



Jack's New Power by Jack Gantos

Subjects: Family life; Barbados

Book Lists: Latin America, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

Props: Chicken, pee, watch, pointer



This book is a collection of humorous stories about 13-year-old Jack Henry while he and his family lived on the island of Barbados. Each chapter covers a different moment in Jack's life. Unfortunately many of those moments should not be included in polite conversation or discussed in school. There was a headless chicken (*Show chicken*) chasing game—lots of blood; collected pee (*Show pee*) thrown from a car—too disgusting to discuss; and a bad case of the runs—again, too disgusting to discuss. However, there were some moments that can be discussed in school and one of them inspired the title of this book—*Jack's New Power*.

Jack first discovered his new power when he was standing in the kitchen eating toast and looking out the window at his dad. His dad was running late and he was trotting around his truck getting supplies and stuff. Jack noticed that at the back of the truck there was a pipe sticking out of the overhead area about head high. As Jack's dad headed for the pipe, Jack thought, "Duck." His dad ducked. As his father came back around, Jack thought, "Duck." His dad ducked again. Then his dad snapped his fingers and doubled back around. Jack thought, "Don't duck."

BONK! His dad hit the pipe with his head; his feet went straight out from beneath him and he landed flat on his back. Jack ran outside and knelt over him. He slapped his dad's cheeks back and forth softly but he didn't wake up. Jack ran into the house to get some ice. When he came back, thankfully, his dad was sitting up with this chin on his knees.

Although Jack felt badly for causing his father pain, Jack was also pretty impressed with his new mind power. So, he looked around for another opportunity to use it. He found one the next morning when he was waiting for the school bus.

Jack had been waiting for what seemed like a long time. He squinted into the sun to try and tell what time it was, but he couldn't tell. "I need a watch," he thought. Well, no sooner had he thought that than he spotted one lying on the side of the road. Very impressive! Jack picked up the watch (*Pick*

up watch) and put it on. It was perfect, even set at the right time. To further test his abilities, Jack snapped his fingers and said, "Bus, arrive!" In seconds, the bus turned the corner and stopped in front of him. Wow! Jack was feeling pretty excited about his new power. It was a great beginning to a new day.

Unfortunately, days that start out that good, don't usually stay that way. At school, his teacher, Mr. Cucumber, started the morning by lecturing his students on how useless they were. It didn't take long for Jack to get bored. He stared out the windows that were near his seat. Then he started to move his wrist so that the sun hit the crystal on his watch. Jack followed the angle and spotted a little patch of bright light on the far wall. He adjusted the crystal so that he could shoot a sharp laser beam of light into the corner of Mr. Cucumber's eye. With each blast Jack concentrated on two words, migraine headache.

Unfortunately, after a couple of good ones, his teacher whipped around and aimed his pointer at Jack's nose. (*Bring out pointer*) "Do you think I'm an idiot?" he shouted, and boar down on Jack. His teacher drove the pointer into Jack's chest like a short, fat, bald cucumber Musketeer. Jack was struck dumb.

"Give me your wrist!" Jack held it out to him. Mr. Cucumber unlatched the watch and set it down on his desk. "Take the stick," his teacher commanded. "Now, lash it!" Mr. Cucumber shouted. "The watch, lash it until it explodes!" What could Jack do? He hit the watch. He hit it again and again until it shattered. "Now pick all that up, sit down, and never pull a stunt like that again," Mr. Cucumber growled. (*Put down pointer*)

Jack cleaned up his watch and sat in his seat. The other kids stared at him. He felt his power slip from body, out through his toes.

What trouble will Jack get into next? (*Hold up book*) *Jack's New Power* by Jack Gantos.