

Freak The Mighty Cross Curriculum Guide

Freak the Mighty / Rodman Philbrick
New York/The Blue Sky Press--Scholastic/1993

ISBN 0-590-47412-X
Genre: Realistic Fiction
Grade Range: 5-8 (Characters are in 7th and 8th grades.)
Cross-curricular Connections: health (birth defects, friendship), Middle Ages

Book Brief: 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.

Pennsylvania Eligible Content Applications

SKILLS/FICTION

R8.A.1.1.1 **Multiple-meaning:**

"Freak" – as in oddity, malformed, but also intelligent beyond the norm; "Max" – refers to height but also to Max's increased ability to deal with difficult relationships when he teams with Kevin.

R8.A.1.1.2 **Synonyms and antonyms**

R8.A.1.2.1 **Affixes**

R8.A.1.2.2 **Context clues in explanatory sentences:**

p. 16 postulate
p. 17 quest

R8.A.1.3.1 **Inferences/conclusion:**

pp. 3, 4—Max's father was or is dangerous
p. 27—Max is relieved.

R8.A.1.3.2 **Cite evidence/generalizations:** p. 27—Max is crying and happy.

R8.A.1.4.1 Main ideas and supporting details: What is the main idea in chapter 5, *Spitting Image*? (Max finds acceptance with Freak and Gwen.) Provide three details that support the main idea.

R8.A.1.5.1 Summarize: Use the main idea and three supporting details to write a summary of chapter 5.

R8.A.1.6.1 Author's intended purpose: entertain and inform

Freak the Mighty Cross Curriculum Guide is an essential resource for educators looking to enhance the learning experience around the novel "Freak the Mighty" by Rodman Philbrick. This story of friendship, courage, and overcoming adversity can serve as a powerful tool to engage students across multiple subjects. This guide aims to provide strategies and activities that can be integrated into various curricula, including language arts, social studies, science, and physical education.

Understanding the Novel

Before exploring cross-curricular connections, it is crucial to understand the themes and character dynamics within "Freak the Mighty." The story revolves around two boys, Kevin (Freak) and Max, who form an unlikely friendship. Kevin is a brilliant boy with a physical disability, while Max is

a large boy with learning difficulties. Together, they embark on adventures that help them confront their fears and discover their strengths.

Themes of the Novel

The central themes in “Freak the Mighty” include:

- **Friendship:** The bond between Max and Kevin teaches students about loyalty, support, and the importance of companionship.
- **Courage:** The characters face various challenges that require bravery, highlighting the significance of facing fears.
- **Identity:** Max’s journey of self-discovery is a key element, encouraging discussions on self-acceptance and personal growth.
- **Overcoming Adversity:** Both characters deal with significant obstacles, making the story a powerful narrative about resilience.

Cross-Curricular Connections

Integrating “Freak the Mighty” into various subjects can enhance students’ understanding of the material while reinforcing key concepts across disciplines.

Language Arts

In language arts, educators can focus on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and writing skills. Here are some suggested activities:

1. **Character Analysis:** Have students create character maps for Max and Kevin, detailing their traits, challenges, and growth throughout the novel.
2. **Creative Writing:** Encourage students to write an alternate ending for the story, allowing them to explore different narrative possibilities.
3. **Theme Exploration:** Assign students to write essays or reflections on one of the central themes, using examples from the text to support their arguments.
4. **Vocabulary Building:** Create a vocabulary list from the novel and have students define, illustrate, and use each word in a sentence.

Social Studies

"Freak the Mighty" provides numerous opportunities to explore social issues relevant to students' lives. Here are some activities to consider:

1. **Disability Awareness:** Host a discussion or project on disabilities, emphasizing empathy and understanding. Students can research historical figures with disabilities and present their findings.
2. **Family Dynamics:** Examine the concept of family and support systems. Students can explore how different family structures impact individuals, drawing parallels with Max's family situation.
3. **Community and Belonging:** Engage students in a project that investigates the importance of community. They can analyze how communities support individuals, similar to how Max and Kevin support each other.

Science

Integrating science concepts can make the reading experience more enriching. Consider the following activities:

1. **Human Anatomy:** Discuss Kevin's medical condition (a form of dystrophy) and explore human anatomy, focusing on the muscular and skeletal systems. Students can create models or diagrams to illustrate their understanding.
2. **Assistive Technology:** Research and present on various assistive technologies that help individuals with disabilities, such as wheelchairs, speech devices, or prosthetics.
3. **Environmental Science:** Explore the settings of the novel, such as the park and the neighborhood. Discuss how environments can affect individuals' lives and well-being, connecting this to broader environmental issues.

Physical Education

The themes of friendship and teamwork can be applied in a physical education setting. Here are some ideas:

1. **Team-Building Activities:** Organize activities that require collaboration and support among students, mirroring the way Max and Kevin work together.
2. **Adaptive Sports:** Introduce students to adaptive sports, fostering an appreciation for inclusivity and encouraging them to consider how physical activities can be accessible to everyone.

3. **Fitness Challenges:** Create fitness challenges that promote personal growth and encouragement, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and support in achieving goals.

Assessing Understanding

Assessment can be multifaceted, allowing educators to gauge students' comprehension and engagement with the text through various methods:

Formative Assessments

- Exit Tickets: At the end of each lesson, ask students to write one thing they learned and one question they still have about the novel.
- Journaling: Encourage students to keep a journal reflecting on their thoughts and feelings about the characters and themes as they progress through the book.

Summative Assessments

- Project Presentation: Have students work in groups to create a presentation or skit that encapsulates key themes and character dynamics. This can also include incorporating technology, such as video or digital storytelling.
- Research Paper: Assign a research paper on a relevant topic, such as disabilities, friendship dynamics, or the impact of family on personal development. This allows students to engage deeply with the content while developing their research and writing skills.

Conclusion

Utilizing a **Freak the Mighty Cross Curriculum Guide** offers educators a unique opportunity to create a rich, engaging, and responsive learning environment. By connecting the themes and characters of the novel to various subjects, students can gain a deeper understanding of the material while developing critical thinking and empathy. This holistic approach not only reinforces academic skills but also fosters personal growth and social awareness, making "Freak the Mighty" a timeless resource for education. By embracing cross-curricular strategies, educators can inspire students to reflect on their own lives and the world around them, ultimately enriching their educational journey.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Freak the Mighty'?

The main theme of 'Freak the Mighty' is the power of friendship and how it can help individuals overcome personal challenges and societal obstacles.

How can 'Freak the Mighty' be used to teach character education?

'Freak the Mighty' can be used to teach character education by exploring the traits of empathy, courage, and loyalty as demonstrated by the characters Max and Kevin.

What cross-curricular connections can be made with 'Freak the Mighty'?

Cross-curricular connections can include discussions on disabilities in health education, storytelling in language arts, and historical contexts in social studies.

How does the author use symbolism in 'Freak the Mighty'?

The author uses symbolism through elements like the 'Grim' and 'Gram' representing family dynamics, and the character of 'Freak' symbolizing intellect and creativity despite physical limitations.

What are some key literary devices used in 'Freak the Mighty'?

Key literary devices in 'Freak the Mighty' include imagery, foreshadowing, and metaphors, which enhance the emotional depth and understanding of the characters' journeys.

In what ways can 'Freak the Mighty' inspire discussions about bullying?

'Freak the Mighty' provides a platform to discuss bullying by showcasing the struggles faced by characters like Max and Kevin, highlighting the importance of standing up against bullies and supporting one another.

What role does adventure play in 'Freak the Mighty'?

Adventure plays a significant role in 'Freak the Mighty' as it represents the characters' quest for identity and belonging, allowing them to explore their capabilities and strengthen their bond.

How can educators incorporate 'Freak the Mighty' into a lesson on resilience?

Educators can incorporate 'Freak the Mighty' into lessons on resilience by analyzing how both Max and Kevin face and overcome various life challenges, fostering discussions on perseverance.

What impact does the setting have on the story in 'Freak the Mighty'?

The setting in 'Freak the Mighty' significantly impacts the story by reflecting the characters' socio-economic challenges and personal struggles, shaping their experiences and growth throughout the narrative.

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