

*Orbiting Jupiter* by Gary Schmidt

Reviewed by Jocie Gunter (Literary Arts 2024)

Some people have a Comfort Sad show; I have a Comfort Sad book, *Orbiting Jupiter*, by Gary D. Schmidt. I feel connected to it through its family, community, and support themes. In the book, we follow Joseph as he learns to answer the questions of what family is. What is community? What are you willing to sacrifice for your family? We by proxy meet Joseph through a caseworker where Jack's soon-to-be foster brother is just learning about him. I first started to connect to this book at a time when my family was shifting a lot due to my brother's mental crisis. And I felt connected to Jack, who constantly tries to support Joseph even if Joseph isn't initially receptive. At other times, I feel more connected to Joseph, who is trying to find family and home after finding out that his daughter, who is 3 months old, has been given foster care. Joseph is also in foster care and was forced to give up his rights as he was only 14. Through Joseph's determination to see his baby and his constant assertion that Jupiter is his daughter, we understand Joseph much more. One of my favorite scenes from the absolutely heartbreaking book is when Joseph goes to church on Christmas Eve, stays after everyone else, and looks at the manger. The pastor comes over but just stops talking about miracles and angels. Joseph asks if they are referring to the angels, and the pastor says either all of it is real or none, and then Joseph asks where they were? This scene is especially emotionally impactful because this is right after we learn that Madeline (Maddie), Jupiter's birth mother, died. I think that this book is excellent if you want something to cry about.