

GAVRIEL SAVIT

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

COME SEE
THE
FAIR

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Twelve-year-old orphan Eva Root travels the country pretending to channel spirits at séances. Her audiences swear their loved ones have spoken to them from beyond the grave. This, of course, is impossible.

But one day, Eva experiences another impossibility: she hears a voice in her head telling her to come to the World's Fair in Chicago. There, she meets a mysterious magician who needs her help to bring magic to life. But as their work progresses, Eva begins to suspect that the project's goals may not be as noble as they seem. And when tragedy strikes, Eva will have to reach beyond death itself to unravel the mystery of the magician's plan—before it's too late.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GAVRIEL SAVIT is the author of *The Way Back*, a National Book Award finalist, and *Anna and the Swallow Man*, which the *New York Times* called “a splendid debut.” His books have been translated into nineteen languages. He lives in St. Louis, Missouri, with his wife and children.



Photo by Nikita Arminian



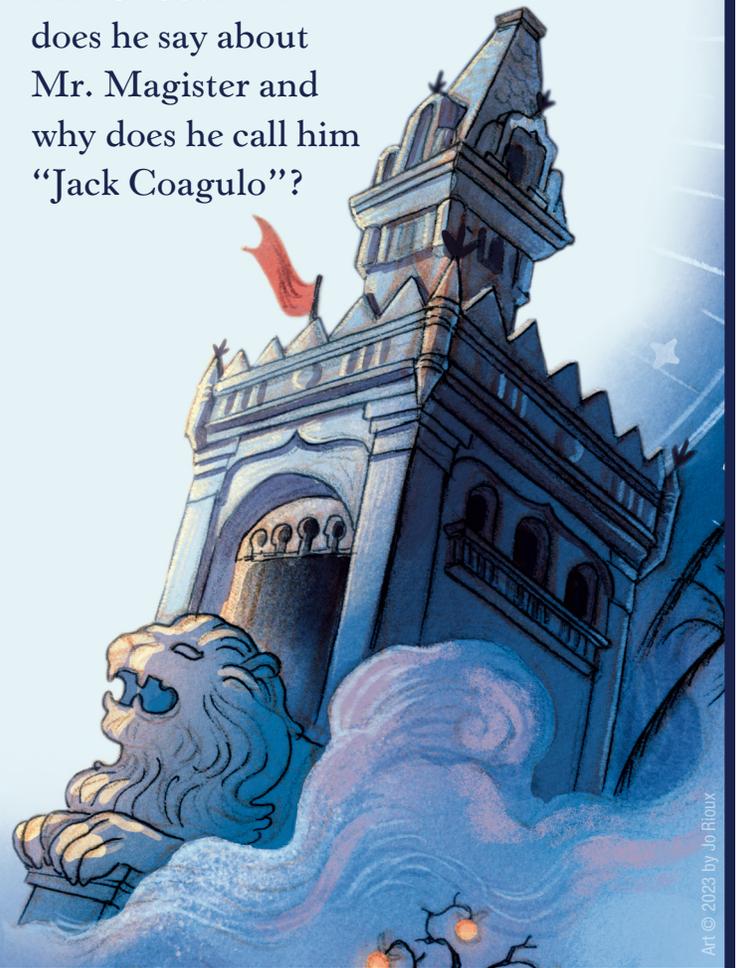
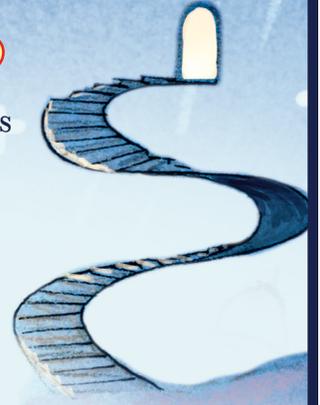
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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the important aspects of a family and the important elements of a home?
2. What do you know about world's fairs? What do you think are the goals of such a gathering?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Eva and Henry meet? What is Henry's life like before he meets Eva? Why does he take her home with him, and how is she treated there? What interests him most at the World's Fair? Talk about the role of art in Henry's life.
2. What was Eva's situation before she met Henry? What happened to her parents? How did she end up with Mrs. Blodgett? What is Mrs. Blodgett like? Describe the séances they stage. Why does Eva take money and run away?
3. How do Eva and Henry change over the course of the story? Discuss what each of them is like when they first appear and compare that to what they are like the last time they appear. Cite specific moments or incidents that are crucial to their character development.
4. How important is setting to the story? Could it have taken place somewhere else? Give an overview of the World's Fair as conveyed in the novel. What kind of buildings and grounds are there? What makes it so exciting to the people who attend? What are some of the activities they can do? What kind of food is for sale?
5. Describe the Pavilion of Magic, its atmosphere, and some of its different rooms. How does time shift there? What is Eva's reaction to the Pavilion? What is Henry's? Why do they react differently?
6. How do Eva and Henry meet Mr. Magister? Describe what he's like when they meet him. What does he do in the Pavilion of Magic? Who is Mr. Gabbermann? What does he say about Mr. Magister and why does he call him "Jack Coagulo"?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. Discuss this quotation about Eva that appears twice in the novel: “All her life, she’d lived with the orphan’s quiet question—what was it like to have a family? what was it like to be at home?” (p. 37) Why are those things important to her? Does she find a family or a home?
8. What is the Impossible Art? Discuss Eva’s ability to turn the peach pit back into a real peach and her power to “bring back what is gone.” (p. 244) What does she want to bring back? Does Mr. Magister practice the Impossible Art? If so, how does he do it and what are his goals?
9. What happens at the farmhouse? How do Eva and Mr. Magister get there? Who does she see there? What is the barn like? Where does Eva think the farmhouse is, and where does she discover it really is?
10. How does Eva meet Detective Webster? Why does she tell him some of what she knows about Mr. Magister? Why doesn’t she tell him everything? Describe their visit to the cyclorama and what the cyclorama shows. What has happened to the flames?
11. Discuss Mr. Magister’s relationship to the Chicago Fire and what he lost in it. How do furnaces, electricity, and copper figure in his actions? How do those elements affect Eva at different times?
12. How do the other children—Meg, Cato, Vaclav, Iphigénie, and Henry—prove helpful to Eva? What happens to Mr. Magister in the end? What happens to Eva?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

EXPLORE THE EXPOSITION

As a class, make a list of aspects of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that are mentioned in the novel, including specific buildings, attendance, food offerings, performances, fair newspapers, transportation on the fairgrounds, and so on. In pairs, have students choose a topic and research it with print and digital resources. The students should give a multimedia presentation to the class that combines facts and images with music and other media.

COME SEE THE FAIR

Ask each student to create a colorful poster to entice people to the Fair using information from the novel and the class presentations. The poster should incorporate images and facts that might draw in attendees such as the novelty of seeing electric light bulbs or displays from other countries.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

One day at Overstreet House, Eva reads the *Daily Columbian*, “the newspaper printed and distributed on the fairgrounds.” Ask students to choose any exciting episode in the novel, even one that includes magic, and write a newspaper story about it for the *Daily Columbian*. The story should include the traditional elements of who, what, why, where, when, and how.

MAP YOUR VISIT

The Library of Congress has [maps of the 1893 Columbian Exposition](#), which users can zoom in on and explore. Examine the first two maps in the collection. The first map has a numbered key showing different buildings and other features. Have students work in small groups to explore the maps and find buildings and features mentioned in the novel or in class presentations.

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years. Kathleen, who chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee, now presents professional development workshops for educators on new books for young people.

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