***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 40***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Chapter 40. Maniac takes a long run to digest what he’s just witnessed and returns back to the West End for a dinner at Mrs. Pickwell’s.

Feeling refreshed, Maniac returns to the McNab house to find the boys have eased up on their demanding feats. As the weather warms and May approaches, it is getting nearly impossible for Maniac to keep Piper and Russell in school. Although life at the McNab’s house is chaotic, Maniac feels responsible for taking care of the boys and making sure they are okay.

One day, Maniac finds Russell and Piper playing with Grayson’s baseball mitt and using it like a football. This is the final straw for Maniac and he leaves the house for good. Russell and Piper find Maniac at the library and beg him to come back for their birthday party. Maniac agrees and asks if he can bring a guest.

***Analysis (36-40):***

As Maniac lives in the chaotic McNab household, he begins to convince Russell and Piper to go to school regularly. Once again, we see a reciprocal relationship. Maniac fulfills his purpose to help the boys and the boys love the recognition they get from housing Maniac and “convincing” him to complete their daring feats.

One such feat is going into the backyard of Finsterwald’s house and knocking on his front door. The unwarranted fear surrounding this home plays into the idea that people fear what they don’t know or understand. Although Finsterwald has never given the children a reason to be scared of him, they base their opinions on fictional stories. Maniac serves as an example of facing one’s fears and discovering people as they truly are. This theme continues in a grander scale later on.

Maniac is slightly fearful as Russell and Piper dare him to return to the East End. He doesn’t fear being in the East End but rather is worried about the repercussions the Beales may face by his being there. He runs into Mars and accepts his challenge for a race and wins. The race symbolizes Maniac’s stand toward East End resistance. He will not allow the East Enders to bully or belittle him or the Beales ever again.

Old feelings are reignited as Maniac spends time with his beloved Beale family. Feeling a sense of responsibility toward Piper and Russell, he leaves the Beale’s home and heads back to the West End. Upon finding the McNabs building a fortress in preparation for an East End revolt, Maniac heads to the Pickwell’s for dinner. Eating with the Pickwells reminds him that caring people exist in the West End and reignites his wish for a peaceful East End/West End integration. His optimism is soon tested when he discovers the unruly Piper and Russell playing with his prized mitt from Grayson. Although visibly upset, Maniac keeps calm and asks if he can bring a guest to the boys’ upcoming birthday party. Although the guest isn’t revealed, one can’t help but believe that Maniac’s perseverance is in full force.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) spends the day running, but that night, he answers [Mrs. Pickwell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/mrs-valerie-pickwell)’s dinner whistle. This time, he’s not a stranger—the Pickwell kids cheer when he arrives, and even better, Mrs. Pickwell treats him like family. There’s a down-and-out shoe salesman at the table, too. Enjoying dinner, Maniac compares the Pickwells to the Beales and finds the two families similar—“whoever had made Hector Street a barrier, it was surely not these people.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

The Pickwells mirror the McNab family—both are loving, open, generous households ready to believe the best of those both within and without. Eating with them restores Maniac’s faith in humanity, and specifically in Two Mills.

***Summary Part 2:***

Back at the McNabs’, [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) finds he no longer has much influence over [Piper and Russell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/piper-and-russell-mcnab), especially with summer approaching. The kids are beginning to build a raft and daydream about escape. It’s unclear to Maniac why he continues to care. He feels that, somehow, abandoning the McNab boys would be “to abandon something in himself.” Deep down,  he thinks, the boys are so much like [Hester and Lester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters) Beale, but unlike the Beales, their environment is rotting them from the inside.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Maniac sees the McNab boys as being much like himself. If Maniac hadn’t encountered loving homes along the way, he might have turned out like them. He chooses to believe that even the McNabs could be as sweet and affectionate as the Beale kids, if only someone shows them love before it’s too late. This is the epitome of Maniac’s willingness to see the best in others.

***Summary Part 3:***

One day, [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) finds [Piper and Russell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/piper-and-russell-mcnab) punting [Grayson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/earl-grayson)’s baseball glove back and forth like a football. He explodes at them for 10 minutes. This wins Maniac a few days of respect and obedience. But then, angered by their pretending to attack the “rebels,” Maniac stomps the boys’ toy guns into bits. The boys tell him to leave their house, and Maniac does. A few days later, however, the boys find Maniac at the library and beg him to come to Piper’s birthday party the next day. Maniac agrees—on the condition that he can bring any guest he wants.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Even Maniac has his limits—the kids’ disrespect of Grayson’s glove, of him, and of their neighbors pushes him over the edge. But he still doesn’t give up on them, beginning to hatch a plan of his own.