***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 36***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Chapter 36. Maniac makes a deal with the boys stating if they go to school for a week he will show them the shortcut to Mexico. A week comes and goes and Maniac offers them a new deal. This pattern continues for a few weeks. Although school is tough for the boys, they are beginning to like all of the attention they are receiving because of giving Maniac shelter.. One day, Maniac presents the boys with the same offer but Russell and Piper add a stipulation. They want Maniac to stand in Finsterwald’s backyard for 10 minutes in exchange for them going to school for a week. Maniac agrees and extends the dare by offering to knock on Finsterwald’s door. The neighborhood cringes in fear for Maniac and watches him go up to Finsterwald’s porch and knock. A person answers and a conversation, inaudible to the crowd, takes place. Maniac returns unharmed and faces a crowd of amazed kids.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) makes a deal with [Piper and Russell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/piper-and-russell-mcnab): if they go to school for the rest of the week, he will show them the shortcut to Mexico on Saturday. But when Saturday comes, Maniac convinces them that it’s “volcano season” in Mexico, and that they’d better postpone the trip. Meanwhile, he bribes them with Cobble’s free pizza.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Maniac, believing in the little boys’ potential as he does everyone else’s, does the best he can to help the McNab boys within their unhealthy environment.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Piper and Russell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/piper-and-russell-mcnab) have their own ideas, too. At school, they’ve become famous for their association with [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee). For the first time, they feel important. They start craving this feeling. They start making deals with Maniac. If they attend school for another week, Maniac has to spend 10 minutes in [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s backyard.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Piper and Russell decide to leverage their connection with Maniac by getting him to do some of his characteristic heroic feats, enjoying the notoriety it brings them.

***Summary Part 3:***

So next Saturday, a crowd of terrified kids watches as [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) calmly stands in the center of [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s backyard. When 10 minutes are up, Maniac is still smiling. He decides to add to the deal in exchange for another week of school attendance—he’ll knock on Finsterwald’s front door. The kids are so terrified that a few of them get the “finsterwallies” on the spot. But they follow Maniac around to the front of the house, huddled together. They’re convinced they’re witnessing the end of Maniac’s life.

***Analysis Part 3:***

As usual, for Maniac, the so-called heroic feats are not the point, in and of themselves. He uses those actions to try to prompt Piper and Russell to rise to their potential. This is consistent with his character throughout the story—he never sees stunts, like the Finsterwald visit, as ends in themselves.

***Summary Part 4:***

The kids watch as, in answer to [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee)’s knock, [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s front door cracks open. They’re standing too far away to see or hear anything else. But moments later, the door closes, and Maniac jogs toward them with a grin on his face. Some kids run, others touch Maniac in awe, wondering if he’s a ghost. But later, they watch him eat a pack of butterscotch Krimpets and decide he must be alive.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Exactly what happens when Finsterwald opens his door is never shown. The point is that Maniac is willing to reach out to someone that nobody else will—for him, the essence of real heroism.