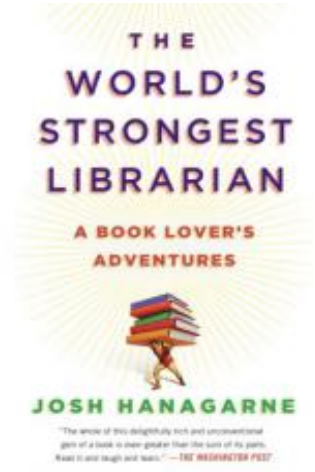
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The World's Strongest Librarian: A Book Lover's Adventures

by Josh Hanagarne



About the Book

Josh Hanagarne couldn?t be invisible if he tried. Although he wouldn?t officially be diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome until his freshman year of high school, Josh was six years old and onstage in a school Thanksgiving play when he first began exhibiting symptoms. By the time he was 20, the young Mormon had reached his towering adult height of 6?7? when --- while serving on a mission for the Church of Latter Day Saints --- his Tourette?s tics escalated to nightmarish levels.

Determined to conquer his affliction, Josh underwent everything from quack remedies to lethargy-inducing drug regimes to Botox injections that paralyzed his vocal cords and left him voiceless for three years. Undeterred, Josh persevered to marry and earn a degree in Library Science. At last, an eccentric, autistic strongman --- and former Air Force Tech Sergeant and guard at an Iraqi prison --- taught Josh how to ?throttle? his tics into submission through strength-training.

Today, Josh is a librarian in the main branch of Salt Lake City?s public library and founder of a popular blog about books and weight lifting --- and the proud father of four-year-old Max, who has already started to show his own symptoms of Tourette?s.

THE WORLD'S STRONGEST LIBRARIAN illuminates the mysteries of this little-understood disorder, as well as the very different worlds of strongman training and modern libraries. With humor and candor, this unlikely hero traces his journey to overcome his disability --- and navigate his wavering Mormon faith --- to find love and create a life worth living.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you remember your first trip to the library? Do you read more or less now than you did as a child? Why?

2. Was there a book --- or a character in a book --- that infatuated you as much as CHARLOTTE'S WEB and Fern did Josh?

3. Why do you think boys like Javier are embarrassed by their interest in books? What might be done to change young people?s perception that books are uncool?

4. Could you relate to Josh?s story about sneaking Stephen King novels into the house after his mother banned them? Is it okay to let kids read whatever interests them or should parents impose boundaries?

5. Should Josh?s parents have taken him to specialists before the tics got as bad as they did during his high school years? Today?s parents are more likely than those from previous generations to have their kids? ?problems? diagnosed and treated. Is this a change for the better or worse?

6. Advances in DNA mapping are making it increasingly possible to screen for disorders like Tourette?s. If you were at risk for passing down a non-fatal but challenging genetic condition to your child, would you want to know before he or she was born?

7. It seems unfair that Josh and Janette?s application to adopt was turned down. How might the screening process be improved?

8. Do you strength train or practice some form of exercise? Do you find that your body?s fitness affects your brain?s fitness?

9. When was the last time you went to a library and what was your reason for going? When was the last time you looked something up using the Dewey Decimal System?

10. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article profiled libraries that have expanded their offerings to include a hog-butchering demonstration, Wii bowling, and Star Wars days. Do you agree or disagree with the notion that ?libraries must stay ?relevant?? (p. 213) in an increasingly electronic age?

11. Does Josh?s success managing his tics inspire you to tackle a challenge of your own?

Author Bio

Josh Hanagarne believes in curiosity, questions and strength, and that things are never so bad that they can?t improve. He is a librarian at the Salt Lake City Public Library. He lives with his wife, Janette, and their son, Max, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The World's Strongest Librarian: A Book Lover's Adventures

by Josh Hanagarne

Publication Date: May 6, 2014

Genres: Nonfiction

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Gotham

ISBN-10: 159240877X

ISBN-13: 9781592408771