

# Novel·Ties

## **MANIAC MAGEE JERRY SPINELLI**



## A Study Guide

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**LEARNING LINKS**

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## For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with the book *Maniac Magee*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

## Pre-Reading Activities (cont.)

7. *Maniac Magee* also deals with the subject of racial prejudice and the need for racial understanding and cooperation. Are there any groups of people in your school or community who are objects of prejudice? Is anything being done to address this problem and assure fair treatment for everyone?
8. One of the characters in the novel lends Maniac Magee a book about the Children's Crusade. Maniac is so fascinated by the story that he reads it several times. Read the following short description of the Children's Crusade and do additional research in a history book, an encyclopedia, or the internet.

Toward the end of the eleventh century, a religious fervor spread over Western Europe. Great numbers of Christians began crusades to the Holy Land of Jerusalem ostensibly to free it from the influence of the Moslems. The Fourth Crusade in the year 1212, otherwise known as the Children's Crusade, was a strange enterprise conducted by children. This represented an attempt to compensate for the sins and failures of the adults who had not recovered the Holy Land. Long columns of boys and girls under the leadership of a twelve-year-old boy named Stephen and a sixteen-year-old boy named Nicholas, marched through European countries. What began in a mood of religious fervor and optimism ended abysmally as thousands died en route or were sold by Christian and Arab shipowners into Moslem slavery.

What significance do you think this crusade might have for the novel you are about to read?

9. View a short segment of a film, such as an old Charlie Chaplin movie, to illustrate how comedy and tragedy can co-exist. How can humor improve an audience's ability to appreciate something sad or serious? Have you ever noticed this combination of comedy and tragedy on a television program? As you read *Maniac Magee*, notice the many times when you are ready to laugh out loud and cry at the same time.

**CHAPTERS 1 - 3**

**Vocabulary:** Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1. lunging  | a. ragged; rough  |
| 2. trolleys | b. social gathering featuring musical entertainment             |
| 3. musicale | c. moving forward suddenly                                      |
| 4. accurate | d. electrical streetcars that get current from an overhead wire |
| 5. scraggly | e. correct  |

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1. In the early part of the century, you would find \_\_\_\_\_ in most large cities, where they were the most important form of mass transportation.
2. You must be absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ when you answer questions on the math exam, or you will not get any credit.
3. After walking for an hour in a driving rainstorm, the children appeared tired and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. As we watched the airplane \_\_\_\_\_ toward the ground, we knew many lives would be lost.
5. The violin instructor hosted a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ so the parents could see what their children had learned.

**Questions:**

1. How did Maniac become an orphan?
2. Why did life become unbearable for Maniac with Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan?
3. Why did Maniac make a spectacle of himself on the night of the concert? Why did the author refer to this occasion as “the birth scream of a legend”?
4. According to the legend, why was Maniac’s eleventh year referred to as “The Lost Year”?
5. Why did Maniac think he had something in common with Amanda when he first saw her on the street? What was his mistake?
6. Why was Amanda disturbed by Maniac’s presence in the East End of Two Mills?