

Restart

by Gordon Korman · Language: EN

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Overview

"Restart" by Gordon Korman tells the compelling story of Chase Ambrose, a middle school football star who wakes up in a hospital with complete amnesia after falling off his roof. With no memory of his past, Chase is given a unique opportunity for a fresh start. He quickly discovers that his pre-amnesia self was a notorious bully, feared by many students and admired by a select few, including his best friends, Aaron and Bear. As Chase navigates his return to school, he struggles to reconcile the person everyone tells him he was with the kind, empathetic individual he now feels himself to be.

His journey of self-discovery is complicated by the reactions of those around him. Some students, like the members of the video club he unexpectedly joins, welcome his new persona, while others, particularly his former victims and their families, remain deeply suspicious and fearful. Through his involvement with the video club, Chase begins to develop new friendships and interests, particularly with Brendan Espinoza, one of his past targets, and Shoshanna Weber, whose twin brother, Joel, was driven away by Chase's bullying. The novel explores themes of identity, redemption, and the power of second chances, as Chase grapples with fragmented memories and the weight of his past actions, ultimately forcing him to choose who he wants to be moving forward.

Key Takeaways

- A person's past actions do not define their potential for future change and growth.
- True identity is shaped by present choices and actions, not solely by past reputation.
- Empathy and understanding can bridge divides created by past conflicts and misunderstandings.
- It's crucial to listen to and believe victims of bullying, even when the perpetrator claims to have changed.
- Second chances offer a powerful opportunity for profound personal growth and redemption.
- Friendships can be formed in unexpected places and with unexpected people, challenging preconceived notions.
- Memory loss, while devastating, can sometimes provide a unique opportunity for a complete fresh start.

Chapter Summaries

A New Beginning

Chase Ambrose wakes up in the hospital with complete amnesia after falling off his roof. He has no memory of his past life, his family, his reputation as a football star, or his notorious bullying. He feels like a blank slate, confused by the unfamiliar faces and the life he's told he once lived.

First Day Back

Chase returns to school, feeling like a stranger in a familiar place. He is bewildered by the reactions of students, some fearful, others welcoming, and his old friends, Aaron and Bear, who expect him to be his old self. He struggles to understand his past identity.

Joining the Video Club

Drawn by curiosity, Chase unexpectedly joins the school's video club, a group he would have previously tormented. He begins to form new, unexpected friendships with members like Brendan Espinoza, a former target of his bullying, and Shoshanna Weber, whose twin brother he drove away.

The New Chase

As Chase helps the video club with their projects, particularly a documentary about senior citizens, he displays kindness, creativity, and a genuine interest in others. This new personality surprises everyone, including himself, and clashes significantly with Aaron and Bear's expectations of him.

Flickers of Memory

Chase experiences fragmented flashbacks and unsettling dreams that hint at his past bullying behavior, including a specific incident involving Joel Weber. He struggles with the dissonance between the kind person he now feels himself to be and the cruel person his memories suggest he was.

The Stolen Medal

During a community service project at the assisted living facility, the Medal of Honor belonging to a resident, Mr. Solway, goes missing. Suspicion immediately falls on Chase, Aaron, and Bear, who were all present at the time, leading to a serious investigation.

The Trial

Chase, Aaron, and Bear are brought before the school board and then a judge for the theft of the medal. Testimonies from various students and adults reveal the extent of Chase's past bullying and the impact of his amnesia on his current character, complicating the proceedings.

The Truth Revealed

Spoiler: During the trial, Chase's full memory returns, and he realizes Aaron and Bear were responsible for stealing the medal, though he had been present. He makes the difficult choice to tell the truth, exonerating himself from the theft but acknowledging his past involvement.

Aftermath and Redemption

Spoiler: Aaron and Bear are punished for the theft, and Chase is cleared of the charge but still faces consequences for his past bullying. He continues to work towards making amends, solidifying his new, kinder identity, and embracing the second chance he was given.

Themes

- Redemption and second chances
- Identity and self-discovery
- Bullying and its consequences
- Memory and amnesia
- Empathy and forgiveness
- The power of choice

Notable Quotes

- "It's like my life is a book, and I've only read the last chapter." — Chase Ambrose reflecting on his amnesia and lack of past memories.
- "The thing about amnesia is that you don't know what you've forgotten." — Chase Ambrose contemplating the vast unknown of his past.
- "You can't just erase the past. You have to live with it." — Shoshanna Weber expressing her skepticism about Chase's change and the impact of his past actions.
- "I'm not the old Chase. I'm the new Chase." — Chase Ambrose asserting his transformed identity to others and himself.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Restart about?

"Restart" is about Chase Ambrose, a middle school football star who loses his memory after an accident. He discovers his past self was a notorious bully and must decide whether to embrace his new, kinder personality or revert to his old ways, all while grappling with fragmented memories and the reactions of those he once hurt.

Is Restart worth reading?

Yes, "Restart" is a highly engaging and thought-provoking middle-grade novel. It offers a powerful message about second chances, redemption, and the impact of one's actions, making it a valuable read for young people and adults alike. Its multi-perspective narration adds depth to the story.

How does Restart end?

Spoiler: Chase's full memory returns during the trial for the stolen Medal of Honor. He reveals that Aaron and Bear were the thieves, not him, though he was present. He is cleared of the theft but faces consequences for his past bullying, ultimately choosing to embrace his new, better self and make amends.

Who should read Restart?

"Restart" is ideal for middle school readers (ages 10-14) interested in stories about identity, bullying, and personal growth. It's also suitable for anyone looking for a hopeful story about redemption and the possibility of change, or for those who enjoy books with multiple character perspectives.

How long does it take to read Restart?

It typically takes about 4 to 5 hours to read "Restart" at an average reading speed. The book is approximately 250 pages long, making it a relatively quick and accessible read for its target audience, often completed in a few sittings.