

Name _____

Harrison Bergeron

ACTIVITY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the short story "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut and answer the questions below in complete sentences.

COMPREHENSION

1. Fill-in-the-blanks: "The year was _____ and everybody was finally _____."
2. How did the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution impact the citizens? _____

3. What does Hazel Bergeron say she would do if she were Handicap General? _____

4. What is the name of the Handicap General? _____
5. How old is Harrison Bergeron when he was taken from his home? _____

6. In order for the government to make George equal to others, what does George have to wear in his ear and how does it make him equal? _____

7. Why does the ballerina apologize for her voice? _____

8. What are the charges against Harrison Bergeron? _____

9. Who shoots Harrison and the ballerina? _____

APPLICATION

10. List Harrison Bergeron's handicaps:
11. List Harrison's personality and physical qualities that have made him a threat to society (list at least 5 characteristics)

12. What reason does George give for not trying to cheat? Because of his reasoning, what can we infer about George's opinion of the current laws? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. What can be implied that the Handicapper General or the other government workers do not wear handicaps?
- _____
- _____
- _____
14. Describe what happens to Harrison at the end of the short story? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

ANALYSIS/SYNTHESIS

15. Kurt Vonnegut's short story "Harrison Bergeron" contains allusions that enhance the meaning of the story. One of the allusions is the name Diana Moon Glampers, the United States Handicapper General who maintains law and order by enforcing handicaps to ensure "equality. Her name is a reference to the mythological Roman goddess of the hunt, Diana. Diana was the goddess of the hunt who was known for vengeance. She later became the Roman Goddess of the moon and was associated with light. She preferred to dwell on high mountains and was indifferent towards secular matters and mortals.

How does this allusion contribute to the meaning of the story?

An **allusion** is a brief reference to a famous historical or literary figure or event that stimulates ideas, associations, and extra information in the reader's mind. An allusion may be drawn from history, geography, literature, or religion.

Anachronism

16. Author's works contain anachronisms frequently. What is the Handicapper General's weapon? What makes it an anachronism?

Anachronism is derived from the Greek word *anachronous* which means "against time." The term is used when something or someone that is not in its correct historical or chronological time. For example, the character Ross in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* uses the word *dollar*, which was a word not used during Macbeth's time period

Satire

17. Kurt Vonnegut uses satire in the short story "Harrison Bergeron." He specifically satirizes the idea that the government can enforce "equality." Which specific details from the story reveal satire?

Satire is the use of irony, sarcasm, ridicule, or the like to expose and criticize vices, particularly in the context of politics and social issues.

Point of View

18. Which point of view is the story told? _____

How does this point of view allow the reader to learn what George is thinking?

Point of view is the perspective from which the work is presented

First person: "I" or "we," serves as the narrator

Third person may be omniscient or limited:

- **omniscient** knows everything and gives the reader information. This point of view may reveal the motivations, thoughts and feelings of the characters
- **limited omniscient** is presented from the point of view of a character, in third person.

Objective presents the action and the characters' speech, without comment or emotion. The reader has to interpret them and uncover their meaning.

READER-RESPONSE/PERSONAL CONNECTION

Directions: Choose one response question below and write one paragraph in the space provided.

- What did Aristotle mean when he said, "The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal"? Kurt Vonnegut echoes Aristotle's point in his short story. How does this quote apply to the short story "Harrison Bergeron"?

Are there advantages and/or disadvantages being the Handicapper General? If you were offered the job to be the Handicapper General

A large rectangular box containing 25 horizontal lines for writing a response.

Simile- *Simile* is a type of figurative language. A *simile* is a comparison using the words *like* or *as* that show how two unlike things are similar in one important way.

- The school cafeteria is like a prison.

Personification- *Personification* is a type of figurative language. The use of *personification* is when an inanimate object is given the characteristics as being a living person or animal.

- "Because I could not stop for Death--/He kindly stopped for me" by Emily Dickinson

In the poem Death is a gentleman who stops for her.

Allusion- *Allusion* is a brief reference to a famous historical or literary figure or event that stimulates ideas, associations, and extra information in the reader's mind. An allusion may be drawn from history, geography, literature, or religion.

- "My life is like a memento mori painting from European art: there is always a grinning skull at my side to remind me of the folly of human ambition." By Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*

The character Pi is comparing his life to European art known as memento mori which contains images of death.

Directions: Read the passages and identify the figurative language that has been underlined and write the answer on the line-*simile, personification, or allusion.*

1. _____ "His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm."
2. _____ "They were burdened with sashweights and bags of birdshot, and their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or a pretty face, would feel like something the cat drug in."
3. _____ "'Sounded like somebody hitting a milk bottle with a ball peen hammer,' said George."
4. _____ "Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General, a woman named Diana Moon Glampers."
5. _____ "Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the handicaps issued to strong people, but Harrison looked like a walking junkyard."
6. _____ "The photograph of Harrison Bergeron on the screen jumped again and again, as though dancing to the tune of an earthquake."
7. _____ "Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds."
8. _____ "The bar snapped like celery."
9. _____ "There was the shriek of a door being torn from its hinges."
10. _____ "He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder."
11. _____ "A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow."
12. _____ "But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang the music as he wanted it played."

Harrison Bergeron

CHARACTERIZATION: HARRISON BERGERON

The word *character* derives from the Greek verb *charassein*, meaning “to mark with a cut.” **Characterization** is the method used by an author to develop a character. When an author introduces the reader to the characters within the work, he or she has two choices: to use direct and indirect characterization.

DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION - the author makes direct statements about the character; he or she *tells* the reader about the character.

- Tara is a diligent student who completes all her homework assignments and studies for the tests.

The author tells us that Tara is diligent.

INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION - the author reveals information about a character and his personality through that character's appearance, actions, speech, thoughts and reactions of others to the character; he or she *shows* the reader about the character. Indirect characterization can be tricky because the reader must analyze the supports closely to determine the character's personality.

- Tara completes all her homework assignments and studies for the tests.

The author shows Tara's actions, completes all her homework assignments and studies for the tests, so the reader can conclude that Tara is diligent.

The method of indirect characterization includes

(1) character's appearance

- physical description-hair and eye color, height, weight
- age
- fashion traits such as conservative, trendy, eclectic, classic
- body language such as folding arms
- facial expressions such as rolling his or her eyes, smiling frequently

(5) reactions of others to character

- interaction with other characters
- family role
- the way other characters react to him or her
- lives alone, with a family or friends
- the types of people the character knows
- character's name and/or nickname by other characters

(2) character's actions

- interaction with his or her environment
- behavioral traits that reveal he or she is shy, confident, socially adept, introvert etc.
- body and facial language habits
- special talents such playing music, singing, writing, dancing, acting etc.

(3) character's speech

- dialect or style of speech- formal, use of slang, sarcastic etc.
- words he or she uses to communicate with the other characters
- frequency of speech

(4) character's thoughts

- internal thoughts and/or philosophical and religious outlook
- revelations about his or her past and/or a pivotal event
- how he or she feels about other characters
- hobbies
- favorite music, food, films, video games etc.

Directions: Below is a chart to help organize the specific details of the character Harrison Bergeron. Complete the chart using the details from the work.

(1) Appearance	(2) Actions	
(3) Speech	Character	(5) Other's Reactions
	(4) Thoughts	

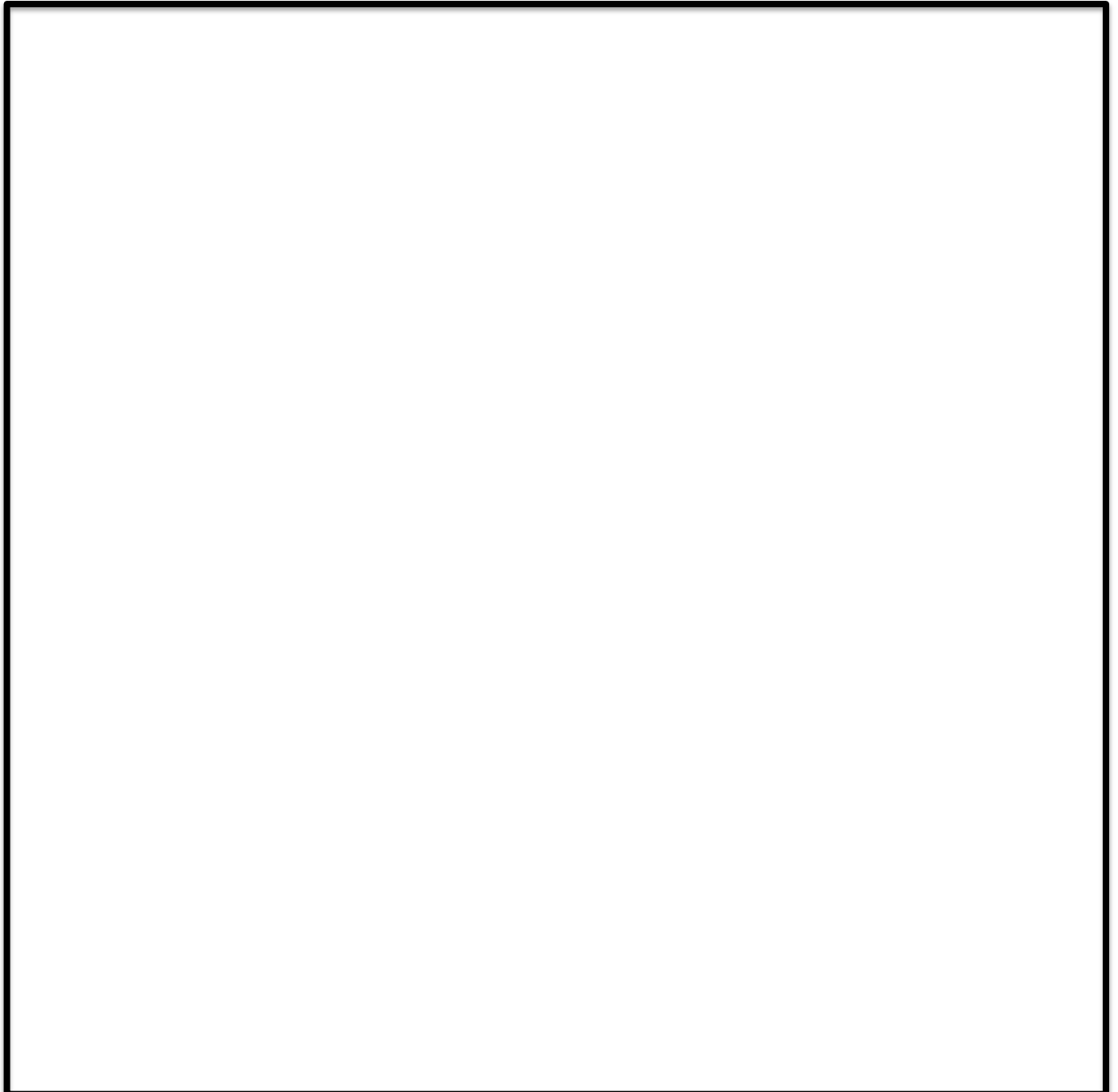
Based on the details you have listed, what is your impression of the character?

Harrison Bergeron

CHARACTER SKETCH: HARRISON BERGERON

PART B

Directions: Read the short story "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut. Using the chart in Part A, draw a picture of Harrison Bergeron.



Harrison Bergeron

ARTICLE ANALYSIS WITH MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS: "WHEN EVERY CHILD IS GOOD ENOUGH"

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions

excerpt from "When Every Child Is Good Enough"
by John Tierney

"The Incredibles" is not just an animated adventure for children, at least not to the parents and teachers who have been passionately deconstructing the story of a family of superheroes trapped in suburbia. The movie has reignited one of the oldest debates about child-rearing and society: competition versus coddling, excellence versus egalitarianism.

Is Dash, the supersonic third-grader forbidden from racing on the track team, a gifted child held back by the educational philosophy that "everybody is special"? Or is he an overprivileged elitist being forced to take into account the feelings of others?

Is his father, Mr. Incredible, who complains that the schools "keep inventing new ways to celebrate mediocrity," a visionary reformer committed to pushing children to excel? Or is he a reactionary in red tights who's been reading too much Nietzsche and Ayn Rand?

Is Syndrome, the geek villain trying to kill the superheroes, an angry Marxist determined to quash individuality? Or is his plan to give everyone artificial superpowers an uplifting version of "cooperative learning" in an "inclusion classroom"?

At one level, the debate is over current controversies in public education: Many parents believe that their children, mostly in elite schools, are being pushed too hard in a hypercompetitive atmosphere. But other parents are complaining about a decline in programs for gifted children, leaving students to languish in "untracked" and unstimulating classrooms. Some critics of education believe that boys especially are languishing in schools that emphasize cooperation instead of competition. No Child Left Behind, indeed.

But the basic issue is the same one raised four decades ago by Kurt Vonnegut in "Harrison Bergeron," a short story set in the America of 2081, about a 14-year-old genius and star athlete. To keep others from feeling inferior, the Handicapper General weighs him down with 300-pound weights and makes him wear earphones that blast noise, so he cannot take "unfair advantage" of his brain.

That's hardly the America of 2004, but today's children do grow up with soccer leagues and spelling bees where everyone gets a prize. On some playgrounds dodge ball is deemed too traumatic to the dodging-impaired. Some parents consider musical chairs dangerously exclusionary.

Children are constantly feted for accomplishments that used to be routine. They may not all be honored at a fourth-grade graduation ceremony - the event in the movie that inspires Mr. Incredible's complaint about mediocrity - but they all hear the mantra recited by Dash's sister in response to his ambitions.

"Everyone's special, Dash," she says.

"Which is another way of saying no one is," he replies.

The villain, Syndrome, makes the same point when he envisions empowering the masses with his inventions.

"Everybody will be super, which means no one will be," he says, gleeful that he will finally have revenge on Mr. Incredible for snubbing him during his childhood.

"Every Child Is Good Enough", November 21, 2004
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1. _____ The author of this passage refers to the film *The Incredibles*. What literary technique is this reference called?
 - A) metaphor
 - B) simile
 - C) symbolism
 - D) allusion

2. _____ Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 include examples of
 - A) contrasts
 - B) paradoxes
 - C) irony
 - D) symbolism

3. _____ In context, when Dash uses the word *special* in paragraph 9, he means
 - A) exclusive
 - B) extraordinary
 - C) memorable
 - D) uncommon

4. _____ The principle contrasts in Paragraph 2, 3, and 4 is between
 - A) corruption and innocence
 - B) wit and stupidity
 - C) individuality and community
 - D) conservative and liberal

5. _____ The author uses all of the following to refer to “coddling” EXCEPT
 - A) “mediocrity”
 - B) “hypercompetitive atmosphere”
 - C) “everyone gets a prize”
 - D) “musical chairs dangerously exclusionary”

6. _____ The sentence “No Child Left Behind, indeed” implies
 - A) Schools that promote cooperation help struggling students and no one is left behind.
 - B) Children in a “untracked” and unstimulating classroom creates mediocrity; therefore, nobody moves ahead.
 - C) Hypercompetitive schools do not look out for the needs of others.
 - D) Schools that leave children behind need to make sure that other children do not take “unfair advantage” of their talents.

7. _____ The tone of this passage can best be described as
 - A) pretentious
 - B) threatening
 - C) didactic
 - D) concerned

8. _____ The structure of the sentences

At one level, the debate is over current controversies in public education: Many parents believe that their children, mostly in elite schools, are being pushed too hard in a hypercompetitive atmosphere. But other parents are complaining about a decline in programs for gifted children, leaving students to languish in "untracked" and unstimulating classrooms"

can best be described as

- A) General statement followed by examples
 - B) General statement followed by other general statements
 - C) Specific examples followed by general statements
 - D) Easily understood statement followed by technical language
9. _____ The author employs all of the following EXCEPT
 - A) parallel structure
 - B) emotionally charged diction
 - C) figurative language
 - D) juxtaposition of ideas