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Hector is being hectored by an unlikely bully: a talking brain tumor. And it's not just a talking brain tumor. It's a know-it-all, pain-in-the-arse, jibber-jabbering brain tumor that names itself Jack, and insists on coaching Hector through life even as it's threatening to take his life away. It's a pretty good coach, actually. With Jack in control of Hector's speech and brain chemicals, Hector suddenly finds himself with a cool haircut, a new fashion sense, and tactics for snogging previously unattainable hottie Uma Upshaw. But when Jack begins to force increasingly questionable decisions and behavior, Hector has to find a way to turn the tables – before it's too late for both of them.

Delightfully twisted, desperately funny, and deeply moving, this novel is also the winner of the Booktrust Teenage Prize in the United Kingdom.

Jack Tumor Details

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Author : Anthony McGowan

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From Reader Review Jack Tumor for online ebook

Ender says

"Laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone."

Here is a book that will make you laugh and cry. Sometimes on the same page. For those that do snore, don't worry, it's a page-turner, so you can stay up all night reading!

There's a special place in my heart for Henry Tumour. I first read it back when I was almost the same age as Hector, the narrator of the story. I felt an immediate affinity with him, as we were both having far more success in mathematics than with those mysterious creatures, the opposite sex. I don't think it's too much of a spoiler to mention that he has a brain tumour. A talking one, called Henry. You're going to find out on page one anyway.

I decided to re-read this after obtaining an old library copy. There's so many references to books and comics, it felt like the whole story was an intricate inside-joke, which I, the reader, was invited to join.

There's swearing, snogging and stargazing. If you assumed that this book wouldn't make you think, just because the opening sentence is "Arsecheese.", you'd be wrong. There's some beautiful, profound moments interspersed among the highs and horrors of teenage life. Fortunately Henry, our favourite cancerous inner-monologue, always manages to bring us back down to earth.

I'm not sure who to recommend this to. Fans of William Shakespeare, Frank Miller, George Orwell? Who knows? I think anyone would find it hard to dislike this book.

I just ordered Hellbent too!

Kat says

I really will never learn. How many times have I picked up a book I knew was going to be funny-beyond-belief, and read it on the train! After snorting with laughter very loudly on a train jam packed with people, this strictly became a read-at-home-only book. And this is one seriously funny book. The premise is simple. Hector discovers he has a brain tumour. Its name is Henry. And it talks to him, gives him advice and generally keeps him company. Whether Hector likes it or not.

The story is super clever as it deals with quite a serious and difficult topic, but in a way that is easy for younger people to relate to. A colleague told me about McGowan's other book, 'Hellbent', but the plot didn't appeal, so I went for this one instead. When I read the first word on the first page, it was sold, but due to the nature of that word, this is probably a book for older readers!!

Megan says

I have to admit this book reads kind of like a NaNoWriMo novel. I'm not saying that in a bad way. Just that

the voice of the protagonist lends it to the type of writer who has a word count to fulfill or who gets paid by the sentence. There is a lot of extra stuff here. Do I really care about the Battle of the Fish and Chips Shops? Not really. But the way the author puts himself in the head of the main character, it's obvious that Heck cares about it, or at least has that flotsam floating around in his head, and by golly if he's writing a book it is all spilling out on the paper. At first I found this a bit annoying. But Heck is one of those characters who grows on you. By the last page, he was someone I could genuinely care about, for all of his silly meandering mental paths. His voice is very clear.

That's kind of how the entirety of this book was for me. At first I had a hard time settling myself down in the plot and setting. Not because I'm unused to British novels or slang, because I'm not, but because seeing the world through the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day naturally means you get a few strange things thrown at you all at once and not everything is going to be explained. But as the novel carried itself along, I grew more interested in Heck's life, his friends (though I never could tell them or the bullies quite apart), and his family. By the end of it I genuinely was rooting for Heck.

I had a hard time with Jack. Maybe it was just his ALL-CAPS dialogue though normally that doesn't bug me. I had a hard time figuring out what he was saying and what his motives were. It felt strange that a tumor would actually have motives. That kind of got me off on some long train of thought about If I Were a Brain Tumor, What Would My Life Goal Be? Would it be different if I were a tumor in somebody's colon, or a piece of plaque blocking their artery, or an ulcer in their tummy? Hmm. Thinking about the thought paths of vicious bodily problems occupied me quite a bit as I read along.

I would like to see this comic ending that got cut out of the American version. I HATE when books are changed from country to country. It is a pet peeve of mine. Here's hoping the comic can be put online somewhere...

Laura says

Difficult to think of a book about a boy and his brain tumor as funny, but this one really is. Hector, who's been having rather severe headaches, starts hearing a voice. Not just any voice, it's the voice of Jack... Jack Tumor (who TALKS LIKE DEATH if you know what I mean).

Jack's funny at times, cranky at others. It's sort of like Heck's subconscious but better - at one point (and I'm paraphrasing here) Jack admits that he has access to everything in Hector's brain, including stuff he doesn't know is there. Some of that is girls (Uma and Amanda), some of that is how to best the school bullies, and some of it is bad graveyard poetry. Go figure.

Mom's a hippie from the CND demonstrations, serving mung bean soup and various icky-sounding teas, and doesn't seem terribly good at Mom-stuff, particularly when her son is finally diagnosed with the tumor. Or after, it seems.

The majority of the action takes place in a fortnight, which seems short but there's a lot packed in. I think the boys will like it, despite its being written in English, not American.

Ringo The Cat says

One of the coolest ideas (a talking brain tumor) and definitely one of the coolest opening words for any book: Arsecheese. The tone is set: we get deliciously vulgar (thought often decidedly man-) humour as well as unpredictable scenes featuring Hector Brundy – your typical nerdgeek who's into comic books, Star Trek as well as Buffy the Vampire Slayer. That last part definitely won over the cat.

Henry Tumour is a sensitive tale about growing up, and making the best of things, despite your shortcomings, even if that something is a brain tumor that threatens to take over your life as well as your geeky personality. When life is short, the last thing you need is a brain tumor trying to turn you into Super Stud (to keep in tune with the comic book theme of the novel). The sensitivity of the novel is smartly disguised in brutally honest bully scenes, sex-talk and snogging fests with Uma Upshaw (I am not inventing this name!) and tragic-comic reveries about has been hippie-feminists.

Also disguised amongst the stream of consciousness writing are important questions about your own mortality, and the need/want/use of morality in light of the finality of all things (with Hector as the Ego and Henry as the Id). This is never an easy question to answer, but in the mind of a teenager with a brain tumor, the whole thing almost gets something hilariously grotesque.

The cat definitely rates this book 4 stars, but she felt her mind wander a bit at times, much like Henry takes Hector's mind on a bit of a mind trip. Otherwise it would have been a 4+... Be that as it may, Henry Tumour is as fresh as fresh can get, and you'll find yourselves sniggering along with the crude jokes and reveling in the TV and other pop culture references.

Meeriams Fleep says

I have to admit I left this story three quarters of the way through because it was so depressing towards the end, HOWEVER..I did read lots of spoilers and whatever I may have initially thought about this story, I do not hesitate for a moment to declare its absolute FANTASTIC BRILLIANCE, which I do suppose was highly influenced by reading McGowan's other book, Hellbent. Its surprisingly funny for such a depressingly sad topic, and had me cringing at times, laughing out loud, as well as being dampened by feelings of utmost tragic depression :/ HOWEVER, I still am of the ABSOLUTE AND COMPLETE CONVICTION that you really cannot ignore such a book. Do it justice, and then judge, critically if you like, BUT DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE BRILIANCE OF THE WRITING!!!

Haley says

In an overflowing, smelly, terribly lit save-a-lot I came across 'Jack Tumor'. Whilst looking at another book that didn't really interest me, I knocked over Anthony McGowan's masterpiece. One look at the first word, Arsecheese, I was sold. I took it home, not thinking much of it. Little did I know that this crude, hilarious, and beautifully insightful novel would change my life forever. Pretty amazing for an accident, right? Perhaps it was Hector Brunny, the humorous and very humanized character, or maybe it was his know-it-all brain tumor Jack that made me fall in love with this book. I would like to thank my clumsiness that brought 'Jack Tumor' and I together.

The only thing I will say is that the comic strip ending is only featured in 'Henry Tumour' Which is the original UK version. I'm completely satisfied with the ending as it is, but now I suppose I'm going to have to

buy the UK version. enjoy the riveting, hilarious adventure of Hector and Jack. Along with the beautiful and touching words of Mr.McGowan.

Sally says

An absolutely hysterical book about a boy with a brain tumour. It shouldn't be funny, but it ABSOLUTELY is! I mean, what author would be MAD enough to start their book with the heading and first line "ARSECHEESE" I ask you! Of course, it's Anthony McGowan.

I love the way this novel unravels, drawing the reader ever deeper into the insanity that Henry's tumour causes him while he grapples with what this means to his life. It's like his inner monologue has read all of his Negative Thoughts and is either using them as a weapon against him or shouting them down to get Henry on side, either way - the tumour is taking over and is going to go out with a bang.

I've found this book to be a massive hit for those reluctant readers who have a good or higher reading ability, but low interest levels when it comes to reading. The main reason is that it doesn't talk down to the reader, whilst also having such great dark humour that those students (who normally feel like literature doesn't represent or connect with them) find themselves drawn in and enthused enough to turn the page and carry on reading! I normally recommend it to one student, find that they've mentioned it to a friend and that they both take a copy! I even get their friends coming by and reserving a copy as they are interested off the back of them starting the book too so it has flurries of issues throughout the school year as groups discover it! It's one of my favourite parts of my job!

Robert Weinstein says

I'd really give this a four and a half stars. It's not often you read a book that makes you feel bad for the tumor that's killing the protagonist but Mr. McGowan has done just that. The symbiotic relationship between the boy and his tumor works because McGowan gives 'Jack' a real personality: smart, supportive, vulnerable and - yes - reasonable. He (the tumor) knows what he is. He also knows the effect he has on the boy. He also knows he wants to live. It's a great idea and it plays out in a wonderful and satisfying way.

The book is full of fascinating characters and wonderful relationships. I was sad it ended.

Miss Ryoko says

This looks an awful lot like David Henrie on the cover. Aww, how I miss Wizards of Waverly Place!

I picked this book up at the library book sale a while back because the synopsis sounded hilarious... a talking brain tumor!? How could I pass that up. What really surprised me was how touching this book actually was. Now, don't get me wrong, it definitely had its hilarious moments, but I found it to be moving as well.

I really loved Hector Brunt as a character. Not only was he nerdy but he was so humanized. And I really love how his relationship with Jack (his brain tumor) really changed him, at first for the worst, but in the end, the better. His gang of nerdy friends were all so great too.

The writing was fantastic. Hector's voice was loud and clear through the writing. I loved the style and presentation of the writing. Superb! Not only was the writing spot on, but the overall ability to take an idea that really, sounds so ridiculous (a talking brain tumor? Really?) and turning it into a fantastically written book with both humor and humanity in it - wonderful. There were many times I thought the story was going to take a turn for the worse and it was going to get crappy on me, but it just kept getting better and better.

I love Hector, now and forever. He will be a character I remember for many years, and one I think I will cherish.

And I must say, JK Rowling THAT'S how you do a fantastic epilogue! This was probably the greatest epilogue I ever read. I knew it was good when I was chuckling the first sentence in. Great epilogue. Great story. Fantastic job Mr. McGowan!

Oh, and with this book, I reached my reading goal of 330 books for 2013! Woot! A good book to reach my goal with!

Louisa says

Don't let the cover fool you. This is no Paul Jennings (not that I have anything against Paul Jennings). My point is, it's a little heavier than the cartoon cover might suggest. Yes, it is funny. Yes, it is about a teenage boy. Yes, it is set predominantly in a school. Good for young teenage boys then? Maybe and maybe not. It is also about a boy who has a brain tumour: one that talks to him and controls his behaviour. So the theme of death and dying, while it is dealt with in an unusual way, is important. It is also about bullying (some of it quite nasty) and the concept of who fits in and why that is or isn't important. All very common ideas that most teenagers are interested in, right? In order to 'keep it real' the author has allowed his characters some fairly coarse language - hence my earlier statement about Jennings who is much more careful. For me, the 'bad' language really contributed to the novel's humour as well as its authenticity. Set in Manchester, some of the vocabulary might baffle the average Aussie but it certainly won't ruin the experience. To conclude, this is a clever novel which tackles some very difficult and sensitive issues with sharp humour and honesty. I really enjoyed it even though it paints a pretty horrendous picture of teachers!

Ryan Bruesewitz says

Jack Tumor is a very interesting, but also a little sad novel. The novel is about a young teen in Britain named Henry and his troubles in his school with bullies, friends, girls, and above all his brain tumor. Hector quickly learns about his brain tumor, who prefers to be called "Jack", but Jack knows that he and Henry don't have much time (because he's still a deadly brain tumor), and strives to make the best of his stay in the boy's head. Jack claims to know and can access everything that has ever been stored in Henry's brain (much like the movie "Limitless") and helps him with processing information during school, and helps him get the girls at his school. Jack Tumor is an awesome book and I would recommend it to anyone who wants an easy but good read.

Georgia says

I have read this book twice now, which shows how much I love it, as I very rarely do that. It was even better the second time! This book is so full of witty phrases and laugh-out-loud bits, but it also tackles deep philosophical subjects like the meaning of life and what happens to us after we die in a very clever way. Hector is a likeable and hilarious character, and his narration of his antics with his talking brain tumour Henry (who is also strangely loveable despite his educated insults and insensitivities hurled across Hector's mind every day) kept me gripped throughout the whole book, and Hector's love for Amanda Something made me "awww" several times. The only downside to the story is the fact that we don't really find out what happens to Hector and Henry in the end, although we are given a short but cryptic comic sequence on the final pages.

One of my favourites, and definitely definitely worth a read.

Candice Lamb says

I saw this in the guardians kids section and was pulled to it by the excellent front cover. A comic bookesque style of a boy and taking brain tumour.

Told through amusing tales of growing up, school bullies and that eventful first kiss. Henry tumour is the tale of a boy called Hector who is trying to get on with his life as well as having a tumour that talks. Sad in places but also uplifting. Great for teens and adults alike

Andersreads says

This is a funny, realistic book about a 14-year-old boy who is being tested for brain cancer. As the novel begins, he starts to hear a voice in his head that he calls Jack Tumor (hence the title). The novel is set in England, so along with a lot of British slang (is snogging what I think it is?) it creates a picture of school life in England. It seems surprisingly similar to American high schools, except that the bullying is much more pervasive. I enjoyed this book and would give it a 9 out of 10, but it will only go on the 8th grade shelf in my classroom.
