

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 1- p.1- 45

1. What academic subject did Joseph excel in?
2. What did Jack mean by saying, "Rosie loves him," in answer to his mother's question?
3. What are a few possible negative outcomes that were prevented by Jack joining Joseph as he walked to school?
4. Jack consistently counts Joseph's smiles throughout the book. Why?
5. Who do you think Maddie is, and why was Joseph so angry when Jack said her name?
6. Jack has gotten in trouble twice for Joseph. Would you have joined Joseph in his bus boycott?

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 2- p. 45- 68

1. What are the names of the three boys who Jack warns Joseph about?
2. At the end of this selection, the family goes ice skating, but it wasn't as easy as going to an ice rink. Summarize the different steps they took to get ready to skate.
3. If you were in charge of Joseph's school, what would you do to keep him safe from the boys who are threatening him?
4. Compare and contrast the different ways that Mr. Canton and Coach Swieteck think about and treat Joseph, including information from last week's reading.
5. Have you ever had to tell a friend something you didn't want to tell them? Share about your experience, in detail, if you feel comfortable, or just your emotions if you prefer to keep the situation private or how you imagine it would feel if you haven't experienced it personally.
6. People keep warning Jack to stay away from Joseph. Do you think he should? Why or Why not?

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 3- p.69-100

1. What is the significance of Jupiter?
2. What tragedies brought Joseph to the point he was willing to take the drugs?
3. How might have Joseph's life changed if the tragedies from question 2 never happened?
4. There is a sentence after the locker room incident that completely stops two different adults from lecturing. Write the sentence below and explain why it is so powerful.
5. If Jack had not gotten involved, how would that have affected the relationship between Joseph and Jack?
6. Put yourself in either Joseph's shoes after learning the news about Maddie or in Jack's shoes when he walks into the locker room. How would you be feeling, and what would you do similarly or differently than the character you chose.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 4- p.100-138

1. What was the best gift that Joseph got for Christmas?
2. Compare Joseph and Maddie's story to that of Joseph and Mary that he heard at church. How are their stories similar and different?
3. Mr. Brook is one of the antagonists of this story. List specific instances of this character saying and doing negative things that set him up as the antagonist.
4. List the steps taken to try to let Joseph see Jupiter before he takes his visitation into his own hands.
5. The legal system/ foster care/ governmental rules and process all prevent Jack's parents and Mrs. Stroud from allowing Joseph to see his daughter. Legal battles and red tape like this happen to real families as well. What would you change about the legal system if you had the power to do so to make cases like Joseph's better?
6. As an outsider, do you think Joseph should be able to have a relationship with Jupiter? Why or why not?

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 5- p.139-164 (chapter 7)

1. What name did the librarian give Jack?
2. Why do you think Jack checked the library as a place for Joseph?
3. What would you have said to the librarian to convince her to let Joseph meet Jupiter?
4. The librarian said, “it **wouldn’t be** good for him, and I’m **not sure** it would be good for her.” How are the bold phrases different? Put yourself in her shoes, and explain your reasons for using those words.
5. What did you think was going to happen at the librarian’s house? Were you right or wrong and how did you feel about this scene?
6. Defend the librarian’s choice to only give a picture instead of a meeting.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 6- p. 165-end

1. Why did Joseph's father come back?
2. Summarize the end of the book, starting from when Joseph's father arrived?
3. Why is the book titled, "Orbiting Jupiter"?
4. Why did Joseph go with his dad? Was it the right thing to do?
5. How would you have changed the ending?
6. Did this book have a happy ending? Why or Why Not?

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 1- p.1- 45

These answers, for the most part, are suggestions only, and other answers might also be excellent answers as well. Bold answers are the ones where there is little room for diversion.

1. What academic subject did Joseph excel in?

He excelled in **math**.

2. What did Jack mean by saying, "Rosie loves him," in answer to his mother's question?

I think he meant that since Rosie, the cow, was comfortable with him, that Joseph is actually not a bad person, in spite of his past.

3. What are a few possible negative outcomes that were prevented by Jack joining Joseph as he walked to school?

The main negative outcome that was prevented was **Joseph falling into the ice and freezing to death**. But he also could have gotten lost on his way to school because he didn't know his way.

4. Jack consistently counts Joseph's smiles throughout the book. Why?

Joseph has had a really hard life, and doesn't smile much, so his rare smiles are something to be remembered. Another possibility is that Jack wants to remember exactly why Joseph smiled because they were such special moments for him.

(Key to this answer is acknowledging it means that they are rare/special)

5. Who do you think Maddie is, and why was Joseph so angry when Jack said her name?

I think Maddie is the mother of Jupiter, and Joseph misses her and doesn't want anyone to talk about her.

(Students can speculate however they want- sister, mother, friend, etc. as long as they give a good guess and reason for his anger)

6. Jack has gotten in trouble twice for Joseph. Would you have joined Joseph in his bus boycott and why or why not?

Example Yes

Yes, I would have joined Joseph in his bus boycott because I wouldn't want him to have to go to school by himself.

Example No

No, I would not have joined Joseph, I would not want to walk two miles to school every day, especially if it was cold.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 2- p. 45- 68

1. What are the names of the three boys who Jack warns Joseph about?

The boys are Nick Porter, Brian Boss, and Jay Perkins.

2. At the end of this selection, the family goes ice skating, but it wasn't as easy as going to an ice rink. Summarize the different steps they took to get ready to skate.

First, they had to shovel away the snow from the ice. Then they got wood, and made a fire to warm up after skating. Last, they got their skates on, and were ready to skate.

3. If you were in charge of Joseph's school, what would you do to try to keep him safe from the boys who are threatening him?

Answers may vary. Example: I would change the schedule so they weren't in the same classes.

4. Compare and contrast the different ways that Mr. Canton and Coach Swieteck think about and treat Joseph, including information from last week's reading.

Mr. Canton and Coach Swieteck both don't like his actions, and try to encourage him to make better decisions. Mr. Canton however, thinks of him as a bad kid, always assumes the worst about him and makes Joseph nervous, reminding him of other adults who didn't treat him right. Coach Swieteck looks out for him, made him smile and gives him opportunities to succeed. (Example only, answers will vary, but as long as they are in line with the text, they are good).

5. Have you ever had to tell a friend something you didn't want to tell them? Share about your experience, in detail, if you feel comfortable, or just your emotions if you prefer to keep the situation private or how you imagine it would feel if you haven't experienced it personally.

Answers will vary.

6. People keep warning Jack to stay away from Joseph. Do you think he should? Why or Why not?

Example- Stay away

Joseph's past and his risky behavior have put Jack into really dangerous situations, and are getting him in trouble with the teachers, his parents and his former friends, and I think that Jack might end up getting hurt because he is too nice to Joseph.

Example- Stay close

Joseph needs a friend, and would get into more trouble if Jack wasn't willing to be there for him, and that friendship is more important than getting into trouble.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 3- p.69-100

1. What is the significance of Jupiter?

Jupiter started as just **Joseph's favorite planet**, Maddie said it was hers too when he said he loved it, and Maddie used their favorite planet as a way to show she still cared about Joseph when she **named their daughter Jupiter**.

2. What tragedies brought Joseph to the point he was willing to take the drugs?

He learned he had a daughter, that he had to **surrender custody of her, and that Maddie didn't survive childbirth** all within a short time, and it was too much for him to handle.

3. How might have Joseph's life changed if the tragedies from question 2 never happened?

If Maddie had survived, first off, he might not have decided to sign away custody of her, and might have had more of a relationship with Jupiter from the start. Also, he wouldn't have been in such a low, depressed place when the boy with the drugs came in, and he might not have even been offered drugs in the first place. But even if he was offered drugs, if he wasn't so depressed and heartbroken, **he might not have taken them**. Consequently, he wouldn't have attacked the teacher, wouldn't have gone to Stone Mountain, and might have had a better life with his dad. (However, deep thinkers could even go further and decide that since he wouldn't have ever had the past at Stone Mountain, he would still be at home being abused by his dad, never have met Jack and made a friend and might have actually had a worse life in that way).

4. There is a sentence after the locker room incident that completely stops two different adults from lecturing. Write the sentence below and explain why it is so powerful.

"Would you have left a guy being beat up to go find a teacher?" The point of the sentence is that although kids are typically taught to not get involved, and get help, that Joseph needed help immediately, and Jack's lack of intervention could have ended worse for Joseph, and while the pacifist side is always endorsed by adults, there are times that it just isn't in the best interest of all parties.

5. If Jack had not gotten involved, how would that have affected the relationship between Joseph and Jack?

It might have built up a wall between them, could make Joseph resent Jack instead of bringing them closer together.

6. Put yourself in either Joseph's shoes after learning the news about Maddie or in Jack's shoes when he walks into the locker room. How would you be feeling, and what would you do similarly or differently than the character you chose.

Answers will vary widely.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 4- p.100-138

1. What was the best gift that Joseph got for Christmas?

His best gift was learning that Jack's parents were going to help him see Jupiter.

2. Compare Joseph and Maddie's story to that of Joseph and Mary that he heard at church. How are their stories similar and different?

They both are a young couple who find they are going to have a baby, and it is very difficult for both. Unfortunately in Joseph's case, they don't get any miraculous intervention, Maddie doesn't make it, and Joseph doesn't get to be with his baby.

3. Mr. Brook is one of the antagonists of this story. List specific instances of this character saying and doing negative things that set him up as the antagonist.

He is abusive to Joseph. He is using the baby's existence to try to get money while keeping Jupiter from getting a good home, he tries to convince Joseph that Jack's parents aren't good too.

4. List the steps taken to try to let Joseph see Jupiter before he takes his visitation into his own hands.

Jack's parents called the counselor, several times, they had teachers write recommendation letters, and Mrs. Stroud tried to intervene, but all were unsuccessful.

5. The legal system/ foster care/ governmental rules and process all prevent Jack's parents and Mrs. Stroud from allowing Joseph to see his daughter. Legal battles and red tape like this happen to real families as well. What would you change about the legal system if you had the power to do so to make cases like Joseph's better?

(Student answers will vary, answer that follows is my personal opinion as an example answer). I would utilize current technology like Skype and Facetime to assist in situations like this. If there is a fear of abuse, emotional or physical, preventing parents from being with their kids, Skype could allow face to face communication without the risk of physical harm, and if the conversation becomes negative, the foster parent can simply hang up, while allowing good relationships and contact to continue while the legal mess is worked through.

6. As an outsider, do you think Joseph should be able to have a relationship with Jupiter? Why or why not?

A 'yes' answer could cite Joseph's positive interactions with Jack, teachers, and his good motives now that he isn't influenced by drugs. A 'no' answer could cite his propensity towards violence or even the fact that he is too young to care for her, and it might be easier for her sake to not have a relationship with him.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 5- p.139-164 (chapter 7)

1. What name did the librarian give Jack?

She called him "Guy Who Has Jupiter Father's Back."

2. Why do you think Jack checked the library as a place for Joseph?

A few possible reasons are that it was **warm**, Joseph enjoys reading, or that it doesn't cost money to go there.

3. What would you have said to the librarian to convince her to let Joseph meet Jupiter?

I would have told her how much he has changed over the last several months, and explained how my parents, the teachers, and the social worker all have been trying to make it happen, but that there is such a back up in the paperwork that it isn't happening and Jupiter keeps growing while they wait for the legal system to catch up with the adult recommendations. (Student answers will vary).

4. The librarian said, "it **wouldn't be** good for him, and I'm **not sure** it would be good for her." How are the bold phrases different? Put yourself in her shoes, and explain your reasons for using those words.

When she says "wouldn't" she is showing that she is confident that Joseph should not get involved with her. The "not sure" answer is less confident, and shows that she thinks it is possible that Jupiter should meet him. If I were her, I would explain that it is more difficult to be willing to be apart from your child after you meet them, and it was for his protection. I would also explain that while baby Jupiter might like meeting her dad, it might be hard for her to see him when she won't get to be with him.

5. What did you think was going to happen at the librarian's house? Were you right or wrong and how did you feel about this scene?

I thought that he was finally going to get to meet Jupiter, but I was wrong. I liked that he at least got the picture, but wish he could have gotten more. At the same time, I understand the librarian's reluctance.

6. Defend the librarian's choice to only give a picture instead of a meeting.

Give a lot of student freedom here. Some possible defence angles could be that she was legally obligated to keep them apart, she morally thought it was bad for both of them, she could have been trying to protect Jupiter from a boy she doesn't know anything about but his violent history, etc.

Six Weeks of Reading and Thinking about Orbiting Jupiter

Week 6- p. 165-end

1. Why did Joseph's father come back?

He came back to get Joseph.

2. Summarize the end of the book, starting from when Joseph's father arrived?

Joseph's father arrived, and used a gun to threaten the family. Joseph intervened to save Jack from the gun, and they drove away. Unfortunately they went off a broken bridge into the icy water and neither survived. After some time passed, Jack's parents adopted Jupiter.

3. Why is the book titled, "Orbiting Jupiter"?

The title comes from Jupiter, the daughter. All of the events in the story revolve/rotate around this little girl and her existence. Jupiter's existence is what costs Maddie her life. Maddie's death steers the events in Joseph's life to the point that he was in foster care and eventually with Jack, and the story ends with Jupiter getting the happy ending.

4. Why did Joseph go with his dad? Was it the right thing to do?

Joseph went with his dad to save Jack from being hurt by his father. Students can argue for or against it being the right thing to do, based on their knowledge of it causing Joseph's death, but also knowing that it could have meant harm without him going too.

5. How would you have changed the ending?

Student answers will vary.

6. Did this book have a happy ending? Why or Why Not?

Students can argue for a happy ending for Jupiter's sake, and the joy that the last chapter brings as a somewhat good resolution. Students can also argue for a sad ending because even though Jupiter had a good ending, Joseph didn't survive, Maddie didn't survive, Jupiter never got to know her birth parents, and Joseph never got to meet her in person.

Few more follow up Questions/topics to Discuss

Did you like the book? Why or Why Not?

What were some of the deeper themes in the book?

- Talk about friendship
- Talk about perceptions and judgement
- Talk about what it means to "do the right thing"

What character did you like best?

Talk about counting smiles. Why Jack counted Joseph's smiles, why he lost count.

All of the major characters in the story had challenges. One possible assignment would be to give each student a character and explain in either first or third person the challenges that character had, and how they handled them.

Jack

Joseph

Maddie

Jack's Father

Joseph's Father

The Librarian/Foster Mother

Maddie's parents

Mrs. Stroud

