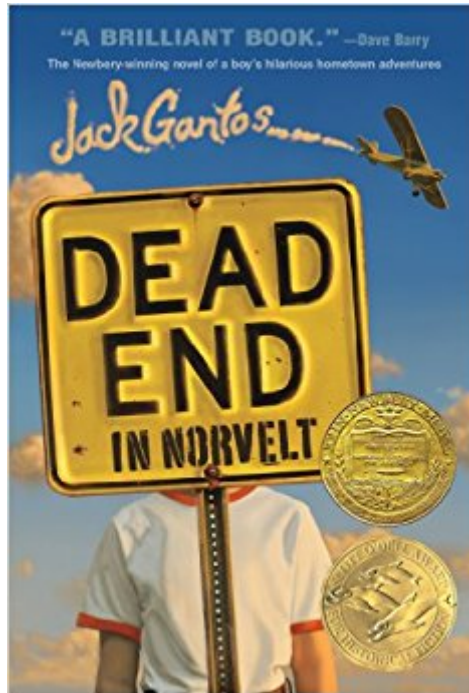




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Dead End In Norvelt (Norvelt Series)



Synopsis

Dead End in Norvelt is the winner of the 2012 Newbery Medal for the year's best contribution to children's literature and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction! Melding the entirely true and the wildly fictional, Dead End in Norvelt is a novel about an incredible two months for a kid named Jack Gantos, whose plans for vacation excitement are shot down when he is "grounded for life" by his feuding parents, and whose nose spews bad blood at every little shock he gets. But plenty of excitement (and shocks) are coming Jack's way once his mom loans him out to help a feisty old neighbor with a most unusual chore—typing obituaries filled with stories about the people who founded his utopian town. As one obituary leads to another, Jack is launched on a strange adventure involving molten wax, Eleanor Roosevelt, twisted promises, a homemade airplane, Girl Scout cookies, a man on a trike, a dancing plague, voices from the past, Hells Angels . . . and possibly murder. Endlessly surprising, this sly, sharp-edged narrative is the author at his very best, making readers laugh out loud at the most unexpected things in a dead-funny depiction of growing up in a slightly off-kilter place where the past is present, the present is confusing, and the future is completely up in the air.

Book Information

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Humorous

Customer Reviews

“This is a brilliant book, full of history, mystery, and laughs. It reminded me of my small-town childhood, although my small town was never as delightfully weird as Norvelt.”

“A bit of autobiography works its way into all of Gantos’s work, but he one-ups himself in this wildly entertaining meld of truth and fiction by naming the main character . . . Jackie Gantos. Publishers Weekly, starred review “A fast-paced and witty read. School Library Journal “A more quietly (but still absurdly) funny and insightful account of a kid’s growth, kin to Gantos’s Jack stories, that will stealthily hook even resistant readers into the lure of history. BCCB “This winning novel, both humorous and heartwarming, takes place during the summer of 1962, when narrator Jack Gantos turns 12 and spends most of his days grounded. Jack’s main ‘get out of jail free card,’ and one of the novel’s most charming characters, is Miss Volker. The blossoming of their friendship coincides with the blooming of Jack’s character. Shelf Awareness Pro “There’s more than laugh-out-loud gothic comedy here. This is a richly layered semi-autobiographical tale, an ode to a time and place, to history and the power of reading. The Horn Book, starred review “Gantos, as always, delivers bushels of food for thought and plenty of outright guffaws. Booklist “An exhilarating summer marked by death, gore and fire sparks deep thoughts in a small-town lad not uncoincidentally named ‘Jack Gantos.’ The gore is all Jack’s, which to his continuing embarrassment ‘would spray out of my nose holes like dragon flames’ whenever anything exciting or upsetting happens. And that would be on every other page, seemingly. . . . Characteristically provocative gothic comedy, with sublime undertones. Kirkus Reviews, starred review “Nobody can tell a story like Jack Gantos can. And this is a story like no other. It’s funny. It’s thoughtful. It’s history. It’s weird. But you don’t need me to attempt to describe it. Get in there and start reading Gantos.”

—Jon Scieszka, founder of guysread.com and author of the Spaceheadz series

Jack Gantos has written books for people of all ages, from picture books and middle-grade fiction to novels for young adults and adults. His works include *Hole in My Life*, a memoir that won the Michael L. Printz and Robert F. Sibert Honors, *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, a National Book Award Finalist, and *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, a Newbery Honor book. Jack was born in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, and grew up in nearby Norvelt. When he was seven, his family moved to Barbados. He attended British schools, where there was much emphasis on reading and writing, and teachers made learning a lot of fun. When the family moved to south Florida, he found his new classmates uninterested in their studies, and his teachers spent most of their time disciplining students. Jack retreated to an abandoned bookmobile (three flat tires and empty of books) parked out behind the sandy ball field, and read for most of the day. The seeds for Jack’s writing career

were planted in sixth grade, when he read his sister's diary and decided he could write better than she could. He begged his mother for a diary and began to collect anecdotes he overheard at school, mostly from standing outside the teachers' lounge and listening to their lunchtime conversations. Later, he incorporated many of these anecdotes into stories. While in college, he and an illustrator friend, Nicole Rubel, began working on picture books. After a series of well-deserved rejections, they published their first book, *Rotten Ralph*, in 1976. It was a success and the beginning of Jack's career as a professional writer. Jack continued to write children's books and began to teach courses in children's book writing and children's literature. He developed the master's degree program in children's book writing at Emerson College and the Vermont College M.F.A. program for children's book writers. He now devotes his time to writing books and educational speaking. He lives with his family in Boston, Massachusetts.

I laughed so hard at certain passages that the tears came, and there were even more laughs when I read it aloud to my husband. The book is tightly woven from the point of view of a good-natured eleven- (then twelve-) year old boy growing up in the early '60s, a bit used and abused by the adults in his world. The writing is wonderful, and in my opinion the author's metaphors and similes are often dazzling: "I could see the flames leaping into the air, and the confetti of glowing ash that floated above the flames...[The] blistering flames rising above the house...waving goodbye to everyone who was watching." About old, arthritic Mrs. Volker: "When she finished she plopped down onto her couch like a string puppet that had been cut loose. All her jumbled pieces slumped into herself, and with her forehead pressed against her tucked-up knees she fell into a deep sleep." The unity of the book is complete, dealing, as it does, with the boy's obsession with death -- his own, the death of the town, the deaths of the town's old people, the death-work of the embalmer.... The main characters and secondary characters including the boy's mother, Mrs. Volker, Bunny, and Mr. Spizz are endearing and funny, and unlikely to be forgotten. Having said all that, I'm not so sure that this is really a kid's book; at the end, when the mystery is solved, there is no moral payoff. Someone is outed, but there are no real consequences to the person's ill deeds. Life goes on -- or not, actually -- with little shock or horror, whereas the rest of the book deals, humorously, with right vs wrong. It's really a terrific book, if for adults. The best part is that it's tear-inducingly hilarious.

Hooray for Jack Gantos. This book was recommended to me a couple of years ago and I added it to my list of books to read. When I chose this for one of my reading groups, the students could not put it down, and neither could I. Jack and Ms. Volker's relationship was quirky but fun to follow along as

the plot developed. Jack Gantos is one of the best story tellers that I have read in youth literature in a long time. I HIGHLY recommend this book and this author. Now I want to go and read Joey Pigza books as well as some of the adult literature he writes. Thank you Jack Gantos!

Read Dead End Norvelt for a graduate class . I have never read this ok but it was an interesting read from author Jack Gantos who I assume is portraying this book in regards to him growing up. The character and author each have the same name and the book a good read about a boy named Jack who is always getting nose bleeds especially when he is scared and nervous. In the summer of 1962 Jack is grounded and his only escape is helping his elderly neighbor who is the town's death examiner. With his neighbor Miss Volker, Jack has an amazing summer writing obituaries for the towns local paper and discover the truth behind so many of the towns older citizens dying.

I'm really surprised this book won the Newbery medal. Halfway through reading the I wondered, "Why in the heck am I reading this stupid book? Oh yeah, it's a Newbery winner." 2012 must have been an off year if this was the best the award committee could find. None of the characters were sympathetic, believable, or likable. The strangest thing about this book was the weird way the main character's parents behaved. They felt alien, or non-human, although I'm not sure the author intended for them to be so unnatural (which is especially odd since this book is categorized as historical fiction). They were on the verge of psychotic and abusive, although the story seems to act as if they're perfectly normal. Many events in the book felt forced and disjointed, such as the weird deer scene toward the end. It just came out of nowhere and served only to resolve a plot point. The ending itself was overly predictable, which was disappointing. Skip this one and read any other Newbery winners, which I've usually found to be worthy of the prize.

"Dead End in Norvelt" is absolutely hilarious, and I feel it was a deserving winner of the Newbery Medal. I really enjoyed following the "adventures" of young Jack Gantos, or "Gantos Boy" as the tricycle-riding, elderly Spizz insists upon calling him. Gantos has a great writing voice, and this novel was full of colorful, funny language. Just take a look at a few examples: "I really didn't want to sneak into a house and stumble around like the Grim Reaper who had come to harvest Mrs. Dubicki." (p.105) "I glanced from the table to the orange linoleum floor, which looked like the inside of a grilled cheese sandwich" (p.221) "She was so short she could run full speed under her dining room table without ducking. I tried it once and nearly decapitated myself." (p.41) I feel that most middle graders would enjoy reading this story, especially boys. The finale is bit anti-climatic for my liking, but this

story has so much character and heart, it more than makes up for this minor fault. Ultimately, it's a story about family and love, wrapped inside of a very funny package :)

The story was very clever and made me laugh. I have problems reading profanity and the boy's creative swearing was bothersome. His mother was not amused and chided him for it. She told him that it was still offensive and he did not use the term again. He was obviously torn between the two very different viewpoints of his parents. The very end of the story gives insight into which attitude he will adopt. Some readers were bothered by the deaths in the story and were not amused. There must be something wrong with me since I was not troubled by them. I purchased this for my son to read to my grandchildren. His said they all enjoyed it and he wife cracked up over the nosebleeds.

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