***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 2***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary***

A year after the fateful night of the school musical, Jeffrey shows up in the town of Two Mills, unaware that like his aunt and uncle’s home, this town is divided. Two Mills is situated near the Schuylkill River, just across from the town of Bridgeport where Jeffrey once lived with his parents before the trolley accident.

***Analysis:***

That Jeffery earns the moniker of "Maniac" is interesting because this word has a couple of meanings, usually with negative connotations. A "maniac" can be another word for someone who is crazy, rooted in the word "mania" which means a mental illness marked by great excitement, hyperactivity, and delusions. However, the word "maniac" can also be used to describe someone who really enjoys or obsesses over something like a particular hobby. This meaning is a bit more positive. People seem to use the nickname with both of these definitions in mind - Jeffery may be perceived as crazy because he runs around all day with no family and no real direction, but he truly earns his name and his fame by his athletic feats and lack of fear.

***Summary part 1:***

Everybody knows that [Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) wound up in Two Mills, but nobody knows why it took him a year to cover the 200-mile distance from Hollidaysburg. Everyone just calls it The Lost Year. Nobody knows why he stayed in Two Mills, either. Maybe it’s because his hometown, Bridgeport, is right across the Schuylkill River. But some people say that he just got tired of running, or was simply happy to make a friend.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jeffrey eventually crosses much of Pennsylvania, ending up in the greater Philadelphia suburbs, where he was born. His “Lost Year” adds to the sense of myth surrounding Jeffrey—it’s not very likely that a kid would succeed in running away and surviving on his own in secret—yet the important thing is that Jeffrey winds up in Two Mills.

***Summary Part 2:***

Nowadays, lots of people claim to have seen [Jeffrey Magee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) the day he first arrived. The truth is that only a handful of people did, and all they saw was a “scraggly” boy whose sneaker soles flopped open with every step he took. What people remember most, however, is that he said “Hi” to them as he passed, causing them to pause and wonder. People didn’t normally greet strangers like that.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jeffrey isn’t anything extraordinary on the surface. Yet his simple greeting suggests that he’s kinder and more open to other people than the average person in Two Mills. It sets the tone for the rest of the story, where a simple gesture often has a much greater impact than a heroic act.

***Quotes and their explanations:***

***Quote 1:***

As he passed them, he said, 'Hi.' Just that—'Hi'—and he was gone. They stopped, they blinked, they turned, they stared after him, they wondered: *Do I know that kid?* Because people just didn't say that to strangers, out of the blue. (2.7)

***Explanation:***

Gee, how rude of him to say "Hi." But really, Maniac has the most important step towards friendship down: being friendly. It's kind of a relief that life with the unloving Uncle Dan and Aunt Dot didn't completely turn him off of human niceties, right? Gee, the world might be a nicer place if we were all this innocent. Think about it: why do you avoid saying "Hi"? Because you're afraid of strangers? Because you don't trust people? Because you're not innocent enough to think they'll respond?