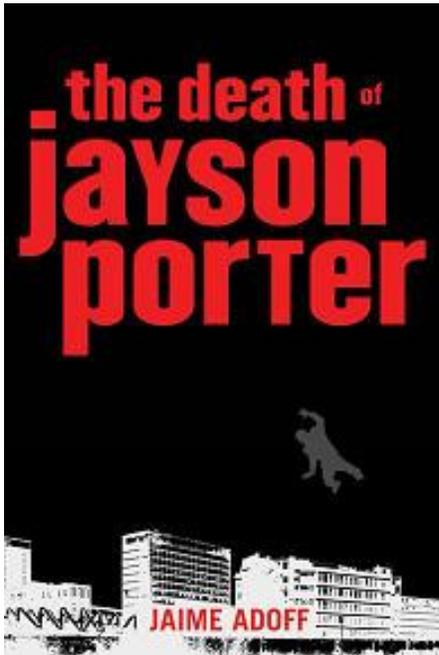


## The Death of Jayson Porter by Jaime Adoff A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



### About the Book

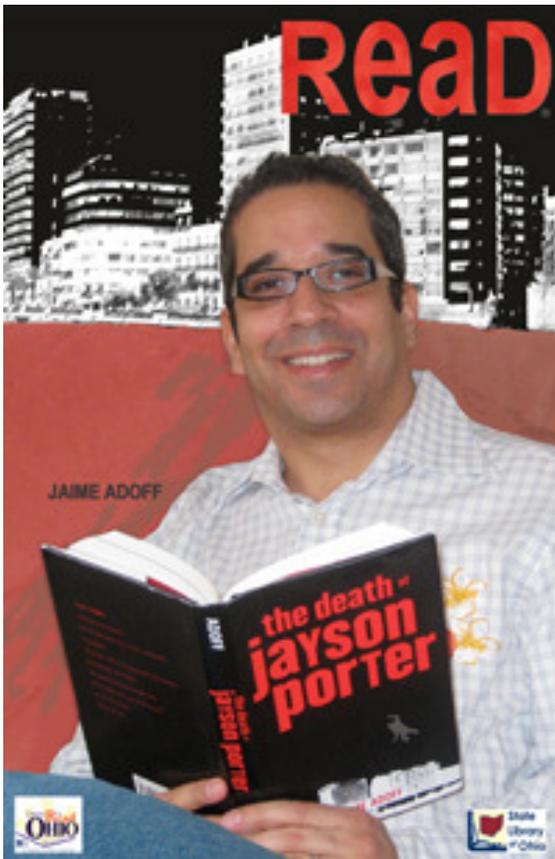
Sixteen-year-old Jayson Porter wants to believe things will get better. But the harsh realities of his life never seem to change. Living in the inland Florida projects with his abusive mother, he tries unsuccessfully to fit in at his predominately white school, and struggles to maintain even a thread of a relationship with his drug addicted father. As the pressure mounts, there's only one thing that Jayson feels he has control over—the choice of whether to live or die. In this powerful, gripping novel, Coretta Scott King Award-winning author Jaime Adoff explores the gritty reality of a teenager's life, finding hope even in the bleakest of hours.

### Cited Resource:

Hyperion Books For Children Discussion Guide

<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/data/books/dgpdf/14231069111915.pdf>

The contents of this guide were created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author.



## About the Author

Jaime Adoff is the author of the critically acclaimed **The Song Shoots Out of My Mouth: A Celebration of Music**, a Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award Honor Book; **Names Will Never Hurt Me**, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults nominee; and **Jimi and Me**, winner of the 2006 Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent. He is the son of renowned poet Arnold Adoff and the late Newbery Award-winning author Virginia Hamilton.

### Author Resources:

#### Jaime Adoff's Official Website

<http://www.jaimeadoff.com/>

#### Hyperion Author Profile

<http://hyperionbooksforchildren.com/authors/displayAl.asp?id=392&ai=a>

#### Ohio Channel Interview with Jaime Adoff

[http://www.ohiochannel.org/multimedia/programs/media.cfm?file\\_id=121545&program\\_id=107763](http://www.ohiochannel.org/multimedia/programs/media.cfm?file_id=121545&program_id=107763)

At the 2009 Ohioana Book Festival

#### Interview with Jaime Adoff

[http://www.pulsejournal.com/o/content/shared-gen/blogs/dayton/booknook/entries/2008/09/07/an\\_interview\\_with\\_jaime\\_adoff.html](http://www.pulsejournal.com/o/content/shared-gen/blogs/dayton/booknook/entries/2008/09/07/an_interview_with_jaime_adoff.html)

Interviewed by Vick Mickunas of the *Pulse-Journal*; audio file available for download.



## Discussion Questions

### Before Reading

Read the poems in "After" (p. 5–6) and discuss what you think of the opening.

Do you think this scene will become real later in the story? How do you think the main character gets to this point in his life? Predict what the consequences of his decisions will be.

### After Reading

1. Why do you think the author decided to divide the novel into parts, "After" and "Before"? The author also uses a prose/poetry style to tell this story. Why do you think he picked this format? What does it add to the narrative?
2. What do you learn about the main character in chapter one? Describe him and the realities of his life. Compare them to your own. How would you cope under his extraordinary circumstances?
3. Bandon is a community divided "*There's the white section—the haves. And the black section—the never had shit.*" (p. 21) Is your community divided as well? Could things ever become more equal? How? How can kids be given the same opportunities for education and success?
4. What is Jayson's "outside game"? Do you have one too? Do you think everyone shows the world a face that is not really who they are? Who gets to see the real side of Jay? Who sees your real side?
5. Describe Jay's relationship with his mother, Lizzie. Do you consider the way she treats him abusive? Is there a line between discipline and abuse? Does Jay have some alternative choices to taking his mother's treatment? Why doesn't he react?
6. Explain why Jay's relationship with his dad is so tenuous. How has addiction controlled his father's life? Why do you think Jay bothers to see his father at all? Would you stay in a relationship with a parent who had a drug problem? Would you blame the addict or the addiction? Why?
7. Why doesn't Jay confide in Trax about his life at home? Does Trax share the whole truth with Jay? How does this add to Trax's tragedy? Do you think Jay could've prevented the accident if he had known? Could Trax have prevented Jay's decision to kill himself?
8. Compare and contrast Milburn (where Jay goes to school) to Bandon. Do you think the school gives Jay hope, or does it contribute to his despair to see how



other people live? Why? Why does Jayson prefer being at school rather than at home?

9. Who is April? What does she mean to Jay? Is their love for each other real? What makes you think so or not? Why isn't their relationship enough to prevent Jay's decision to end his life? Why didn't he turn to April about his feelings of hopelessness?
10. What does Jay finally learn about his own true parents? Do you think this contributes to his decision to kill himself? Why? Is there ever a good reason to keep the truth from someone? Why or why not?
11. Discuss the consequences of Jayson's decision to jump. What are the physical, psychological, and emotional aspects of his decision? Does he regret it? Why? What other choices did he have? Why do you think he felt unable to do any of them?
12. Where is Jayson at the end of the story? Do you think there will be long-term consequences for his decision? What type of parent will Trina be? Will his new life with Trina help him to live a better life?

## Extension Projects

### Language Arts

Write a letter from one character to another at any point in the story. Be sure to stay "in character" as you write and explore the relationships that make up this story.

### Math

Find statistics that compare America's "haves" to the "have-nots." Create a bar or pie graph comparing each group's access to education, health care, nutrition, and housing.

### Health

Create a poster or pamphlet about suicide prevention. Be sure to list the signs and warnings associated with it, and include local numbers to services that provide help for people at risk. After the project has been graded, distribute the posters or pamphlets to local restaurants, teen hotspots, and service agencies.

### Cited Resource:

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The contents of this guide were created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author.



## Additional Resources

### Hyperion Books For Children Discussion Guide

<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/data/books/dgpdf/14231069111915.pdf>

This guide is the source of much of the information in this toolkit, and also includes a brief interview with Jaime Adoff. It was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author ([www.tracievaughnzimmer.com](http://www.tracievaughnzimmer.com)).

### *The Death of Jayson Porter* on Jaime Adoff's website

[http://www.jaimeadoff.com/the\\_death\\_of\\_jayson\\_porter\\_67938.htm](http://www.jaimeadoff.com/the_death_of_jayson_porter_67938.htm)

Includes book summary, reviews, link to an NPR interview with Adoff, and more.

### Book Trailer for *The Death of Jayson Porter*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS34DmWdO2g>

### Excerpt from *The Death of Jayson Porter*

<http://www.teenreads.com/reviews/9781423106913-excerpt.asp>

### *Cry For Help*

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/cryforhelp/>

Online companion to the PBS program about teen mental illness and suicide.

Book details:

**The Death of Jayson Porter** by Jaime Adoff.

Hyperion, 2008. Grades 7 up. ISBN-13: 978-142310691-3.

## About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio (CTRO) spotlights Ohio authors and promotes reading across Ohio. The State Library of Ohio, in partnership with Ohioana Library Association, developed this initiative to encourage Ohioans of all ages to share literature by authors native to, residing in, or associated with Ohio. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>.