

where Gantos developed a love of reading.

When Gantos was in the sixth grade, he came across his sister's diary and decided he could write something better than that. Those journals would become the source of many incidents in his later work.

Once out of high school, Gantos got caught up in an ill-fated scheme to smuggle drugs — recounted in his memoir, "Hole in My Life." He spent 18 months in prison, an experience that made him determined to be a writer. Following prison, he entered college to study creative writing.

It was in college that he made his first professional sale, a collaboration with artist Nicole Rubel on the first of the "Rotten Ralph" picture books.

Gantos' work also includes two stand-alone novels for young adults: "Desire Lines," about a teenager whose knowledge of a relationship between two fellow students puts him in a moral quandary, and "The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs," a dark, quirky story about the inhabitants of a small Pennsylvania town.

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BY ANDREA KOLE • WORLD STAFF WRITER

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