***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 16***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Chapter 16. In Chapter 14, Maniac questions why the East Enders call themselves black. The question presents itself again as Maniac is termed “blind” because of his failure to understand the tensions that exist around him. He doesn’t understand age or racial discrimination and is confused by the premise of skin color. The end of the chapter culminates with an allusion to the fact that Maniac is about to understand discrimination.

***Summary and Analysis Part by part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) has a sort of blindness. He fails to see things like the fact that big kids don’t like being shown up by little kids, and that some kids don’t like kids who are different—especially a different color.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Maniac’s innocence, which helps him cross boundaries so readily, is poised to get him in trouble. Though he means well, he’s unaware of more complicated social dynamics around him.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) doesn’t understand “this color business.” He doesn’t understand what makes the East Enders “black”; he doesn’t understand what makes him white. He looks himself over, and he can’t find a truly white shade anywhere. It’s a relief to him, since being plain white would be pretty boring. However, there’s still a growing dislike all around him. He can’t see it—until, one day, he can.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Maniac’s total innocence of racial dynamics is another aspect of his mythical character—it’s a bit hard to believe that a real kid of his era would take such a literal view of the idea of skin color, for example. But his exaggerated innocence is meant to highlight the foolishness of arbitrary divisions between people.