***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 17***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Chapter 17. It’s a hot August day and an open fire hydrant on the corner of Green and Chestnut cools Maniac and his neighbors. As they enjoy the water, a loud voice is heard above the crowd. The voice comes closer to Maniac and he is face to face with a black man pointing straight at him. The man calls Maniac “Whitey” and tells him that he needs to go home. Maniac calmly tells the man he lives in the neighborhood on Sycamore Street. The man, named Old Ragpicker, continues to yell at Maniac telling him to go home. Ragpicker turns to the neighbors and calls to them, telling them “the sheep lie not with the lion.” Essentially, he’s saying Maniac doesn’t belong in the neighborhood and should stay in his own neighborhood. Visibly shaken, Maniac returns home where he struggles to sleep. One morning while out running, he is met by Hester, Lester, and Amanda who attempt to keep him from going back to the house. Maniac senses something is wrong and as he pulls up to his house, he notices Mrs. Beale is scrubbing the house’s brick. Upon closer inspection, Maniac notices a message written in chalk on the house. It says, (F)ISHBELLY GO HOME.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

One hot August day, somebody opens the fire hydrant on a street corner, and soon the gushing water is filled with screaming, happy people. [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) joyfully joins the crowd—until he starts noticing a single, thick voice calling a name over and over. The voice is saying “Whitey.” To Maniac’s surprise, he knows the voice is addressing him.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The scene of community happiness is harshly disrupted. The fact that it’s just one person shows how powerful a single discordant voice can be within a community. Though Maniac has seemed oblivious to racial dynamics, somehow he senses that he’s being singled out.

***Summary Part 2:***

The voice tells [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee), “You move on now, Whitey […] Time to go home now.” It’s an elderly man in slippers. When Maniac insists that he is home, the man says that Maniac needs to return to “his own kind,” and that white people just keep wanting more and more. Maniac figures that the man must be hard of hearing, and keeps loudly repeating that he lives at the Beales’ address. [Hester and Lester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters) yell at the man in Maniac’s defense. The old man keeps ranting to the crowd at large, until a woman drags him away.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The old man sees Maniac as a symbol of white people’s encroachments into black communities. Maniac can’t understand, because to him, the East End simply means home and community—hence repeating his address to the man.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) stops sleeping well. He gets up even earlier and jogs around Two Mills. One day, at the end of a jog, [Hester and Lester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters) and [Amanda](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/amanda-beale) run out and try to distract Maniac from approaching their house. When Maniac breaks away from them and looks at 728 Sycamore, he sees [Mrs. Beale](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/mrs-beale) frantically scrubbing at graffiti which reads, “Fishbelly go home.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

The encounter with the old man is unsettling for Maniac, and he begins to sense that his adoptive community might not be permanent. The graffiti confirms this—and it rubs salt in the wound of his homeless past.