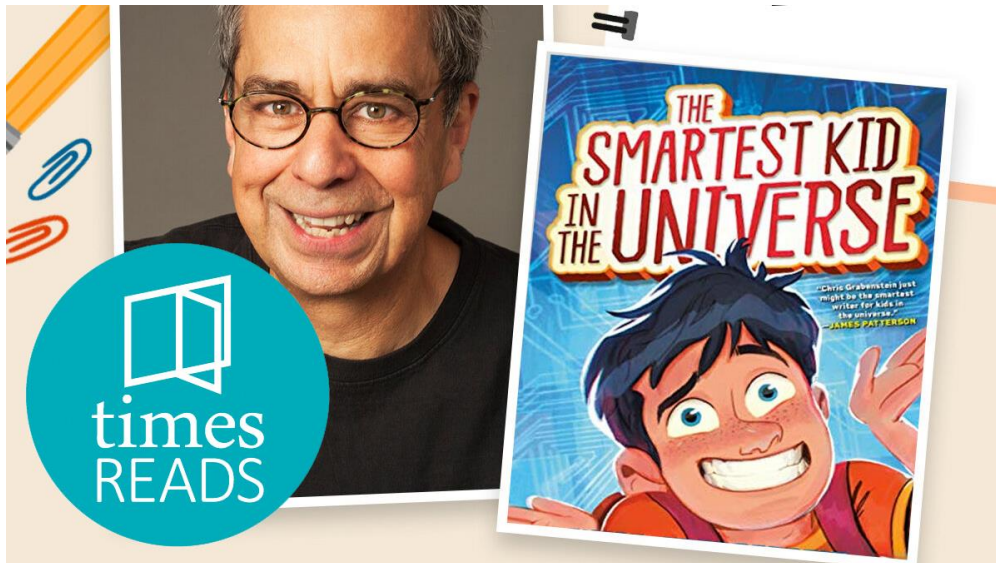


# Unlocking a lost treasure



The book we are reviewing this month is by Chris Grabenstein.

*What's Up teams up with **TIMES READS** to bring you an interesting book each month. Every story reflects a value that is part of your Character and Citizenship Education (CCE).*

Jake is the guy who is friends with everybody in school. He fist-bumps every kid he meets. He has a friendly word for everyone, from Mr Lyons the vice-principal to Mr Schroeder the janitor. He even charms the school bully into being his friend. Jake is the coolest kid in Riverview Middle School.

Jake is not the smartest kid, though. He is just not into “learning stuff”. He goes to school to hang out with friends and have a good time. If he needs to know anything, he just looks it up on his smart phone.

“Jake McQuade, you are the laziest kid in the world,” his best buddy Kojo tells him. Kojo is super brainy and always gets top marks for all his assignments.

“Slothfulness? That’s my superpower,” Jake says, grinning. It is time for Math class, but Jake prefers to play the new game he has on his phone. “You wanna go hang out in the cafeteria?” he asks Kojo.

The cafeteria, like the rest of Riverview Middle School, is somewhat shabby. The broken-down chillers hold a few sad cartons of chocolate milk. The rows of school lockers just beyond are too dented to be locked. And, the dirty walls can definitely do with a fresh coat of paint. If only the school had more money.

Jake's mother has to work one evening. She is coordinating a big event at the hotel Imperial Marquis. She texts Jake with instructions to fix dinner for himself and his little sister, Emma. But, Jake gets an idea that will require less work.

"If Mom has a big event at the hotel, that means there's a ton of food. Come on, Emma, we're taking the bus downtown!"

Jake is friends with the hotel kitchen staff, who are happy to give him and Emma a free meal. As they wait for their food at the little room behind the banquet hall, Jake spies a jar of colourful jellybeans on the table. Jake takes a fistful and gobbles them up. Unknown to him, these are not ordinary sweets. These are the world's first Ingestible Knowledge Pills.

On the bus home, Jake starts to spout facts about everything he sees. Pointing to the chocolate mousse cake that Emma has packed to bring home, he tells Emma all about the origins of chocolate and how it reached France. He then goes on to talk expertly about French cuisine.

Emma stares at Jake. "How do you know all this stuff?"

Jake is surprised himself. He shrugs. "Beats me."

Thanks to the jellybeans, Jake becomes the smartest kid in the universe. He can do college-level Math, knows all the facts about any number of subjects, and even speaks Swahili.

With his new-found brilliance, Jake is roped in to help the two top brains in his school, Kojo and Grace, solve an old pirate's riddle. Legend has it that there is treasure buried under the school building. Whoever solves the riddle will get to the treasure. Surely Riverview Middle School can use the money!

There is just one problem. The complex riddle is written in Spanish. And, when it comes to understanding Spanish, the jellybeans are of no help. How will Jake help his friends crack the code? Read *The Smartest Kid in the Universe* by Chris Grabenstein to find out.

– Reviewed by NG SOCK LING

## Activity

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### Contest: If I were Jake

Jake is the coolest guy in school, but not the smartest. Jake is just too lazy to learn anything. One day, Jake gobbles up some jellybeans left on a table. They were not ordinary sweets — they were Ingestible Knowledge Pills! They turn Jake into the smartest kid in the universe. With his new-found brilliance, Jake is roped in to help his friends Grace and Kojo solve an old pirate's riddle that could save his school. The problem is that the riddle is written in Spanish. And, the jelly beans are of no help with Spanish. If you were Jake, what would you do?

1. Email your note to [ourcontest@whatsup.sg](mailto:ourcontest@whatsup.sg).
2. Include your full name, class, and school in your email.
3. Contest deadline: 16 June 2021.

You could win a copy of *The Smartest Kid in the Universe!*