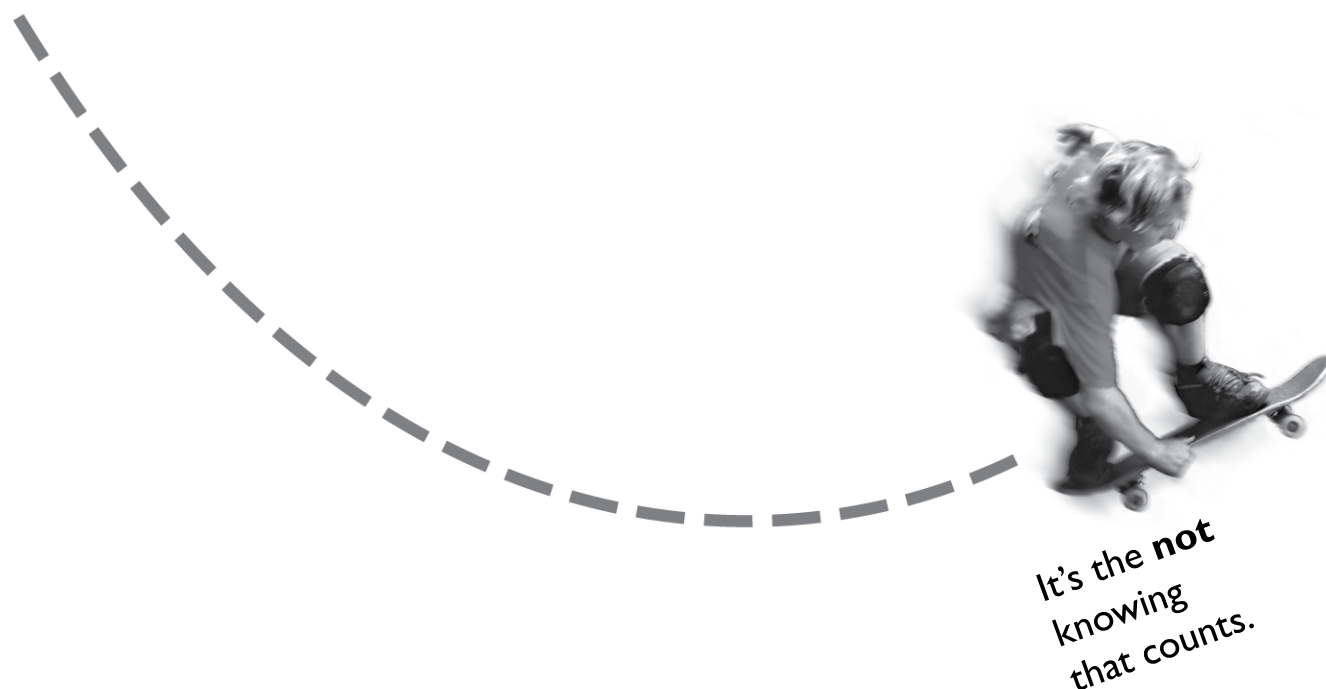


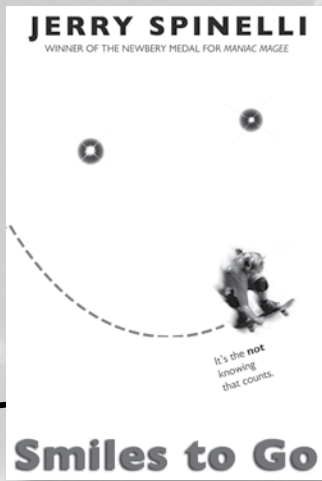
JERRY SPINELLI

WINNER OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL FOR *MANIAC MAGEE*



It's the **not**
knowing
that counts.

Smiles to Go Teacher's Guide



ABOUT THE BOOK

Ninth grader Will Tuppence has his life planned out—what his job will be, who he will marry, and even what he will do in retirement. But the curves life throws at him steer him off course. As Will handles sudden surprises in friendship, love, and family, he learns a thing or two and just maybe lands on a new road that will make him happier overall. In *Smiles to Go*, Jerry Spinelli offers real-life characters that readers can relate to and real-life questions that will linger beyond the last page of this engaging novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What three words would you use to describe Will Tuppence? Is Will someone you would like to get to know? Explain.
2. How does Will change over the course of the story? Describe how his approach to life at the end of the book differs from his approach at the beginning.
3. What is the meaning of the book's title? Do you think BT intentionally misspoke the last lines of Robert Frost's poem? What makes you think so?
4. What does the news of proton death mean to Will? How does it effect him?
5. What parts of the book did you find funny? What made those parts funny?
6. Do you think BT actually skateboarded down Dead Man's Hill? Why or why not? Is whether he did important to the story? Explain.
7. Will thinks in epitaphs and mottoes throughout the story. What motto would you assign to Will at the end of the story? What mottoes would you give to BT, Mi-Su, and Tabby?
8. What does Will learn from Korbet? What do you think of Korbet's approach to love? Compare and contrast Korbet's and Will's ways of having a crush.
9. In what ways are Mr. Bontempo and Mr. Tuppence the same, and how are they different? Why do you think Will talks more with Mr. Bontempo than with his father? If you had a choice between the two fathers, which one would you prefer to discuss a problem with? Why?
10. What is the significance of the wedding presents? Do you think they are a happy or a sad symbol in the book, or are they something else? Explain.
11. Why does Will have such a hard time with Mi-Su acting in the school play?
12. Will's elementary school instituted First Day because people thought there was too much focus on endings and not enough on beginnings. Do you agree? Why or why not?
13. In what ways does the saying *carpe diem* relate to the story? How does the tag line on the front of the book—"It's the *not* knowing that counts"—relate to the novel?
14. What do you think Will, Mi-Su, and BT will be doing ten years after the story ends? Base your conjectures on what you know about the characters from your reading.

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. **Commemorating oneself.** Ask the class to scan through the book to find the epitaphs for the different characters. Then have students write epitaphs for themselves. Request volunteers to share their creations with the class and call on other students to explain their understanding of the various epitaphs' meanings, given what they know about the writers.
2. **Alternative versions.** Have students choose an aspect of the book and write an alternative version of it. For instance, would the part where Mi-Su and BT were kissing have ended differently if Will had said or done something to interrupt? Or, would Will have a different relationship with his younger sibling if that sibling was a brother instead of a sister? Pair up students to read their vignettes to each other.
3. **Seeking advice.** Ask students to take on Will's point of view to write a letter to an advice columnist. What might Will ask for help with? His relationship with his sister, Tabby? His friendship with BT? His feelings for Mi-Su? After students write their letters, have them trade with partners to write responses as advice columnists. Partners should then give their responses back to the original letter writers to read.
4. **Young poets.** Remind students of how BT changes the final lines of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost to: "Smiles to go before I weep." The word changes are so meaningful that Jerry Spinelli makes the new phrase the title of his novel. Charge students with using "Smiles to Go" as the title of a poem they write that relates to the messages of the story. Organize students to read their poems aloud in small groups. Ask them to discuss how their poems are different, even though they all have the same title.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. **Scientific research.** Assign students to small groups to work together on science research projects. Have each group choose an aspect of science raised in the book, such as proton decay, the Horsehead Nebula, galaxies, atomic clocks, string theory, or ventilators. Arrange time for groups to research their topics, letting them know that they will need to present what they learn to the class. Presentations should include historical information, the relevance of the topic, related scientific occupations, interesting facts, and visual aids.
2. **Science in the news.** Ask each student to bring in a recent newspaper or magazine article about a current scientific discovery. Then have students give verbal summaries of their news items to the class, answering questions from the group. Also have students post copies of their articles as part of a "Science in the News" display in the classroom.
3. **Making poetry personal.** Pass out copies of the poems recited in Will's English class: "The End of the World" by Archibald MacLeish; "I'm Nobody!" by Emily Dickinson; "Who Are You?" by Emily Dickinson; and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost. Read the poems as a class and facilitate a discussion about why Jerry Spinelli aligned his three main characters with these poems. As an extension to this exercise, make poetry anthologies available to your students so that they may each select a poem that resonates personally. Have each student memorize his or her selection to recite to the class. Also ask students to be prepared to explain why they chose their individual poems.
4. **Approaching life through art.** Engage students in a discussion about the different approaches to life presented in the book. Ask them to consider how they approach their own lives, as well as to reflect on what is important to them, what they fear, and how they want to live. Have art materials ready for students to use in creating visual representations of their own approaches to life. Hang the art pieces around the room so that everyone may view each other's ideas.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jerry Spinelli is one of the most gifted storytellers in contemporary children's literature. His books include Newbery Medal winner *Maniac Magee*; *Loser*, which won five state-sponsored children's choice awards; and *Wringer*, a Newbery Honor Book. Jerry Spinelli lives with his wife, Eileen, also a writer, in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Gettysburg College. Visit him online at www.jerryspinelli.com.

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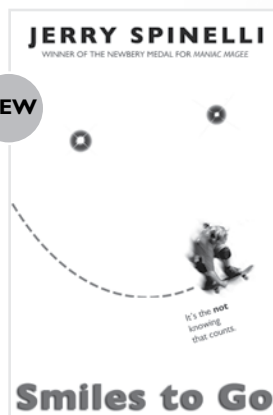
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Questions and activities prepared by Emily Lindsay, Teacher at the Bank Street School for Children, New York, New York.

BOOKS BY JERRY SPINELLI

A Selected Bibliography



Smiles to Go

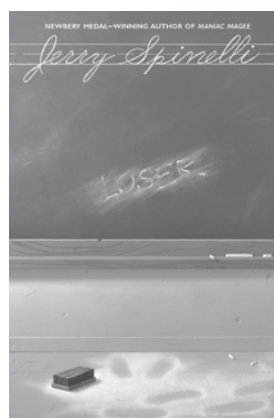
Tr 978-0-06-028133-5 • \$16.99 (\$19.99)

Lb 978-0-06-028134-2 • \$17.89 (\$20.89)

"The Spinelli touch remains true in this funny and thoroughly enjoyable read." —*Publishers Weekly* (signature review)

"Spinelli employs a fresh voice and honest perspective to mine the prickly intersections of family, friendship, and growing up, with emotionally resonant results."

—*ALA Booklist*



Loser

Tr 978-0-06-000193-3 • \$15.99 (\$18.99)

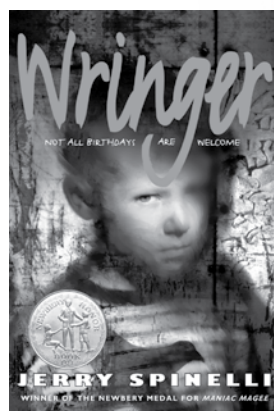
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Pb 978-0-06-054074-6 • \$5.99 (\$6.50)

★ "A masterful character portrait; here's one loser who will win plenty of hearts." —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

★ "Spinelli here enters the consciousness of the social pariah ... [and] demonstrates the differences between those who can continue to see with the more compassionate 'little-kid eyes' and those who lose sight of what is truly important." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

- Book Sense Pick
- *Publishers Weekly* Best Book
- Judy Lopez Memorial Award Honor Book
- Maine Student Book Award
- Missouri's Mark Twain Award
- New Jersey's Garden State Children's Book Award
- Vermont's Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award
- Washington's Sasquatch Reading Award
- New York Public Library's 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing



Wringer

Tr 978-0-06-024913-7 • \$16.99 (\$21.50)

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Pb 978-0-06-440578-2 • \$6.99 (\$8.99)

Pb Rack 978-0-06-059282-0 • \$6.99 (\$8.99)

★ "Tender scenes contrast with barbaric images in this spellbinding story about rites of passage. An eloquently wrought narrative." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

★ "Spinelli's characters are memorable, convincing, and both endearing and villainous; and they are involved in a plot that, from the first page, is riveting." —*School Library Journal* (starred review)

- Newbery Honor Book
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- ALA *Booklist* Editors' Choice
- *Horn Book* Fanfare
- *School Library Journal* Best Book
- NCTE Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts
- American Bookseller Pick of the Lists
- New York Public Library's 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing