

A detailed illustration of a young boy's face, looking upwards with a wide-eyed, curious expression. He has dark hair and is holding a large, ornate key in his hand, which is visible in the lower right corner. The background is white with several colorful, translucent spheres in shades of red, orange, and yellow floating around. The title 'Joey Pigza Swallows the Key' is written in a large, stylized, purple font on the left side of the cover.

JACK GANTOS

author of *Joey Pigza Loses Control*,
Newbery Honor Book

**Joey
Pigza
swallows
the
Key**



1

OFF THE WALL

At school they say I'm wired bad, or wired mad, or wired sad, or wired glad, depending on my mood and what teacher has ended up with me. But there is no doubt about it, I'm *wired*.

This year was no different. When I started out all the days there looked about the same. In the morning I'd be okay and follow along in class. But after lunch, when my meds had worn down, it was nothing but trouble for me.

One day, we were doing math drills in class and every time Mrs. Maxy asked a question, like "What's nine times nine?" I'd raise my hand because I'm really quick at math. But each time she called on me, even though I knew the answer, I'd just blurt out, "Can I get back to you on that?" Then I'd nearly fall out of my

chair from laughing. And she'd give me that white-lipped look which meant, "Settle down." But I didn't and kept raising my hand each time she asked a question until finally no other kid would raise their hand because they knew what was coming between me and Mrs. Maxy.

"Okay, Joey," she'd say, calling on me and staring hard at my face as if her eyes were long fingers that could grip me by the chin. I'd stare right back and hesitate a second as if I was planning to answer the question and then I'd holler out really loud, "Can I get back to you on that?" Finally, after a bunch of times of me doing that in a row, she jerked her thumb toward the door. "Out in the hall," she said. And the class cracked up.

So I went and stood in the hall for about a second until I remembered the mini-Superball in my pocket and started to bounce it off the lockers and ceiling and after Mrs. Deebs in the next class stuck her head out her door and yelled, "Hey, cut the racket," like she was yelling at a stray cat, I remembered something I wanted to try. I had seen the Tasmanian Devil on TV whirling around like a top so I unbuckled my belt and pulled on the end really hard, as if I was trying to start a lawn mower. But that didn't get me spinning very fast. So I took out my high-top shoelaces and tied them together and then to the belt and wrapped

it all around my waist. Then I grabbed one end and yanked on it and sort of got myself spinning. I kept doing it until I got better and better and before long I was bouncing off the lockers because I was dizzy too. Then I gave myself one more really good pull on the belt and because I was already dizzy I got going really fast and began to snort and grunt like the Tasmanian Devil until Mrs. Maxy came out and clamped her hands down on my shoulders. She stopped me so fast I spun right out of my shoes and they went shooting up the hall.

"You glue your feet to the floor for five whole minutes or you can just spin yourself down to the principal's office," she said. "Now, what is your choice going to be?"

"Can I get back to you on that?" I asked.

Her face turned all red. "Five minutes," she said. "Settle down for five, and you can rejoin the class."

I nodded, and when she was gone I wrapped the belt and laces around my middle and gave it a good tug and began to spin and spin and slam into the lockers and I got going so good the gum I had under my tongue flew out and my Superball slipped out of my hand and went bouncing down the hall and I kept going and going like when you roll down a steep hill and before long I was bumping on the glass walls around the principal's office like a dizzy fish in a

Wired!

Joey Pigza can't sit still. He can't pay attention, he can't follow the rules, and he can't help it—especially when his meds aren't working. Joey's had problems ever since he was born, problems just like his dad and grandma have. And whether he's wreaking havoc on a class trip or swallowing his house key, Joey's problems are getting worse. In fact, his behavior is so off the wall that his teachers are threatening to send him to the special-ed center downtown.

Joey knows he's really a good kid, but no matter how hard he tries to do the right thing, something always seems to go wrong. Will he ever get anything right?

"Readers will cheer for Joey."

—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

"Joey's not just a good kid—he's a great kid."

—*The Horn Book* (starred review)

"Compassionate and humorous."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Finalist, National Book Award for Children's Literature

An ALA Notable Book

**A Notable Children's Trade Book in
Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)**

US \$5.99 / \$7.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-0-06-440833-2

ISBN-10: 0-06-440833-7



9 780064 408332

HarperTrophy®

An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Ages 10 up

Cover art © 2002 by Brian Selznick

Cover © 2002 by HarperCollins Publishers Inc.