

# Attack of the Jumpin' Jack

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# Chapter One

## Jackie Time

Seventh-period science class was almost finished, and the students began fidgeting restlessly in their seats. Their teacher, Mr. Garces, had begun summarizing the day's lesson. All the students looked extremely anxious for class to be over — all the students but one.

“Uh-oh,” whispered Michael to Benjamin, “it’s almost question-and-answer time, and you know what that means.” He sketched a doodle of a stick figure leaping into the air.

Benjamin groaned and whispered back, “Yeah, it means Jackie time.”

Mr. Garces stopped reviewing, checked his wristwatch, and said, “It appears our time is nearly up. As usual, now I’ll quiz you on what you’ve learned today.” He completely erased his notes from the board, and then asked, “Who can explain what island gigantism is?”

All the students let out a tremendous sigh — all the students but one. The one, Jackie Williamson, was already springing out of her seat and flinging out her arms, shouting, “Me, me, me — oh, please pick me!”





## Chapter Two

# A Fateful Assignment

Mr. Garces looked around to see if someone — anyone — else might want to answer, but he only observed blank stares. He nodded at Jackie.

“Island gigantism is what happens when an animal is especially alone,” she began.

“Jackie might be smart, but it’s so annoying how she jumps up and down to get attention,” Michael whispered. “She looks like she’s doing jumping jacks.”

“*Jackie* — jumping *jacks*,” responded Benjamin. “That’s good, Michael. Let’s call her Jumpin’ Jack!” The boys reeled with laughter until Mr. Garces shot them a look.



Jackie heard their comments and swallowed hard. Then she continued, "If no other animals around hunt this animal, it can grow unbelievably huge."

Benjamin started to crack another joke, but Mr. Garces nailed him with a glare. "Perfectly stated, Jackie," the teacher replied. "Now, for homework, I'm assigning you into five groups. You must work together, and everyone must contribute."

After Mr. Garces explained the project, he started to designate groups. Benjamin and Michael began to get nervous. Jackie hadn't yet been assigned a group, and neither had they! The two boys whispered anxiously, "He can't possibly place us with Jumpin' Jack, right?"

However, when the teacher prepared to announce the last group, they understood the truth. "Benjamin, Michael, Jackie — that means you are Group 5," declared Mr. Garces. The three students groaned disgustedly, but they were grouped together, for better or worse.



## Chapter Three

# Change of Heart



An hour later, Jackie, Benjamin, and Michael gathered in the library. Their assignment was to give a presentation about an animal whose body had transformed because of where or how it lived. Michael suggested they discuss anteaters and their long, ridiculous snouts. Benjamin preferred Komodo dragons, an example of island gigantism. Jackie, to their amazement, contributed nothing.

After a few minutes, Benjamin sneered, “So what do *you* think, Jumpin’ Jack?”

“I think you must have lived on an island to get a mouth so gigantic,” Jackie retorted angrily.



“Wow, now that’s what I call a Jumpin’ Jack Surprise Attack!” Benjamin exclaimed.

“I don’t understand why I get called names, just because I’m excited about learning!” Jackie shouted. The librarian hushed them harshly from across the room.

Michael explained, whispering now, “It’s not about *what* you’re doing, it’s *how* you’re doing it that bothers us. You know, we like to answer questions, too, but you never give us the opportunity. You’re always jumping up and getting all the attention.”

Jackie thought for a moment and said, “I never considered it that way. If I promise to allow you guys to answer sometimes, will you quit teasing me?”

“It’s a deal!” the boys replied, and the librarian hushed even louder.

“Then I promise,” Jackie whispered. “By the way, I really like the idea of anteaters, and I think we can give everyone a gigantic surprise!” Then she explained her idea for their presentation. Benjamin, not Jackie, would do the talking, Michael would prepare the drawings, and all three would research together.



## Chapter Four

# The Presentation

The next day, Jackie, Michael, and Benjamin presented first. As they strolled to the board, Benjamin overheard someone whisper, “Jumpin’ Jack.”

“Knock it off!” Benjamin hissed. The student sat back, shocked.

Benjamin began to discuss anteaters. The whole class murmured, but Jackie put her finger to her lips to silence them. Benjamin explained how the creature might have developed a longer, thinner nose so it could get into anthills. As Benjamin lectured, Michael presented his drawings. In the last one, the anteater had an ant in his mouth, and the ant was crying, “Help!” which made everybody smile.

When Benjamin completed the speech, Jackie began jumping and dancing and thrusting up her hands. Everyone in the class groaned.

“Yes, Jackie, did you have something to add?” Benjamin asked, holding in a chuckle.

Jackie took a long, deep breath, and shouted, “The end!” Everyone, including Mr. Garces, roared with laughter.

