



Freak The Mighty

by Rodman Philbrick

Teacher's Guide

Written By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.



CLASSROOM FAVORITES

A Perma-Bound Production

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

The narrator, Maxwell Kane, claims that he never had a brain until Freak came along. Initially called "Kicker" for his temper, Max was taken in by his maternal grandparents, Gram and Grim, when his father was jailed for killing his mother. Now he is called "Mad Max," and feared for his enormous size. As a result, he has no friends. Freak is a small, blond, crippled boy who moved in next door the summer before eighth grade.

Chapter 2

Max lives in the basement of his grandparents' tiny home. Bored one summer day, he goes in the yard where he first sees Freak's mother, a beautiful woman, moving in next door. Her son, the crippled blond child, is giving the moving men orders.

Chapter 3

Max sees Kevin in his yard playing with a small flying toy. When the toy gets stuck in the tree, Max retrieves it and the boys start to talk. Max is impressed with Kevin's enormous vocabulary and obvious brilliance. He calls Kevin "Freak."

Chapter 4

Freak visits Max in his basement room, and explains that his mother's name is Gwen. He calls her "Fair Gwen of Air," a pun on "Guinevere" from the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The boys talk about the legend and Max explains that he is learning disabled. Gwen comes over, panicked that Max has hurt Freak.

Chapter 5

Gwen apologizes and invites Max over for dinner. At dinner, Gwen explains that she had been friends with Max's mother when they had both lived in the tenements. Gwen is startled that Max looks so much like his father.

They have a wonderful time, and after he returns home, Max is so happy that he cries.

Chapter 6

On the Fourth of July, Freak and Max decide to go see the fireworks. They meet Tony D., a seventeen-year-old bully nicknamed "Blade" who harasses them until the police come. On impulse, Max lifts Freak to his shoulders so the boy can see the fireworks more clearly. Freak explains the chemicals used to make the glorious colored fireworks.

Chapter 7

After the fireworks, the bullies come after Freak and Max again. At Freak's direction, Max heads into the mucky pond. Blade follows, but panics when he gets stuck. The police come to the boys' rescue. Freak gives their name as "Freak the Mighty," linking them together as one unit.

Chapter 8

Max's grandparents give Max full credit for rescuing Freak and look at him with admiration for the first time. Freak proposes a "quest," and makes Max look up the word (and many more) in the dictionary he always carries.

Chapter 9

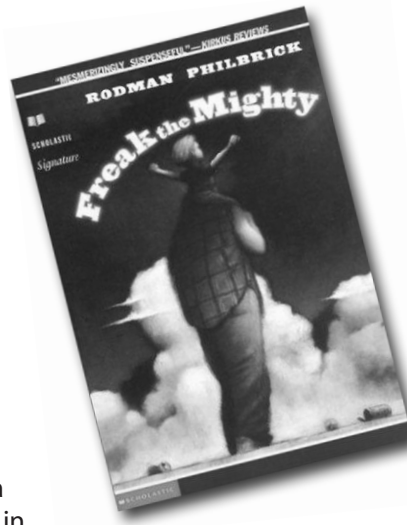
The boys' "quest" takes them to a lab. Freak explains that they are making a new bionic robot that will be used to replace his crippled, failing body.

Chapter 10

One evening, the boys retrieve a pocketbook from the sewer. The purse belongs to Loretta Lee, whom Freak decides is a damsel in distress.

Chapter 11

The boys go to Loretta's apartment in the New Tenements (called the "New Testaments") to return the purse. Loretta's husband, Iggy Lee, is the leader of the Panheads, the bad-news motorcycle gang. Iggy, a friend of Kevin's father, is menacing and cruel. Loretta is kind but ignorant; she tries to rub Freak's head because she



believes that touching a midget's head brings luck. She reveals that Freak's father deserted the family when he discovered that Freak was handicapped.

Chapter 12

School begins and Freak gets Max placed in the same advanced classes he attends rather than the learning-disabled track where he had previously been assigned. When the kids make fun of Max, Freak takes control of the class and things turn out well.

Chapter 13

Although Max can now read and read well, he is still unable to speak in class, even though he knows the answers. Mrs. Addison, the principal, calls Max to her office to explain that his father has been granted parole, even though he is serving a life term for murder. Max is so upset that he goes into a rage. At lunch, Freak almost chokes to death on his lunch, a sign that his condition is worsening. He is taken to the hospital.

Chapter 14

Freak explains that he is growing on the inside but not the outside. As a result, his organs are being crushed. Max overhears his grandparents discussing how his father "Killer Kane" murdered his wife, their daughter Annie. Grim gets a restraining order to keep Kane away from their home.

Chapter 15

On Christmas Eve, Freak and Gwen join Max and his grandparents in a fine meal. They exchange presents, and Max is thrilled with the cunning little dictionary Freak has made for him. That night, Killer Kane returns to kidnap Max.

Chapter 16

Killer Kane takes Max to Loretta and Iggy's apartment in the New Testaments. Although he is terrified of his father's brutality, Max stays quiet and cool.

Chapter 17

Iggy hides Killer and Max in an empty apartment. Killer ties Max up and explains that he did not kill his wife (Max's mother), despite what the authorities claim. Cold, hungry, and in pain, Max waits for dawn as he watches his father sleep.

Chapter 18

Christmas morning, Loretta brings some cold pizza and Killer explains his plan: he and Max will run south and work a con as fake preachers. The police are driving

around, tipped off by Freak, whom Iggy sees sitting in the police car.

Chapter 19

Killer gags Max and ties him to a boiler in the basement of a burned out building. Later, Loretta sneaks in and unties Max. Killer surprises them and tries to choke Loretta.

Chapter 20

Max tries to save Loretta, screaming that he saw his father kill his mother. Killer starts to choke Max, when Freak appears and squirts Killer in the eyes with "sulfuric acid" from a water canon. The police rescue them, and Freak reveals that the "acid" was really an irritating but non-lethal mixture of soap, curry powder and vinegar.

Chapter 21

Back at school, the boys are heroes. Killer takes a plea bargain and has to serve the rest of his sentence plus ten more years.

Chapter 22

In the spring, Freak turns thirteen and Gwen has a birthday party for him. Freak has a seizure and is rushed to the hospital.

Chapter 23

Freak is placed in the Intensive Care Unit. He tells Max that he is not coming home "in his present manifestation"; instead, he will receive his bionic robot body. He gives Max a blank book to use to write down their adventures.

Chapter 24

Freak dies. Max storms the Medical Research center, looking for Freak reborn as a robot. He is restrained and Freak's doctor explains that the bionic body was Freak's dream to sustain them all.

Chapter 25

A year has passed. Even though everyone is kind to him—even Blade—Max has a hard time healing. One day, Max meets Loretta who tells him that he should be moving on with his life. Max decides to write this book and so heals.

Freak's Dictionary

The novel ends with a dictionary of Freak's favorite words and his imaginative definitions for them.

Author Sketch

Rodman Philbrick gained a fan following in the early and mid-1980s with adult novels of mystery and crime. *Shadow Kills*, for example, describes the adventures of Jack (J.D.) Hawkins, confined to a wheelchair after being shot. Now a mystery writer, Hawkins is faced with a killer who copies the murders he reads about in Hawkins' novels. Not unpredictably, Hawkins decides to solve the real-life murders. *Booklist* called the novel "a fascinating whodunit."



Philbrick's next J. D. Hawkins mystery, *Ice for the Eskimo*, combines a police corruption case with the kidnapping of a plaintiff attorney's twin children. While the twins are recovered alive, their father suffers a grimmer fate that Hawkins must avenge. *Publishers Weekly* praised the novel for its "action and energy."

Philbrick's next crime novels, which include *The Crystal Blue Persuasion* and *Tough Enough*, feature T. D. Stash, a Florida fishing boat operator who becomes interested in the intrigues affecting the people he encounters. *Walk on the Water*, Philbrick's next J. D. Hawkins mystery, is a complicated murder tale with a cast of twisted characters set on Nantucket. A *Kirkus Reviews* critic called it "a snappy, sassy endeavor for fans of the humanist private investigative. novel."

Recently, Philbrick has turned toward young adult and children's fiction. *Freak the Mighty*, his best known young adult novel, teams two eighth-grade outsiders—physically strong but learning-disabled Maxwell and under-sized, wheelchair-bound but brilliant Kevin—into the unbeatable team that gives the book its name.

Critic's Corner

Freak the Mighty garnered enviable reviews. *New Yorker* reviewer Daniel Menaker compared the novel to "a circus car, packed with an eventually comic number of current psychological and moral issues." *School Library Journal* critic Libby K. White commented that *Freak the Mighty* is "a wonderful story of triumph over imperfection, shame and loss."

Stephanie Zvirin, writing in *Booklist*, noted: "...if events don't always ring true, there's honest affection in the boys' friendship—Kevin is clever, brave, and a good teacher for Max, who gains from the friendship an identity apart from his father for the very first time. Told by Max in retrospect, the story is both riveting and poignant, with solid characters, brisk pacing, and even a little humor to carry us along. The *Horn Book* was especially impressed with Philbrick's accomplishment in this novel:

"Maxwell Kane, who is learning disabled and unusually large for his age, shies away from others, but when a brilliant boy with a birth defect that has kept his body from growing to normal size moves in next door, the two become *Freak the Mighty*, pooling their brains and brawn to conquer their world. The harrowing events of Max's childhood are revealed gradually, as he is able to face them, thanks to the wisdom of his friend. A fascinating novel."

Freak the Mighty was filmed in 1998 as *The Mighty* starring Sharon Stone. The film received mixed reviews with critics and met with limited box office success.

Philbrick's Other Works

- Shooting Star* (1982)
- Slow Dancer: A Connie Kale Investigation* (1984)
- Shadow Kills: A Novel of Mystery* (1985)
- Ice for the Eskimo: A J. D. Hawkins Mystery* (1986)
- The Crystal Blue Persuasion* (1988)
- Paint It Black: A J. D. Hawkins Mystery* (1989)
- Tough Enough* (1989)
- The Big Chip* (1990)
- Walk on the Water* (1991)
- The House on Cherry Street, Book III; The Final Nightmare* (1995)
- The Final Nightmare, Book III* (1995)
- Night Creature* (1996)
- Children of the Wolf* (1996)
- The Fire Pony* (1996)
- Strange Invaders* (1997)
- Strange Invaders* (1997)
- Things* (1997)
- Brain Stealers* (1997)
- Abduction* (1998)
- Rem World* (May 2000)

Bibliography

Booklist, July 1985, p. 1518; Feb. 1, 1987, p. 821; July 1989, p. 1873; May 1, 1996, p. 1508.
Contemporary Authors Online. The Gale Group, 1999.
Horn Book, July/August, 1996, p. 465.
Kirkus Reviews, June 1, 1984, p. 506; May 15, 1989, p. 734; Feb. 15, 1991, p. 217; April 15, 1996, p. 605.
Library Journal, July 1985, p. 98; Feb. 1, 1987, p. 96.
New Yorker, Dec. 13, 1993, p. 115.
New York Times Book Review, Oct. 28, 1984, p. 39.
Publishers Weekly, May 25, 1984, p. 51; May 17, 1985, p. 99; Dec. 12, 1986, p. 44; Jan. 22, 1988, p. 110; April 28, 1989, p. 72; May 26, 1989, p. 57; Feb. 22, 1991, p. 213.
School Library Journal, December 1993, p. 137.
Voice of Youth Advocates, April 1994, p. 30.

General Objectives

1. To analyze the causes and effects of being different
2. To assess each character's personality
3. To recognize the novel's theme
4. To appreciate author's style
5. To understand the novel's title
6. To explore the ways kindness can be shown
7. To find examples of bravery and courage
8. To sympathize with the plight of the two main characters
9. To describe the novel's mood or atmosphere
10. To see the importance of a true friendship

Specific Objectives

1. To understand why Kevin and Max are both shunned by their peers
2. To appreciate why Kevin invents the story about a new bionic body
3. To probe the relationship between Kevin and Max
4. To explore the problems that Max has learning to read and write
5. To analyze the importance of the Arthurian myth and legend in the novel
6. To look into the relationship between Max and his family
7. To understand the plot structure
8. To compare and contrast Gwen and Loretta
9. To understand the author's use of symbols
10. To visualize the story's action

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Rodman Philbrick's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Allusions: references to a well-known place, event, person, work of art, or other work of literature. For example, on page 35, Freak alludes to the television show/movies *Star Trek* when he says "Warp factor nine," to describe a speed. On page 58, he says, "Beware the force," an allusion to *Star Wars*; on page 86, he says, "Please, sir, more gruel," an allusion to *Oliver Twist*. Allusions enrich a story or poem by suggesting powerful and exciting comparisons.

Plot: the arrangement of events in a work of literature. Plots have a beginning, middle, and end. The writer arranges the events of the plot to keep the reader's interest and convey the theme. The exposition of *Freak the Mighty* introduces the characters, setting, and conflict. The rising action builds the conflict and develops the characters. Readers learn all about Max's father, "Killer" Kane, and get hints that Kevin's medical condition is fatal. The climax occurs when Killer kidnaps his son, Kevin rescues them, and dies shortly thereafter. In the denouement, the author resolves the story and ties up all the loose ends. Max writes the story of his time with Kevin to achieve closure.

Irony: occurs when something happens that is different from what was expected. In verbal irony, there is a contrast between what is stated and what is suggested. In dramatic irony, there is a contrast between what a character believes and what the audience knows is true. In irony of situation, an event reverses what the readers or characters expected. For example, we get irony of situation on page 10, when tiny, crippled Kevin scares huge, normal Max. Although Max could crush Kevin with a flick of his hand, he is terrified of the smaller boy because of his enormous intelligence.

The Importance of Setting

The setting of *Freak the Mighty* is amorphous; neither the characters nor the events tie it to any particular location. Since Freak is unable to fulfill his promise that he will return in a bionic body, or as a robot, after being treated at the intensive care unit of the hospital, the reader can assume the timeframe falls in the late twentieth century since that technology has not yet been developed. Additionally, there are several references to *Star Trek*, a science fiction classic for generations.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about the problems facing young adults, you may wish to consult these sources:

Books

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*
 Judith Caseley, *Harry and Willy* and *Carrothead*
 Hila Colman, *A Fragile Love*
 Bonnie Dobkin, *Just a Little Different*
 K. Scott Conover, *Can I Play, Too?*
 Virginia Hamilton, *Bluish : A Novel*
 Elizabeth Helfman, *On Being Sarah*
 Karen Hirsch, *Becky*
 James Howe, *A Night Without Stars*
 Monica Hughes, *Invitation to the Game*
 Sharona Kadish, *Discovering Friendship*
 Ezra Jack Keats, *Apt. 3*
 Marjorie Bradley Kellogg, *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*
 Donna Jo Napoli, *Friends Everywhere*
 Robin Morgan, *The Mer-Child: A Legend for Children and Other Adults*
 Audrey Osofsky, *My Buddy*
 Susan Beth Pfeffer, *Jo Makes a Friend*
 W. R. Philbrick, *The Fire Pony*
 Patrick Quinn, *Matthew Pinkowski's Special Summer*
 Margaret Rostkowski, *After the Dancing Days*
 Barry Rudner, et al., *The Handstand*
 Hope Ryden, *Horse Summer*
 Virginia M. Scott, *Belonging*
 Maria Diaz Strom, *Rainbow Joe and Me*
 Richard M. Wainwright, *Mountains to Climb*
 John C. Walker, *In Other Words*
 Bill Wallace, *True Friends*
 Nell Wise Wechter, *Taffy of Torpedo Junction*

Internet

Learning Disabilities Association of America
www.ldanatl.org
 National Center for Learning Disabilities
www.ncl.org
 Learning Disabilities Association of Virginia
www.ldanatl.org/va
 LD OnLine: Learning Disabilities Information & Resources
www.ldonline.org
 Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois
www.ldanatl.org/Illinois/Ldail2.html
 Learning Disabilities
www.ninds.nih.gov/patients/disorder/

learning/lea

New Mexico Learning Disabilities Association
www.vivanewmexico.com/nmla
 Learning Disabilities Association of Sault Ste. Marie
www.soonet.ca/lda
 Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba
www.mbnet.mb.ca/enable/ldamb
 Canadian Learning Disabilities Associations
<http://edu-ss10.educ.queensu.ca/~lda>

Videos/Films

Breaking Away (1979)
Champagne and The Talking Eggs (1997)
Future Fantastic (1998)
Greystoke - The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes (1983)
The Horse Whisperer (1998)
Innerspace (1987)
The Iron Giant (1999)
Kiki's Delivery Service (1989)
Microcosmos (1996)
The Mighty (1998)
The Muppet Movie (1979)
My Bodyguard (1980)
Never Cry Wolf (1983)
The Princess Bride (1987)
The Secret of Roan Inish (1995)
Simon Birch (1998)
The Storyteller— Sapsorrow/The Luck Child (1987)
The Storyteller - Perseus and the Gorgon/Daedalus and Icarus (1987)
The Storyteller - Theseus and the Minotaur/Orpheus and Eurydice (1987)
Super Speedway (1997)
Waking Ned Devine (1998)
Walking with Dinosaurs (1999)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Rodman Philbrick's *Freak the Mighty* should include these aspects:

Themes

- bravery
- bullying
- confusion
- crippling conditions
- family love
- fear
- friendship
- humor
- learning disabilities
- prejudice

Motifs

- being brave in terrifying situations
- dealing with a terminal illness
- family love and support
- the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table
- dealing with family disintegration
- random acts of kindness
- coping with a learning disability
- recovering from great loss
- being different from others
- the importance of friendship

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. "We're Freak the Mighty, that's who we are." (Chap. 7, pp. 39-40)
(On July 4, Freak and Max go to see the fireworks together. On an impulse, Max lifts Kevin to his shoulders so he can see the sky more clearly. After their run-in with the hoodlums, the police ask their names. Kevin links himself with Max by calling them "Freak the Mighty." Together, they are nine feet tall and feel invincible. Together, the two boys can vanquish nearly every threat they face—except death.)
2. "Bionics," Freak says. "That's the science of designing replacement parts for the human body." (Chap. 9, p. 53)
(Kevin knew from a very young age that he wasn't going to have a long life. He invented a fantasy about receiving a replacement a bionic body to give himself hope. Later, he extended that hope to Max as well. Everyone needs something to sustain them when the future is bleak. This was Kevin's way of dealing with his congenital condition and premature death.)
3. "Iggy! Iggy! I've got it! Kenny Kane! Remember Kenny Kane?" (Chap. 11, p. 68)
(Max bears a striking resemblance to his father: they are both very large and have the same facial features. Loretta recognizes Max and links him to his father. This scene foreshadows Kenny abducting his son and Loretta and Iggy getting involved.)
4. "Life ain't life, how many times I tell you that?" (Chap. 11, p. 70)
(Loretta is certain that Kenny will never be paroled because he is serving a life sentence for the murder of his wife. Iggy, far more knowledgeable about the legal system than Loretta, realizes that the odds are good that Kenny will get paroled. This is indeed what happens.)
5. "My problem is, I'm growing on the inside but not the outside." (Chap. 14, p. 89)
(This is the closest we come to a diagnosis of Kevin's medical condition. It appears from his small stature, crippled limbs, and his suffering that his condition is very serious indeed. This is the first hint readers get that Kevin will not live a normal life span.)
6. "I came back," he says. "Like I promised." (Chap. 15, p. 99)
(Kenny Kane, a convicted murderer, has returned to claim his son Max. He sneaks into Max's bedroom on Christmas Eve and kidnaps the young man. Max has no bond with his father — indeed, he is terrified of him — and knows that his father is up to no good.)
7. "I saw you kill her! I saw you kill Mom! I never forgot, not ever! I know you did it! I know!" (Chap. 20, p. 128)
(Kenny Kane does not think that Max witnessed the murder. And if he did, Kenny rationalizes, the boy wouldn't remember it at all, because he was only four years old at the time. On the contrary, Max has a very clear memory of his father murdering his mother, strangling her to death.)
8. "Sulfuric acid," Freak says. (Chap. 20, p. 132)
(Freak has cleverly filled his water cannon with water, soap, vinegar, and curry powder that he claims is sulfuric acid. Freak sprays this mixture right at Killer's eyes. Killer scoffs at Freak's claim, but is nonetheless fooled by the concoction—he really believes that Freak has sprayed his eyes with acid. Freak's bravery allows the police to rescue Max and Loretta and take Killer Kane into custody.)
9. "He'll be an old man when he gets out," Grim says. "He'll be older than me." (Chap. 21, p. 139)
(Kenny made a deal with the district attorney, pleading guilty to kidnapping and two counts of attempted murder for his actions against Loretta and Max. In exchange for his plea, Kenny has to serve out the rest of his original sentence for murder plus an additional ten more years. Grim is pleased that Kenny will be very old when he is finally paroled, because this means that he, Gram, and most of all Max will be safe from the murderous Killer Kane.)
10. "But what finally happened is his heart just got too big for his body." (Chap. 25, p. 157)
(On a literal level, Kevin died because his heart got too big for his crippled body. We can take his explanation on a symbolic or fig-

urative level as well: Freak was too good for this world, too filled with love to survive.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

- How do Freak and Max meet?
(They meet when Freak and his mother Gwen move in next door to Max and his grandparents. Max goes into the yard to see Freak playing with a small flying device Freak calls an "ornithopter." When the toy gets stuck in a tree, Max retrieves it for Freak.)
- How are the two boys the same? How are they different?
(Both boys are the same age and grade in school. They are both outcasts, Max because he is very large and the son of a murderer; Freak because he is very small and crippled. They are different because Freak is very intelligent and well-read with a huge vocabulary. Max, in contrast, has been labeled learning disabled, although under Freak's tutoring, he learns to read and write well.)
- Why does Max live with his grandparents?
(Max's father, Kenny "Killer" Kane, killed his mother. Since there is no one else to take care of Max, his grandparents have been awarded custody.)
- How does Max escape from his father?
(Loretta sneaks downstairs where Kenny has hidden Max, unties Max's bonds, and removes the gag. Meanwhile, Freak has alerted the police about the situation. While they circle the house, Freak shoots Kenny with a harmless mixture of water, soap, vinegar, and curry powder that he claims is sulfuric acid. This fools Kenny long enough to allow the police time to move in and take him into custody.)
- How does Freak die at the end of the book?
(His heart becomes too big for his body; all his organs fail.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

- Why are Max and Freak friends? What draws them together?
(Initially, they are drawn together because they are both outcasts, but soon they discover they share a common outlook. The combination of Max's brawn and Freak's brains make the sum of

"Freak the Mighty" far more than the parts.)

- In what ways is the Arthurian legend important to Freak?
(The romantic, imaginative legend allows Freak to escape from the confines of his crippled body and soar into the past. Like knights of old, Freak and Max will defend the weak and right every wrong. Therefore, the legend gives them heroic stature, too.)
- What two gifts does Freak give to Max? What does each gift symbolize?
(Freak gives Max a handmade dictionary of his favorite words and a blank book. The dictionary symbolizes the importance of learning and shows how far Max has come. The blank book symbolizes the importance not only of remembering the past, but of setting it down. After Freak dies, Max fills the blank book with stories of their experiences together. Writing about his experiences with Freak allows Max to heal.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

- Do you find the friendship between Max and Freak believable? Why or why not?
(On one hand, it is believable that two outcasts would indeed be drawn together. On the other hand, the boys have little in common on the surface.)
- What do you think is the theme or main idea of this book?
(Possible responses: Courage comes in all sizes; never judge a book by its cover.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

- Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Max's situation had you been in his place.
- Explain in what ways Freak and Max are similar to the Knights of the Round Table.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

- In the beginning of the novel, Max loves to read comics because they allow him to escape from the reality of his life. Select an incident in the book and retell it in comic form. Include at least five panels, art, and captions.
- Locate the complete lyrics to "The Star Spangled Banner" and teach the song to the class.

3. Draw a treasure map Freak and Max could have used to find the “treasure” in the sewer, the stolen pocketbook.
4. Create a mural showing the key events in the novel in the order in which they occurred.
5. Write a condolence card that Max might send to Gwen, explaining how he feels about Freak’s death.

History/Social Studies

1. Write a report on the legend of *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. Be sure to include information on quests, rescues, and the fair “Gwen of Air,” Guinevere.
2. Explain why Americans celebrate Independence Day on July 4th. Describe why and when the holiday started. You may wish to present your findings in the form of a web page, booklet, or poster.
3. Prepare a timeline of the major events in the novel. Include at least ten events.
4. Discuss your attitude toward grouping children in classrooms by ability levels. Argue that this is or is not an educationally sound idea.
5. Kevin “Killer” Kane kills his wife, kidnaps his son, and attempts to kill both his son and his friend Loretta. Decide how Killer Kane should be punished for these crimes.

Language Arts

1. Add at least ten entries to Freak’s dictionary. Select your own words, but write the definitions in the same style that Freak uses.
2. Watch *The Mighty*, the movie version of *Freak the Mighty*. Then create a chart comparing and contrasting the book and the movie. List at least three ways they are similar and different. Decide whether you preferred the book or the movie and why.
3. Notice that Max has some problems with grammar, usage, and spelling. For example, in Chapter 1 he refers to the “unvanquished” truth rather than the “unvarnished” truth. Correct the errors in grammar and usage in Chapter 1. Be ready to explain your reason for each correction.

4. Explain the author’s allusions to “Mad Max” (p. 3), “Frankenstein and Igor” (p. 29), and “breakfast of champions” (p. 69). Find two more allusions in the novel and explain their meaning as well.
5. Writing as Gwen, draft a series of journal entries tracking the main events of your life with Freak, from his birth to his death.

Science

1. The other children are cruel to Freak, calling him a “midget” and a “dwarf.” Find out more about each medical condition. Share your findings with the class.
2. Early on, Max concludes that Freak’s body is so small because his brain is so big. Research the connection—if any—between brain size and intelligence.
3. Max is astonished when Freak can recite the names of the chemicals that make the brilliant colors of the fireworks. Explain how fireworks are made.
4. Create a safety pamphlet to help people understand that fireworks should only be handled by specially trained experts.
5. Freak knows a great deal about chemistry, too, alluding to sulfuric acid among other chemicals. Make a chemical table, listing at least 10 common elements by their chemical numbers and common names.
6. On page 45, Freak tells Max that there are 2247 different kinds of subspecies of hymenopteran insects, Latin name Formicidae. Find out what insect Freak means and see if his figure is correct.
7. Freak tells Max that he is going to receive a bionic body. Do some research to find out which artificial parts can now be grafted to the human body.
8. On page 57, Max wonders how long crickets live. Find the answer to his question as well as how they create their “chirping” noise.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Create a newspaper reporting on the events in Chapter 20. In addition to newspaper articles, include advertisements, editorials, letters to the editor, and comics.
2. Write a series of brief poems touching on the emotional aspects of this novel, including friendship, love, death, and loss.
3. Create a TV panel discussion debating whether Killer Kane should have gotten paroled or not.
4. In your own words, explain the novel's theme or message.
5. Create a new cover for the novel. Include pictures that suggest the action but do not give away too much of the plot.

Alternate Assessment

1. List ten qualities you look for in a close friend. Then discuss someone who embodies those qualities.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate how Freak and Max work together as one unit.
3. Compose a scene in which Max explains to his own sons what Freak meant to him. Include specific incidents and examples from the novel to make your point.
4. Make a character list and describe each character.
5. Take the novel ten years into the future and describe what has happened to Max, Gwen, Gram, Grim, Iggy, and Loretta.

Vocabulary

Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| _____ 1. vacant | A. antique |
| _____ 2. critter | B. ending |
| _____ 3. sobriquet | C. unconquerable |
| _____ 4. demeanor | D. throw up |
| _____ 5. invincible | E. fierce, concentrated |
| _____ 6. misinformed | F. movement through space |
| _____ 7. opiate | G. empty |
| _____ 8. tenements | H. horse |
| _____ 9. depleted | I. lacking color |
| _____ 10. regurgitate | J. behavior |
| _____ 11. finale | K. mistaken |
| _____ 12. trajectory | L. greed |
| _____ 13. cavalry | M. creature |
| _____ 14. scraggly | N. messy |
| _____ 15. intense | O. slums |
| _____ 16. albino | P. name |
| _____ 17. archetype | Q. drug |
| _____ 18. steed | R. empty |
| _____ 19. artifact | S. soldiers |
| _____ 20. avarice | T. pattern |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Sentence Completion (30 points)

Supply a term to complete each of the following statements. Place your answers in the blanks provided in the sentences.

1. When Freak and Max first meet, Freak is playing in his yard with an ornithopter, a small _____.
2. Max's father is in _____.
3. Freak tells Max all about the legend of _____.
4. One July evening, Max and Freak go down to the millpond to see _____.
5. Freak takes Max to the Medical Research Center and tells him all about the new bionic _____ he is going receive to replace his old one.
6. Max and Freak retrieve a stolen _____ from the sewer.
7. The New Tenements are nicknamed the _____.
8. For Christmas, Freak gives Max a(n) _____ he made himself.
9. Max's father, Kenny "Killer" Kane, plans that he and his son will start a new life as fake _____.
10. Before he dies, Freak gives Max a (n) _____ as a gift.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. You will have choices left over.

- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A. Gram | D. Iggy Lee | G. Freak | J. Mr. Meehan | M. Mrs. Donneli |
| B. Grim | E. Gwen | H. Maxwell | K. Dr. Spivak | N. Mrs. Addison |
| C. Loretta Lee | F. Kevin | I. Blade | L. Killer Kane | O. Hank |

- _____ 1. the principal who tells Max that his father has been paroled
- _____ 2. Kevin's beautiful and kind mother
- _____ 3. A biker who met Kevin's father in prison
- _____ 4. Kevin's nickname
- _____ 5. the real name of the crippled blond-haired boy
- _____ 6. the man who killed his wife and kidnaps his son
- _____ 7. Max's grandmother
- _____ 8. Max's grandfather
- _____ 9. a bully who tries to assault the boys at fireworks
- _____ 10. the woman who brings cold pizza to Max and his father on Christmas morning

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Kevin is crippled as a result of a terrible car accident in which his father was killed.
- _____ 2. Most of the kids in school make fun of Max because he is big and doesn't earn good grades.
- _____ 3. When she first sees Max, Gwen is frightened of him and thinks he is going to harm Kevin.
- _____ 4. Gwen and Max's father were close friends in school.
- _____ 5. Kevin and Max go to a luxury apartment to return a wallet that belongs to Max's father.
- _____ 6. Loretta says that Kevin's father must have been a magician because he disappeared after Kevin was born.
- _____ 7. Kevin has to be rushed to the hospital when he chokes on some American chop suey.
- _____ 8. At Christmas, Max gives Kevin a beautiful wool sweater.
- _____ 9. Iggy hides Killer and Max in the basement of his house, behind a false wall.
- _____ 10. At the end of the novel, Max arrives at the hospital to find that Kevin has already died.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Compare and contrast Max and Kevin, showing how they are the same and different.
- 2. Identify "Freak the Mighty" and explain how it was formed.
- 3. Write a psychological profile of Killer Kane.
- 4. Explain why Loretta helps Max.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

1. For a while, Max was called (**Kicker, Killer**) Kane.
2. When Max first sees Kevin, he is pretending to be a (**racecar, robot**).
3. Max has a bedroom in the (**attic, basement**) of his grandparents' house.
4. In school, Max is classified as (**learning disabled, a genius**).
5. Kevin knows the names of the (**colors, chemicals**) in fireworks.
6. At the fireworks, Max and Kevin get stuck in the (**pond, basement**).
7. Loretta thinks that Kevin is a (**monster, midget**) because of his size.
8. Max's father is serving a life sentence in prison because he killed his (**mother, sister**) .
9. Killer plans that he and Max will be con men posing as (**salesmen, preachers**).
10. Kevin rescues Max with a (**water pistol, rifle**).

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of speakers from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. You will have choices left over.

- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A. Gram | D. Iggy Lee | G. Freak | J. Mr. Meehan | M. Mrs. Donneli |
| B. Grim | E. Gwen | H. Maxwell | K. Dr. Spivak | N. Mrs. Addison |
| C. Loretta Lee | F. Kevin | I. Tony | L. Killer Kane | O. Mad Max |

- _____ 1. the town bully who is nonetheless sorry when Kevin dies
- _____ 2. Kevin's beautiful and kind mother
- _____ 3. the person who tells Max about Kevin's death
- _____ 4. Max's grandmother
- _____ 5. the principal of the school the boys attend
- _____ 6. the nickname Kevin uses
- _____ 7. the woman who tries to pat Kevin on the head for good luck
- _____ 8. Max's father, a murderer and kidnapper
- _____ 9. the top half of Freak the Mighty
- _____ 10. A nickname Max uses

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Motivation (30 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. Kevin is crippled because_____
2. Max lives with his grandparents because_____
3. Gwen is initially afraid of Max because_____
4. Gwen invites Max to dinner the first time because_____
5. Kids in school are mean to Kevin and Max because_____
6. Kevin and Max go to the "New Testaments" the first time because_____
7. Kevin tells Max he is getting a bionic body because_____
8. Max's father visits him on Christmas Eve because_____
9. Kevin dies because_____
10. Max writes down the story of their friendship because_____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how Max changes over the course of the novel.
2. Explain why Kevin is an admirable character.
3. Analyze why Max and Kevin become such close friends.
4. Account for Killer Kane's actions.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. K | 11. B | 16. I |
| 2. M | 7. Q | 12. F | 17. T |
| 3. P | 8. O | 13. S | 18. H |
| 4. J | 9. R | 14. N | 19. A |
| 5. C | 10. D | 15. E | 20. L |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Sentence Completion (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. flying toy | 6. purse |
| 2. prison | 7. New Testaments |
| 3. King Arthur | 8. dictionary |
| 4. fireworks | 9. preachers |
| 5. body | 10. blank book |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. N | 6. L |
| 2. E | 7. A |
| 3. D | 8. B |
| 4. G | 9. I |
| 5. F | 10. C |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Kicker | 6. pond |
| 2. robot | 7. midget |
| 3. basement | 8. mother |
| 4. learning disabled | 9. preachers |
| 5. chemicals | 10. water pistol |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

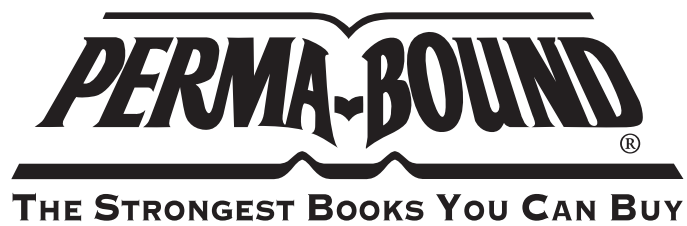
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. I | 6. G |
| 2. E | 7. C |
| 3. K | 8. L |
| 4. A | 9. F |
| 5. N | 10. O |

Part III: Motivation (30 points)

1. he suffers from a congenital medical condition
2. his father had killed his mother; and now his father is in prison
3. he is so big that she thinks he will hurt Kevin
4. she wants to apologize for being afraid of him
5. they are different from the norm
6. they want to return Loretta's purse to her
7. so they both have some hope to hold onto
8. he is going to kidnap him and take him away
9. his heart got too big for his body
10. it helps him heal from the loss of his friend

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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