

## Who and what is *Super Jack*?

*Super Jack*, like *I Am Jack* is funny, even hilarious at times. He's a terrific kid, but he's got challenges to face like every kid. There's a new person in Jack's life— LEO, Rob's son.

What's twelve year old Jack supposed to do? His family is just fine with Nanna, Mum, his sister Samantha and Rob the boyfriend and Anna and the Napoli's nearby. Jack doesn't want Leo in his bedroom and work-shed. Is Leo taking his place with Jack's sort-of-step-dad Rob and Mum? What does Rob moving in mean?

Jack's Grandad has passed away, but he knows Grandad is watching after them all. And Nanna is always there. She loves bargains and keeps buying cheap purple glow-in-the-dark underpants that no one wants to wear. She's a bit deaf, her teeth fall out sometimes, but she's wise and Jack loves her. Nanna's getting wobblier and can't live by herself anymore. Jack's there for Nanna too. There's always things to think about – bush fires and the news. Who would light a fire deliberately? There's so much happening with the Twin Towers and peace marches. Then there's the neighbourhood Italian girl Anna. Her parents run the Napoli's Delizioso Fruitology Market and Anna makes Jack feel red and hot.

It's holiday time and they're all headed up North for a beach holiday – Jack, Mum, Nanna, Samantha, Rob, Ann and Leo – and Jack's got a lot to work out.

Jack's inspired by Susanne Gervay's son and his real family and community. Nanna really loves buying bargains. Mum is a single parent who dances and star jumps in the school car park. Samantha is in love with dogs and sleeps with a big flat dog called Floppy. Rob is a surfer and loves to know the temperature in every room.

The real Jack tries to navigate his changing family with his father gone and being brought up by his sole parent mother. Now there's a potential new step-dad-to- be, a potential step-brother, Nanna having to find a home.

***Super Jack* is a stand-alone novel, and also the 2<sup>nd</sup> book in the *I Am Jack* series.**

## Reviews of *Super Jack*

### **The Weekend Age, Review Section**

Every institution from *Play-school* to kindergarten to schools colludes in the illusion that life is about Mum, Dad, two kids and Big Ted. It is extraordinary, still, that so little is written and

so little spoken to help children deal with divorce, which is a major trauma in the lives of many. Divorce may be common but it is painful. Susanne Gervay writes humorously but with honesty about the rigours of living in a mix-master family.

Jack's little sister Samantha thinks life with the new stepdad will be all Coke and chips but Jack knows now "there won't be any night when she can get into Mum's bed."

Jack faces the problems of dealing with a new stepdad. A stepbrother and also having his Gran come and live with them on a family trip to the Gold Coast. Gervay's strength lies not only in her humour and honesty but in the fact that her characters are the sort you wouldn't mind sharing the back seat with. Her language is also rich and colourful; her imagery is there to assist the narrative rather than show off in an ostentatious literary display. Jack's little Italian girlfriend Anna has "chocolate drop eyes."

The John Marsdens of the writing scene are very good at top-level abuse and the Paul Jennings are excellent in sheer fun but Susanne Gervay is rare in her ability to place common problems for children within the spectrum of normal family life. The result is that she makes it OK for the children to talk about them.

### **YARRA Reviews ACT**

*Super Jack* written by Susanne Gervay is the funny and enjoyable sequel to *I am Jack*. This is a story that would appeal and be suitable for young readers aged between 8 and 12 years. The main character Jack is a twelve year old boy who is dealing with the changes that are happening in his family – a new step-dad and step-brother. The family sets out on a family holiday to the Gold Coast where Jack's mum hopes that everyone can get to know each other and some decisions can be made.

The author has done a great job of making the characters real and funny. Jack's Nanna is a wonderful character who joins them on their family holiday. She delights in making bargain purchases, especially underpants.

The novel explores the relationship between Jack and his new "Dad" and "brother" and how they come to terms with being part of the same family.

The Gold Coast setting provides familiar places and activities for the reader to identify with. Cathy's Wilcox's drawings add an amusing element to the novel – especially the drawing of Jack helping his Nanna up the stairs to their unit.

This was a very easy to read and enjoyable novel that drew you into the family's holiday and the difficulties they were having adjusting to life as one family. I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys funny realistic stories. One of the most memorable moments is when the kids decide to show their appreciation of Nanna's obsession with buying underpants

### **The BOOK CHOOK Reviewed by Susan Stephenson**

One of my favourite books ever is *I am Jack*, by Susanne Gervay (Angus and Robertson/ Harper Collins Publishers 2000). A couple of months ago, I was lucky enough to see *I am Jack* performed on stage in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia), and what a treat that was! In my post about it, I described the performance as having "lots of opportunities for laughter, but also moments when 150 children sat transfixed and made not a sound."

It's difficult to pinpoint why I like the novel, *I am Jack*, so much. I guess it's a combination of factors. Firstly must come its theme - bullying. I loathe the consequences of bullying and applaud Gervay for writing a book that shows victims of bullying that they're not alone in that scary, lonely place. Her honesty and matter-of-factness make this book accessible to kids who may not be able to speak up for themselves.

Next is humour. Does that seem to conflict with such a serious theme? Not at all with Gervay's deft handling. There is drama, tension, conflict AND humour as we get to know Jack and his family.

That brings me to character - Gervay's characters are thoroughly believable. I'm sure I know Nanna - enjoys a chat, a little hard-of-hearing, loves to score a bargain or ten at the shops - and all the other characters are just as real. Even when the bully George made me furious on Jack's behalf, he was always three dimensional, not a stereotype.

Above all though, as with many great books, I think *I am Jack* shines because of its authentic voice. From the first lines, we hear the narrator as a young boy. We experience his anguish; share his corny jokes one minute and pant with him the next as he runs to escape the bullies.

Jack grows, changes, learns lots about who he is and what is important to him during the book, and through him, so do we.

*Super Jack* (Angus and Robertson/Harper Collin 2003) continues with the great characters we met in *I am Jack*. This time we experience the highs and lows of Jack's life against the backdrop of a holiday on the Gold Coast. *Super Jack* introduces a new problem for Jack in the form of Leo, his sort-of-step-dad Rob's son. Jack also must cope with worries about Nanna's health, his growing affection for Anna, and Rob moving in. He's such a great kid though, you just know he'll sort it out in the end!

Cathy Wilcox's illustrations are only occasional in what is really a chapter book. We find them most often as chapter headers. But there are also some quirky, comic-style sketches that contribute an extra visual element to Gervay's word pictures.

Both *I am Jack*, and *Super Jack* are perfect for kids 8-12. They deal with serious issues in a light-hearted way, but above all, are great stories from a superb story teller. If you'd like to take a peek inside, the Harper Collins site offered me the option of letting you browse inside the book via my blog in the widget below.

Susanne Gervay's own website adds real value to the books. You can check out a cute trailer of *I am Jack*, link to find Monkey Baa stage show performances, get more information about bullying, and discover a ton of useful literacy activities tied to the books. The great news here too, is that US readers can share the fun - it's published in the USA by Kane Miller and has been translated into Korean, Bahasa and Vietnamese, Turkish, Portuguese and other languages.

Jack has school holidays on the Gold Coast where he learns how to get on with his slightly oddball family. This sequel to 'I Am Jack' is designed to help kids deal with the pressures of life after their parents' divorce.

### **QANTAS, The Australian Way Magazine**

Jack has school holidays on the Gold Coast where he learns how to get on with his slightly oddball family. This sequel to 'I Am Jack' is designed to help kids deal with the pressures of life after their parents' divorce.

Review: No, I want this!

"But I want this!"

Starts the bickering in *Super Jack*. Have you ever had to increase your family? If you have, then you will be able to relate to the book *Super Jack* a heartwarming and caring story written by the author Susanne Gerway.

*Super Jack* is about a 12-year-old boy named Jack who needs to get used to taking in new family members of his family. After living with his sister, grandma and mom, his mom dates a man named Rob. Then when Rob declares that he wants to take a family trip up North to see his son Leo, it sounds like the perfect family vacation because of the gorgeous beaches, the awesome theme parks and the fact that Jack can bring his friend, Anna along; but will Leo's presence ruin the whole thing. When on this vacation they could do a lot of fun things like eating ice cream and a lot of fun family stuff. But when Jack finds secretive stuff about Leo like how he does not like Nana or how he hid the big bag of gummy worms he may not be able to cooperate with him. However, in the end, Jack and Leo need to unite in order to care for someone who is the loveliest person in the world.

*Super Jack* was very realistic, for example, in the story the whole family bickers which is common behavior in many families. Also Jack's family goes to vacations, to theme parks, they eat breakfast together, and so much more! I also like how Jack has a conflict with Leo because I sometimes fight with my own brother. Another good thing about this book was that Gerway used the most age appropriate words for this book. Another way Gerway did what all good authors do, is that she made the setting one of the big elements of the book; because without the traveling or Jack's house all of this couldn't happen. One thing I didn't like was the jokes because sometimes they were a little crummy, but that is okay because in general, Gerway did write a good story. She even wrote another book, *I Am Jack* which involves the same characters. If you want to find a book where you can relate to the characters and plot. This book is also good for a family to read together because they can relate to this book, even with young readers.

Review written by Ian (6th grade student USA). Kane Miller US edition

Posted by Book Trends at [3:00 AM](#)

Labels: [5 Stars](#), [Age 10 to 12](#), [Realistic Fiction](#)

**I AM JACK**

## Rydalmere East Public School

Reviews/comments from kids of Rydalmere East Public School

*"I think Susanne did a great job. I understood what she said."* **Mikaela**

*"I was interested in her talk about bullying. I felt a bit sad that her son was bullied by George Hamel."* **Austin**

*"Susanne's visit was interesting because she talked about her son".* **Emad**

*"She talked about bullying. I thought she was great because now I know what I can do if someone bullies me."* **Bailey**

*"I thought Susanne Gervay felt excited to visit our fabulous school. She's a great author ... I think she was brave talking in front of us."* **Dylan**

*"When Susanne came in I thought she would be a nice person and I was right, she was! It was really interesting because she was talking about her son."* **Nikita**

*"My feelings were a little bit sad because of the bullying. It was great the way Susanne used expression."* **Angela**

*"Susanne's visit was interesting because she told us about bullying and she grabbed everybody's attention. Susanne is a very good storyteller."* **Mustafa**

*"I thought it was fantastic because now I know how to stand up for myself better."* **Liam**

*“I thought Susanne Gervay was fantastic because she had amazing information and a clear voice. I felt excited and amazed...” Lexie*

*I Am Jack* celebrates kids. Unique, valuable kids who deserve the right to take pride in their own special qualities. Bullying takes this right away from them.

In the context of family and school life, *I Am Jack* sensitively explores how bullying attacks the very basis of a child's self esteem. Bullying isolates and victimises children. *I Am Jack* shows them that they are not alone and that they can win against bullying.

*I Am Jack* is children's literature at its most effective. Beautifully written, revealing the quirkiness of kids, it is funny, loving, moving. It gives adults and children a remarkable understanding into an area that challenges children's belief in themselves.

This is a book children should read because kids are unique.”

*Life Education, Australia*

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