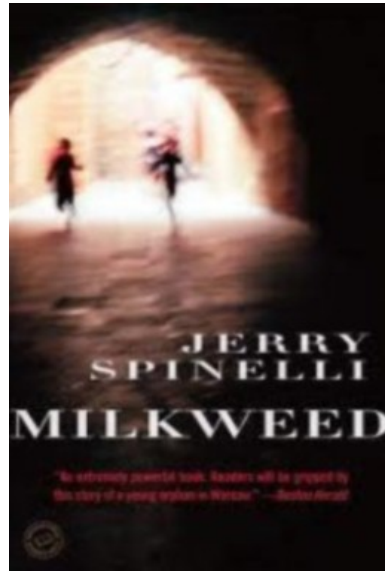


Milkweed



By

Jerry Spinelli

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Milkweed

By Jerry Spinelli

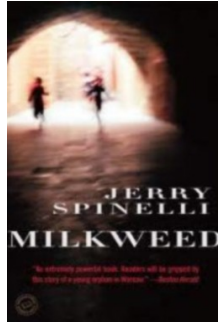


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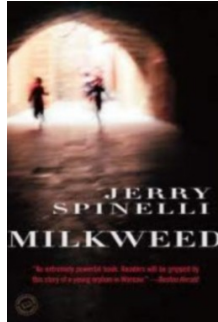
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About the author: Nat Reed has been a member of the teaching profession for more than 30 years. He is presently a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 65 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Most chapters of the novel study focuses on four chapters of *Milkweed* and is comprised of four different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language and Extension Activities

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters . . . respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included as well as a **Student Checklist**.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include The Holocaust, the Warsaw ghetto during World War II, homelessness, racial prejudice, Jews / Jewish faith, Gypsies, courage and self-sacrifice, perseverance, the importance of family and friends.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *foreshadowing*.
7. Identify *personification*.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Working with *anagrams*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

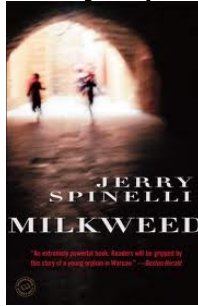
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Complete a KWS Chart
6. Conduct an interview
7. Write about personal feelings
8. Write a book review
9. Complete a Comparison Chart
10. Create a Research Organizer

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create a brochure
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

A stunning novel of the Holocaust from a Newbery Medalist

He's a boy called Jew. Gypsy. Stopthief. Filthy son of Abraham.

He's a boy who lives in the streets of Warsaw.

He's a boy who steals food for himself, and the other orphans.

He's a boy who believes in bread, and mothers, and angels.

He's a boy who wants to be a Nazi, with tall, shiny jackboots of his own-until the day that suddenly makes him change his mind.

And when the trains come to empty the Jews from the ghetto of the damned, he's a boy who realizes it's safest of all to be nobody. [The Publisher]

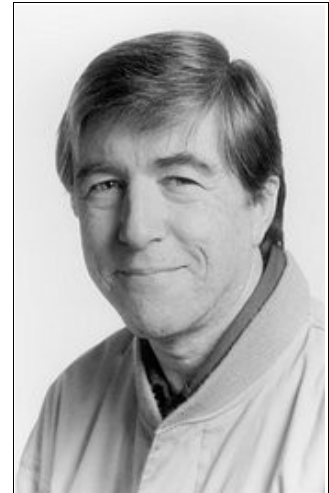
Author Biography

Jerry Spinelli

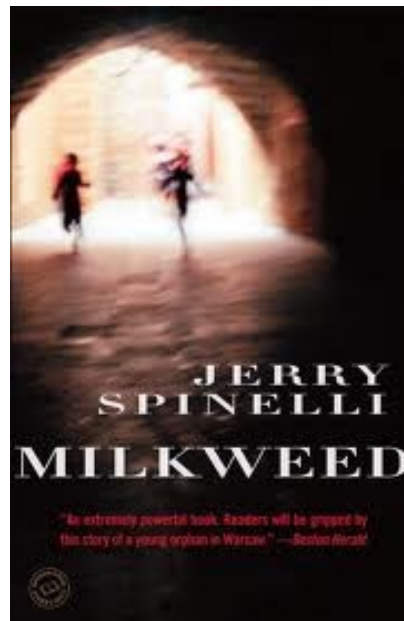
Born in 1941 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jerry Spinelli discovered his calling in 1957 when his high school football team won a big game. The town celebrated, his fellow students raced through the streets, but Jerry sneaked back home and marked the occasion in his own way. He wrote a poem. Later the town newspaper published it. "And," he reports, "I've been a writer ever since."

Married to Eileen Spinelli, who is also a writer, Jerry was for many years an editor for the Chilton Company. Now a full-time writer, he lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

Jerry Spinelli's immensely popular books include *Space Station Seventh Grade*, *Jason and Marceline*, *Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?*, and *Maniac Magee*, which has won more than fifteen state children's book awards in addition to the Newbery Medal. [The Publisher]



Milkweed

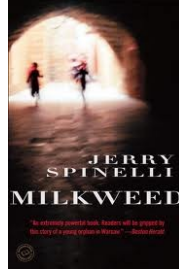


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Name: _____

Milkweed

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Chapters 1 - 4



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *Milkweed* is quite unique – Misha (*Stopthief*), who is about eight years old when the story begins, and lives in the war-torn city of Warsaw, Poland. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially intriguing **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

artillery	sausages	babka	matzoh	explosions
Gypsy	manikins	wheelbarrow	Sauerkraut	foothold

1. We were delighted to see that Melissa’s mother served a delicious type of cake called _____ at the birthday party.
2. _____ is a Polish term which means “sour cabbage”.
3. The children woke up during the night, terrified by the firing of enemy _____ in the distance.
4. Misha learned that from the Jewish family that _____ is a type of bread made without yeast. _____

5. The _____ people had a reputation for being nomads who travelled from village to village.
6. When the grenades went off the _____ were terrifying to hear.
7. My older brother placed the huge pumpkin in the _____ then took it into the town market to sell.
8. We were all shocked to learn that a special ingredient in my aunt's recipe for *toad in the hole* was _____.
9. When we entered the store the _____ in the window startled us, for we thought that they were burglars.
10. When Jenna attempted to scale the wall, she barely got a _____ before slipping and landing in a huge mud puddle.

Questions



1. The setting of the story describes both the time and place. Describe the **setting** of these chapters. (Turn to page 28 to get a more exact date.)

2. Investigate: Uri tells *Stophief* that soon it will be the **Jackboots** chasing him. On the Internet or by using resources in your school library describe the appearance of a jackboot and tell who would be wearing them in this instance.

3. Describe the circumstances in which Uri and *Stophief* met.

4. From the conversation of the boys that *Stopthief* meets in the stable it becomes evident as to the common opinion that most people seem to have of Jews. How would you describe this impression from what the boys say? Give one example from their conversation to support this.

5. Why did the boys assume that *Stopthief* was a Gypsy? Do you think this was a reasonable assumption? Why or why not?

6. The *boom boom* sound that *Stopthief* occasionally makes reference to is German artillery shelling the city. Although *Stopthief* does not yet recognize it as such, this represents a real **crisis** for all the people of Warsaw. Why do you think it is necessary for every good story to have an interesting crisis?

7. What ordeal did Uri put *Stopthief* through at the beginning of Chapter 4? How did *Stopthief* feel when it was all over?

8. What was Uri's philosophy regarding stealing?

9. Describe the circumstances which gave Uri the chance to drive the streetcar? What resulted from this little adventure?

10. Describe your impression of the novel to this point.



Language Activities

A. Warsaw, Poland

The novel takes place mainly in the city of Warsaw, Poland. Warsaw is the largest city and capital of this ancient country. Its present population is about 1.7 million, (2.6 million in the metropolitan area) although at the time of our story, it was much smaller. It is the tenth largest city in Europe. During the Second World War about 80% of the buildings were destroyed. Since then the city has been painstakingly rebuilt by the Polish people.



Your task is to investigate this ancient and fascinating city using resources in your school library or on the Internet. From the information gathered create a brochure advertising the highlights of the city (attractions, restaurants, accommodations, museums, historical sites, etc.) which would be of interest to tourists.

You may wish to obtain a couple of samples of brochures to get some ideas for your creation. Your brochure should contain at least one colored picture and four or more relevant pieces of information for visitors to take advantage of when visiting this amazing city.

B. The word “**brush**” can be used as a **noun** or a **verb**, depending on the sentence. Use your imagination and write sentences to illustrate how this word can be used as both a noun and a verb.

BRUSH

Noun	
Verb	

C. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from this section is: *I saw spaces where stores should be. Like broken teeth.*

What two things are being compared in this example?

--	--

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) the screech of a street car

b) the noise made by a tiny field mouse

Bonus: Keep your eye open for another example of a **simile** as you read the novel. When you find one, remember to come back and enter it here

--

Extension Activities

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of *Milkweed*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6