***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 14***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Chapter 14. Maniac is adjusting well to his new life. As he grows to love his new family and neighborhood, he begins to question why the East Enders call themselves black.

As summer winds away, Maniac is often seen playing stickball, basketball, and football in the vacant lot of his neighborhood. One day, he runs into the same receiver, “Hands” Down, he had seen at the high school field months before. “Hands” asks Maniac to play football with a group of high school students and soon everyone discovers Maniac is a talented athlete. Catching on to his talent, kids from all around come up to him and ask if he is The Maniac. He is called Maniac so much that Hester and Lester begin to call him Maniac, too. Mrs. Beale, however, assures Maniac he will always be Jeffrey to her. Maniac finds comfort in that.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) loves his new life. He has new sneakers to replace the flap-soled ones. He loves the silence of his early-morning runs through the neighborhood. He loves going to church with the Beales, where there’s an exuberant choir and everyone shouts, “Hallelujah! Amen!” including Maniac. He loves the holiday block parties and the variety of people. He thinks of the Beales as his family.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Maniac has carved out a home for himself among the Beales. He has the material things he needs. He even feels comfortable in environments where most white kids perhaps wouldn’t, like the Beales’ church. In other words, he isn’t self-conscious about his place in their world, though others would see him as an outsider.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) can’t figure out why the people of the East End consider themselves to be “black.” He sees a wide range of rich brown skin tones, but no black. He loves joining kids of all colors at the vacant lot for sports and games all summer, often forgetting to return home for lunch. One day [Hands Down](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters) shows up at the vacant lot, and he and Maniac spend hours practicing passes and plays.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Maniac has a naïve, superficial perspective on race. In particular, he takes language about color literally and doesn’t understand why it’s seen as a defining aspect of people. He continues to innocently enjoy his role in the East End community.

***Summary Part 3:***

Eventually, kids at the vacant lot start asking him, “You that [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee)?” One day [Mrs. Beale](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/mrs-beale) asks him the same thing. Maniac tells her he’s just Jeffrey. He fears losing the name his parents gave him. Mrs. Beale promises that in her house, he’ll only be Jeffrey. But as for outside—she can’t control “whatever the rest of the world wants to call him.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

Maniac’s reputation in the West End has spread, but Maniac doesn’t really want to be connected with that. He just wants to stay connected to family—both his birth family and his adoptive family. But he can’t stay sheltered from the outside world forever.