***Maniac Magee***

***Chapter 6***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Brief Summary***

Chapter 6. An hour after the incident at Finsterwald’s house, a woman named Mrs. Pickwell steps outside her front door and blows a whistle through her pursed lips, to let her “small nation” of children, family, and friends know dinner is ready. After the group sits down at the ping-pong table to eat a spaghetti dinner, the children begin to ask who the new dinner guest is. As the children return to the dining room to get one more look at the guest, they notice he’s gone. They step out the back door and see Maniac, book in hand, running down the steel rails.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

An hour later, [Mrs. Valerie Pickwell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/mrs-valerie-pickwell) whistles from her back door. Mrs. Pickwell has a legendary whistle. It successfully calls home all 10 Pickwell kids for dinner every night. There’s nothing special about the whistle, but to a Pickwell kid, it’s magic. From all directions, the kids run home, joining the parents, baby Didi, the grandparents and great-grandfather, and a down-and-out taxi driver.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Mrs. Pickwell is an example of someone who, like Jeffrey, can turn the ordinary into something “magic”—just by caring about her kids and anyone else who happens to need a good meal. The Pickwell house is a ideal home in the book, a place of love and shelter for those who don’t find it elsewhere.

***Summary Part 2:***

After dinner, the Pickwell kids get into a conversation about “that kid” who was seen sitting at the table that evening. Everyone assumes that he was a guest of somebody else. When they look again, they see that [Jeffrey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/maniac-magee/characters/jeffrey-lionel-maniac-magee) has already gone—he’s running along the steel rails of the railroad tracks, book in hand.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The Pickwells are so used to seeing strangers’ faces at their dinner table that Jeffrey isn’t unusual. Even though he was welcome here, however, Jeffrey still seems to be searching for something else.

***Important Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

"As whistles go, Mrs. Pickwell's was one of the all-time greats. It reeled in every Pickwell kid for dinner every night." (6.2)

***Explanation:***

Getting called home to a safe, warm, happy place with good food every night, where your friends are always welcome? Sounds like a family to us.