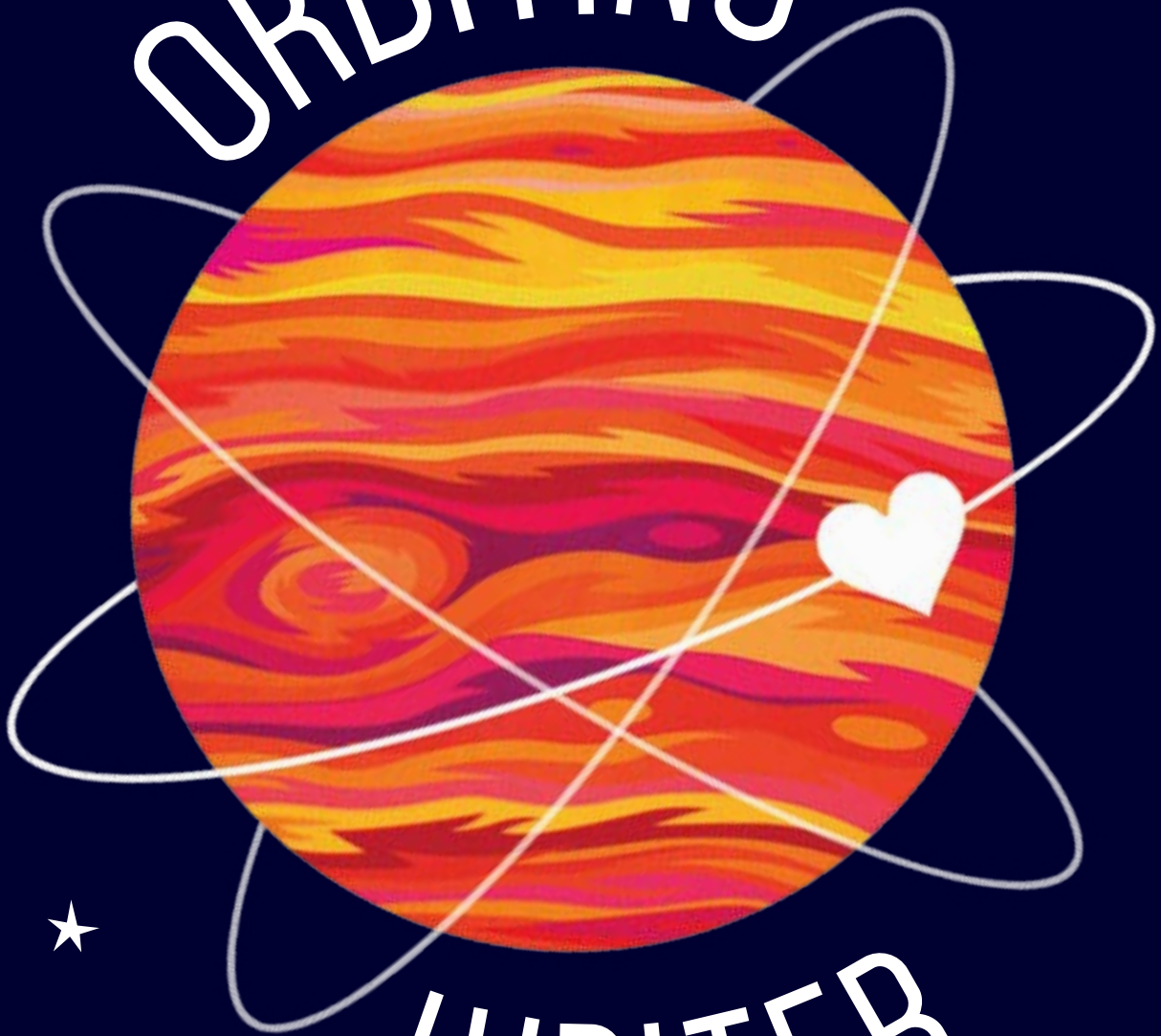


DISCUSSION GUIDE

ORBITING



JUPITER

LONGLISTED FOR THE CARNEGIE MEDAL
A NOVEL BY GARY D. SCHMIDT

ABOUT THE BOOK

When Jack meets his new foster brother, he already knows three things about him:

- JOSEPH ALMOST KILLED A TEACHER.
- HE WAS INCARCERATED AT A PLACE CALLED STONE MOUNTAIN.
- HE HAS A DAUGHTER. HER NAME IS JUPITER.
AND HE HAS NEVER SEEN HER.

What Jack doesn't know, at first, is how desperate Joseph is to find his baby girl. Or how urgently he, Jack, will want to help. But the past can't be shaken off. Even as new bonds form, old wounds reopen. The search for Jupiter demands more from Jack than he can imagine.

ABOUT GARY D. SCHMIDT

Gary D. Schmidt is an American children's writer of non-fiction books and young adult novels, including two Newbery Honor-winning books. He lives on a farm in Michigan and has six children. He is a Professor of English at Calvin College and teaches reading and writing to inmates at a maximum security detention centre on a weekly basis.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the opening chapter, Jack is warned by his parents and Mrs Stroud about Joseph. What impression do we get of Joseph before we meet him as a consequence of this opening scene? Do you think the warnings prepare Jack for the trust?
- What is the significance of the cows in *Orbiting Jupiter*? Discuss the relationship between Joseph and the cows, and how the cows react to Joseph's father.
- When Joseph is confronted by Mr Haskell (the bus driver) on his first day at school, he decides to get off the bus. Jack decides to follow him. Discuss why Jack decides to do this.
- Discuss how the teachers treat Joseph when he first joins Eastham Middle School. Do all the teachers treat Joseph fairly?
- Did you think it was fair when Mr Canton said, 'Kids like Joseph aren't always normal'?
- Discuss the scene in which Joseph falls through the ice. How does Jack react to this incident? How does this scene change Jack and Joseph's relationship?
- Throughout *Orbiting Jupiter*, Joseph reads a book called *Octavian Nothing*. Research this book and discuss why you think it's significant that Joseph reads it.
- 'Being responsible means being ready to do what you're supposed to be doing, even if no one is watching.' Do you agree with Mr Canton's definition of responsibility?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In chapter four, we learn what happened to Joseph and Maddie. How did you feel when you read this chapter? How do your sympathies change for Joseph in this chapter?
- In chapter five, Joseph becomes involved in a fight after gym class with three eighth graders. Was Jack right to intervene?
- On Christmas Eve, Joseph attends a church service for the first time. Afterwards, he discusses the nativity story and the existence of angels with Reverend Ballou. Joseph questions whether bad things would happen if angels existed. Discuss this scene and the insight it gives us into Joseph's character.
- On Christmas Day, Jack's parents offer to help Joseph find Jupiter. Do you think they are right to get involved?
- Jack describes the moment his father approaches Joseph and places a hand on his back as a Christmas miracle. Can you suggest a reason why this gesture is seen as miraculous?
- In chapter six, Joseph's father is permitted to see Joseph. Discuss the way he treats Joseph.
- Jack finds the librarian who is fostering Jupiter. The librarian says that Joseph 'can't love [Jupiter] just for himself.' What do you think this means?
- Discuss the ending of the book and how you felt when reading it.

Orbiting Jupiter is out now (ISBN: 9781783445042)
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