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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit  
*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



## Freak the Mighty

by Rodman Philbrick

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# Literature Teaching Unit

*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



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# Freak the Mighty

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss how certain elements in the novel can be interpreted both literally and figuratively, defining the difference between these two levels of interpretation.
2. identify and cite examples, from the text, of the following literary terms:
  - alliteration
  - allusion
  - figurative language
  - foreshadowing
  - hyperbole
  - imagery
  - irony
  - metaphor
  - simile
3. describe the ways in which Max and Freak supplement each other to become a single unit that they refer to as “Freak the Mighty.”
4. compare and contrast the way Max deals with trauma and grief after the death of his mother with the way he ultimately deals with his grief over the death of Freak.
5. contrast Max’s and Freak’s self-image and discuss the necessity and value of self-worth.
6. identify the ways in which Max’s father uses religion as a tool for his own gain.
7. discuss the ways in which the author creates suspense for the reader, and cite examples of foreshadowing from the text.
8. discuss how Gram and Grim’s attitudes toward Max change as the novel progresses, and cite examples from the text that illustrate these changing attitudes.
9. discuss Freak’s fascination with robots, and explain how his fantasy of acquiring a bionic body helps both he and Max to deal with his illness.
10. discuss how *slaying dragons* is a metaphor for *conquering fears*, and specify who or what the real “dragons” in the novel are.

# Freak the Mighty

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why is Freak so interested in knights and robots? What do they have in common, and what does Freak have in common with them?
2. Explain how Freak and Max, together, become “Freak the Mighty.” What skills does Freak have that Max lacks? What skills does Max have that Freak lacks?
3. Max tells the reader that one of the things he and Freak did together was slay dragons. According to Freak, dragons are symbols of fear. Explain how the following things can be compared to dragons, and explain how Max and Freak conquer them together.
  - Max’s father
  - Tony D.
  - illiteracy
  - disability
4. How does Freak help Max improve his reading skills? Why is Freak able to help Max when it seems that no one else ever could? How is Freak ultimately responsible for helping Max to write?
5. Why do you think Loretta and Iggy help Max? Do you think the newspapers were accurate in calling Loretta “the Heroic Biker Babe”?
6. How does Max’s relationship with Gram and Grim change throughout the novel? At what point do Gram and Grim first realize that their assumptions about Max were wrong?
7. Was Max ever really learning disabled? What evidence in the first half of the novel supports this idea, and what evidence in the second half refutes it?
8. Freak gives Max two special gifts—one on Christmas Eve and one when Max visits Freak in the hospital. What is similar about these two gifts? What is the most significant difference about them?
9. The following quotes appear in the text. Identify the speaker of each quote, describe the context in which it is said, and explain each quote’s meaning:
  - “Remembering is just an invention of the mind.”
  - “...it isn’t how long you’ve got that matters, it’s what you do with the time you have...”
  - “Nothing is a drag, kid. Think about it.”
  - “No one stays like they are...Everybody is always changing.”

# Freak the Mighty

## Chapter One – The Unvanquished Truth

### Vocabulary

**departed** – the dead

**duplex** – a house divided into two separate residences

**goon** – a stupid or awkward person

**persuaded** – convinced

**resembles** – looks like

**scowling** – frowning; glaring

**unvanquished** – unbeaten or undefeated

1. Who is the narrator of the story? How does the reader know that the story is a first-person narrative, as opposed to a third-person narrative?

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2. In the first paragraph, Max relates a great deal of information in just a few sentences. What does Max reveal about himself in this paragraph? What can the reader infer about Freak?

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3. The significance of the novel's title, *Freak the Mighty*, is suggested in the first paragraph. How does Max introduce the idea of Freak the Mighty? What might the phrase imply about Max's and Freak's relationship with one another?

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4. Who are Gram and Grim? What is their relationship to Max?

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4. What is known about Max's dad at this point in the story?

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5. What is the significance of the title of the chapter, *Spitting Image*?

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6. In the last paragraph of the chapter, Max says:

Everything seems really great, just like Gwen says, except when I lie down on my bed it hits me, boom, and I'm crying like a baby. And the really weird thing is, I'm happy.

Why is Max crying if he is happy? What is it that "hits" him?

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## Chapter Ten – Rats or Worse

### Vocabulary

**accomplished** – finished; completed  
**camouflage** – to disguise or hide  
**conceal** – to hide  
**confirmed** – proven and verified  
**damsel** – a young woman  
**decibel** – a unit of measurement for sound  
**devised** – created or invented  
**distress** – trouble; danger  
**fealty** – loyalty  
**grotty** – a slang term meaning grubby or gross  
**optimum** – best  
**pledge** – to promise  
**recovering** – getting something back  
**retrieval** – the act of getting something back  
**savage** – wild and untamed  
**smug** – snobby, stuck-up  
**sorrowful** – sad  
**specifically** – precisely, exactly  
**teleportation** – a method of instant transportation popular in science fiction

1. What do Max and Freak retrieve from the sewer grate?  
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2. Freak calls Loretta Lee a “damsel in distress.” What does he mean, and how does the term fit in with Freak’s fantasies about knights, quests, and King Arthur?  
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3. Many characters in the novel have names or nicknames in which the beginning sounds of the first and last name are repeated. *Loretta Lee* is an example of such a name, as it contains the letter “L” in both the first and last name. In creating these names, what literary device is the author using? What other names in the story illustrate this literary device?  
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