

***Maniac Magee***  
***By Jerry Spinelli***  
***A Teaching Unit***



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***Maniac Magee Teaching Unit***  
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# Maniac Magee

## Chapter 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

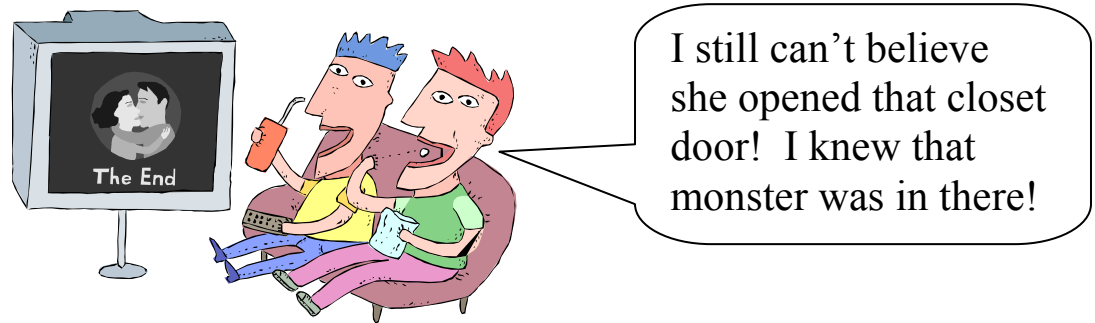
Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 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?

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### Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences

What can you infer about Maniac Magee from his actions in this chapter?

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# Maniac Magee

## Chapter 5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

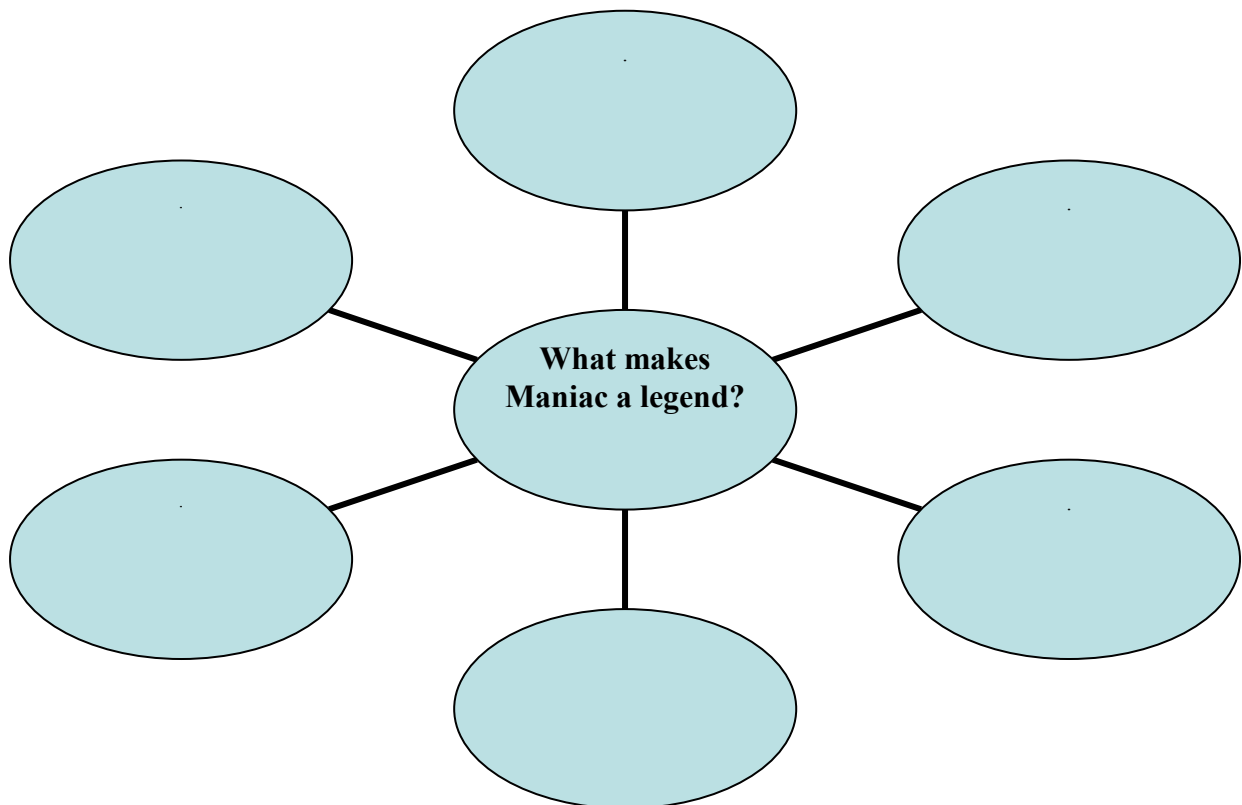
## Comprehension

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.



# 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.

Character	Conflict	Passage from the book that proves or supports that conflict	Type of conflict (internal or external)
Maniac Magee			
Mars Bar			
Amanda Beale			
John McNab			

# 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.

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

## 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?

# Maniac Magee

## Writing Opportunity After Chapter 17

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.

# Maniac Magee

## Test on Part I

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is telling the story of Maniac Magee?
  - a. Maniac
  - b. Amanda
  - c. Aunt Dot
  - d. An unseen narrator
2. Why does Maniac 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 Maniac 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 Maniac Magee as a legend
  - d. to offer Maniac 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 Maniac 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.
  - c. Maniac borrows a book from Amanda.
  - 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
14. Why is it so easy for Maniac to blend in with the Pickwell family at supper?
  - a. They all have the same color hair.
  - b. There are so many children, nobody notices there is an extra one.
  - c. The Pickwells are playing a ballgame, and they are all in uniform.
  - d. He looks just like the Pickwells.
15. Which of the following characters was a member of the Cobras?
  - a. Mars Bar
  - b. Hands Down
  - c. John McNab
  - d. Hester Beale

16. Which of the following sentences from the novel contains imagery?
- a. *He flipped through some pages. "Looks like mine."*
  - b. *Mrs. Beale held up a hand, said, "Hold it," and went on scrubbing.*
  - c. *By the time they got out, it was too late to go to church and almost lunchtime.*
  - d. *Maniac was covered with round, red blotches, all shiny from the bath water.*

*Mars Bar jammed his arms downward, stuck out his chin, sneered. "Am I bad?"* (page 35)

17. In this passage, the author uses the words "jammed" and "sneered" to show Mars Bar's feelings of -
- a. anxiety.
  - b. curiosity.
  - c. caution.
  - d. anger.
18. The use of the third person omniscient point of view allows the author to -
- a. share each character's inner thoughts and feelings.
  - b. concentrate on creating unusual characters.
  - c. describe the story's setting in vivid detail.
  - d. focus in on only what the main character is thinking and feeling.
19. Why does Maniac not want the Beales to call him Maniac?
- a. He hates the name.
  - b. He does not want to lose the name his parents gave to him.
  - c. He is tired of the name.
  - d. He would rather them call him *Miracle Magee*.
20. What are the names of Amanda's brother and sister?
- a. Amanda and John
  - b. Dot and Don
  - c. Dan and Sarah
  - d. Hester and Lester