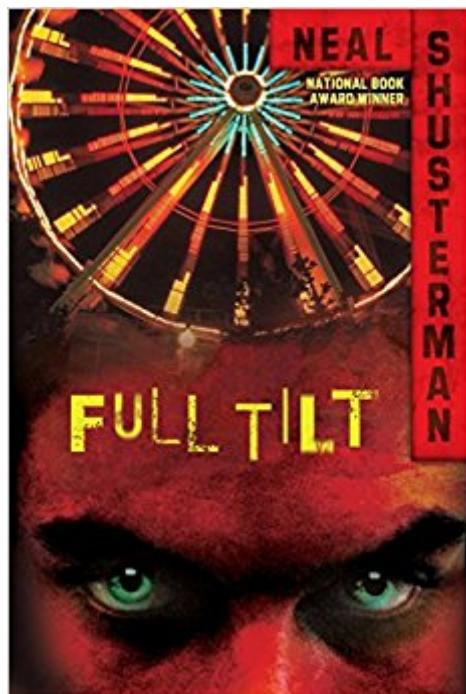


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# Full Tilt



## **Synopsis**

Sixteen-year-old Blake has always been the responsible one in his dysfunctional family -- the one who drives safely, gets good grades, and looks after his wild younger brother, Quinn. Quinn is his brother's opposite -- a thrill-seeker who's always chasing the next scary rush, no matter what the cost. But Quinn and Blake are in for the surprise of their lives when they're thrust into the world of a bizarre phantom carnival -- and their souls are the price of admission. In order to save his brother, and himself, Blake must survive seven different carnival rides before dawn. Seven rides...it sounds easy. But each ride is full of unexpected dangers, because each ride is a reflection of one of Blake's deepest fears. And the last ride is the worst one of all. Because that's the one that confronts Blake with a terrifying secret from his past -- a secret he's been running from for years. Full of roller-coaster twists and turns, Neal Shusterman's latest page-turner is an Orpheus-like adventure into one boy's psyche.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 700L (What's this?)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 7 Up-The myriad bits in 16-year-old Blake's brain become the stuff of an alternate universe, a nightmare amusement park in which he must experience seven wild rides before dawn in order to escape. The teen has always been the careful child in his family; at age seven, he was the only

survivor of a school-bus crash. Since then, he has taken on the responsibility of saving his brother Quinn, who constantly needs to be rescued from his own impulsive behavior. Blake would certainly never accept the invitation to a midnight ride offered by the icily attractive Cassandra, a mysterious figure he encounters at Six Flags. However, when his brother steals the invitation and disappears, Blake has to follow. As he makes his way from one terrifying ride to another, Cassandra appears and disappears, challenging him, leading him on, and, finally, desperately attempting to keep him where he is, in the world she has created. His brother appears and disappears as well, and in one ride they discover that they need to work together. But at the end, Blake is on his own to face his deepest fears and survivor guilt. As the pace picks up in his surreal fantasy, readers are sucked into the nightmare, tumbling full tilt from one bizarre occurrence to another. Set in the vibrant, vivid atmosphere of theme parks and computer games, this is an unusual quest adventure. Teens will recognize both Quinn's sensation seeking and Blake's withdrawal, and celebrate the balanced conclusion. Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC  
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Gr. 6-10. Sixteen-year-old Blake, a straight-arrow, Ivy-league, college-bound kid, is at a carnival with Quinn, his thrill-seeking brother, and two friends when a beautiful girl invites Blake to another carnival in a remote part of town that only admits invited guests. Later that evening, Quinn is found at home in a comatose state with Blake's invitation by his side. Did he go to the other carnival in Blake's place? When Blake and his friends go in search of the mysterious carnival to find out what happened to Quinn, they discover that the price of admission to this bizarre, phantom place is one's soul. To save Quinn, Blake must survive seven different carnival rides before dawn, each one a terrifying reflection of one of Blake's deepest fears. In the final ride, Blake confronts the memory of a horrible childhood accident that he has buried deep in his psyche--a school bus wreck in which he was the only survivor. With a nod to Ray Bradbury's classic *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Shusterman has created a surreal, scary fantasy, packed with suspenseful psychological drama. Readers will savor the page-turning thrills in this wonderfully eerie story. Ed Sullivan  
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In *Full Tilt*, Blake's greatest fears are personified as an amusement park. After an incident with his younger brother, Blake must board seven rides at this bizarre carnival and conquer the fears that each ride represents in order to save his brother. I love the character development and

relationship dynamics as we discover that Blake and Quinn come from a single parent home that's also been a bit of a broken home as his father abandoned the family and his mother dated quite often and sometimes, the guys that she dated abused them. So when their mother gets engaged, it's hard to rap their head around A) a good guy and B) a good guy sticking around. Full Tilt is a fantastic metaphor to a life thrown off balance, our lives spinning out of control and what we can do to take back that control. Full Tilt is a thought provoking look at fear, how it allows us to paralyze ourselves or overcome our greatest roadblock - ourselves. Full Tilt is a great exploration of how stillness and movement, order and surrendering mean all of the difference in where our lives go. It does feel message heavy after he realizes the point of each ride so if you can't look over that, this is not the book for you. This is one of Neal's earlier works so it's quite fascinating to see how his writing has evolved since this point in time. Through Blake, we explore his anxiety over his past trauma and his future hope. We explore the fear of falling, fear of failing, fear of taking everyone down with us. We come to the realization that more often than not when we look in the mirror, we get lost in ourselves and see the tiny truths in a fractured mirror rather than the whole truth in complete frame. Full Tilt is a great reminder to readers to know when to get on and off the rides of our lives. To have the strength to take the jump, to survive, and to thrive. When we don't overcome our fears, it often feels like we're stuck in a nightmare forever. Well, this book plays out that reality and gives us that push we sometimes need to take the jump and overcome. While Blake is joined by his friends Russ and Maggie as they search for his brother, Quinn, Russ and Maggie (and Quinn) are very much minor characters as we mainly follow Blake. What's so interesting in that is that he's on a mission to save his brother, only come to find out that the path he really needs to go down is the one where he saves himself. It was refreshing to read a story about a teenager saving themselves rather than the world. Because we're part of this world and individually, self care is so important and yet so overlooked. Don't overlook this one. It's definitely worth checking out.

The calibre of novels out there nowadays for teens/young adults is exceptional. I wish I had been able to read this book in junior or senior high in one of my literature classes and then discuss it with my peers - some great talking points all the way through it. "Full Tilt" holds up as a literary gem for any age reader. I'm surprised that as I read through other reviews that there weren't more comparisons between "Full Tilt" and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* by Ray Bradbury. Similar themes on both and Bradbury's novel has been required reading in classrooms for a long

time. But I think Shusterman's novel with themes of friendship, brotherly love, family dynamics, and most importantly, facing our fears and overcoming them, even surpasses Bradbury's and brings enjoyment and adventure to a new generation of readers. I loved this book. The characters were well developed, the storyline unique, the villain vile. Shusterman has written two of my recent favorites - "Full Tilt" and Unwind. Great job! Keep them coming - not only for the young people but for the older audience that enjoys your writing, too.

Full Tilt is a novel about adventure, a relationship between two brothers, and four friends going to an amusement park and may never come back. The four friends Blake, Quinn, Russ, and Maggie went to a strange amusement park. On page 42 it stated " The wave-and-spiral symbol was branded in red across the back of my hand." This means that the amusement park is not normal. If it was they wouldn't put a symbol that was branded on your hand. In chapter 1 it states the background of the characters. Blake and Quinn are brothers. Russ and Maggie are the couple of the group. They were really close, but broke up. On the blurb it states " Blake is the responsible member of the family. He constantly has to keep an eye on the fearless Quinn, whose thrill-seeking sometimes goes too far." This proves Blake and Quinn are opposites. This whole adventure started when Blake played a game and won a bear with an invitation from a girl named Cassandra to another amusement park. Once Blake and Quinn went home , they found out their mom is engaged. After that Blake and Quinn talked about Blake going to college. It stated on page 36 "It was as Quinn weren't really there. His body was, but Quinn himself gone." Blake was explaining that Quinn was in a coma. Then Blake saw the invitation to the other amusement park was gone. Blake realized Quinn went to the amusement park. So Blake ,Russ , and Maggie went to the amusement park. They have to ride seven rides. During the seven rides Blake , Russ ,and Maggie got separated. Blake also found out Cassandra was a spirit of the park. It also stated on page 129 "Cassandra hadn't singled me out tonight, I'd been on her list since the day of the bus accident." This meant Cassandra was after Blake ever since a bus accident. Blake found Quinn and finished all seven rides. But had to ride one more to save his friends. Blake finished the ride, the park burned down, Blake and everyone else made it through.

I love this book. I read it as a kid in school but couldn't remember what it was called because I just remembered a few small details, well after a few google searches I found it and bought it instantly and had it sent to my kindle. The story is great too, I think it is extremely suspenseful. I seriously couldn't put it down the second time reading it.

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