Jack Adrift: Fourth Grade Without a Clue (Jack Henry) by Jack Gantos

Gantos Is Terrific!

He’s really at sea this time

As the Henry family sets sail for a new life on Cape Hatteras, fourth-grader Jack is struggling to chart a course between his parents’ contradictory advice on making friends and influencing people. Just tell people what they want to hear, Dad advises. Just tell the truth, Mom cautions. Jack finds there are no easy answers as he drifts through his crazy school year, falling desperately in love with his young teacher, getting suckered into becoming a bad-behavior spy for the principal, and being forced to make a presentable pet out of a duck with backward feet. Indeed, with an airheaded, air-guitar-playing neighbor the closest thing to a friend, and a judgmental older sister his relentless enemy, it’s all he can do to stay afloat.

This colorful and comic new collection of interrelated stories featuring the author’s hapless alter ego is a prequel to the other four books in the Jack Henry series, praised by Booklist for their “hilarious, exquisitely painful, and utterly on-target depiction of the life of an adolescent and preadolescent boy."

Features:
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My Personal Review:
Jack Henry is back. The stories in this book weave together as Jack faces a new school with a nasty principal, a beautiful and smart teacher, irritating
siblings, and parents who are preaching totally different approaches to success in life. The book has great humor and pathos. Gantos perfectly captures the mental state of boys at this age. Some of the book's funniest moments are captured in the handwritten diary entries that precede the chapters. Be sure to read them. Also, given the fate of so many other Henry family pets, I have to admit I feared the worst when the vet tells Jack how to get his duck to put on new feathers. Like all his books, this one is a fun read aloud. You know the writing is terrific when listeners to the story put their hands over their eyes when the duck goes in the freezer.

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