***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 3***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary***

Jeffrey’s first day in Two Mills leaves the children of the town wild with stories, and not just because he seems to have no knowledge or regard for the unspoken social rule of segregation. One of his first encounters is with a young African-American girl named Amanda Beale. Immediately Amanda is suspicious of Jeffrey, primarily because he is hanging out in the East End regardless of his white skin, but also because he so easily greets her. But Jeffrey is also curious about Amanda, and the suitcase she is carrying with her. She is not another runaway, as Jeffrey presumes. Amanda carries her own personal library of books around with her, a collection of her most favorite positions. Although no one has ever been able to convince Amanda to part with the books she holds so dear, Jeffrey manages to persuade her into lending one to him. From Amanda, Jeffrey first learns that he may not belong in the East End.

***Summary part 1:***

The first person who talks with [Maniac](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) is [Amanda Beale](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/amanda-beale), and that happens by accident. It’s around eight in the morning, and Maniac sees Amanda carrying a suitcase and figures she’s a runaway like him, so he says, “Hi.” She’s suspicious at first, wondering what this white kid is doing in the East End, but she’s also a friendly person, so she says “Hi,” too. When Jeffrey asks if she’s running away, she laughs and laughs. At last she tells Jeffrey that she’s just going to school. She opens up the suitcase to reveal dozens of books crammed inside.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jeffrey/Maniac is drawn to people who, like him, seem to be looking for a home. This is also the first hint in the story of the extreme racial divisions in the town—it’s notable that a white kid would even speak to a black kid.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) kneels in the middle of the crowd of rushing students to admire the books. There are all kinds, including an encyclopedia volume, the one for the letter A. [Amanda](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/amanda-beale) proudly explains that it’s her library. Then she suddenly realizes that the street is emptying and she’s going to be late for school. Jeffrey offers to carry her suitcase, but she snatches it away from him.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jeffrey hasn’t attended school for at least a year, and books are a luxury for him. Though Amanda is friendly to Jeffrey, his gesture toward carrying her suitcase makes Amanda uncomfortable—both because she’s protective of her books and because it would be conspicuous in this racially divided town.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Amanda](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/amanda-beale) asks who [Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) is—she knows he isn’t from the East End, like her. Two Mills, after all, is “pretty much divided,” with black people living in the East End, and white people in the West End. Jeffrey says that he’s originally from Bridgeport, across the river, but he’s not from anywhere in particular right now—maybe here.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The racial division in Two Mills is openly described—the town is strictly segregated, something that wouldn’t have been unusual in a Pennsylvania town in the 1950s. Jeffrey seems oblivious to this reality, however.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) asks why [Amanda](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/amanda-beale) is carrying a suitcase full of books to school. She explains that her little brother and sister love to color on everything, and her dog, Bow Wow, loves to chew on everything, so she just carries her library to school each day to keep it safe. As the bell rings and Amanda hurries toward school, Jeffrey jogs alongside, begging to borrow one of her books.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Jeffrey continues to show interest in Amanda, eager for friendship as much as for books.

***Quotes and their explanations:***

***Quote 1:***

Amanda was suspicious. Who was this stranger kid? And what was he doing in the East End, where almost all the kids were black? And why was he saying that? (3.3)

***Explanation:***

Amanda is a pretty great kid, who is open-minded and friendly (if a little bossy and opinionated). So, if even she is concerned by a white kid in the black neighborhood, you know we're talking about some deep-seated prejudices.

**Rock in a Stream (Simile)**

**He and Amanda and the suitcase were like a rock in a stream; the school-goers just flowed to the left and right around them." (11)**

This turn of phrase, used the first time Jeffery meets Amanda, describes how the other school children flowed around them, not bothered by them being together. This contradicts other times that Jeffery's skin color makes him stand out, shows their shared focus on the books Amanda carries, and evokes a sense of nature through the use of the image of a rock and a stream.