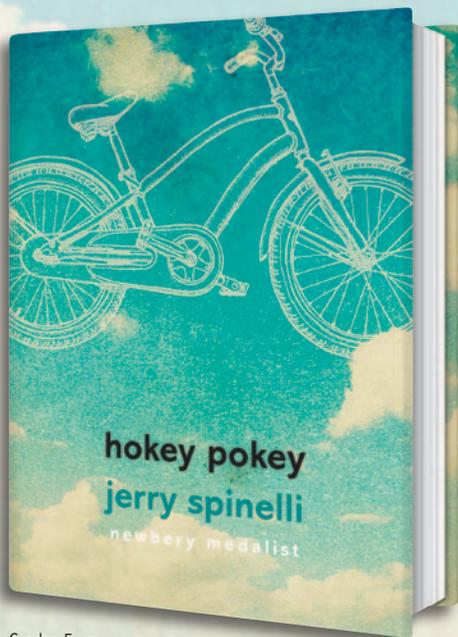




Includes  
Common Core  
State Standards  
Correlations

# hokey pokey

## educator guide



Grades 5 up

HC: 978-0-375-83198-0 • GLB: 978-0-375-93198-7

EL: 978-0-307-97570-6 • 

★ “A masterful, bittersweet recognition of coming-of-age.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

★ “This unforgettable coming-of-age story will resonate with tween readers and take its rightful place beside the author’s *Maniac Magee* and Louis Sachar’s *Holes*.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

“A surreal landscape reminiscent of J.M. Barrie’s *Never Land*. . .”—*Publishers Weekly*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

In Jack’s dream, there are no grownups and kids reign as they journey through various stages of childhood. There’s a place called Tantrums, a line for Snugger, and an enticing Forbidden Hut. They play games, watch cartoons, and ride bikes like they were bucking broncos. The boys hate the girls, and the girls hate them back. This life in Hokey Pokey is all that Jack has known, and he is the supreme leader of it all. Now things are changing, and Jack is struggling to understand why he no longer cares about his beloved bicycle, called Scramjet, or enjoys the same relationship with his Amigos, Dusty and LaJo. And worst of all, he is confused about his changing feelings toward Jubilee, a girl that until now he has despised. The dream symbolizes important changes in his life. Is he ready to accept them?

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Ask students to write about a favorite activity or game they played when they were younger. At what point did they lose interest or abandon this type of play? Why? Have them share their writing in class.

**Correlates with Common Core Standard Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.1, 7.1, 6.2, 7.2; Production and Distribution of Writing: 6.4, 7.4.**

# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Discuss the laws of Hokey Pokey. What is the role of the big kids? How does LaJo shirk his responsibility as a big kid?
- What are the qualities of a leader? Jack is considered the leader of Hokey Pokey. Cite scenes from the novel that reveal Jack's leadership. Who do you think will become the new leader after Jack leaves Hokey Pokey?
- What is Jubilee's relationship with her little brother? How does she prevent him from learning to deal with the other kids?
- The Destroyer says, "I am the LION. They are the zebras." (p. 79) How does this metaphor convey the Destroyer as a bully? How does he choose his victims? Explain how he uses fear to torment them? What is his weapon? Why is Albert so convinced that he has been "exploded"? Describe how Jack teaches Albert to face the Destroyer. How does the Destroyer react to Jack?
- Jack says that Gorilla Hill is "for riding down, not walking up." (p. 18) What is the symbolism of the climb?
- At what point does LaJo realize that Jack is different? How does Jack sense the changes in himself? Discuss the questions Jack has: Is it an absence? A presence? Is it good, or bad? (p. 47) How does he have the answers by the end of the novel?
- Discuss what happens when Jack gets his bike back. Explain what is meant that Jack isn't driving the bike, but the bike is driving Jack. Where is the bike leading Jack? Discuss the sadness that comes over him? What is he grieving?
- Describe Jack and the Amigos' attitude toward girls. Explain Jack's confusion about his changing attitude toward girls, specifically Jubilee. What are the girls' feelings about the boys? How do Jubilee's thoughts toward Jack change by the end of the novel?
- After Scramjet is stolen, Jack has to walk to get where he is going. He realizes that walking by oneself leads to thinking. Why does walking promote thinking more than riding a bike? What is Jack thinking about when he is reduced to walking? Compare and contrast his thoughts at the beginning of the novel to the end of his dream.
- No one has ever been able to get in the Forbidden Hut. Explain why anything forbidden is more enticing.

- Discuss the term “coming of age.” How is Jack’s dream a symbol of his coming of age? Debate whether the decision to redecorate his room sparks the dream in the first place. Why does revisiting his childhood through the dream make his transition easier? Jack receives a one-way ticket on the train. Explain how this symbolizes that growing up is a one-way trip.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3.**

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Jack makes a journey from childhood to adolescence in the novel. Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to find a poem that best describes adolescence. Share the poem in class and talk about how the poem describes what Jack can expect in this new stage of his life.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas R.L. 6.9; Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 6.4, 7.4.**

- Dusty says that “The Story” is a fairy tale. (p. 164) Review the structure of a fairy tale, and ask students to write “The Story” as a fairy tale. Allow time in class for students to read aloud what they have written.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Literature RL. 6.9; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.2, 7.2.**

- Explain what the Hokey Pokey Man means when he says to Jack, “Sayonara Kid.” List the things Jack is leaving behind as he enters a new phase in his life. Have students design a scrapbook page called “Sayonara Kid” that Jack may use in a book about his childhood. Instruct them to use pictures from magazines, computer clip art, or drawings that illustrate these things. Use appropriate captions as a summary of Jack’s childhood.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Literature: Craft and Structure RL 6.7, 7.4; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.3, 7.3a.**

- Allow students to work with a partner to conduct research about childhood and the life of a teenager in another country. Instruct them to use sites on the Internet or books in the library to gather information. Then have them develop a two-part illustrated PowerPoint presentation called “The Childhood and Teenage Years in (name of country).” Ask them to make a conclusion at the end of the presentation that compares these life phases to those in our society. Cite references in proper format at the end of the presentation.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge 6.7, 6.8, 7.7, 7.8; Production and Distribution of Writing 6.6, 7.6.**

# LOOKING AT LITERARY ELEMENTS

**UNDERSTANDING THEME:** Divide the class into small groups and ask them to identify the most important themes in the novel. Instruct them to identify specific quotes from the book that illustrates the various themes. Allow time in class for the groups to share their thoughts. How many different themes do the students identify?

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3.**

**EXPLORING POINT OF VIEW:** The novel is told in third person, but chapters are devoted to specific characters. Select one of the chapters and rewrite it in first person from that character's point of view. Ask students to read aloud their first-person writing. How does this change what a reader knows about a character?

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Craft and Structure R.L. 6.6, 7.6; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.3, 7.3.**

**FOCUSING ON USE OF LANGUAGE:** Write a brief essay that explains the symbolism of the tattoo, and the meaning of Jack's fading tattoo.

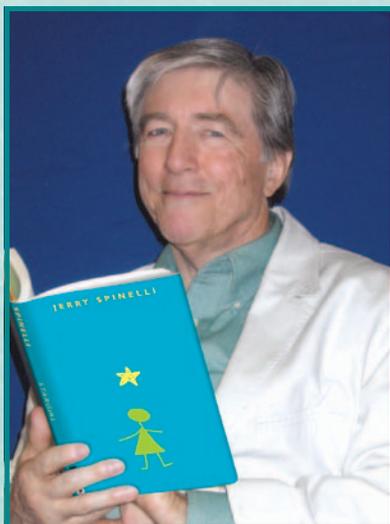
Spinelli uses simile to convey meaning. Explain the following simile: "Somewhere in his mortal brain a miraculous thought unfolded like the morning wings of a dragonfly." (p. 32) Ask students to find other examples of simile in the novel and share with the class. Have them write a simile that describes Jack's feelings at the end of the novel when he wakes up from his dream.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 6.5, 7.5**

**EXAMINING PLOT:** As a class discuss the structure of the novel. What is the first hint that Jack is dreaming? How does this foreshadow what happens in the last chapter of the book? Identify the climax, or the turning point, of the novel. What are the significant events that mark the rising and falling action?

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3.**

Photo credit: Gettysburg College



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jerry Spinelli graduated from Gettysburg College where he wrote his first short stories and edited the literary magazine. He is the father of six children who sparked memories of his own childhood. These memories have found their way into many of Spinelli's novels. He is the author of 30 books, including Newbery Medal winner *Maniac Magee*. Among his books for Random House are: *Crash*, *Knots in My Yo-Yo String*, *Stargirl*, *Love, Stargirl*, and *Milkweed*. He is married to writer Eileen Spinelli. They have 22 grandchildren.

## ALSO BY JERRY SPINELLI:



Prepared by Pat Scales, Children's Literature Consultant, Greenville, SC

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