***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 5***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary***

Maniac’s antics continue as he is spotted at 803 Oriole Street, the house of the notoriously mean and mysterious Finsterwald. A group of high school boys have thrown young Arnold Palmer over Finsterwald’s fence. As Arnold lies paralyzed with fear, a type of seizure (in the text called finsterwallies) overcomes him and his teeth and body shake uncontrollably. Out of nowhere, Maniac shows up, sticks Amanda’s book in between Arnold’s teeth, and takes him to Finsterwald’s front steps. Arnold comes to and runs off, leaving Maniac reading a book.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee)’s second appearance in Two Mills that day occurs in the backyard of 803 Oriole Street. This is [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s house—an infamous place to the kids of Two Mills. Nobody knows exactly what Finsterwald does to kids. All anyone knows is that, to this day, if you see a “poor, raggedy, nicotine-stained wretch” around town, he was probably once a normal kid who stumbled onto Finsterwald’s property by accident. That’s why no kid dares chase a stray baseball or boomerang into Finsterwald’s backyard.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jeffrey again crosses a boundary that nobody else would dare. This time, though, the stakes are higher than just running across the football field. It’s not clear precisely what kind of threat Finsterwald poses, or if he’s really a threat at all—but the kids of Two Mills have developed a legend about him that might be scarier than reality.

***Summary Part 2:***

But this particular afternoon, screams are coming from a 10-year-old in [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s backyard. Nobody’s sure of his name nowadays, but for convenience, he’s called [Arnold Jones](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters). Several high school kids are hoisting Arnold Jones above Finsterwald’s fence while he screams in desperation. But of course the high school kids drop Arnold Jones into the yard. Then they wait and watch. Arnold Jones just crouches there, his teeth chattering and his body trembling—a condition the kids call “the finsterwallies.” The high school kids clap and cheer.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Older kids use the stories of Finsterwald to terrorize younger kids, suggesting that not only are racial divisions a problem in Two Mills, but that there’s an atmosphere of bullying in general.

***Summary Part 3:***

Years later, no one can say exactly what happened. Some say that [Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) just hopped the fence; others say he just opened the backyard gate and walked in. But everyone remembers seeing the raggedy kid walk in and approach [Arnold Jones](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters), who promptly fainted in shock. Jeffrey put his book between his teeth, picked up the limp Arnold Jones, and hauled him out of [Finsterwald](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/finsterwald)’s backyard, depositing him on the front steps. When Arnold Jones wakes up and realizes where he is, he takes off. Jeffrey, meanwhile, just stretches out on the front steps and begins to read.

***Analysis Part 3:***

As a newcomer, Jeffrey doesn’t have any reason to know about the legend of Finsterwald, but he knows what the cries of a helpless kid sound like, and he calmly comes to the rescue. He’s willing to cross boundaries that others won’t in order to give help where it’s needed. As an outsider, he doesn’t have the same ingrained fears as those who’ve grown up here.

***Important Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

As the stupefied high-schoolers were leaving the scene, they looked back. They saw the kid, cool times ten, stretch out on the forbidden steps and open his book to read. (5.19)

***Explanation:***

Okay, (1) this is awesome. But (2), is Maniac really being brave here? Or does he just have no idea that he should be scared of Finsterwald's? Does it make a difference to his legend?