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S&T Publications
# Maniac Magee Teaching Unit

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Maniac Magee
Chapter 4

Name________________________ Date_____________________

Comprehension
1. Who is Brian Denehy?

2. Who punted the ball back to the players?

Dramatic Irony
Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or the reader knows something a character does not know. Example: The reader knows who the criminal is, but the characters do not know.

Chapter four is full of dramatic irony. What is the irony in this chapter?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences
What can you infer about Maniac Magee from his actions in this chapter?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________
Comprehension

1. What happened to Arnold Jones?

2. Where did Maniac Magee put Arnold?

The Finsterwald’s Backyard

Finsterwald’s backyard was a graveyard of tennis balls and baseballs and footballs and Frisbees and model airplanes and one-way boomerangs. That’s why his front steps were the only un-sat-on front steps in town. And why no paperkid would ever deliver there. And why no kid on a snow day would ever shovel that sidewalk, not for a zillion dollars.

Jerry Spinelli’s description of the Finsterwald’s backyard is notable because of the metaphor used to describe it and the witty examples of those who dared not grace the place. Using this passage as a model, write a description of the Finsterwald’s backyard, but describe it as if it were the nicest place in town, as if the Finsterwalds were the nicest people around.

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

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___________________________________________________
**Maniac Magee**

Chapters 6 - 8

**Comprehension**
1. What did all of the Pickwell’s eat around?
2. Where was Maniac Magee running that everyone else only walks?
3. Describe John McNab.
4. What did Maniac Magee do to the frog?
5. How did Maniac Magee get his nickname?

**The Legend of Maniac**

In chapters six through eight, it is easy to see that Maniac is “larger than life”. Maniac is a legend or a hero. Typically, a character who is a hero often begins life as a normal person, but is transformed into someone extraordinary by significant life events, often in response to social injustice, and sometimes in response to natural disasters. In Maniac’s case, he is transformed in response to social injustice. His parents have died, and he is left to fend for himself.

*Complete the following graphic organizer to map out the actions that make Maniac Magee a legendary character.*

![Graphic Organizer]

What makes Maniac a legend?
Maniac Magee
Chapters 11-13

Name________________________ Date_____________________

Comprehension
1. Who is Mars Bar referring to when he says “Hey, fishbelly.”?
2. Who comes to Maniac’s rescue?
3. Where does Amanda invite Maniac?
4. Why does Amanda’s mother carry around a yellow plastic bucket and a sponge?
5. Who are Hester and Lester?
6. What does Maniac tell Mr. Beale in the car?
7. Where is Maniac’s new home?
8. To what is Mrs. Beale referring when she says the miracle on Sycamore Street?
9. Who takes a bath with Hester and Lester since Amanda won’t?
10. What is Maniac Magee allergic to?

Conflict – a struggle or clash between opposing characters or forces (external conflict) or the character’s emotions (internal conflict)

Complete the following chart to analyze the conflicts that are present in the novel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Passage from the book that proves or supports that conflict</th>
<th>Type of conflict (internal or external)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maniac Magee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars Bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Beale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McNab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maniac Magee
Chapters 14-15

Name________________________  Date________________________

Comprehension
1. Who is Bow Wow?
2. Who picks Maniac first for a game of football?
3. What do little kids from all over bring to Maniac?
4. Which encyclopedia does Maniac want from Amanda?

Imagery - language that creates a sensory impression within the reader’s mind
Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to readers’ senses. Writers use sensory
details to help readers imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste. In these two
chapters, Spinelli uses a great deal of imagery. He is describing the things that Maniac loves
about his new life.

Complete the following chart as you analyze the imagery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The things Maniac loved</th>
<th>Words that create imagery</th>
<th>The sense or senses that the imagery appeals to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early morning</td>
<td>Red brick rows of houses, even the windows resting from faces, the cool silent sidewalks, water running</td>
<td>Sight and sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancake batter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fourth of July block party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The colors of the East End</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Predict
Maniac loved almost everything about his new life, but everything did not love him back. Do you
think Maniac’s life is about to make a change for the worse? If so, what do you think will
happen?
Jerry Spinelli effectively describes a hot August day by using hyperbole, or extreme exaggeration. Reread the following passage.

It was a hot day in August.
It was so hot, if you stood still too long in the vacant lot, the sun bouncing off a chunk of broken glass or metal could fry a patch on your hide.
So hot, if you were packing candy, you had soup in your pocket by two o’clock.
So hot, the dogs were tripping on their own tongues.
And so hot, the fire hydrant at Green and Chestnut was gushing like Niagara Falls (courtesy of somebody wrenching off the cap).

You try it! Write a paragraph describing a cold day in January. Like Spinelli, use hyperbole to playfully get your point across.

It was a cold day in January.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Maniac Magee
Writing Opportunity
After Chapter 17

On page 59, Spinelli describes the block party by writing a series of short and one-word sentences. These sentences could be turned into a poem simply by arranging them to look like one.

Block Party
Radios blaring.
People blaring.
Somebody selling lemonade.
Somebody selling Kool-Aid ice cubes on toothpicks.
Bodies.
Skin.
Colors.
Water.
Gleaming.
Buttery.
Warm.
Cool.
Wet.
Screaming.
Happy.

Create your own poem using this same writing style. You can write one describing your classroom, a baseball game, a football game, a water park, a circus, or any other place that you could describe.
1. Who is telling the story of Manic Magee?
   a. Maniac
   b. Amanda
   c. Aunt Dot
   d. An unseen narrator

2. Why does Manic Magee have to go and live with Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan?
   a. His parents have given them temporary custody while they travel out of the country.
   b. He is tired of living under his parents’ strict rules.
   c. His parents are killed in a trolley crash, and he is forced to go live with them.
   d. His parents have moved and he lives with his aunt and uncle so he does not have to change schools.

3. Which of the following is not something that Manic loves about living at the Beale’s home?
   a. the time right after Hester and Lester go to sleep
   b. attending church
   c. walking Bow Wow
   d. sharing the A encyclopedia with Amanda

4. Which of following best describes Maniac?
   a. timid and hopeful
   b. aggressive and mean
   c. trustworthy and daring
   d. sad and lonely

5. What is the author’s main purpose for including the character of Hands Down in this novel?
   a. to offer Maniac someone to talk with
   b. to contrast Maniac with someone who is satisfied with his life
   c. to help create Manic Magee as a legend
   d. to offer Manic Magee a best friend

6. Which of the following does Maniac do that amazes Mrs. Beale?
   a. takes baths
   b. reads lots of books
   c. keeps his room clean
   d. sings

7. What does Manic bunt to score a run on John McNab?
   a. a frog
   b. a curve ball
   c. a candy bar
   d. a pine cone
8. Which of these events happened first?
   a. Maniac moves in with Amanda Beale.
   b. The Cobras try to catch Maniac.
   d. Maniac finds out he is allergic to pizza.

9. Which of the following is the main conflict in the book so far?
   a. Maniac is allergic to pizza.
   b. Amanda’s struggle to protect her books
   c. Maniac Magee’s struggle to find his place in the world
   d. Mars Bar’s need to find a friend

10. The conflict of the story begins when -
   a. Maniac is born.
   b. Maniac meets Mars Bar.
   c. Maniac moves in with the Beales.
   d. Maniac runs out of the gym during the spring musical.

11. Which of the following best describes the Finsterwald’s backyard?
   a. evil and dark
   b. bright and refreshing
   c. messy yet clean
   d. foreboding and infamous

12. From Mars Bar’s thoughts and actions, the reader can infer that he -
   a. thinks that messing with Maniac Magee is too dangerous.
   b. cannot do things well when he is under pressure.
   c. was not in very good physical condition.
   d. is arrogant and very aggressive.

13. What is Maniac Magee’s real name?
   a. Jeffrey
   b. Bob
   c. John
   d. Duke

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- *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis
- *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen
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