



Maniac Magee (Newbery Medal Book)

By Jerry Spinelli

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

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

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Maniac Magee (Newbery Medal Book) By Jerry Spinelli Bibliography

- Rank: #109137 in Books
- Brand: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
- Published on: 1990-04-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .63" w x 5.75" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 184 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Maniac Magee is a folk story about a boy, a very excitable boy. One that can outrun dogs, hit a home run off the best pitcher in the neighborhood, tie a knot no one can undo. "Kid's gotta be a maniac," is what the folks in Two Mills say. It's also the story of how this boy, Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee, confronts racism in a small town, tries to find a home where there is none and attempts to soothe tensions between rival factions on the tough side of town. Presented as a folk tale, it's the stuff of storytelling. "The history of a kid," says Jerry Spinelli, "is one part fact, two parts legend, and three parts snowball." And for this kid, four parts of fun. **Maniac Magee** won the 1991 Newbery Medal.

From Publishers Weekly

In this modern-day tall tale, Spinelli (*Dump Days* ; Jason and Marceline) presents a humorous yet poignant look at the issue of race relations, a rare topic for a work aimed at middle readers. Orphaned as an infant, Jerry Magee is reared by his feuding aunt and uncle until he runs away at age eight. He finds his way to Two Mills, Pa., where the legend of "Maniac" Magee begins after he scores major upsets against Brian Denehy, the star high school football player, and Little League tough guy, John McNab. In racially divided Two Mills, the Beales, a black family, take Maniac in, but despite his local fame, community pressure forces him out and he returns to living at the zoo. Park groundskeeper Grayson next cares for the boy, but the old man dies and Maniac moves into the squalid home of the McNabs, who are convinced a race war is imminent. After a showdown with his nemesis, Mars Bar, Maniac bridges the gap between the two sides of town and finally finds a home. Full of snappy street-talk cadences, this off-the-wall yarn will give readers of all colors plenty of food for thought. Ages 8-12.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-10-- Warning: this interesting book is a mythical story about racism. It should not be read as reality. Legend springs up about Jeffrey "Maniac" Magee, a white boy who runs faster and hits balls farther than anyone, who lives on his own with amazing grace, and is innocent as to racial affairs. After running away from a loveless home, he encounters several families, in and around Two Mills, a town sharply divided into the black East End and the white West End. Black, feisty Amanda Beale and her family lovingly open their home to Maniac, and tough, smart-talking "Mars Bar" Thompson and other characters are all, to varying degrees, full of prejudices and unaware of their own racism. Racial epithets are sprinkled throughout the book; Mars Bar calls Maniac "fishbelly," and blacks are described by a white character as being "today's Indians." In the final, disjointed section of the book, Maniac confronts the hatred that perpetuates ignorance by bringing Mars Bar to meet the Pickwells--"the best the West End had to offer." In the feel-good ending, Mars and Maniac resolve their differences; Maniac gets a home and there is hope for at least improved racial relations. Unreal? Yes. It's a cop-out for Spinelli to have framed this story as a legend--it frees him from having to make it real, or even possible. Nevertheless, the book will stimulate thinking about racism, and it might help educate those readers who, like so many students, have no first-hand knowledge of people of other races. Pathos and compassion inform a short, relatively easy-to-read story with broad appeal, which suggests that to solve problems of racism, people must first know each other as individuals. --Joel

Shoemaker, Tilford Middle School, Vinton, IA

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Users Review

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Destiny Hunt:

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Sylvia Langley:

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