

Freak the Mighty

By Rodman Philbrick

Guided Reading Packet

***NAME:** _____*

***PERIOD:** _____*

Don't lose this packet – We will use it for the entire unit!

Directions for reading the book and completing this packet:

- **We will be using this packet as a guide for active reading as we read Rodman Philbrick's novel, *Freak the Mighty*.**
- **As we read in class and as you continue reading at home, please record your notes on the graphic organizer pages, in the space provided for the corresponding chapter.**
- **There will be a quiz at the end of the unit, on Friday, May 18th, so be sure to read carefully and take good notes as you do so.**
- **The activities that are included in the packet (aside from the note-taking pages) will be completed in class.**

Pre-Reading Preparation

Author Biography: Rodman Philbrick



Rodman Philbrick was born on January 22, 1951 in Boston, Massachusetts, the first of four boys. He was raised in Rye Beach, New Hampshire and attended Rye Schools. He began to write for his own pleasure in sixth grade, but felt that writing was “not cool” like being good at sports or being in the in-crowd so he kept it to himself.

At the age of sixteen, Philbrick completed his first novel, a book-length series of stories about two characters, similar to *Freak the Mighty*. The book was never published. He graduated from Portsmouth High school in 1969, and went on to attend University of New Hampshire. He dropped out in his sophomore year, began working at various jobs as a carpenter, longshoreman, and boat builder, and even started a couple of businesses that were unsuccessful. He never gave up on his true

passion, however, and continued writing in his spare time.

Eleven years after that first attempt, he was still unpublished. Determined to become a writer, he decided to write a genre novel, as suggested by one of the publishers he had contacted. In a relatively short time, he was writing and publishing mysteries, detective stories, thrillers—whatever he could sell. After a couple of years he was able to give up his part-time jobs and settle into writing for a living. He learned a lot about writing while working on the genre novels and actually liked it. Finally, he was making a living doing something he enjoyed.

Before long he decided that he should try writing for kids. It was a break from the safety of writing genre novels, but he had to do it, even though he felt it had no commercial possibilities. He just couldn't let the story go; the inspiration to write *Freak the Mighty* was too strong. He found that it wasn't work to him; it was fun! The most important novel in his career was finished in just six weeks.

While continuing to write and publish adult thrillers under pen names William R. Dantz, W.R. Philbrick, and Chris Jordan, he went on to write many books for teens, with *Freak the Mighty* (1993), *The Fire Pony* (1996), *Max the Mighty* (1998), *Last Book in the Universe* (2000), *REM World* (2000), *The Journal of Douglas Allen Deeds* (2002), *The Young Man and the Sea* (2003), *Lobster Boy* (2005), and *The Mighty* (1998, a reissue of *Freak the Mighty*) among them. He has also written several other books with his wife, Lynn Harnett. *Freak the Mighty* won many honors, including the Judy Lopez Honor Book '93, ALA Best Books for Young Adults, ALA Recommended Books for Reluctant Readers, California Young Readers Medal Winner, and Arizona Young Readers Medal Winner.

Philbrick lives with his wife Lynn, whom he married in 1980, and they divide their time between homes in Maine and the Florida Keys.

Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

Directions: Using the biographical information about Rodman Philbrick on page 6, answer the following questions. Write the letter of the correct answer on the line.

- 1. _____ What is the author’s purpose in writing this biography of Rodman Philbrick?
 - a. To persuade the reader to read Philbrick’s books
 - b. To describe Philbrick’s life experiences
 - c. To inform the reader about Philbrick’s life and works
 - d. To entertain the reader before reading Philbrick’s novel

- 2. _____ Based on the information given in paragraph 2, the reader can assume that:
 - a. Philbrick wrote *Freak the Mighty* when he was sixteen
 - b. Philbrick never graduated from college
 - c. Philbrick really enjoyed writing
 - d. Philbrick was more suited to physical labor than to writing

- 3. _____ Philbrick wrote the genre novels because through them he knew he could make a living. Why didn’t he just continue writing them exclusively?
 - a. It was boring writing the same type of story over and over
 - b. He felt he had a more important story to tell
 - c. He ran out of ideas for mysteries
 - d. Children were begging for more of his novels

- 4. _____ Where would be the best place in the biography to insert information about Philbrick’s childhood?
 - a. In paragraph one
 - b. Between paragraphs one and two
 - c. Before paragraph one
 - d. After paragraph two

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

5. The term *genre novel* is used in this biography. Using context clues from the information given, what do you believe is the meaning of the term? _____

6. If you were given the opportunity to interview Rodman Philbrick for an article to be published in your school newspaper, what three or four questions would you ask him?

Freak the Mighty
Anticipation/Reaction Guide—Before Reading

*Directions: For each of the following statements, compose **one** well-written sentence giving your reaction to the statement in your response. An example has been done for you. (Be prepared to read some of your responses aloud in class.)*

Ex. Everyone in every situation should always be treated equally.
Sometimes people have different needs and treating everyone the same in every situation might even be unfair under certain circumstances.

1. It is always best to speak the truth, no matter what the consequences.

2. A *true* friend is a friend for life—one who will always agree with everything you do and back you up in any situation.

3. Virtually everybody agrees that bullying is a bad thing, and for that reason it can be concluded that most people who bully others really don't realize that they are doing it.

4. People are most comfortable spending time with others who are just like themselves.

5. Children who are raised by their natural parents have an unquestionably easier life than those who are raised by someone who is not their natural parent.

6. Only smart people or those who work very hard will become truly successful in life.

Freak the Mighty
Anticipation/Reaction Guide Reflection

Pre-Reading Individual Reflection

Directions: After several students have shared their responses with the entire class, get into small groups and discuss your answers as well as your group members' answers. Listen carefully to their responses, paying attention to their individual opinions. After you have discussed your "Before Reading" responses, answer the following questions below or on a separate piece of paper. Be sure to write in complete sentences and number your answers.

- 1. Which statement triggered the most thought-provoking or interesting discussion among your group members? Summarize the discussion/debate.
- 2. For any statements that you discussed, what were some of the strongest or most important points made by your group members? How did those statements affect your opinion?
- 3. When you found that a member of your group disagreed with the way you feel about an issue, what was your reaction?
- 4. Why do you think there might be so many differing opinions about the answers to even the simplest questions?

Note-taking for chapters 1-5

For some students, reading can be a difficult, tedious task. Part of the problem is that many students do not have the tools they need to read for meaning, and lose interest because they cannot follow the action, do not understand, or cannot relate to the events or the characters.

Below is a chart that you will be completing as you read *Freak the Mighty*. It is designed to help you understand the action, conflict, and characters and to eventually appreciate the author’s reasons for writing the book.

Directions: For Chapters 1-5, use the chart below to help you keep track of your reading. Summarize the setting or settings, and then summarize each major event in the chapter. Try to keep your summaries short—just a few words or phrases. Do not write in complete sentences! Chapter 1 has been done as an example for you.

	Setting	Action Summary (Plot) and Characters Involved	Important to Remember From This Chapter
Chapter 1	No real setting given; he just flashes back to telling how he met Freak in daycare, but doesn't describe the scene.	Max flashes back to meeting Kevin in daycare. Sees him again in a special bus when he is in about 3 rd grade, then he moves into a duplex down the street the summer before 8 th grade.	Max had a temper—nicknamed Kicker; Kevin (Freak) had leg braces even then. Max is really growing and Grim and Gram notice that he is beginning to look a lot like his father.
Chapter 2			
Chapter 3			
Chapter 4			
Chapter 5			

Now that you have read and taken notes on Chapters 1-5, make a prediction (educated guess) about what you believe will happen next in the novel.

My Prediction:

Standards Focus: Figurative Language in chapters 1-5

One of the most captivating aspects of good literature is the use of **figurative language**, or ideas communicated beyond their literal meaning to create an image in the reader's or audience's mind. There are several types of figurative language, also called figures of speech. In this exercise, you will use the following figures of speech:

- **metaphor**- a comparison made between two unlike objects: "The pillow was a cloud."
- **simile**- a comparison made between two unlike objects, using the words "like" or "as" in the comparison: "The pillow was *like* a marshmallow."
- **personification**- giving human qualities or characteristics to non-human objects: "The wind sang its sad song."
- **hyperbole**- truth is exaggerated for humor or emphasis: "I *died* when the boy I like finally talked to me."

Directions: Read each quote from Chapters One through Five. Look at the underlined figure of speech in the sentence, then decide what type of figure of speech it is. Finally identify the comparison being made or the object being personified or exaggerated. An example has been done for you.

Ex. "I never had a brain until Freak came along and let me borrow his for a while, and that's the truth, the whole truth." (pg. 1)

Figure of Speech: hyperbole (or metaphor)

Analysis: Max wasn't very smart until Freak came along and taught him how to learn.

1. "Except I had a way of saying things with my fists and my feet even before we became Freak the Mighty..." (1)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

2. "And Gram right away shushes him and says don't ever say that, because little pictures have big ears, which makes me run to the mirror to see if it is my big ears made me look like Him." (4)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

3. "...he's exploding out of his shoes." (4)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

4. "I'm just this critter hiding out in the basement, drooling in my comic books or whatever." (6)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

5. "At first she's a glimpse, caught her going between the van and the front door, talking to the beards." (7)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

Name _____ Period _____

6. "...she has this glow, a secret spotlight that follows her around and makes her eyes light up." (7)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

Directions: Now identify and underline the figure(s) of speech in the sentence, then decide what type of figure of speech it is. Finally identify the comparison being made or the object being personified or exaggerated.

7. "...my feet are going wild that year and I keep tripping over everything. Cracks in the sidewalk, ants on the sidewalk, shadows, anything." (8)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

8. "If you didn't know, you would think he was like a kindergarten creeper who forgot how to walk, he's that small." (11)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

9. "I *am* amazed, because it does fly just like a little bird, flitting up and down and around, higher than I can reach." (13)

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

10. "It's cool and dim in there and you float like a cloud – no, you *are* a cloud..." (21)

Figures of Speech: 1. _____ ; 2. _____

Analysis: _____

Now, find two other examples of figures of speech from Chapters One through Five and write them on the lines. Identify the type of figure of speech and write an analysis.

11. _____

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

12. _____

Figure of Speech: _____

Analysis: _____

Note-taking for chapters 6-10

Directions: For Chapters 6-10, use the chart below to help you keep track of your reading. Summarize the setting or settings, and then summarize each major event in the chapter. Try to keep your summaries short—just a few words or phrases. Do not write in complete sentences!

	Setting	Action Summary (Plot) and Characters Involved	Important to Remember From This Chapter
Chapter 6			
Chapter 7			
Chapter 8			
Chapter 9			
Chapter 10			

Now that you have read and taken notes on Chapters 6-10, make a prediction about what you believe will happen next in the novel.

My Prediction:

Standards Focus: Character Development in chapters 1-10

The characters in a novel or play may be revealed to the reader or audience in a variety of ways. Your main impression of a character is formed through his/her speech or actions, physical description, mannerisms, surroundings, other characters' reactions to that character, or the writer's feelings about the character. A **static character** is one who changes very little or not at all throughout the story. A **dynamic character** is one who changes or grows significantly as the story unfolds.

Max and Kevin, the two most important characters in *Freak the Mighty*, can both be described as dynamic characters. Each of them goes through major changes that are revealed through their dialogue and actions, and by what the author says about them. Other characters' reactions to them also change throughout the story. These other characters could be static or dynamic characters.

Directions: Locate specific quotes or descriptions of the characters below to show examples of their behavior or personalities from Chapters 1-10, using the clues above the box. Then find examples that show some of the changes they have undergone in the story so far, if they have changed at all. If the character has not changed, write "static character" in the box.

What he says about himself

Kevin

What someone else says about him

Example of his actions

Example showing how he has changed

What he says about himself

Max

What someone else says about him

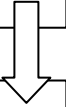
Name _____ Period _____

Example of his actions

(Max)

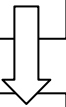


Example showing how he has changed

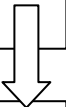


What she says about herself

Gwen



What someone else says about her



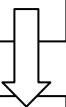
Example of her actions



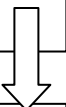
Example showing how she has changed

What she says about herself

Gram



What someone else says about her



Example of her actions



Example showing how she has changed

Note-taking for chapters 11-15

Directions: For Chapters 11-15, use the chart below to help you keep track of your reading. Summarize the setting or settings, and then summarize each major event in the chapter. Try to keep your summaries short—just a few words or phrases. Do not write in complete sentences!

	Setting	Action Summary (Plot) and Characters Involved	Important to Remember From This Chapter
Chapter 11			
Chapter 12			
Chapter 13			
Chapter 14			
Chapter 15			

Now that you have read and taken notes on Chapters 11-15, make a prediction about what you believe will happen next in the novel.

My Prediction:

Scavenger hunt: Setting and Mood

One of the most important aspects of a novel is its setting. **Setting** includes:

- Physical description: geography, weather, description of surroundings, etc.
- Time: historical time period, season, time of day, etc.
- Atmosphere: social, cultural, and political conditions

Mood is the atmosphere or emotional state created by a piece of literature. Mood is *usually* described in expressions of feeling and emotions, such as fear, anger, hatred, contentment, loneliness, confusion, happiness, excitement, or jealousy, to name a few.

In *Freak the Mighty*, even though most of the action takes place within Max’s bedroom, his yard, the school, and the hospital, other elements contribute a lot to the setting. Setting contributes a great deal to creating the mood of the novel.

Directions: For each section, find specific examples from Chapters 11-15 that describe the setting. (You may go back and find examples from Chapters 1-15 if you prefer.) Then, tell how the setting affects the mood. An example has been done for you.

Physical Description: Geography, Weather, etc.	How Does the Setting Affect the Mood?
Time: Time Period, Season, Time of Year, Day, etc.	
Atmosphere: Social, Cultural, and Political Climate	
Tenements are falling apart; looks sad and smells like fish and sour milk; bikes and toys lying around, broken; kids are almost as busted up as the toys.	This place makes me feel depressed and sad, makes me feel sorry for people who live there. I feel fearful of the tenements, and imagine the people there are lonely.

Note-taking for chapters 16-20

Directions: For Chapters 16-20, use the chart below to help you keep track of your reading. Summarize the setting or settings, and then summarize each major event in the chapter. Try to keep your summaries short—just a few words or phrases. Do not write in complete sentences!

	Setting	Action Summary (Plot) and Characters Involved	Important to Remember From This Chapter
Chapter 16			
Chapter 17			
Chapter 18			
Chapter 19			
Chapter 20			

Now that you have read and taken notes on Chapters 16-20, make a prediction about what you believe will happen next in the novel.

My Prediction:

Life Skills—Improving Your Character

We have all been in situations where we have not behaved toward someone as we should have, or perhaps you may have been the victim of such treatment. Sometimes we behave this way because our friends are doing it, or possibly because it makes us feel somehow superior. But often, it is because we don't know how to react to the person's personality, disability, or differences. In this activity, you will be practicing some techniques to help you better understand how someone might feel if they were mistreated, and you will discover some techniques for dealing with the "bully" type.

*Directions: Read each quote, then write a positive reaction that could be used to deal with the teasing. Try to use your **sense of humor**, which is one of the best ways to throw a bully off guard. If joking won't work in a particular situation, think of something you could say to **help the bully feel compassion and concern** for their victims, instead of picking on others. (You may be called on to demonstrate your answers in front of the class.)*

(P. 7) "Hey you, Doofus! Yeah, you with the hairy face, take it easy with that box. That box contains a computer, you know what a computer is?" _____

(P. 29) "Hey, you! Mutt and Jeff! Frankenstein and Igor! Don't look around, I'm talkin' to you, boneheads. What is this, a freak show?" _____

(P. 76) "Forget it, Mrs. Donelli, his brain is in his tail! Ask him to count, he can paw the ground!" _____

(P. 81) "As you know, heh heh, my personal opinion has always been that you're lazy and stubborn and you didn't *want* to learn." _____

(P. 109) "Now your grandparents say you're nothing but a dysfunctional retard, but no kin of mine is a retard, and that's a fact. So first thing, you've got to start acting smart. Use your head. We've got a situation going here, boy, so the way to handle it, you just do exactly what I say, no matter what. Understood?" _____

(P. 121) "You can't trust a cripple, but I guess you know that now, don't you?" _____

Standards Focus: Elements of Style

An author's **style** is what makes his/her writing unique. Word choice, figurative language, imagery, rhythm, sentence structure, foreshadowing, symbolism, use of dialect, and other literary devices all work together to make an author's writing distinctive. The style an author uses when he/she writes influences how well we understand and identify with the literature.

Rodman Philbrick uses numerous techniques to create a style that makes *Freak the Mighty* a literary success. He uses imagery, hyperbole, even run-on and incomplete sentences extensively. He also uses some difficult vocabulary, long wordy sentences, and a bit of dialect.

Directions: Identify the elements of style that are being used in each of the following excerpts, choosing from the box below. Elements may be used more than once, and there may be more than one right answer for each. Once you have identified the elements of style that have been used, explain the effect that these techniques have on the reader. An example has been done for you.

short or incomplete sentences	clear rhythm pattern	dialect
heightened vocabulary	sense of humor	figurative language
long, wordy sentences	repetition	sensory images

Ex. "I never had a brain until Freak came along and let me borrow his for a while, and that's the truth, the whole truth. The unvanquished truth, is how Freak would say it, and for a long time it was him who did the talking. Except I had a way of saying things with my fists and my feet even before we became Freak the Mighty, slaying dragons and fools and walking high above the world." (1)

Elements of style: long wordy sentences, sensory images, heightened vocabulary
Effect: This passage uses sensory images (sight) to create for the reader a mental picture of the two of them walking somewhere up high, like up in the clouds. The sentences he writes are long and wordy, like run-ons, but they sound like a kid is writing, so I get the feeling it is really written by a kid. The vocabulary (unvanquished) makes me wonder what's to come.

1. "Gram and Grim, bless their pointed little heads, they're my mother's people, her parents, and they figured whoa! better put this little critter with other little critters his own age, maybe it will improve his temper." (1)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

2. "So, finally I get bored in the down under and I'm hanging out in the so-called back yard, your basic chunk of chain link heaven. Grim keeps this crummy little mower in the shed, but what's the point of mowing dirt, right?" (6)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

3. "By this time I'm hunkering along in front of the place, trying to maintain a casual attitude, except like I said my feet are going wild that year and I keep tripping over everything. Cracks in the sidewalk, ants on the sidewalk, shadows, anything." (8)

Name _____ Period _____

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

4. "All mechanical objects require periodic maintenance. We'll schedule installation of a new propulsion unit as soon as the Fair Gwen of Air gets a replacement." (13)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

5. "'Gram must be your grandmother,' he says. 'Grim would be, I suppose, a sobriquet for your grandfather, based on his demeanor.' 'I go, huh?' Freak grins and pushes back his yellow hair, and he goes, 'Pardon my vocabulary. Sobriquet means 'nickname,' and demeanor means 'expression.' I merely postulated that you call your grandfather 'Grim' because he's grim. Postulate means —'" (15)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

6. "There's a place I go inside my head sometimes. It's cool and dim in there and you float like a cloud—no you *are* a cloud, the kind you see in the sky on a windy day, the way they keep changing shape except you can't really see it changing? It just sort of happens, and suddenly you realize the cloud that looks like a big hand with fat fingers now looks like a catcher's mitt, or a big soft TV set? Like that." (21)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

7. "Got any, dudes? ... Pay attention, I asked did you got any." (30)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

8. "I hate the beach because the beach is stupid, the cool crowd looking sleek and tanned and aren't-we-gorgeous?, and because if you saw me lying on a blanket you'd go, hey, why is that albino walrus wearing sunglasses?" (44)

Elements of style: _____

Effect: _____

Note-taking for chapters 21-25

Directions: For Chapters 21-25, use the chart below to help you keep track of your reading. Summarize the setting or settings, and then summarize each major event in the chapter. Try to keep your summaries short—just a few words or phrases. Do not write in complete sentences!

	Setting	Action Summary (Plot) and Characters Involved	Important to Remember From This Chapter
Chapter 21			
Chapter 22			
Chapter 23			
Chapter 24			
Chapter 25			

Now that you have read and taken notes on Chapters 21-25, make a prediction about where you believe Max’s life will go from here.

My Prediction:

Post-Reading Reaction

Directions: Look back at your Anticipation Guide on page 3. Reread the responses you wrote before reading the novel, and then answer the following questions, either below or on a separate piece of paper. Compare your responses from “Before Reading” to what you feel now, after reading the novel. Answer each question using complete sentences.

1. Which of your responses has changed since reading the novel?

2. For those statements you feel differently about after reading the novel, describe your reaction now, comparing it to your original response.

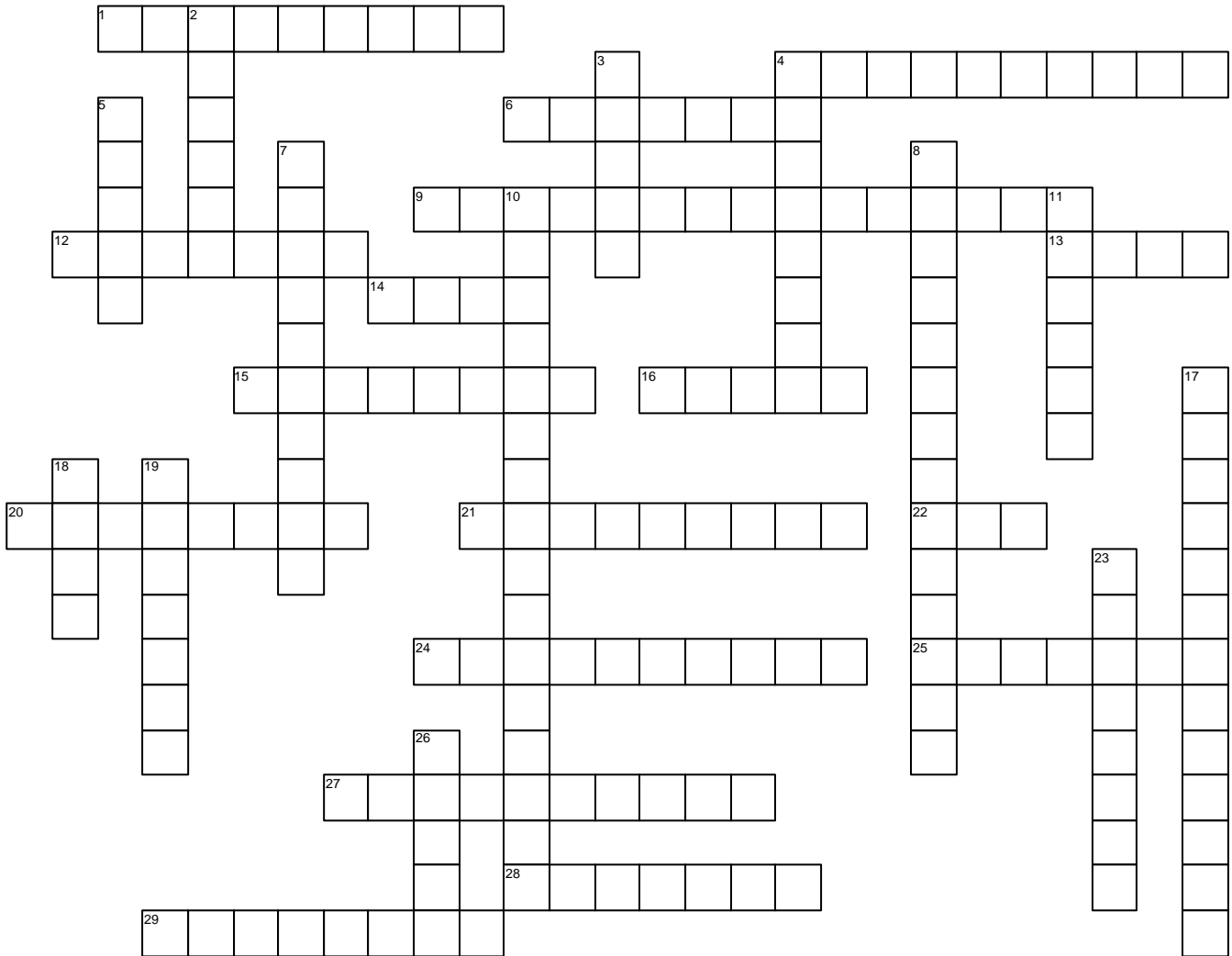
3. Describe a scene from the novel that had a powerful effect on you and made you change your way of thinking.

4. In small groups, talk to some of your classmates about their responses. How are their responses different now that they have read the novel?

5. Overall, are the feelings of your other group members the same or different from yours? Do any of their responses surprise you? Which ones? How?

6. Why do you think there might be so many different opinions and viewpoints? What do you feel has contributed to the way you and your classmates responded to each statement?

**Just For Fun! *Freak the Mighty*
Final Quiz Review Crossword**



ACROSS

- 1 Kevin gave Max this in the hospital
- 4 let the class get out of hand
- 6 tried to untie Max, but was strangled
- 9 real author of *Freak the Mighty*
- 12 science of designing replacement parts for the human body
- 13 Kenny Kane's friend who helped him hide out
- 14 Max's grandfather who was raising him
- 15 Kevin got one of these for his birthday
- 16 Killer Kane
- 20 Kevin and Max went to the sewer to find this
- 21 remembering is just an _____ of the mind
- 22 his best friend taught him a lot about words
- 24 school principal
- 25 what Kenny and Max did in the old lady's apartment
- 27 abducted Max
- 28 Kevin had one of these on his birthday
- 29 invited Max to dinner at her house in apology

DOWN

- 2 where Kenny went after Max went back home
- 3 told the police where to find Kenny and Max
- 4 what Kevin's dad must have been
- 5 wanted bionic surgery to get a new body
- 7 Kevin gave Max this for Christmas
- 8 The boys named themselves this
- 10 name Max and Kevin called Loretta because she had her purse stolen
- 11 Max's nickname in day care
- 17 a nickname for the tenement houses
- 18 treated Max like a son
- 19 name Grim and Gram liked to call Max
- 23 Kevin choked on this at school
- 26 picked on Max and Kevin all the time