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

Chapters 1-2: Chase's New Beginning

Chase Ambrose wakes up in the hospital with amnesia after falling off his roof. He remembers nothing about his life, his family, or his reputation. He returns to Hiawassee Middle School, feeling like a stranger in his own life. He meets his parents, his brother Johnny, and his old friends Aaron Hakimian and Bear Bratsky, but they all feel unfamiliar. He's confused by the reactions of other students, some fearful, some angry, some avoiding him. He finds himself drawn to the video club, a place he never would have considered before his accident, feeling a strange pull towards something new and different from his past self, which he can't recall.

Chapters 3-4: First Impressions and New Paths

Shoshanna Weber, whose twin brother Joel was driven away to boarding school by Chase and his friends, is horrified to see Chase back at school. She believes his amnesia is a trick. Brendan Espinoza, a quirky member of the video club, is surprised when Chase shows interest in joining. Brendan is initially wary, remembering Chase's past bullying, but is also intrigued by Chase's seemingly changed demeanor. Chase attends his first video club meeting, feeling a sense of belonging he didn't expect. He helps Brendan film a humorous video involving a tricycle and a slip-and-slide, showing a natural talent for filming and a willingness to participate in activities far removed from his old persona.

Chapters 5-6: Old Friends, New Memories

Aaron and Bear, Chase's former football teammates and partners in crime, are frustrated by Chase's amnesia. They try to remind him of their past exploits, including their bullying of Joel Weber and their general reign of terror. Chase has his first 'flashback' – a fragmented, disturbing memory of a girl falling from a tree, which leaves him shaken and confused. He doesn't understand why he's remembering such a violent image. He continues to spend time with the video club, finding solace and a sense of purpose in helping Brendan and Shoshanna, despite their initial distrust. He begins to question the kind of person he was before the accident.

Chapters 7-8: Kimberly's Crush and Video Club Progress

Kimberly Tooley, a new student, develops a crush on Chase, seeing him as a reformed hero rather than his old self. She joins the video club to be closer to him, offering to help with their projects. The video club decides to enter the National Video Journalism Contest, with Brendan proposing a documentary about a local war hero. They identify Mr. Solway, a resident of the assisted living facility where Chase is doing community service, as their subject. Chase, through his community service, starts to build a rapport with Mr. Solway, who is initially grumpy and uncooperative, but slowly begins to open up to Chase's genuine interest.

Chapters 9-10: Mr. Solway's Story

The video club, including Chase, Shoshanna, and Brendan, begins interviewing Mr. Solway for their documentary. Mr. Solway, a Korean War veteran, is reluctant to share his story, often giving short, dismissive answers. He claims he doesn't remember much about the war or receiving his Medal of Honor. Chase, however, shows persistence and empathy, slowly chipping away at Mr. Solway's gruff exterior. The club learns about Mr. Solway's past, including his time in the war and the heroic act that earned him the medal, though he downplays his own bravery. The project starts to bring the video club members closer, despite their lingering reservations about Chase.

Chapters 11-12: Joel's Return and Shoshanna's Doubts

Joel Weber, still at boarding school, receives news that Chase has amnesia and is seemingly a changed person. He remains skeptical, remembering the relentless bullying that forced him to leave Hiawassee. Shoshanna, despite seeing some positive changes in Chase, struggles to reconcile his current kindness with his past cruelty. She worries about Joel's potential return and the impact Chase might have. The video club continues to work on Mr. Solway's documentary, with Chase proving to be an invaluable asset, not just with filming but also in connecting with Mr. Solway. Shoshanna starts to grudgingly admit that the 'new' Chase is different.

Chapters 13-14: Chase's Good Deeds and Growing Suspicion

Chase continues to perform good deeds, helping people and showing genuine kindness, which further confuses those who knew his old self. He helps a young girl retrieve her lost teddy bear from a tree, an act that triggers another fragmented memory for him, this time of a different girl and a different tree. Aaron and Bear become increasingly frustrated with Chase's transformation, seeing him as 'soft' and trying to pull him back into their old ways. They remind him of the 'incident' that got them all community service, but Chase still can't fully recall it, only feeling a sense of dread.

Chapters 15-16: The Medal and the Truth

The video club successfully films Mr. Solway's story, culminating in a powerful interview where he finally shares more details about his Medal of Honor. The medal itself becomes a central focus of the documentary. Meanwhile, Aaron and Bear, still trying to get Chase to remember his past, reveal more details about the 'incident' – the vandalism of the band room and the theft of Mr. Solway's Medal of Honor. Chase starts to piece together the fragments of his memory, realizing with horror that he was involved in the theft, though the full picture remains blurry. He feels immense guilt and confusion about his past actions.

Chapters 17-18: The Fire Extinguisher and Joel's Return

Joel Weber returns home from boarding school, much to Shoshanna's relief and anxiety. He is immediately confronted with the 'new' Chase, who is now a respected member of the video club. Joel struggles to trust Chase, remembering the trauma he endured. During a school assembly, a fire extinguisher is accidentally discharged, causing chaos. Chase, using his quick thinking and strength, helps to contain the situation and protect students, further solidifying his new heroic

image in the eyes of many, including Kimberly. This incident highlights the stark contrast between his past and present self.

Chapters 19-20: The Video's Impact and Growing Tensions

The video club puts the finishing touches on Mr. Solway's documentary, which is now a powerful and moving tribute. Joel, despite his reservations, is impressed by the quality of the film and the genuine respect Chase shows Mr. Solway. However, the tension between Chase's past and present selves escalates. Aaron and Bear continue to pressure Chase, reminding him of their shared history and the 'incident.' Chase's memories become clearer, and he starts to remember more details about the day the medal was stolen, including his own complicity and the role Aaron and Bear played.

Chapters 21-22: The Premiere and the Missing Medal

The video club's documentary, 'The Warrior,' premieres at the school, receiving widespread acclaim and praise. Mr. Solway, present at the screening, is deeply moved by the tribute. The film is a huge success, showcasing the talent and hard work of the club members, especially Chase's contributions. However, the triumph is short-lived. During the celebration, it is discovered that Mr. Solway's Medal of Honor, which was prominently featured in the documentary and brought to the school for display, is missing. Panic ensues, and suspicion immediately falls on Chase, given his past reputation and his prior involvement in the medal's original theft.

Chapters 23-24: Accusation and Investigation

Chase is immediately accused of stealing the Medal of Honor again. Principal Schultz and the police begin an investigation. Aaron and Bear, fearing they will be implicated, try to distance themselves from Chase and deny any knowledge of the medal's whereabouts, even though they were involved in the original theft. Chase, despite his amnesia, feels a deep sense of injustice and is determined to prove his innocence. He begins to actively search for the medal, hoping to clear his name and protect the reputation of the video club and Mr. Solway. The pressure mounts as his new friends start to question him.

Chapters 25-26: The Full Truth Revealed

As the investigation intensifies, Chase's memories fully return. He remembers the entire 'incident' from before his accident: how he, Aaron, and Bear broke into Mr. Solway's house, how Aaron and Bear stole the medal, and how he himself was present and complicit, though he didn't physically take it. He also remembers where the medal was hidden after the original theft. He confronts Aaron and Bear, who confess their involvement in the original theft and their subsequent hiding of the medal in Chase's locker to frame him. Chase retrieves the medal from its hiding place, determined to return it and tell the truth.

Chapters 27-28: The Hearing

A formal hearing is held to determine responsibility for the medal's theft and the vandalism. Chase, Aaron, and Bear are all present, along with their parents, school officials, and Mr. Solway. Chase bravely tells the full truth about the original theft, his amnesia, and his subsequent discovery of the medal's hiding place. He admits his past complicity but emphasizes his changed character. Aaron and Bear, initially defensive, are eventually forced to admit their roles. Mr. Solway, touched by Chase's honesty and the documentary, speaks on Chase's behalf, acknowledging his transformation and his genuine efforts to make amends.

Chapters 29-30: Verdict and New Beginnings

The hearing concludes with a verdict. Aaron and Bear receive significant penalties for their actions. Chase is cleared of the recent theft, but still faces consequences for his past involvement, including being removed from the football team for the season. However, his honesty and the support of Mr. Solway and the video club members lead to a more lenient outcome than he might have faced. Chase embraces his new identity, continuing his friendships with Brendan, Shoshanna, and Joel. He realizes that while he can't change his past, he can choose who he is in the present and future, committing to being a better person.

Themes

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

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.

Best Quotes

“I don't remember anything.”

1

Spoken by Chase Ambrose early in the book, this line establishes his amnesia, the central premise. It signifies his literal blank slate, setting the stage for his journey of self-discovery and transformation as he learns about his past and decides who he wants to be.

“A clean slate.”

1

This phrase is used by Dr. Fitzwilliam to describe Chase's amnesia. It highlights the unique opportunity Chase has to redefine himself, free from the memories of his past bullying actions. It's a key concept that drives the narrative, exploring whether someone can truly escape their past.

“I'm not going to let you ruin my life again.”

10

Joel Weber says this to Chase, expressing his deep-seated fear and resentment towards his former tormentor. It underscores the lasting impact of Chase's bullying and the challenge he faces in earning forgiveness and trust from those he hurt, particularly Joel and Shoshanna.

“He saved my life.”

29

Mr. Solway, the elderly Korean War veteran, says this about Chase during the trial. This pivotal statement reveals Chase's heroic act of saving Mr. Solway from a falling tree branch, dramatically shifting the perception of Chase from a bully to a potential hero and influencing the trial's outcome.

“I'm not a hero. I'm just a guy who fell off a roof.”

28

Chase says this towards the end of the book, reflecting on the praise he receives. It shows his humility and his struggle to reconcile the 'new' Chase with the 'old' Chase's reputation. He acknowledges his past mistakes and doesn't want to take credit for something he doesn't fully remember doing.

“The old Chase is gone.”

10

Shoshanna says this, expressing her belief in Chase's transformation. It signifies her growing trust and acceptance of the 'new' Chase, acknowledging that his amnesia has allowed him to develop into a kinder, more empathetic person, distinct from the bully he once was.

“We're going to make a movie about Mr. Solway.”

7

Brendan Espinoza says this, initiating the video club's project that brings Chase into a new social circle. This project becomes a catalyst for Chase's change, allowing him to discover new talents, build positive relationships, and contribute to something meaningful, contrasting with his past destructive behavior.

“It was the old Chase.”

27

Chase's father, Frank Ambrose, says this during the trial, attempting to defend his son by attributing the past bullying actions to a version of Chase that no longer exists. This highlights the father's struggle to accept his son's transformation and his desire to protect him.

“You're a good kid, Chase.”

29

Mr. Solway says this to Chase, offering a powerful affirmation of Chase's character. Coming from someone Chase helped, this statement validates Chase's efforts to be a better person and provides him with much-needed reassurance and acceptance, contrasting with the judgment he faces from others.

“He's still Chase Ambrose.”

12

Aaron and Bear, Chase's former friends, say this, expressing their skepticism about his transformation. They believe Chase is merely faking his amnesia or will eventually revert to his old bullying ways, highlighting the difficulty of changing perceptions and earning trust after a history of bad behavior.

“I'm not the person I was.”

20

Chase says this to various characters throughout the book, asserting his changed identity. It reflects his genuine desire to distance himself from his past as a bully and his commitment to being a better person, even as he struggles with the consequences of actions he can't remember.

Questions & Answers

What is the main premise of "Restart"?

The main premise of "Restart" is about a middle school football star, Chase Ambrose, who falls off his roof and suffers amnesia. He wakes up with no memory of his past, including his reputation as a notorious bully. This "clean slate" allows him to experience life from a new perspective, make new friends, and discover the kind of person he truly wants to be, forcing him and others to confront whether someone can truly change and be forgiven for past actions.

Who is Chase Ambrose at the beginning of the book?

At the beginning of the book, before his amnesia, Chase Ambrose is the popular, athletic captain of the football team at Hiawassee Middle School. He is known for being a charismatic but also a severe bully, often leading his friends Aaron and Bear in tormenting other students, particularly those in the video club and Joel Weber. He is admired by some for his athletic prowess but feared and disliked by many others for his cruel behavior.

What causes Chase's amnesia?

Chase's amnesia is caused by a fall from the roof of his house. He was attempting to retrieve a football when he slipped and fell, hitting his head. This accident results in a concussion and complete memory loss of his life before the fall, setting the stage for his journey of self-discovery

and transformation.

How does Chase's amnesia affect his personality?

Chase's amnesia completely alters his personality. Without memories of his past bullying, he becomes a kinder, more empathetic, and genuinely curious individual. He is confused by the negative reactions he receives from some students and is open to forming new, positive relationships. He develops a passion for filmmaking and helps others, contrasting sharply with his former aggressive and destructive self.

Who are Chase's old friends and what are they like?

Chase's old friends are Aaron Hakimian and Bear Bratsky. They are also football players and were his partners in bullying. They are loyal to the 'old' Chase and are skeptical of his transformation, believing he is faking his amnesia or will eventually revert to his old ways. They try to pull him back into their old habits and are resentful of his new friendships and interests, especially his involvement with the video club.

Who are Chase's new friends?

Chase's new friends include Brendan Espinoza, Shoshanna Weber, and Joel Weber. Brendan is the president of the video club, who initially feared Chase but later becomes his collaborator and friend. Shoshanna is Joel's twin sister, who slowly warms up to Chase after seeing his genuine change. Joel, the primary target of Chase's past bullying, eventually forms a tentative friendship with Chase after witnessing his efforts to make amends.

What is the video club and why is it important to Chase?

The video club is an after-school activity run by Brendan Espinoza, focused on creating films. It's important to Chase because it becomes his new social circle and a creative outlet. Through the club, he discovers a talent for filming and editing, develops positive relationships with Brendan, Shoshanna, and Joel, and contributes to meaningful projects, which helps him redefine his identity away from his past as a bully.

Who is Mr. Solway and what is his significance?

Mr. Solway is an elderly Korean War veteran living in a local assisted living facility. He becomes the subject of the video club's documentary project. His significance lies in his past as a war hero, his friendship with the 'new' Chase, and his crucial testimony during Chase's trial. He reveals that Chase saved his life from a falling tree branch, a heroic act that dramatically influences the perception of Chase and the outcome of his legal troubles.

What is "The Hydra" video?

"The Hydra" video is a humiliating and cruel video created by the 'old' Chase, Aaron, and Bear. It features Joel Weber's head superimposed onto a multi-headed monster, being attacked by the three boys. This video was the final straw that led to Joel being sent away to boarding school,

highlighting the severity of Chase's past bullying and serving as a painful reminder of his former actions.

What happens at the band room?

At the band room, Aaron and Bear attempt to steal Mr. Solway's Medal of Honor, which Chase had found and returned to him. Chase, having no memory of stealing it initially, tries to stop them. In the ensuing struggle, a fire extinguisher is discharged, causing damage. Chase is blamed for the incident, leading to his arrest and trial, despite his efforts to prevent the theft and protect Mr. Solway's medal.

Why does Joel Weber return to Hiawassee?

Joel Weber returns to Hiawassee because his parents believe that with Chase's amnesia, the bullying threat is gone, and he can safely return home from boarding school. His return is a test of Chase's transformation and forces both Joel and Chase to confront their past. Joel initially fears and distrusts Chase but gradually witnesses his genuine change and begins to form a new, tentative relationship with him.

Spoiler: What is the outcome of Chase's trial?

Spoiler: Chase is found not guilty of stealing Mr. Solway's Medal of Honor. During the trial, Mr. Solway testifies that Chase had previously returned the medal to him, and crucially, that Chase saved his life from a falling tree branch. This testimony, combined with the evidence that Aaron and Bear were the ones attempting to steal the medal in the band room, convinces the judge of Chase's innocence regarding the theft and his changed character. Aaron and Bear are sentenced to community service.

How does Chase's family react to his transformation?

Chase's mother is relieved and supportive of his transformation, happy to see him become a kinder person. His father, Frank, struggles more, initially wanting the 'old' athletic Chase back and downplaying his past bullying. He tries to defend Chase by attributing his past actions to a different person. His younger brother, Johnny, looks up to the 'new' Chase, seeing him as a hero, which helps solidify Chase's commitment to his new self.

What is the main theme of "Restart"?

The main theme of "Restart" is the idea of second chances and whether people can truly change. It explores whether a person's past actions define them forever, or if they can overcome their history and redefine themselves. The book also delves into themes of identity, forgiveness, empathy, and the power of choice in shaping one's character, regardless of what one remembers or has done before.

How does the book explore the idea of second chances?

The book explores second chances through Chase's amnesia, which literally gives him a "clean slate" to restart his life. He gets a chance to make new friends, pursue new interests, and act with kindness instead of cruelty. It also shows that second chances aren't just given but earned through consistent positive actions, empathy, and a genuine desire to make amends, as seen in his efforts to gain the trust of those he once bullied.

What role does Kimberly Tooley play?

Kimberly Tooley is a popular girl who has a crush on the 'old' Chase. She tries to get close to the 'new' Chase, hoping he will revert to his former self and notice her. She is initially dismissive of his new friends and interests, particularly the video club. Her role highlights the superficiality of some relationships and the pressure Chase faces to conform to his past identity, contrasting with his genuine desire for change.

What is the significance of the title "Restart"?

The title "Restart" directly reflects Chase Ambrose's situation. His amnesia provides him with a literal restart to his life, wiping away his past memories and allowing him to begin anew without the burden of his former reputation as a bully. It signifies the opportunity for personal transformation, the chance to make different choices, and the possibility of redemption, emphasizing that one can always choose to change their path.

How does Chase try to make amends for his past actions?

Chase tries to make amends by actively choosing kindness and empathy. He helps Brendan with the video club, defends Joel from Aaron and Bear, and returns Mr. Solway's Medal of Honor. He also expresses genuine remorse for the pain he caused, even though he doesn't remember doing it. His actions demonstrate a commitment to being a better person, earning the trust and forgiveness of those he once wronged, particularly Shoshanna and Joel.

What does Chase learn about himself by the end of the book?

By the end of the book, Chase learns that his identity is not solely defined by his past actions or what others remember of him. He discovers he has the capacity for kindness, empathy, and heroism, and that he can choose who he wants to be. He understands the importance of making amends and earning trust, realizing that true character is built on present choices and actions, not just past reputation or forgotten memories.

What message does Gordon Korman convey through "Restart"?

Gordon Korman conveys the message that people are capable of change and redemption, and that everyone deserves a second chance. The book emphasizes the power of choice in shaping one's character and the importance of empathy and forgiveness. It suggests that while the past cannot be erased, individuals can choose to learn from it and build a better future, demonstrating that true heroism lies in kindness and standing up for what is right.