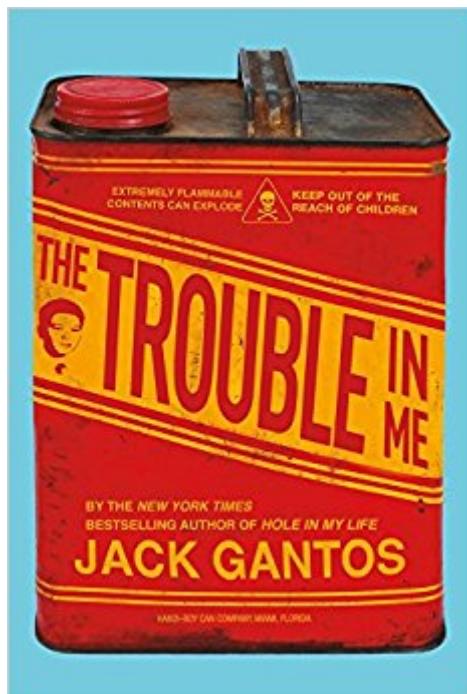


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# The Trouble In Me



## Synopsis

This fiery autobiographical novel captures a pivotal week or two in the life of fourteen-year-old Jack Gantos, when 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 Fort Lauderdale, *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. *The Trouble in Me* by Jack Gantos is a brutally honest memoir that is dark, funny, and most of all, true-to-life.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

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Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #659,501 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #322 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Moving #356 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > New Experiences #486 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Law & Crime

Age Range: 12 - 16 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up • Before there was life behind bars at the federal prison, there was life behind a chain-link fence on his Florida city lot, where Jack, at age 14, saw his future. On the other side stands car thief Gary Pagoda, recently released from juvie, a boy who is "everything [Jack] had never been" but who in short order Jack decides is everything he wants to become. Each reckless antic (shoplifting, kamikaze-esque "Pagoda Olympics," escalating pyromania) aimed at creating a

new identity leaves a bigger void. Read admirably well by the author, the only narrator who could do this tale justice. VERDICT This poignant story is about learning one of life's lessons the hard way: the most powerful lies are the ones you tell yourself. ["Gantos's characteristic humor and keen observation of the fragile teen psyche combine with heartbreaking authenticity in this unflinching look at how a good kid can easily go down a wrong path": SLJ 10/15 starred review of the Farrar book.] •Cheryl Preisendorfer, Twinsburg City Schools, OH --This text refers to the Digital edition.

The Trouble In Me:A School Library Journal Best Book of 2015 "Eloquent, unflinching and darkly funny, The Trouble in Me chronicles a boy's initiation into manhood" • "cone warped version of it, anyway." • "Chicago Tribune" "The book has an unsettling power ... A gutsy ... cautionary romp." • "The New York Times Book Review" "[An] incendiary fictionalized memoir ... Abundant style and substance makes this an irresistible cautionary tale ... Gantos has won a Newbery Medal, Printz Honor, Sibert Honor, and countless hearts. Readers will want to know how he became one of a kind." • "Booklist, starred review" "Gantos' characteristic humor and keen observation of the fragile teen psyche combine with heartbreaking authenticity in this unflinching look at how a good kid can easily go down a wrong path ... Hand this to the so-called "bad" kids, the lost kids, and the ones struggling to find their way." • "School Library Journal, starred review" "Full of 'don't try this at home' moments ... Jack's interior monologue also has a heartbreaking edge." • "Publishers Weekly" "Readers will laugh ... at Jack's reckless antics and lack of impulse control, but they will probably also sympathize with his deep itch to make a change." • "Kirkus Reviews"

This is an excellent read for teens and adults alike. Entertaining and swiftly placed, the message is clear. I'm off to purchase and read Hole I in my Life! Thank you, Jack, for sharing this story! Always a fan and proud to tell everyone you were my favorite writing professor at Emerson College. Much love and respect, always!

13 yr old son loved this book & all the others written by Jack Gantos. The guy writes great books for boys. My son can't get into the Harry Potter type fiction. This was just his style!

I liked this book because Gantos managed to fill a book with just a few days and keep me

interested.

Another startlingly honest chapter in young Jack's story--well-written, hilarious, heartbreaking, wise. A perfect YA offering.

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.

I am not at all familiar with the works of Jack Gantos, and it is my understanding that The Trouble in Me is a fictionalized memoir of what appears to have been a very troubled childhood. Gantos was apparently one of those very awkward kids who never fit in to the middle school and high school culture. While he had a good relationship with his mother, his father is portrayed as a tyrant similar to the father in The Great Santini. Things really start going downhill in the author's life when he becomes acquainted with Gary Pagoda, a delinquent teen who has already had several brushes with

the law. A book I would share with someone age 13 and up, particularly someone with relationship and self esteem issues. I am not sure if the author is a totally reliable narrator, but the story speaks to those of us who had a hard time fitting in when we were in our early teens.

Once again Jack Gantos shows why he's the master of blurring memoir and novel. In *The Trouble in Me*, Gantos writes about his thirteen year-old self wanting to be anyone but himself by trying to be the older kid across the street. From the start, this is obviously going to be as much cautionary tale as exploration of a personal episode that would shape his life to come. Book Jack knows that the stunts probably aren't that wise, but hey, the kid across the street is so cool that it's got to be better than being 'Jack Gantos.' As usual the writing is superb, this time meant for YA and the upper level of middle grade readers. The book isn't quite as compelling *Dead End in Norvelt*, but for readers who are trying to figure out who they are just like Jack was at a pivotal time of his life, *The Trouble in Me* resonates. Though, there, perhaps, ought to be a warning of 'Don't do what I did' on the cover. Note: ARC received via Vine in exchange for review.

*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

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