

Jerry Spinelli's
Maniac Magee:
A Discussion Guide

By David Bruce

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Jim Phillips

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**Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*:
A Discussion Guide**

by David Bruce

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Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I enjoy reading Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*, and I believe that it is an excellent book for children (and for adults such as myself) to read.

This book contains many questions about Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee* and their answers. I hope that teachers of children will find it useful as a guide for discussions. It can also be used for short writing assignments. Students can answer selected questions from this little guide orally or in one or more paragraphs.

I hope to encourage teachers to teach Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*, and I hope to lessen the time needed for teachers to prepare to teach this book.

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A Few Notes

Maniac Magee won the prestigious Newbery Medal in 1991.

The character Maniac Magee is mentioned briefly in Jerry Spinelli *Dump Days*, which he published in 1988: “Maniac Magee, who’s an orphan sort of kid, who sleeps at the bandshell” (36).

Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*

Spinelli, Jerry. *Maniac Magee*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1990.

The kid's a maniac.

The kid rescued a little boy whom older kids had dropped into old man Finsterwald's backyard. Venturing onto Finsterwald's property can turn "a bright, happy, normal child" into a "poor, raggedy, nicotine-stained wretch" (16).

The kid intercepted a pass from "Hands" Down, ran it for a touchdown without a varsity player laying a hand on him, then punted the football so that it made a perfect spiral.

The kid hit homer after homer off Giant John McNab—John was 5-feet-8, weighed over 170 pounds, and no one believed he was only 12 years old even after he showed them his birth certificate—just after Giant John had struck out 16 players to set a new Little League record in Two Mills, Pennsylvania.

Even when Giant John tried to fool the kid by pitching a "frogball"—a real frog instead of a baseball—the kid bunted the frog for an inside-the-park home run. (No frogs were harmed during the writing of *Maniac Magee*; even after being bunted, this frog hops all over the infield.)

The kid, of course, is Jeffrey Lionel Magee, who is given the nickname "Maniac" because of his incredible athletic ability and fearlessness.

In this novel, the 1991 Newbery Medal-winning *Maniac Magee*, the title character leaves behind a legacy that is more important than incredible athletic events such as scoring a reputed 49 touchdowns—294 points!—in a vacant-lot football game. Maniac ends up changing a town where blacks live in the East End and whites live in the West End and seldom one race enters the other race's territory unless on official business into a town where no one sees anything unusual in two girls—one girl living in the East End and one girl living in the West End—holding the ends of the same jump rope.

Even before getting his nickname, Maniac is a hater of segregation, even self-imposed segregation. After his parents are killed in a trolley accident because of a drunken conductor, he goes to live with his Aunt Dot and his Uncle Dan, a married couple who hate each other but would never get a divorce because they are Catholic. They hate each other so much that they have two of everything—two bathrooms, two refrigerators, two toasters—so they don't have to share anything, even meals. (Young Maniac eats with Aunt Dot one day, then with Uncle Dan the next day.) Finally, he can stand it no longer, and during a school musicale when he is 11 years old, he starts screaming, "Talk! Talk, will ya!" Then he runs away, ending up at Two Mills a year later. (It should have taken him a week or so to run to Two Mills, and since no one

knows where Maniac was the past year, this is known as “The Lost Year.”)

While in Two Mills, Maniac lives at separate times with two families—one black, one white—and with a lonely man named Grayson whom he befriends. Grayson also befriends Maniac.

Anyone looking at Maniac would see a dirty, runaway kid who smells like a buffalo—Maniac is able to live by staying at the zoo, sleeping in the bison pen and eating what the deer and bison eat: carrots, apples, and day-old hamburger buns. Grayson is able to look beneath Maniac’s exterior and see a lonely kid who desperately wants a real home, a real family, and a real address.

Anyone looking at Grayson would see an old man who lives at the Y and works at the park. They would not see that he had once been a young man who devoted his life to baseball, despite not making it out of the Minor Leagues. They would not see that he had once struck out Willie Mays with three straight curve balls in Mr. Mays’ last at-bat in the Minor Leagues before playing Major-League baseball. They would not see a man who had perfected the Stopball—a pitch that seemed to stop before reaching the batter and that not even Maniac could hit out of the infield—after retiring from Minor-League baseball.

Just as he is able to see beneath black skin or white skin, Maniac is able to see beneath this old-man exterior and learn that Grayson has a kind heart and an illiterate mind—something that Maniac is able to ameliorate by teaching Grayson to read such books as *The Little Engine That Could*.

Maniac is also able to teach Grayson about black people. Grayson's mind is as ignorant about black people as it is about reading. Never having been in a black family's home, he is surprised to learn that blacks eat potatoes and that their toothbrushes are like the toothbrushes that white people use. Maniac has to tell him, "Grayson, they're just regular people, like us."

Grayson is willing to be educated, unlike the white McNab family, who build a pillbox in the living room of their crumbling home to prepare for what they feel will be the coming riots in which black people assault white people. The youngest McNab children, Piper and Russell, play the game "Rebels" in the pillbox. In their game, the whites inside the pillbox use submachine guns to repel the invading black hordes.

Despite the industrial-strength theme of the town's tense relations between blacks and whites, *Maniac Magee* is a fun read with lots of humor. The humor lies in part in other characters such as Mars Bar, a black boy who sticks a Mars Bar candy bar in his mouth like a stogie and who is famous just

like Maniac. In Mars Bar's case, he is reputed to carry 100 Mars Bars with him at all times and he is able to back up traffic by standing in the middle of the street and letting the evil in his pre-teen eyes bring all vehicles to a complete stop.

Of course, *Maniac Magee* is highly recommended summer (as well as fall, winter, and spring) reading. Also highly recommended is Mr. Spinelli's *Stargirl*, a novel about a teenage girl (based on Mr. Spinelli's wife, Eileen, also an author) who is anything but a conformist, and *Wringer*, a 1998 Newbery Honor book.

Introduction to Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*

What do people say about Maniac Magee?

From page 1:

They say he was born in a dump.

They say his stomach was a cereal box.

They say his heart was a sofa spring.

They say he kept an 8-inch cockroach on a leash.

They say rats stood guard over him while he slept.

They say if you knew he was coming and you sprinkled salt on the ground and he ran over the salt soon he would be as slow as everyone else.

From page 2:

They say he ran all night.

They say he doesn't go to school.

They say he kissed a bull.

What is Maniac Magee's legacy?

We can see the legacy in two girls holding the ends of a jump rope. One girl sometimes is from the West side of Hector, while the other sometimes is from the East side of Hector.

The East side is mainly black; the West side is mainly white.

We will see later that Hector is segregated. One side is for whites; the other side is for blacks. Maniac Magee's legacy is that he broke down at least some of the barriers between the races.

How is the story of Maniac Magee like folklore?

Some of the events that are told about Maniac Magee's life are improbable, like folklore. Also, like folklore, some of the events told about Maniac Magee's life are wrong. For example, we read that it wasn't really a bull that Maniac Magee kissed.

Jerry Spinelli tells us this: "But that's okay, because the history of a kid is one part fact, two parts legend, and three parts snowball" (2).

Part 1

Part 1: Section 1

What is Maniac Magee's early history?

Maniac Magee was not born in a dump. He was born in an ordinary house.

His real name is Jeffrey Lionel Magee.

How did Maniac Magee's parents die? (This will be important later.)

He became an orphan when the P & W high-speed trolley crashed because of a drunken conductor who was speeding. At 60 miles per hour, the trolley hit the high trestle over the Schuylkill River. The trolley jumped the track and landed in the river.

This shows that evil exists in the world, and that people (such as the conductor) can do the wrong thing.

Why does Maniac Magee start running?

After his parents died, Maniac Magee went to live with his Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan. They are married, they hate each other, they are Catholic, and they will not get a divorce.

Here we have an example of a kind of hypocrisy. This cannot be regarded as a good marriage, yet they stay married.

Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan have two of everything so that they can stay separated in their own house. Maniac alternates days of eating with his aunt, then eating with his uncle.

This goes on for 8 years. (So Maniac is 11 years old, and after the “lost year” he is 12 years old.)

At the spring musicale at the school, Jeffrey (Maniac) is in the chorus. Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan are at opposite sides of the auditorium. Finally, Jeffrey can’t stand it any longer. He starts screaming, “Talk! Talk, will ya!” (7). At first, people think this scream is related to the program—the children are singing “Talk to the Animals.” Soon, they realize that Jeffrey’s screaming is not related to the program.

Jeffrey runs from the auditorium, and he keeps running. He never returns to the house with two toasters and two of everything else, and he never returns to the school.

Of course, later Maniac Magee will want blacks and whites to talk to each other.

Part 1, Section 2

What is “The Lost Year”?

A year later, Jeffrey is seen again—at Two Mills, which is 200 miles from where he started out, in Hollidaysburg (in western Pennsylvania).

No one knows where Jeffrey has been for the past year. (He could have traveled the distance in a week or so.)

How and why does Maniac Magee end up in Two Mills?

He apparently runs to Two Mills.

Why Two Mills? For one thing, Jeffrey was born across the river, in Bridgeport.

People are unsure why he chose to stay at Two Mills.

As part of the folklore, lots of people claim that they saw Jeffrey (Maniac) that first day, but only a few people actually saw him.

What is unusual about Maniac Magee?

One thing that is unusual about Maniac Magee is that he would say “Hi” to strangers. That is something that did not happen in Two Mills.

Part 1, Section 3

Write a short analysis of the town of Two Mills. (Often, names in fiction are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli named the town Two Mills?)

Two Mills is set in Pennsylvania, which used to have a lot of steel mills.

Two Mills is a racist town. The blacks live in one section of town, and the whites live in another section of town.

There are two races in the novels, thus we have the word “Two” in the name of the town.

Write a short character analysis of Amanda Beale. (Often, the names of characters are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli have chosen the name of Amanda Beale for this character?)

The name “Beale” reminds me of Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee. Beale Street is sometimes called the Home of the Blues.

“Amanda” is a perfectly ordinary name.

Amanda Beale is a reader. She has a library.

Amanda Beale is a problem solver. She has siblings who will draw on books and a dog that will chew on books, so to protect her books she carries them with her to school.

Amanda Beale owns many books, including Volume A of an encyclopedia.

Amanda Beale is suspicious of the white boy—Jeffrey—in front of her, but she is also friendly.

Amanda Beale is never late to school—except today.

How do Maniac Magee and Amanda Beale interact?

They meet, Jeffrey says “hi,” and Amanda says “hi” back to him.

Jeffrey is pretty insistent about borrowing a book, and Amanda finally lends a book to him.

Part 1, Section 4

Describe the first of the other three appearances that Maniac Magee puts in at Two Mills his first day in town (the football field).

We find out that Jeffrey has pretty impressive athletic skills. James “Hands” Down is an excellent football receiver, but Jeffrey intercepts the football and runs down the field through the varsity players with it—without anybody touching him.

Jeffrey then punts the football so that it spirals perfectly.

Part 1, Section 5

Describe the second of the other three appearances that Maniac Magee puts in at Two Mills his first day in town (Finsterwald's).

Finsterwald is an old man who is apparently mean to kids. We never see him, but his reputation is ferocious. Kids stay out of his backyard, kids don't offer to shovel his snow, and kids stay away from his front steps.

We read:

Suffice it to say that occasionally, even today, if some poor, raggedy, nicotine-stained wretch is seen shuffling through town, word will spread that this once was a bright, happy, normal child who had the misfortune of blundering onto Finsterwald's property. (16)

High school kids, of course, like to pick up little kids and drop them over the fence into Finsterwald's back yard. This scares the little kids.

We see this happen when the high school kids do this to a boy whose name is not known—this is reminiscent of folklore—but who is called Arnold Jones.

A boy wearing “flap-soled sneakers” (18) and with a book in one hand rescues Arnold Jones, then “cool times ten” (19) sits down on Finsterwald's front steps to read his book.

Part 1, Section 6

Describe the third of the other three appearances that Maniac Magee puts in at Two Mills his first day in town (the Pickwells).

The Pickwells have a big family dinner, and Maniac Magee crashes the dinner.

Because the family is so big, and because guests usually attend the dinner, no one questions who Maniac is when he eats dinner with the family.

Part 1, Section 6

Write a short character analysis of the Pickwell family.

The Pickwell family is good. They have many guests for dinner.

The Pickwells are helping a taxi driver who is down on his luck. The Pickwells always are helping somebody.

Mrs. Valerie Pickwell has a whistle that everybody hears. Her children always make it home for dinner.

The Pickwells always eat at 5 p.m. This may be a sign of a lower-class family. Higher-class families eat later.

The Pickwells always eat spaghetti for the evening meal every third day. They may be a sign of a lower-class family. Higher-class families may make more money and not have to rely so much on pasta, which can be cheap.

The Pickwell family has 10 children. The Pickwells may be Catholic, and may be Italian.

Because the Pickwell family is so big (and usually has guests), everyone eats around a ping-pong table.

The Pickwell family is huge. Eating dinner (the evening meal) are these people:

- Mr. and Mrs. Pickwell
- their 10 children
- baby Didi
- Grandmother and Grandfather Pickwell
- Great-grandfather Pickwell
- a down-and-out taxi driver
- Maniac (Jeffrey) Magee

I count 18 people at the dinner table that night.

By the way, when Maniac Magee leaves, he runs on the rails of the railroad tracks.

Often, the names of characters are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli have chosen the name of Pickwell for this family?

Of course, Pickwell is a much better name than Pickbadly.

The Pickwells have picked well when they go against racism. They have picked well when they choose to help other people.

The Pickwells have picked well when they pick good over evil.

Part 1, Section 7

Write a short character analysis of John McNab based on what you learn in Part 1, Section 7.

John McNab plays Little League baseball. He is an athlete. He is big for his age, and he is a pitcher.

He is 12 years old, but people don't believe it even when he shows them his birth certificate. He is 5-foot-8 and weighs over 170 pounds.

He is arrogant, and he has set a Two Mills Little League record for strikeouts: 16 in one game.

He continues to strike out kids even after the game is over.

He is not well liked. When Maniac Magee starts hitting homers off him, the other kids start cheering.

What athletic feats does Maniac Magee perform in Part 1, Section 7?

- 1) Maniac Magee hits homer after homer off John McNab.
- 2) Maniac Magee bunts a frogball, and he scores a homer off the bunt.

Were any frogs killed in the making of this book?

Actually, no.

John McNab is clever (in a way) and throws a frog instead of a baseball to Maniac Magee. However, Maniac bunts the frog instead of smashing it. The frog is not hurt because it hops all over the place.

If you feel being creative, invent a fictional athletic feat that an exceptional athlete like Maniac Magee could perform.

Students' answers will vary.

Presumably, they will take into account the season (summer) and the resources available to Maniac. Maniac will not set any records on the golf course, most likely.

He could perhaps score a lot of points in a playground basketball game.

He could imitate Jack Mathews' Hanger Stout. (See Jack Mathews' novel *Hanger Stout, Awake*.) Hanger's talent lies in outhanging (by his arms, from something such as a tree limb) anyone else.

Part 1, Section 8

How does Jeffrey Magee acquire the nickname of Maniac?

Everybody is talking about Jeffrey Magee, and someone says, “Kid’s gotta be a maniac” (28). Someone else agrees with that person, and soon everyone knows who Maniac Magee is.

Nicknames are never given to oneself; people always give them to other people.

How does Maniac Magee live?

He lives with the deer in the Elmwood Park Zoo. He eats what the deer eat, basically: carrots, apples, day-old hamburger buns.

If you feel doing research, answer this question: What was the Children’s Crusade? Why might Jerry Spinelli have chosen to have Maniac Magee read a book about this crusade?

The book that Maniac Magee borrowed from Amanda Beale was about the Children’s Crusade.

Perhaps Maniac Magee has his own children’s crusade. However, in his case he is leading children out of a kind of slavery instead of into slavery.

The leaders of the Children’s Crusade supposedly had visions of Jesus. If Maniac Magee should have a vision inspired by Jesus, it would be of a world with no racial prejudice.

In 1212 C.E., a Children’s Crusade occurred in history, but it is difficult to separate fact from fiction in determining what really happened.. Supposedly, a boy had a vision, children

marched into South Italy, the children tried to free the Holy Land from followers of Islam, and the children were sold into slavery. From this, we learn that not all crusades are successful.

Part 1, Section 9

Write a short character analysis of John McNab based on what you learn in Part 1, Section 9. (Often, the names of characters are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli have chosen the name of John McNab for this character?)

John McNab is the leader of a gang called the Cobras. He tells them what to do.

John McNab wants revenge on whoever goes against him. The runt—Maniac Magee—showed him up by hitting home runs off of him, so he wants revenge on him.

John McNab wants his gang and himself to beat up Maniac Magee.

“Nab” can be a negative word. It is associated with crime. It can mean to arrest someone. It can also mean to steal something.

Who are the Cobras?

The Cobras are members of the gang that John McNab leads. They are out to beat up Maniac Magee because John McNab tells them to do that.

What is the difference between the East End and the West End?

Hector Street is the dividing line between the East End and the West End.

A memory aid:

West End = white

East End = Ethiopian or black

Adults would go into the section of town that did not correspond with their race in the daytime but never at night.

Kids stayed out of the section of town that did not correspond with their race unless they had to be there for a good reason such as school or a sports event.

The Cobras are sure that Maniac Magee will be beaten up because he is in the East End instead of the West End.

Note that a mean bunch of white kids like the Cobras are afraid to go into the East End.

Part 1, Section 10

Write a short character analysis of Mars Bar based on what you learn in Part 1, Section 10. (Often, the names of characters are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli have chosen the name of Mars Bar for this character?)

Mars Bar is black, and he is bad in the sense of being tough.

He does not want the white Maniac Magee in his neighborhood.

Mars Bar is belligerent; he tries to pick a fight with Maniac Magee.

Mars Bar can stare other people down, including all the 11-year-olds in the East End.

Maniac Magee does not understand racism at all. He takes a bite of Mars Bar's candy bar when Mars Bar offers it to him, and he bites off a chunk from the part where Mars Bar has already bitten.

Mars is the name of the Roman god of war (the word "martial" comes from his name); the Greek name for this god is Ares.

Mars is a tough name, so Mars Bar has taken it for his own.

Of course, Mars Bar likes to eat Mars Bras.

Write a short character analysis of the lady with the broom.

The lady with the broom stops a fight from breaking out between Mars Bar and Maniac Magee.

The lady with the broom can outstare Mars Bar.

The lady with the broom is looking out for Maniac Magee but wants him to stay out of the neighborhood—probably so he can avoid fights.

Apparently, Maniac Magee was going to thank her but she had already left.

Discuss the relationship of Maniac Magee and Mars Bar in Part 1, Section 10.

The relationship is that between a hostile black boy and a non-racist white boy.

If Maniac Magee had had a normal upbringing, he may have been racist.

In this culture, segregation exists between the races.

Mars Bar is partly responsible for tearing the page from Amanda Beale's book. He has hold of it and is going to keep it, but Maniac grabs the book away from Mars Bar and a page is torn out of the book.

Part 1, Section 11

Why is Maniac Magee called “fishbelly”?

Maniac Magee is white.

A fishbelly is also white.

Discuss the relationship of Maniac Magee and Mars Bar in Part 1, Section 11.

Once again, the relationship is tense. Mars Bar and a group of his friends find Maniac—this time without a lady with a broom to help him.

Mars Bar backs up Maniac and bullies him.

Once again, Mars Bar wants the book. Fortunately, Amanda Beale comes on the scene, and she is tougher than Mars Bar.

Discuss the relationship of Maniac Magee and Amanda Beale in Part 1, Section 11.

Amanda Beale knows that Maniac Magee is not responsible (in any meaningful way) for tearing the page of the book. She blames Mars Bar. In the end, she invites Maniac Magee to her home, so they are becoming friends.

Part 1, Section 12

How does Maniac Magee get along with the Beale family in Part 1, Section 12?

Maniac Magee gets along fine with the Beale family.

Clearly, Maniac Magee is not racist. He would like to get along with everybody.

He stays a long time. He eats with the family. He helps Amanda mend the torn page of the book. He reads to the two youngest children. He watches TV with the family. He stays until the Beale family thinks that he ought to return to his own home—of course, Maniac Magee does not have a home, but the Beale family does not know that.

How does Maniac Magee come to live with the Beale family?

When it time for Maniac Magee to return home (although he does not have a home), he gets in the car with Mr. Beale. They ride a couple of blocks, then Maniac says that this is his house. Mr. Beale knows that it is not his house, because they are still in the East End, where only blacks live.

When Mr. Beale discovers that Maniac has been living at the zoo with the deer, he makes a U-turn in his car and takes Maniac back to his house.

Mrs. Beale listens for 10 seconds to Mr. Beale's explanation of why he returned with Maniac, then invites Maniac to stay with them.

Maniac finally has a home, and he memorizes the number of the house because he finally has a real address where he lives.

Write short character analyses of the members of the Beale family other than Amanda.

This family is the black equivalent of the Pickwell family, which is white.

Both families have good people living in them. Both families look out for other people. Both families have a house to live in and food.

Mrs. Beale

Mrs. Beale is friendly. She listens to her husband's explanation of why he brought Maniac back and within 10 seconds tells Maniac, "You're staying here" (44).

Hester and Lester

These are young, trusting children. They sit next to Maniac at dinnertime, then bring a book—*Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*—to Maniac to read to them.

Mr. Beale

As soon as Mr. Beale finds out that Maniac is homeless, he brings him back to his house to stay.

He has a "Saturday shift at the tire factory" (42).

Part 1, Section 13

How does Maniac Magee fit in with the Beale family in Part 1, Section 13?

“The way Maniac fit in, you would have thought he was born there” (45).

Amanda willingly gives up her room to Maniac because she prefers to sleep with Hester and Lester.

Maniac is willing to take baths with Hester and Lester, now that Amanda is no longer willing to—when she entered 4th grade, she decided she was too old to tub it with the little kids.

Maniac volunteers to do the dishes.

Maniac unties Hester’s and Lester’s sneaker knots.

Maniac reads to Hester and Lester.

Hester and Lester stop crayoning everything in sight.

Mrs. Beale has time to do nothing occasionally.

Maniac keeps his room clean—and prefers to sleep on the floor, not on the bed.

Maniac does chores such as taking out the trash and mowing the lawn.

To what is Maniac Magee allergic?

Maniac Magee is allergic to pizza.

He had never eaten pizza before living with the Beale family, so nobody knew that he was allergic to pizza.

Part 1, Section 14

How does Maniac Magee get along in the East End?

We read, “Maniac loved his new life” (50).

Maniac certainly gets along with his new family, and he gets along with most people in the East End.

He shouts out “Hallelujah! Amen!” (51) in the black church, and he enjoys the July 4th block party in the East End.

He does not understand the colors black and white. Black people have a variety of colors, and mostly they are not the liquorice color that he associates with the color black. As for white, he sees a number of shades in his skin, none of them white. The only white that he sees in people is in the whites of their eyes, and that color is the same for both white and black people.

How does Maniac Magee get along with “Hands” Down?

“Hands” Down accepts Maniac Magee. He realizes that Maniac is a superior athlete, although the other kids regard Maniac as a runt—until he proves himself.

In another remarkable athletic endeavor, Maniac scores a reputed 49 TDs. That’s 294 points in one game. “Hands” Down is the passer, and Maniac is the receiver.

At this point (and after a stickball game), the kids start asking, “You that Maniac?” (53). And so at home Jeffrey is Jeffrey, but outside home he is known as Maniac.

Part 1, Section 15

How does Maniac Magee learn to trash talk?

Maniac learns how to trash talk from “Hands” Down. Maniac has not done a lot of boasting, but he does learn to trash talk.

The trash talk we read in this novel is not dirty, although the words Maniac says to Mrs. Beale may be. The trash talk is “Do it, man! Smoke them suckas! Poke ’em! Joke ’em! You bad-dudin’ it! You the baddest! Five me, jude!” (55).

What happens when Maniac Magee trash talks at home? What do we learn about Mrs. Beale?

Mrs. Beale is so shocked that she slaps Maniac.

Both of them are sorry immediately. Her lip starts quivering, but Maniac hugs her and tells her “I love you” (56).

What is special about the “A” volume of the encyclopedia?

Amanda won’t let Maniac read the “A” volume until she has read it, but Maniac reads it at night when Amanda is asleep.

There is only one volume—the “A.” Amanda or her parents bought the volume at the supermarket, but that offer is over with, so there will be no more volumes of the encyclopedia.

Another thing that Maniac does in addition to the reading is run. He is a very early riser and gets a lot done before the Beales wake up.

Bow Wow, the Beales’ dog, runs with Maniac.

Part 1, Section 16

In what way is Maniac Magee blind?

Maniac Magee is blind to the fact that some black people don't like him.

Mars Bar still doesn't like him, and Mars Bar occasionally tries to trip him as he (Maniac) runs around the bases after hitting a home run. In football, Mars Bar will sometimes try to tackle him even when Maniac doesn't have the football.

There is some resentment because Maniac is so good at sports that he shows up older, bigger kids—but Maniac doesn't see the resentment.

Part 1, Section 17

How does Maniac Magee stop being blind?

On a hot August day, one of the fire hydrants is opened up so that the kids can cool down. Maniac is playing with the other kids when an elderly black man tells Maniac to go back where he came from. The elderly black man thinks that blacks ought to stay on the East End and that whites ought to stay on the West End.

The elderly black man is calling him “Whitey” (60). The elderly black man tells Maniac:

You go on home now, son. Back to your own kind. I seen ya at the block party. Now you get goin’. (61)

Never enough, is it, Whitey? Just want more and more. Won’t even leave us our little water in the street. Come on down to see Bojangles. Come on to the zoo. The monkey house. (61)

Later, in chalk the word “FISHBELLY” is scrawled on the Beale home.

What do we learn about the Beale family in Part 1, Section 17?

The Beale family back up Maniac Magee. Hester and Lester both criticize the elderly black man: “You leave him alone, Old Ragpicker! You shut up!” (61).

Later, when in chalk the word “FISHBELLY” is scrawled on the Beale home, the Beales don’t want Maniac to see the word. (Maniac is out running at night, as usual.) Mrs. Beale is busy washing the word off the house. Hester and Lester want Maniac to run with them—away from the house. Amanda

wants Maniac to go to the store with her—but Maniac knows that the stores aren't open yet.

Maniac knows that something is wrong, so he goes home—and he sees “ISHBELLY” written on the house. (Mrs. Beale has had time to wash away only the first letter.)

Part 1, Section 18

Why is Maniac Magee hurt?

Maniac Magee, of course, is hurt by the racism or at least by the lack of understanding between the races.

Later, he will be worried about the Beale family, and he will not want them to be hurt by associating with him.

More than one black does not like Maniac Magee. The nutty old coot was not the one who write FISHBELLY on the house.

Amanda downplays the writing on the wall. She points out that it was done with chalk, not with paint.

Would Maniac Magee be able to survive on his own? How did he live before he began staying with the Beale family?

He can go to the bathroom in the bushes or at McDonald's.

He can stay at the deer pen at the zoo, the way he used to.

He could survive. (This is not totally realistic, but some homeless kids do survive—and some end up dead.)

Part 1, Section 19

What is Cobble’s Knot? What is its history?

Cobble’s Knot is a very intricate knot.

Perhaps the idea for Cobble’s Knot came from the Gordian Knot, an intricate knot that Alexander the Great cut in half with his sword. The story is that whoever could untie the Gordian Knot would conquer the world. Alexander came up with his own way of untying the knot, and he did conquer the world that was known to the Macedonians at the time. (We may say that Alexander the Great cheated, but Maniac Magee does not cheat.)

Mr. Cobble runs Cobble’s Grocery Store. An intricate knot is hanging outside. It is crusted over from the weather, and no one can find its ends. He ran and still runs a contest and offered a prize to anyone who could untie the knot. No one—including a kid who became a magician and a kid who became a pickpocket—has ever been able to do that even after years has passed. Eventually, Cobble’s Grocery Store starts to sell pizza, not groceries. The prize for untying the knot now is “one large pizza per week for a whole year” (69).

What is Amanda’s plan for making Maniac Magee well liked?

Amanda thinks that Maniac Magee will be a celebrity if he unties the knot and no one will want him to move away; instead, everyone will accept him.

Amanda has good reason for thinking that Maniac can untie the knot. He has been untying the knots in Hester’s and Lester’s sneaker shoestrings, and his fame has spread so much that neighborhood kids keep bringing knots (including knots in yo-yo strings) for Maniac Magee to untie.

Part 1, Section 20

What role do butterscotch Krimpets play in Part 1, Section 20?

This is a snack that Maniac Magee is offered and accepts. It takes him pretty much all day to untie the knot, and during that time Maniac drinks an orange soda and eats the butterscotch Krimpets.

How does Maniac Magee fare with Cobble's Knot? To what does he owe his success or failure?

Maniac unties the knot, although it takes hours and hours.

Maniac is a smart kid. After loosening up the knot, he takes a 15-minute nap to clear his head and get ready for the hard part.

Maniac does attract a large crowd by the time he finishes untying the knot. At first, only Amanda sticks around. The Heck's Angels, a group of 4- and 5-year-old, tricycle-riding kids get bored after 10 minutes and ride off to terrorize somebody.

However, at the end Cobble's is selling lots and lots of pizza and sandwiches and so on, and a big cheer is given to Maniac when he finishes untying the knot.

Part 1, Section 21

How long is the string that made up Cobble's Knot?

Everyone finds out how long the string is by tying down one end then walking to see how long the string is. It turns out to be 4 and 1/2 blocks long.

Why does Maniac Magee walk out of town?

Confetti fills the air when Maniac unties the knot. This sounds like a good thing, but the confetti turns out to have been made from pages of Amanda's Volume A of the encyclopedia.

Maniac does not want Amanda and the other Beales to suffer by being associated with him, so he walks—not runs—out of town.

He goes to the dividing line between the East End and the West End and walks down the middle of the street out of town. On one side, McNab and the Cobras want Maniac to join them—they have heard about the pizza prize. On the other side, Mars Bar and others want Maniac to join them.

This is an excellent image of the racial divide in Two Mills.

Part 1 Question

How does Part 1 develop the book's main theme of racial prejudice?

Pretty clearly, there is a racial divide in Two Mills, as is seen in the image of Maniac walking out of town with whites on one side of him and blacks on the other side of him.

Pretty clearly, there is prejudice on both sides. Both whites and blacks show it.

Part 2

Part 2, Section 22

What has happened to Maniac Magee?

Maniac Magee has been living on his own.

He now lives with the buffalo because the deer pen and the buffalo pen have been changed around. (It was dark, and Maniac went to what he thought was the deer pen.) Maniac's diet still includes carrots, so probably the buffalo eat much the same diet as the deer.

Maniac is still suffering from prejudice as well as from hunger. He is scratched because he was hiding in some bushes with thorns from some kids in some other town (he says).

He is dirty, and he smells like a buffalo.

Write a short character analysis of Grayson based on what you learn in Part 2, Section 22. (Often, the names of characters are important. Why might have Jerry Spinelli have chosen the name of Grayson for this character?)

“Grayson” is an interesting name. It has two parts: “Gray” and “son.” One part indicates age, while the other indicates youth. Grayson is an old man, but he is going to experience a rebirth with Maniac Magee.

Grayson is kind but lonely. We know that he is kind because he takes care of Maniac. He feeds Maniac, and he will give him a place to stay. We can guess that he is lonely because he takes Maniac to the band shell rather than to a hospital or a doctor, which we can guess is where he should take Maniac.

Grayson apparently has some money. He is able to buy Maniac some butterscotch Krimpets.

Grayson is aware of the segregation in Two Mills. When Maniac tells Grayson where he used to live, Grayson scraps some of the dirt off Maniac's arm—so he can see if Maniac is white under the dirt, he says.

Part 2, Section 23

Write a short character analysis of Grayson based on what you learn in Part 2, Section 23.

We get further evidence that Grayson is kind. He takes Maniac home. Grayson has a room at the Y, but he takes Maniac to the locker room so that Maniac can get a shower. Maniac stays in the shower for an hour. When he gets out, he has to wear Grayson's clothes, which are much too large for him. Grayson then buys Maniac new clothes.

We find out that Grayson has a sense of humor. He says:

I called the U.S. Army in to haul them buffalo rags away. [...] They come in with gas masks on, and they used tongs to pick 'em up and put 'em in a steel box, and they took the box away to bury it at the bottom of the first mine shaft they come to. (84-85)

Why doesn't Maniac Magee go to school?

Maniac simply refuses to go to school. Of course, being a kid he is supposed to go to school. However, he tells Grayson that if Grayson tries to make him go to school that he will simply "start running" (86).

This makes Grayson happy. Of course, Grayson is hoping that he will be able to take care of Maniac. Grayson is hoping that because he is lonely.

Part 2, Section 24

Describe Grayson's knowledge of black people.

Grayson's knowledge of black people is seriously lacking. He asks Maniac if black people eat potatoes just like white people do. Maniac has to tell Grayson that black people eat all the same food that white people do.

Grayson asks if the toothbrushes black people use are the same as the toothbrushes white people use. Maniac, of course, says that they are, and he says: "Grayson, they're just regular people, like us" (88). This surprises Grayson.

Why doesn't Grayson know more about black people?

Grayson doesn't know more about black people because of a lack of experience. Apparently, he has never had a black person as a friend.

He says, "I was never in a house of theirs" (88).

What else do we learn about Grayson in Part 2, Section 24?

We learn what he wanted to be when he was a kid. He wanted to be a "baseball player" (90).

We learn that he likes butterscotch Krimpets. (He and Maniac eat 30 of them.) He tells Maniac that he was eating them with him to be friendly, but Maniac calls him a liar and he laughs.

Grayson is generous. Maniac wants dinner (the evening meal). Grayson was joking about dinner, thinking that he and Maniac had had plenty to eat (all those butterscotch Krimpets!), but Maniac is enthusiastic about eating, so Grayson drinks

coffee while Maniac eats the dinner that Grayson bought him.

Part 2, Section 25

What do we learn about Grayson in Part 2, Section 25?

The main thing we learn is that Grayson was in the Minor Leagues and devoted much of his life to baseball as a pitcher. He never made it big, because he had a bad day pitching when a scout for an AAA league team—the Toledo Mud Hens—came to see him.

We find out that Grayson's first name is Earl, but he prefers that Maniac call him Grayson like everyone else does.

We learn that Maniac is impressed that Grayson was in the Minor Leagues. Grayson had to be good to make it there, even if he did not make all the way to the Major Leagues.

What kind of stories does Grayson tell?

Grayson says that he doesn't tell stories, but he does tell Maniac many stories about baseball. He tells three stories in particular:

1. As a kid, going to a Class D team—the worst possible in the Minor Leagues—Grayson fell for a practical joke. A gas station attendant pointed out a restaurant to him and said that the owners of the restaurant always gave new players their first meal free. Grayson ordered a 16-ounce steak, half a broiled chicken, and two pieces of rhubarb pie. He didn't make it to his first game because he was busy washing dishes to pay for the meal.
2. In Willie Mays's last at-bat in the Minor Leagues, Grayson struck him out with three straight curveballs.
3. The night before the scout for the Toledo Mud Hens came to look at Grayson pitch, Grayson spent half the night on his

knees, praying to win the game. He probably should have been in bed getting his rest because he did not pitch well. The team was behind 12-0 even before the 3rd inning was over, and Grayson was in the showers.

Part 2, Section 26

Describe the “stopball.”

The stopball is the only pitch that Grayson has left—even Maniac can’t hit it out of the infield.

The stopball is a peculiar pitch. It appears as if the ball stops when it reaches the batter.

Grayson perfected the pitch only long after he had left Minor-League baseball.

What does Grayson teach Maniac Magee?

Grayson teaches Maniac some things about baseball (96-97):

- How to throw a curve ball.
- How to spray liners to the opposite field.
- How to get a jump on a fly ball before the ball is even hit.

How and what else does Maniac Magee learn?

Grayson gives Maniac 50 cents or \$1 to buy butterscotch Krimpets, and Maniac uses (at least part of) the money to buy old books from the library. He reads and studies the books. He has been learning geometry, spelling, biography, etc.

Maniac also learns that Grayson is illiterate when Grayson asks him to teach him how to read.

Part 2, Section 27

What kind of education did Grayson get in his youth?

His parents were drunk a lot and left him alone a lot.

Apparently, his teacher thought he was mentally retarded. He heard his teacher whisper to the principal, “This bunch will never learn to read a stop sign” (100).

Grayson was in a class where no education occurred: “... they cut paper and played games all day” (100).

How does Grayson learn to read?

Grayson works part time for a while.

They buy a few things: old picture books such as *The Little Engine That Could* from the library, and a chalkboard and chalk from Woolworth’s.

Grayson learns the alphabet in three days and 10 one-syllable words (from memory) in a week.

Over time, he learns to read, “I see the ball” (102). This is a happy day for Grayson and for Maniac.

Part 2, Section 28

How does the relation between Grayson and Maniac Magee develop in Part 2, Section 28?

It develops well.

Grayson reads his first book on his own: *The Little Engine That Could*. It is hard work and takes an hour and leaves Grayson sweating and exhausted, but it makes him happy. It also makes Maniac happy.

Maniac celebrates by shouting “A-men” the way he did in the black church he attended. He then makes Grayson what Grayson wants to eat: a corn muffin and apple juice.

That night, Grayson stays at the home he has fixed up for Maniac. The home is now nicer than Grayson’s room at the Y. Maniac now has a toaster-oven and a chest of drawers for his clothes—note that Maniac has clothes (plural). He has a bookcase (a pantry), a space heater, a 2-foot refrigerator, paper plates and plastic utensils, etc.

Maniac Magee bulldogs Grayson into bed. What is bulldogging?

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2000) defines “bulldog” as “Western U.S. To throw (a calf or steer) by seizing its horns and twisting its neck until the animal falls.”

Part 2, Section 29

Describe the Thanksgiving of Maniac Magee and Grayson.

They have a good Thanksgiving.

- They go to the Thanksgiving football game, which Two Mills wins because of a last-minute 73-yard touchdown pass to “Hands” Down.
- They stuff themselves “silly” (108), eating a 5-pound chicken (cooked in the toaster-oven), cranberry sauce, SpaghettiOs, pumpkin pie, gravy, applesauce, raisins, and butter-scotch Krimpets. This is the best Thanksgiving dinner that Maniac has ever had.
- They dance to Grayson’s collection of 31 polka records. (Grayson brought over a record player earlier.)

By the way, Grayson has now read 13 books.

What do Maniac Magee and Grayson have to be thankful for?

Mainly, they have each other to be thankful for.

They are thankful for their Thanksgiving meal.

They are thankful for a warm home.

They are thankful that Grayson has learned how to read.

Maniac paints a number on the band shell, so he can now be thankful that he has an address: 101 Band Shell Boulevard.

Part 2, Sections 30-31

Describe the Christmas of Maniac Magee and Grayson.

“If Thanksgiving was wonderful, Christmas was paradise” (110).

Section 30

They have a home together now, since Grayson has moved out of the Y. (Grayson is a long-time friend of the locker-room attendant, so he and Maniac have shower privileges.)

They have decorated their home and especially the tree.

They are so happy at decorating the tree that they decorate another tree outside. This one is decorated with natural items: pine cones, clusters of sumac berries, milkweed, and Queen Anne’s lace.

Section 31

They get up early and visit their outdoor decorated tree.

They know where a family of muskrats lives, and Grayson places a pine branch at the doorway to the muskrat family home. “Maniac whispered: ‘Merry Christmas’” (113).

They visit the zoo, where the ducks are especially happy to see them. Maniac gives the baby buffalo three scarves tied together.

They exchange gifts.

Section 30

According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Sixth Edition, 2001), Queen Anne's lace is a

wild carrot, herb (*Daucus carota*) of the family Umbelliferae (carrot family), native to the Old World but naturalized and often weedy throughout North America. Similar in appearance to the cultivated carrot (which is believed to have been derived from this plant), it has feathery foliage but a woody root. The tiny white flowers bloom in a lacy, flat-topped cluster (called an umbel) until they wither, when the cluster becomes nest-shaped (whence another of its names, bird's nest). The plant was formerly used in folk medicine as a diuretic and a stimulant. Queen Anne's lace is classified in the division Magnoliophyta, class Magnoliopsida, order Apiales, family Umbelliferae.

Part 2, Section 31

Which Christmas presents do Maniac Magee and Grayson give each other?

Maniac Magee gives to Grayson:

- A book he has written titled *The Man Who Struck Out Willie Mays*.
- A pair of gloves.
- A woolen cap.

Grayson gives Maniac:

- A box of butterscotch Krimpets.
- A pair of gloves.
- A brand-new baseball.
- His glove from his Minor League baseball days.

Both enjoy the gift of companionship.

Part 2, Section 32

What happens to Grayson, and how does Maniac Magee react?

Five days after Christmas, Maniac wakes up to discover that Grayson has died in his sleep.

Maniac spends the day with the body. He does not run to the Superintendent.

He talks to the body.

He reads out loud the books that Grayson has learned to read, ending with Grayson's favorite book: *Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel*.

That night, he lies beside the body, and he cries.

Maniac is the only mourner at the funeral. He is never entirely sure whether the minister finally shows up, as he leaves a little early, and he runs.

Part 2 Question

Why do you suppose Jerry Spinelli wrote Part 2? What relationship does it have to the book's main theme of racial prejudice?

People don't see all of Grayson, just as white people don't see all of black people.

Some things have the potential of being good, but may never come into existence. Grayson could easily have died alone, but Maniac comes into his sphere of being. It's possible that blacks and whites could never learn to live together in harmony.

Maniac looks beneath the surface of Grayson, just as Grayson looks beneath the surface of Maniac (other people would see a dirty, stinky, homeless kid). Similarly, black and white people need to look beneath the surface of each other.

Part 3

Part 3, Section 33

How does Maniac Magee live?

Not well.

Activities

Maniac keeps running, so he is getting lots of exercise.

Food

Maniac takes some non-perishable food from his old home at the Band Shell. Now that Grayson has died, he will not live there.

When that food runs out, he eats at the zoo or at the Salvation Army soup kitchen.

Work

He runs errands for shopkeepers or does odd jobs for housewives. He does not beg.

Shelter

He sleeps sometimes at the zoo; he sleeps sometimes in “an abandoned car, empty garage, a basement stairwell” (122).

What is foreshadowing?

The 6th edition of *A Handbook to Literature* by C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon defines “foreshadowing” in this way: “The presentation of material in a work in such a way that later events are prepared for” (201).

Here are a couple of other definitions:

Foreshadowing is the use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in literature.

Source:

http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/foreshadowing.html

Definition: A literary device used to hint at events that will follow later in the story, sometimes generating feelings of anxiety or suspense. Anton Chekhov once said that “if there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it must fire in the last.” That remark captures the essence of foreshadowing.

Source:

<http://contemporarylit.about.com/library/bldef-foreshadowing>

When Maniac Magee runs, he is always careful not to look at the P & W trestle. Why? (By the way, this is important foreshadowing.)

When he runs on the bridge over the Schuylkill River, he never looks at the P & W trestle because that is where his parents died. We read: “Even so, in his mind’s eye he saw the red and yellow trolley careening from the high track, plunging to the water, killing his parents over and over” (122).

At the end of Part 3, Section 33, where is Maniac, and what is he determined to do?

He finds himself at Valley Forge, where he takes shelter in one of the log-and-mortar cabins that are replicas of the cab-

ins that General George Washington's soldiers took shelter in.

Maniac is determined to die. He has some crackers, but he gives them to the birds. He simply stays in the cabin, and he waits to die.

Part 3, Section 34

Write brief character analyses of Russell and Piper.

They are two little kids—brothers, we find out.

One has a missing tooth; the other has a big voice.

The two kids fight, then laugh.

The two kids are crude; they call each other and Maniac such things as “Meatball.”

The two kids are running away to Mexico. We find out later that they run away from home regularly.

They are shoplifters. They have stolen butterscotch Krimpets, candy, pies, and cupcakes.

They pat Maniac, looking for a gun.

Piper is the Screacher, so Russell has the Missing Tooth.

How does Maniac Magee convince Russell and Piper to return to Two Mills?

Maniac tells the two kids that they have won a free pizza, and they have to go to Two Mills to claim it.

He also tells them that they are taking the long way to Mexico, and if they return to Two Mills then he will show them a short cut to Mexico.

How does Part 3, Section 34 end? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

Big John McNab comes roaring up and says, “Where you been?” (128). Maniac thinks that Big John is talking to him; instead, he is talking to the two little boys. We then find out that the two little boys are Big John’s brothers, and Big John wants to know why Maniac is with them. (When Big John asks Maniac this, the smile vanishes from his face.)

By the way, Big John also recognizes Maniac—he is the “frog man” (128).

The reader will definitely keep on reading here.

Part 3, Section 35

Which lie does Maniac Magee tell in Part 3, Section 35 and why does he tell it?

Maniac tells a lie to save Giant John's face. Piper and Russell find out that Maniac is the person who kept hitting Giant John's fast ball and who hit the frog ball, and they laugh and laugh, making Giant John angry, so Maniac tells them what happened the next day, when Giant John kept throwing the stop ball—and Maniac couldn't even hit it for a foul. Of course, this never happened, but it saves Giant John's face and it impresses Piper and Russell.

Describe the house the McNabs live in.

It is a horrible house.

At first, Maniac thinks that raisins are in the house, but when the "raisins" move, he realizes that they are roaches.

Dogs piddle and poop on the floor.

Maniac smells the house before he enters it.

There is a huge hole in the ceiling of the living room. Piper and Russell jump from upstairs into the living room.

As bad as the living room is, the kitchen is even worse. The remnants of a bird are on the table. The refrigerator contains beer and mustard.

A jar of peanut butter crashed to the floor, and someone slid in it, making a track to the stove.

Maniac is afraid that rats are in the house.

Little furniture is in the house. The living room does not have a rug. There is no trash can in the house; no one would use it if there was.

The Cobras play football in the house.

Everyone but Maniac drinks beer—including Piper and Russell.

Paint is flaking from the walls.

Obviously, this house and family form an impressive contrast to the house and family of the Beales.

Describe the father of the McNabs.

The father does feed his children—fast food. Today he has brought home Whoppers.

The father has an enormous beer belly.

The father yells at his kids, “Do yer homework!” (135).

The father does not have a winter coat. He has “a sleeveless green sweatshirt” (132).

The father has tattoos on his upper arms, and his hands are “nearly pure black” (132), apparently from dirt.

There is no mother, as far as we can see.

McNab realizes that Maniac is in the kitchen, but he doesn’t care. He doesn’t speak to Maniac.

What game do Piper and Russell play at the end of Part 3, Section 35? What other things do they do?

Piper and Russell play a game in which they fight off—with submachine guns—the residents of the East End (the blacks).

The kids fight over food, fart, smoke, drink beer, and belch.

Part 3, Section 36

How does Maniac Magee convince Russell and Piper to go to school for another week, and another week, and another week?

Maniac wants Piper and Russell to go to school. He is able to convince them to go for a while by giving them a pizza a week. He also tells them that it is volcano season in Mexico, and the whole place is covered with lava.

Eventually, Piper and Russell want more than a pizza.

Of course, Piper and Russell don't want to go to school. It is "agony" (136) for them. However, because of their association with Maniac, they have acquired importance in the eyes of the other kids—and they didn't have to steal anything to get it. (One way to impress kids is to show them the stuff you have stolen.)

Piper and Russell tell Maniac that they will go to school for one more week if he goes and stays in Finsterwald's back yard for 10 minutes—something that Maniac readily agrees to do and that he does do.

Maniac is able to get Piper and Russell to go to school for two more weeks instead of one by knocking on Finsterwald's front door. He does this, and he even speaks to Finsterwald, apparently, but nothing happens to Maniac. (Some kids, however, figure that Maniac is now a ghost.) This makes the legend of Maniac grow.

Part 3, Section 37

How does Maniac Magee's reputation grow?

Maniac does a feat a week to make Piper and Russell important so that they will go to school.

He races a train and wins.

He sticks his arm into a mysterious hole for 60 seconds and then pulls it out with all his fingers intact.

He hits a telephone pole with a rock 61 times in a row at 20 paces.

He goes to the American bison pen at the zoo, climbs in, and kisses the baby buffalo. (He suggested this feat himself.)

What is Maniac Magee's greatest challenge?

Piper and Russell come up with what they think is “the most perilous challenge of all” (142)—to go into the East End.

Of course, this will set in motion the next part of the plot.

Part 3, Section 38

Jerry Spinelli writes about the day of the worms. Why might he have chosen to write about that?

It sets the season. It is now spring.

He writes about two populations: the population of worms and the population of kids. The worms die by the millions—they are on asphalt and dry up when the sun shines on them. The kids simply play and don't notice the worms except when they step on one. Of course, two other populations are the population of whites and the population of blacks.

The worms are kind of helpless; perhaps Maniac is kind of helpless in the East End.

How does Maniac Magee meet the greatest challenge of his life?

Maniac meets it well.

He, of course, is not afraid to go to the East End—at least not for himself. However, he is afraid that his presence in the East End will cause trouble.

Describe the meeting between Mars Bar and Maniac Magee.

It is a confrontation. Mars Bar still doesn't like Maniac. Mars Bar calls Maniac Fishbelly and Fish and “honkey donkey” (145), and Mars Bar boasts about his athletic prowess, his new sneakers, and about how fast he is.

Mars Bar also challenges Maniac to a foot race.

Maniac wins the foot race, which is described in some detail (including the preparations for it and its aftermath). In winning, Maniac at first is behind, seeing the bottoms of Mars Bar's sneakers, but then he shoots ahead. Near the end of the race, Maniac turns around so he is running backwards as he crosses the finish line. (It is possible to run backwards very quickly. Dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was very skilled at doing this.)

What happens at the end of Part 3, Section 38? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

At the end of Part 3, Section 38, Maniac is on Sycamore Street, where the Beales live. Hester and Lester see him, and they are happy to see him.

At the doorway of the house, Amanda and Mrs. Beale are standing and smiling.

The reader will definitely keep on reading. The reader will wonder, "What will happen next?"

Part 3, Section 39

What has happened to Maniac? What do Russell and Piper think has happened to Maniac?

Maniac stays with the Beales overnight, but he leaves at dawn to go back to the McNabs. He had a joyful reunion with the Beales.

Russell and Piper are afraid that blacks have killed Maniac in the East End.

What do the McNabs build in their house? Why?

We find out that the father's name is George McNab. After Maniac has been staying with them for three months, George still does not know his tenant's name.

They are building a fortress, a pillbox. Maniac declines to help them build it. The Cobras help the McNabs build the pillbox.

The McNabs are building the pillbox out of cinder blocks in their living room. They are afraid that the blacks will revolt, and when that time comes, they want to be ready. They will be armed and ready in their own pillbox.

At the end of the Part 3, Section 39, we read: "Now there was no room that Maniac could stand in the middle of and feel clean. Now there was something else in that house, and it smelled worse than garbage and turds" (152).

Part 3, Section 40

Why does Maniac Magee eat with the Pickwells?

Maniac hears Mrs. Pickwell's whistle, and he answers it, just like he did his first day in Two Mills.

He compares this family to the Beale family. Both are very nice families. Whoever started the prejudice between the East End and the West End, it certainly wasn't the Pickwell family—or the Beale family.

By this time, Maniac is famous, and the Pickwell kids are happy when he arrives in answer to Mrs. Pickwell's whistle.

Mrs. Pickwell treats him like one of the family, as if she would have been surprised if he had not showed up to eat.

What do we learn about Mr. Pickwell?

We learn the same thing about him that we knew before. Previously, on Maniac's first day in Two Mills, the Pickwell family had been feeding a down-on-his-luck taxi cab driver. Now Mr. Pickwell has brought him for the evening meal a down-on-his-luck shoe salesman. Obviously, the Pickwell family is a very nice family.

How does Maniac Magee take care of Russell and Piper? What happens to their relationship?

Maniac does what he can to make Piper and Russell go to school. Since Maniac's visit to the East End, the two boys no longer have him do stunts, so Maniac has to figure out other ways to convince them to go to school, such as holding a marbles tournament at recess.

When Piper and Russell find Grayson's old glove and start playing with it, including kicking it like a football, Maniac blows up and tells them that they had better obey him. They do for three days. The first day they obey him out of shock, and the next two days they are playing "a new game, called Obedience, or Being Good" (156). Then they stop being obedient.

When they start playing with their plastic guns, shooting at imaginary East Enders, Maniac blows up again. He stomps on their plastic guns and ruins them. Piper and Russell then tell him to get out of their house, and Maniac does.

A couple of days later, they find Maniac in the library, reading (Maniac had brought them to the library earlier—where they misbehaved—so perhaps it is no surprise that the boys come to the library now), and Piper invites him to his birthday party. (So Piper and Russell are brothers, but not twins.)

Maniac promises to come, but only if he can bring a guest.

Part 3, Section 41

Who does Maniac Magee bring to the McNab birthday party? Why does he bring this particular guest?

Maniac brings Mars Bar to the McNabs' birthday party. He does that because whites don't know about blacks, and blacks don't know about whites.

An important passage on p. 159 says:

Whites never go inside blacks' homes. Much less inside their thoughts and feelings. And blacks are just as ignorant of whites. What white kid could hate blacks after spending five minutes in the Beales' house? And what black kid could hate whites after answering Mrs. Pickwell's dinner whistle?

Write a short character analysis of Maniac Magee's guest based on what you learn in Part 3, Section 41.

Mars Bar is still acting tough. He is still reacting to the color of Maniac Magee's skin. Maniac Magee basically says that Mars Bar is chicken to go to the West End; that is the only way that Maniac Magee is able to convince Mars Bar to go to the West End.

Mars Bar is famous in the West End. The Pickwells' kids believe that he always carries 100 Mars Bars around with him. Mars Bar does his stunt of stopping traffic in the West End. He goes out into the street and forces vehicles to stop while he takes his own sweet time crossing the street. We read, "By the time he finally moved on to the far side, so the legend goes, twenty-three cars, several bicycles, and a bus were stacked to a dead stop in both directions" (161).

Mars Bar saves face by telling the Pickwell kids that Maniac Magee did not beat him running backwards in a foot race;

instead, he says that Maniac beat his brother, who is named Milky Way.

Mars Bar is tough. He has a candy bar sticking out of his mouth like a stogie.

At the McNabs' home, Mars Bar is very, very uneasy.

First, Maniac Magee takes his guest to the Pickwells' home. How did that work out?

It goes very well.

As always, the dinner table is full. There are lots and lots of little Pickwells, who are aware of Mars Bar's fame, and Mrs. Pickwell does not even bat an eye when she sees Mars Bar.

Part 3, Section 42

How is Maniac Magee's guest treated by the McNabs?

Poorly.

The father asks, "What's he doin' here?" (162), then he gets a beer can and says, "Let me know when it leaves" (163) before going upstairs.

The Cobras don't talk to Mars Bar, but one jumps through the hole in the ceiling, startling Mars Bar, then says that someone should check Mars Bar's drawers. Giant John is ready to fight Mars Bar. Maniac says that Giant John owes him one because he brought Piper and Russell back, and Giant John does not fight.

Describe the game "Rebels."

Maniac Magee tells Mars Bar that the pillbox is a bomb shelter, but the kids start playing the game "Rebels," and Mars Bar finds out what the concrete block structure really is.

In the game "Rebels," the whites are inside the pillbox and the blacks are outside, attacking. The blacks lose. (None of the kids want to be black, by the way.)

Why does Maniac Magee admire his guest?

Mars Bar is scared, but he is very ready and willing to fight all the Cobras at once, all by himself. Mars Bar is also very good at not showing the Cobras that he is scared.

By the way, Mars Bar was impressed by the Pickwells, whom he calls "Pick-peoples" (166).

At the end of Part 3, Section 42, once again Maniac Magee does not have a home to go to.

Part 3, Section 43

How does Maniac Magee live?

He still eats carrots, apples, and day-old hamburger buns at the deer pen at the zoo.

He sleeps at various places in the park. (It is growing warmer.)

He often sleeps in people's back yards or on their porches. Once, he slept in an unlocked kitchen. (He gets up early, so he is never caught.)

Where doesn't Maniac Magee go? What doesn't he see? (By the way, this is important foreshadowing.)

He doesn't run on the bridge over the Schuylkill River.

He never looks at the P & W trestle because that is where his parents died.

Part 3, Section 44

How and why do Mars Bar and Maniac Magee keep meeting?

At first, they seem to be running into each other at random. Both are working out, running in the early mornings. They meet while running.

They never talk to each other, but soon they are running beside each other. They never look at each other. Each seems to think that they are simply going in the same direction.

What happens to the children?

Maniac Magee and Mars Bar are running when Piper comes crying up to them. They can't understand what he is saying, but they follow him to the P & W trestle. The two boys had been playing Bombs Away. Piper would sail the raft under the trestle, while Russell would Bombs Away with a bucketful of rocks and try to sink the raft.

Now that the game is over, Russell has discovered how high he is, and he is frozen with fright. Meanwhile, the trolley is "idling and tooting" (173).

Maniac leaves the scene and leaves Russell.

Part 3, Section 45

Why doesn't Maniac Magee save the children?

Maniac Magee remembers that his parents died there. He is not able to face the trolley trestle although the trolley is coming. He is not able to save Russell.

Mars Bar gets this story from Maniac Magee. He knows that Maniac was not scared, so he came to find out the real story from Maniac Magee.

How are the children saved?

Piper ends up asking Mars Bar to save Russell. (Before, he had been asking Maniac Magee to save Russell.) Mars Bar is a little angry at Piper because Piper was ignoring him before and asking Maniac Magee to save Russell, but Mars Bar saves Russell.

How do the children treat their rescuer?

Mars Bar becomes a hero to them. Russell is still hanging onto and hugging Mars Bar even after he was rescued, so Mars Bar takes him home so his mother can pry Russell off him. Of course, Piper tags along, too. (So some white kids are able to see a home where some black people live.)

Piper and Russell stay at Mars Bar's home all day. Mars Bar's mother cleans them up and feeds them and has Mars Bar play games such as Monopoly with them. They stay all day, and they want Mars Bar to play "Rebel" with them at their house—and if he does play "Rebel," they'll let him be white.

Why won't Maniac Magee go to Mars Bar's house?

He is afraid of what might happen because of racial prejudice.

How does the novel end?

Very happily.

Amanda forces Maniac Magee to come live with the Beale family by basically beating him up until he agrees to go. (Mars Bar/Snickers is with her, but he stays outside the buffalo pen.)

Why does Amanda want to rename Mars Bar?

Amanda wants to rename Mars Bar “Snickers” because with a name like that you can’t be bad.

Part 3, Section 46

What is Maniac Magee's legacy?

We see his legacy at the beginning of the novel. Basically, he integrates the two parts of Two Mills.

He gets Mars Bar not to be so suspicious of white people, and he gets Piper and Russell not to be so suspicious of black people.

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Paper Topics (Perhaps for Older Readers)

For these topics, use the MLA format and include a Work(s) Cited List. Your audience is either your teacher for this course, or the readers of a WWW site that discusses and evaluates children's literature.

- Discuss the didactic aspects of *Maniac Magee*. (What can children learn from reading these books? Racial prejudice is a main theme of this book. Which other kinds of prejudice are addressed?)
- Discuss the comedic aspects of *Maniac Magee*. (What could children find funny in these books?)
- Discuss the fantastic aspects of *Maniac Magee*. (Is it good or bad for children to read books such as these? How realistic is *Maniac Magee*? This novel contains elements of folktales. Why might have Jerry Spinelli chosen to include elements of folktales in this novel?)
- Discuss how Jerry Spinelli handles characterization. For example, how does Mr. Spinelli differentiate his characters' use of language? Do any characters develop? Which characters, if any, are stereotypes?

Appendix A: Jerry Spinelli Anecdotes

• The parents of Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Medal-winning *Maniac Magee*, spent very little money on themselves, but out of love they made sure that their children enjoyed very nice Christmases. One Christmas, Jerry had unwrapped what he thought was his final present. His father told him, “Well, I guess that’s it. Looks like you did pretty good this year.” Later, Jerry was sent on an errand to the kitchen, and he found his real final present: a Roadmaster bicycle. Mr. Spinelli describes the gift in a memorable way: “Love leaning on a kickstand.”¹

• When Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Medal-winning *Maniac Magee*, attended his ninth-grade prom, the girls were angry because they were not allowed to wear strapless gowns. Not content with merely being angry, the girls also took action. Many of the straps worn to the prom that evening were flimsy—one “strap” consisted of a single piece of thread. Another girl’s “straps” were actually lines painted with eyeliner. Of course, some girls wore real straps—but they carried scissors in their purses. By the last dance, every girl had bare shoulders.²

¹ Source: Jerry Spinelli, *Knots in My Yo-yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*, pp. 69-70.

² Source: Jerry Spinelli, *Knots in My Yo-yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*, pp. 134-135.

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Crash* and *Wringer*, got many, many rejection letters when he was a young author, but he did not give up. Every time he finished a novel that no publisher would publish, he wrote another novel. Mr. Spinelli once noted that during his first 15 years of writing, he made only \$200 from his writing. He also recommended that publishers send rejection bricks instead of rejection letters, noting, “Decades of work should not be able to fit into an envelope. You should be able to build a house with them.”³

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Maniac Magee* and *Stargirl*, gets interesting letters. A boy once wrote to invite Mr. Spinelli to visit his school so he could meet the school’s pet duck. One year later, the boy again wrote Mr. Spinelli to visit his school so he could meet the school’s pet duck—but to hurry because the pet duck was getting old.⁴

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Maniac Magee* and *Stargirl*, wrote at home in a house with six kids. Of course, they made a lot of noise, so he bought a gizmo that made ocean sounds such as surf in an attempt to drown out the noise of the kids. Did it work? Mr. Spinelli says that “there’s no surf that’s a match for six kids in the house.”⁵

- Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Award-winning

³ Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, pp. 24-25.

⁴ Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, p. 68.

⁵ Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, p. 24.

young people's novel *Maniac Magee*, is aware that at age six, many future authors were reading such works as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. What about Mr. Spinelli? He was reading Bugs Bunny comic books.⁶

⁶ Source: David Seidman, *Jerry Spinelli*, p. 10.

Appendix B: Anecdotes About Prejudice

• The United States considers itself a free country, but its freedom has had to be fought for. On July 13, 1958, at 2 a.m. in Central Point, Virginia, Sheriff Garnett Brooks and two deputy sheriffs entered the home of Richard and Mildred Loving, arrested them, and took them to the county jail, where they stayed for five days before being released after posting bail. What crime were they charged with? Mr. Loving was white, and Mrs. Loving was part African American and part Native American. They had fallen in love, gone to Washington, D.C., to get married, then returned to Virginia, which had outlawed marriage between a white person and anyone who was not white. In addition, the state of Virginia had made it illegal for a white person and anyone who was not white to get married in another state, then return to Virginia and live as man and wife. The State of Virginia found Mr. and Mrs. Loving guilty, and Judge Leon M. Bazile sentenced each of them to one year in jail, but suspended the sentence for 25 years if the Lovings would leave Virginia. In his decision, Judge Bazile made it clear that he opposed marriage between whites and blacks. The Lovings left Virginia for a while, but did not want to be separated from friends and family, so they returned to Virginia. In 1963, Mrs. Loving wrote United States attorney general Robert Kennedy and asked him for help. Mr. Kennedy referred the letter to the American Civil

Rights Union, which agreed to represent the Lovings in a lawsuit. Eventually, the case made its way to the United States Supreme Court, and Mr. Loving told his ACLU lawyers, “Tell the court that I love my wife, and it is just unfair that I can’t live with her in Virginia.” The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Lovings, making it legal for whites and blacks to marry each other. If the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the state of Virginia, states would be able to legally ban marriages between white people and non-white people. The Lovings had not set out to be civil rights heroes, but because they loved each other and wanted to legally live together as a married couple in Virginia, they (with the help of the ACLU) refused to let the state of Virginia take away their rights. In doing so, they made possible the Supreme Court ruling that whites and non-whites can legally marry in any state.⁷

- During the Civil Rights movement, Freedom Riders headed south. Laws had been passed outlawing segregation on public transportation, but in some places segregation continued. Therefore, the Freedom Riders, who were both white and black, rode on buses throughout the south to test whether public transportation had really been desegregated. In Birmingham, Alabama, the Freedom Fighters were assaulted, and James Person, who was black, and James Peck,

⁷ Source: Karen Alonso, *Loving v. Virginia: Interracial Marriage*, pp. 5-6, 24-25, 27ff, 45, 86.

who was white, were brutally beaten—Mr. Peck ended up with 53 stitches in his face. Outside Anniston, Alabama, a bus was fire bombed as a mob broke windows and punctured tires. In Montgomery, Alabama, the Freedom Riders were attacked by a mob, and James Zwerg, a white student, and John Seigenthaler, John F. Kennedy's representative, were beaten until they were unconscious. A reporter asked Police Commissioner L.B. Sullivan if he had sent for ambulances, but the police commissioner replied, "Every white ambulance in town reports their vehicles have broken down."⁸

- African-American college students started a unique form of protest in early 1960 when they staged sit-ins. At the time, Jim Crow laws segregating blacks and whites were common in the South. Whites could drink from one drinking fountain, and blacks had to drink from a different drinking fountain. Whites could use one set of restrooms, and blacks had to use a different set of restrooms. This segregation pervaded the South and extended to lunchrooms. To protest the segregation, the African-American college students used to go to a whites-only lunchroom, sit down, and wait to be served. They were *not* served; however, they would continue to sit at the lunch counter, taking up a seat that could have been used by a white customer whom the lunchroom would have been

⁸ Source: Jean Darby, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, pp. 64, 66.

happy to serve. Eventually, the lunchrooms began to serve black people.⁹

- Once, Sojourner Truth and her friend Laura Haviland were traveling together. Ms. Truth was an African-American woman, and Ms. Haviland was a wealthy white woman. A streetcar stopped for the two women, and Ms. Truth tried to board the streetcar first. However, the streetcar conductor pushed Ms. Truth away and told her to let the lady get on first. Ms. Truth replied, “I am a lady, too,” and attempted to board the streetcar again. The conductor stopped Ms. Truth and asked Ms. Haviland if she was Ms. Truth’s owner. Ms. Haviland replied, “No—she belongs to humanity.” Again, the conductor pushed Ms. Truth away, this time with such force that he dislocated her shoulder. The two women stopped trying to board the streetcar, but they recorded the number of the streetcar and reported the brutality of the conductor. He was arrested for assault and battery, and he lost his job.¹⁰

- Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest, had an enormous impact on Desmond Tutu of South Africa. When Desmond was a young boy, he saw Mr. Huddleston tip his hat to show respect to Desmond’s mother. The sight of a white man showing respect to a black woman in South Africa

⁹ Source: Ron L. Harmon, *American Civil Rights Leaders*, pp. 24-25, 81-82.

¹⁰ Source: Catherine Bernard, *Sojourner Truth: Abolitionist and Women’s Rights Activist*, pp. 88-89.

at that time was extremely rare, and Desmond never forgot it. Mr. Huddleston's kindness did not stop there. When Desmond was a teenager, he was hospitalized with tuberculosis and Mr. Huddleston stopped by every day to see him. Because of Mr. Huddleston's great kindness, Desmond converted to Anglicanism, and later Mr. Tutu became an Anglican bishop. In 1984, Bishop Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to have blacks in South Africa treated with respect and dignity.¹¹

• During the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, which lasted 381 days, blacks declined to ride on the city's segregated buses. Instead, they walked, rode in car pools, and took taxis. African-American taxi drivers even lowered their prices to match those offered by the bus company. An African-American minister who worked in the car pool organized by the Montgomery Improvement Association asked an elderly black woman who was walking, "Sister, aren't you getting tired?" She replied, "My soul has been tired for a long time. Now my feet are tired, and my soul is resting." The Supreme Court ruled that the segregated buses were against the Constitution, and the boycott ended in victory for the civil rights workers.¹²

¹¹ Source: Nathan Aaseng, *The Peace Seekers: The Nobel Peace Prize*, pp. 69ff.

¹² Source: Ron L. Harmon, *American Civil Rights Leaders*, pp. 42-45.

- When Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major-league baseball, he made it possible for other African-American players to join the major leagues—and to start cashing some major-league checks. Willie Mays once said, “Every time I look in my pocketbook, I see Jackie Robinson.” (Mr. Robinson had some help breaking the color barrier. Leo Durocher told the white players on the team in 1947, “I don’t care if the guy is yellow or black or if he has stripes like a f**king zebra. I’m the manager of this team, and I say he plays.”)¹³

- When Jackie Robinson became the first black man to play in baseball’s major leagues in the 20th century, he was subjected to torrents of racist abuse from fans and opposing players. At one game, Mr. Robinson’s fellow Brooklyn Dodgers teammate Pee Wee Reese, a white man, stopped the abuse. Mr. Robinson was standing at first base, and Mr. Reese walked over and put his arm around him.¹⁴

¹³ Source: Bill Adler, *Baseball Wit*, pp. 2, 115.

¹⁴ Source: Karen Mueller Coombs, *Jackie Robinson: Baseball’s Civil Rights Legend*, p. 67.

Appendix C: Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this short guide to Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University in my Humanities courses. See below for the assignment and a sample short reaction memo.

How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?

During the quarter, you will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For an example of a short reaction memo, see the following pages.

To: David Bruce
From: Jane Student
Re: *Candide*, Ch. 26-30
Date: Today's Date
Words: 368

Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is “sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air” (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with “several kinds of fruit-favored drinks” and “boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee” (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, “I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty” (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

- The old man and his family are content—even happy.
- The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.
- The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.

- The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.

Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow “abundant crops” (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel’s last words, “... we must cultivate our garden” (120).

Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Lowell Bair. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy—me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name—David—ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a master’s degree in English and a master’s degree in Philosophy. Currently, and for a long time to come, I publish a weekly humorous column titled “Wise Up!” for *The Athens News* and I am an English instructor at Ohio U.

Shameless Commerce

Visit David Bruce’s storefront at

<http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=552168>

or

<http://stores.lulu.com/bruceb>

By the way, this storefront offers free downloads of collections of my students’ autobiographical essays. For example, one such collection is titled *Love and Friendship: Stories About Growing Up*.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)