

***Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick (Published by Scholastic)**

Approved for use in Communication Arts, Grade 6 and Grade 7

Summary

Philbrick creates two characters who are complete opposites but become dear friends—Max, who is labeled learning disabled, and Kevin, who is a genius but physically disabled. Max states from the beginning, I never had a brain until Freak came along and let me borrow his for a while. It is not until the final page that readers learn why and how Max wrote a book about the adventures of Freak the Mighty.

Connection to the Curriculum

This is a well-written and unusual young adult novel. Although likely to be classified as realistic fiction, it has many elements of fantasy and fairy tale: the handicapped hero who is bigger than life, exciting quests, events that have numerous levels of meaning, and magical moments. Philbrick's novel of two handicapped and troubled young men, one smaller than a yardstick and the other outgrowing size thirteen shoes, is about the strength of friendship, family, intelligence, and life. The poignant story is told from the perspective of Max, who through the life and death of his friend Kevin, learns to respect his own intelligence and endure his own frightening heritage. This novel is appropriate for middle school readers. Not only will adolescent readers devour it and rejoice in the victories of Max and Kevin, but teachers will also use it to highlight the genre and its rich themes of respect and tolerance.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1- The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

- 1.3.8- The student identifies and determines the meaning of figurative language including similes, metaphors, analogies, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, personification, and idioms.
- 1.4.4- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after the reading of the text.
- 1.4.5- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.
- 1.4.9- The student identifies characteristics of narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts.
- 1.4.11- The student identifies and describes the author's purpose (e.g. to inform, to give directions, to entertain) and basic techniques the author uses to achieve that purpose.
- 1.4.12- The student uses prior knowledge, content, text type, and text features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.
- 1.4.24- The student distinguishes between fact and opinion, and recognizes propaganda (e.g., advertising, media), bias, and stereotypes in various types of appropriate-level texts.

Literature:

- 2.1.1- The student describes different aspects of major and minor characters (e.g. their physical traits, personality traits, feelings, actions, motives) and explains how those aspects influence characters' interactions with other characters and elements of the plot, including resolution of the major conflict.
- 2.1.2- The student identifies and describes the setting (e.g., environment, time of day or year, historical period, situation, place) and explains the importance of the setting to the story or literary text.
- 2.1.3- The student identifies major and minor events related to the conflict in a story (e.g., crisis/turning moment, climax, resolution) and explains how one event gives rise to another.
- 2.1.4- The student understands aspects of theme (e.g. moral, lesson, meaning, message, author's ideas about the subject) and supports with implicit/explicit information from the text.
- 2.1.5- The student understands the use of literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback).

A Note on the Text

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This novel contains references to bullying and some child abuse. In the context of this topic, there is some limited mild violence and mild cussing and derogatory remarks. The novel leaves readers with a greater understanding of respect.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:
To be completed during future curriculum development activities