



# Maniac Magee

*Jerry Spinelli*

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**Maniac Magee** Jerry Spinelli

**A Newbery Medal winning modern classic about a racially divided small town and a boy who runs.**

Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee might have lived a normal life if a freak accident hadn't made him an orphan. After living with his unhappy and uptight aunt and uncle for eight years, he decides to run--and not just run away, but run. This is where the myth of Maniac Magee begins, as he changes the lives of a racially divided small town with his amazing and legendary feats.

Includes an introduction from Newbery Award-winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*, Katherine Applegate.

## Maniac Magee Details

Date : Published November 1st 1990 by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780316809061

Author : Jerry Spinelli

Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Childrens, Realistic Fiction

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# From Reader Review Maniac Magee for online ebook

## Sasha says

I HATED IT.

Plot: A little boy named Maniac's parents had a tragic death. He lives with his stupid aunt and uncle who should get a divorce. During a march of the animals or whatever school play, he shouts like Harry in the fifth and runs into the onion smelling night. He lives with animals and eats animal food. He is not very happy. :o He meets an old guy who used to play baseball. He dies. Maniac lives with animals again! etc...

DON'T READ IT.

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## Jeffrey Mohr says

This book is one of my favorite books to use when I work with students. It approaches the concept of “race” and “racism” through the eyes of someone that just wants to make friends and doesn't understand why people would treat others differently just because of their looks. It also treats the main character as a whole person and shows the turmoil he goes through while dealing with the loss of loved ones and the sadness and depression that can result from that. Students need to see books that don't gloss over the dark side of life but show how a character can go through the darkness and come out the other side by making friends and building relationships. It also introduces the idea that a family doesn't just have to be those you are related to but can be those people who want you to come home and are genuinely interested and delighted in having you in their life.

In summary, this book can be used to broach a lot of different subjects with students from racism to dealing with death. I have personally recommended this book to help a boy I worked with deal with his dad's passing and it helped him a lot since he could see how someone went through the same emotions as him and how that character found the light again after. This book is great for upper elementary school and even into middle school when used properly.

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## Liz says

I really didn't enjoy this book. I feel like the story didn't really go anywhere. Spinelli tried to touch on issues of racial prejudice and poverty, and let the existence of those issues carry his story. It didn't work. However because there are touchy issues, it becomes a story that isn't easy to complain about. However I'll be brave enough to say, "I didn't like it!".

As a personal note, I do not find this novel appropriate for children still in gradeschool.

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## serprex says

I stayed up all night reading this one. Finished it the next day, as it was a Friday PD day. 6th grade. Teacher came up with a set of topics & each student was assigned a topic. I was given the topic of the knot, some little plot device in the middle of the book. I was pretty annoyed that a girl in the class was assigned the widescale topic of the character, & demonstrated that she didn't get past the first chapter when she stated that they called him maniac magee because he was yelling like a maniac whereas in the following chapters they state explicitly that he gained the name because people said he was running like a maniac

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### **Colleen Venable says**

Last week I came across a pile of free books on the ground...all copies of MANIAC MAGEE. I took one, knowing it was supposed to be good, but knowing nothing of the plot. It made me cry three times—twice because of the actual story of a homeless boy who brings together the white and black sides of a small town—but I cried the hardest because it felt so poignant given the sad craziness in the country right now. I don't talk politics online, mostly because my own personal believe system is simply "don't be a jerk" and "if you are nice to people it'll spread", but if you know a kid, or really anyone who is sad and confused by what happened in Ferguson/Staten Island this book is a great place to start the conversation. Thank you to whatever stranger left it out for me. My copy will return to the streets, just like Magee himself, and hopefully find the hands of someone else in need of a little hope.

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### **Dawn says**

A really neat book. Excellent! Definitely deserving of its Newbery Award. I think I have to give it a 5! I find myself asking, "Why didn't I ever read this before?" I've certainly heard of it for years. My fourth grade daughter just read it at school and loved it. I really enjoyed the narrative voice and style. It starts out almost like a tall tale, but what Maniac really accomplished is better than a legend. So it's a meaningful story that teaches an important lesson without being preachy. The quick pace of the story matches the speedy main character. He is very appealing. I liked his courage, kindness, humility, joy in life and desire to help others. I was impressed that he was the way he was despite his history. It was amazing how he turned enemies to friends and brought out the best in people just by being himself, just by his example. Some of my favorite parts were when he befriended the old maintenance man at the zoo. I also appreciated the happy ending. I've heard other Spinelli books recommended, too--I'll have to read more.

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### **Nelson B. says**

Jerry spinelli is one of the best woters ever. Maniac Magee is a realistic fictionbook because maniac is invented but it could happen in real life.The perents of Maniac Magee died in a trolley crash.Maniac Magee was an orphan so his aunt and uncle adoped him.Maniac did't like their house because they cant share.One day Maniac ran away because the hated in his aunt and uncle house.When he left he went to Two mills.In TWO MILLS it is white V.S black.I have schema with this book because maniac put a lean on a wall so he can sleep so when I went to Mexico me and uncle went to swim and one day it was going to rain so we were swiming so we did a lean on the wall.I also have schema when Maniac was hungry so he kept sayingcan we get some butter scoch krimpets because one day I did not eat for a daysowe were hungry so keptm telling my dad gom buy kintuky fried chicken.My question is why does nobody know that blak and white are the same?I remember when the old man told maniac to to the white side of town.this happened when maniac

,Hester and Lester were swimming.I recommed this book to teachers so they can teach their kids that blak and white are the same.

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## **Fox says**

Maniac Magee is a book that stuck with me long after I read it in fifth grade for the first time. It stuck with me more than in just a life-long love of Butterscotch Krumpets, but also in the sweetness of the main character and the good that he finds in - well, everyone. Everyone wants to belong in some way, and often all it takes is a listening ear and sincerity to find the way to that person's heart. This book shows that in a way that is accessible to a kid, touching to an adult, and just... soulful. Little is as pure and wonderful as this book.

Maniac Magee is a legend. As a young boy he runs away from home from his fighting aunt and uncle, and finds himself in a series of houses, deer pens, bison pens, and baseball shells. He meets people along the way - white, black, old, and young. He meets people in poverty, people with strange perspectives. He proves himself on the streets, but with honor - never stealing, never cheating. He's a *good* kid, and he's *cool*. The best part is - this never comes off as preachy, never comes off as forced or insincere. This is a compelling book, with all the gasped excitement of gossip on a schoolyard. Jerry Spinelli is a wonderful writer, and he *gets* what makes kids tick.

This book lived up to my expectations, and even surpassed them. I loved every second of it, an am glad to hear it's still on school's reading lists. This is a fun book to read, and I'm sure kids are liking it now as much as my class did when I read it. Who wouldn't love Maniac, Mars Bar, Amanda, and Earl? I don't know how anyone could actively dislike this book.

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## **David says**

He wasn't born with the name Maniac Magee. He came into this world named Jeffrey Lionel Magee, but when his parents died and his life changed, so did his name. Maniac Magee took to the streets.

And Maniac Magee became a legend.

Even today kids talk about how fast he could run; about how he hit an inside-the-park "frog" homer; how no knot, no matter how snarled, would stay that way once he began to untie it. Little girls jumping rope chant:

"Ma-niac, Ma-niac

He's so cool

Ma-niac, Ma-niac

Don't go to school

Runs all night

Runs all right

Ma-niac, Ma-niac

Kissed a bull!"

But the thing Maniac Magee is best known for is what he did for the kids from the East Side and those from the West Side.

He was special all right, and this is his story, and it's a story that is very careful not to let the facts get mixed up with the truth.

Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli, Scholastic Inc. 2002.

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### **Shanu says**

"Maniac loved the colors of the East End, the people colors.

For the life of him, he couldn't figure why these East Enders called themselves black. He kept looking and looking, and the colors he found were gingersnap and light fudge and dark fudge and acorn and butter rum and cinnamon and burnt orange. But never licorice, which, to him, was real black."

Oh, you precious little freak.

I don't really follow the thought that if people stopped talking about color of skin, then racism would disappear- and that's what Spinelli promotes through Maniac's sweet innocent voice.

"Maniac kept trying, but he still couldn't see it, this color business. He didn't figure he was white any more than the East Enders were black."

-2,5 stars because you just gotta love Jeffrey

-Good message, poor execution

-short and easy to read

-funny and weird and sad

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### **Rodolfo A. says**

I love this book because it's telling me the time when black people and white people were separated.

This book is realistic fiction because there are made up characters but, this happened real that black people and white people were separated.

Maniac's parents died from a trolley crash. Maniac didn't have any family to live so, he is an orphan. He met a girl named Amanda. Maniac went to Amanda's house and lived with her. Later he met a boy named Mar Bars. Some people from the west side and east side hated him so, he went to the middle of the line. A person named Grason helped Maniac and took him to his home.

My questions are, Why Mar Bars was bad to Maniac?

Why Maniac went to Amanda's house?

I remember when Martin Luther King was fighting the world to change the law.

I would remember this book to my teacher because it tells us the time when black people and white people were separated.

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

I loved this book when I was in junior high school. You know that scene in *Forrest Gump* where Forrest decides to just run across the country repeatedly? This book is very similar, but the extraordinary runner in this story is a boy who gets sick of his stuffy aunt and uncle.

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### **Patti Richards says**

Wow! Maniac Magee has to be one of the best middle grade novels I have ever read. The storyline is fascinating, but the mixture of reality, conjecture and legend is what kept me turning pages. I loved the hero, and I especially love the family from the "other side of town" that takes him in. The way they pour love into his lost little soul is amazing and very believable. I also really liked the way the author removed him from that home and gave him the ability to love the old man. Had he gone there first, I don't think his ability to give and receive love would have been nearly as developed. The final place he stops for a while is the classic idea of someone trying to do for the two little boys what no one had done for Maniac when he was a young child. The reader senses his frustration and genuine fear for their safety and well-being. The theme of the bitterness of racism prevails throughout the story, but Maniac's ability to be colorblind and love unconditionally no matter where he finds himself is a unique and fresh approach. Jerry Spinelli does more than just tell Maniac's story, he weaves the very fabric of his life until he finally comes home for the last time.

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### **Kelly says**

Re-read in prep for teaching it to my younger group of kids this year. The structure of the book lends itself very well to teaching it in chunks and to illustrate its points clearly, which isn't why it's a classic of early middle school, I assume. Extra star for that- looking forward to discussions that arise from it.

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### **Maddie says**

This book is quite possibly one of the most poorly written works of fiction I have ever had the misfortune to stumble upon. I personally am not a fan of Jerry Spinelli (with the exception of *Stargirl*), and thought I would give him one last shot. Not only was the writing itself unbearable and slow, the topic is overused and cliché. The emotions are few and far between. Throw in there a sad, pathetic kid whose life does not improve whatsoever and some other worthless surface characters and you have the trainwreck that is *Maniac Magee*. Never again shall I waste time with one of his books. It might just be me, but almost all of Jerry Spinelli's protagonists have tragic, horrible lives (which I get, I totally understand the appeal), but the lives of these

characters never turn positive--Loser, Milkweed, even Stargirl! Maniac Magee is no exception. None of his stories really have tangible plots. This book made me feel absolutely nothing--except joy that I have FINALLY found a book horrible enough to douse in kerosene and throw in the fireplace. Isn't the point of reading to feel some sort of happiness?

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