



MISSISSIPPI
EXEMPLAR
Units & Lessons

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Grade 6

Lesson 1: Theme

Focus Standard(s): RL.6.2

Additional Standard(s): W.6.2, SL.6.1

Estimated Time: 11-12 days

Text(s): *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Phibrick (pages 1-53)

Resources and Materials:

- Handout 1.1: Bell Work Organizer
- Handout 1.2: Pre-Assessment
- Handout 1.3: Thinking Notes Reading Guide
- [The Present](#) (video for modeling in Activity 1)
- [Frayer model](#) (enough copies for each student)
- Chart paper to create an anchor chart of Frayer model in Activity 1

Lesson Target(s):

- Student can identify key details (objects, actions, setting, descriptions or depictions, word choice, changes in the main character) in a text that contribute to a theme.
- Students can explain how the key details contribute to the development of the provided theme.
- Students can use examples to explain the difference between the subject/topic of a literary text (e. g. war) and a theme of a literary text (e.g., War is a plague for humanity).
- Students can use examples to explain how the subject/topic of the literary text (e. g. war) can help them identify a theme of a literary text (e.g., War is a plague for humanity).
- Students can use examples to explain how a theme is different from a central idea.

Guiding Question(s):

- How do readers determine the theme of a literary text?
- What are the differences amongst topics, central ideas, and themes?
- Why is it important to understand other people's limitations?

Vocabulary

Academic Vocabulary:

- Summary
- Text based evidence
- Theme
- Universal

Instructional Strategies for Academic Vocabulary:

- Introduce words with student-friendly definition and pictures
- Model how to use the words in writing/discussion
- Read and discuss the meaning of word in multiple contexts
- Create pictures/symbols to represent words
- Write/discuss using the words
- Act out the words or attach movements to the words

In-Context Vocabulary: Before reading the text, have students search through the text for words that are unfamiliar to them. If it is a word that has clear context clues, teach students a strategy to determine the meaning of the word from the context clues. See the strategies listed to the right. Some words to choose from could include the following:


- Archetype
- Converging
- Cretin
- Deficiency
- Demeanor
- Depleted
- Evasive
- Expel
- Glimpse
- Gruel
- Hunkering
- Invincible
- Oath
- Perspective
- Pledge
- Postulate

Strategies for Teaching How to Determine Meaning from Context Clues:

Common types of Context Clues:

- Root word and affix
- Contrast
- Logic
- Definition
- Example or Illustration
- Grammar

Visit www.readingrockets.org for more context clue teaching strategies.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propelled • Quest • Scuttle • Sobriquet • Steed • Strutting • Tenement • Trajectory • Unvanquished • Yonder <p>Note: Words included as in-context are meant to aid in comprehension of the text through the instruction of context clue strategies. When assessing for student mastery of in-context vocabulary, assess students' ability to use strategies. See RL.4 AND L.4 in your grade level standards.</p>	
<p>Direct Instruction Text Vocabulary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental limitation/obstacle • Physical limitation/obstacle • Societal limitation/obstacle <p>Note: Words included for direct instruction are meant to aid in comprehension of the text. Decisions about vocabulary assessments and word walls are to be made based on individual needs of students.</p>	<p>Instructional Strategies for Direct Instruction Text Vocabulary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce words with student-friendly definition and pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Model how to use the words in writing/discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Read and discuss the meaning of word in multiple contexts <input type="checkbox"/> Students create pictures/symbols to represent words <input type="checkbox"/> Students write/discuss using the words <input type="checkbox"/> Students act out the words or attach movements to the words
Symbol	Type of Text and Interpretation of Symbol
	Instructional support and/or extension suggestions for students who are EL, have disabilities, or perform/read well below the grade level and/or for students who and/or a more advanced text for students who perform/read well above grade level
✓	Assessment (Pre-assessment, Formative, Self, or Summative)
Instructional Plan	

Understanding Lesson Purpose and Student Outcomes: The Bell Work Organizer will be used to inform students of their learning goal for the day. (i.e. the standards being taught) At the end of the lesson students will revisit these bell work organizers to respond to the essential questions and record new responses after engaging in the instructional processes of the lesson.

Anticipatory Set/Introduction to the Lesson: Before the lesson begins, check for understanding of the students' knowledge of theme. Ask guiding questions to ensure that students comprehend theme. Have a discussion about the Essential Question and the Guiding Questions that will drive the instruction for the lesson. Record students' responses on chart paper building an anchor chart for the unit.

Explain the purpose of this lesson is to decide a theme of *Freak the Mighty*, and to use the determined theme to write a paragraph that explains a possible theme of the novel.

Activity 1: Building Conceptual Understanding of Theme

Note: As you provide instruction below, complete the [Frayer model](#) of the following concepts in an anchor chart or on the board. Consider recording yourself modeling for students who are absent.

T: To help you build conceptual understanding of theme, we will watch [The Present](#) and determine the theme. Create a jot list of the actions you see in the film. Simply note what happens first, second, third, next, and on until the end.

S: (Create a jot list and compare with other students after the film.)

T: Let's create a [Frayer model](#) together to understand theme, facts about it, and examples and non-examples. We will use the short film we just watched as an example for our notes.

S: (Receive Frayer models.)

T: Let's start with what themes are not. Themes are not one-word or simple topic statements (e.g., overcoming obstacles; a boy overcame a major obstacle). These words represent just the subject or the topic and do not represent specifically what *overcoming obstacles* about or *a boy overcame a major obstacle* that the author is trying to convey. However, the topic can help you determine the theme.

S: (Record what themes are not, including teacher-provided examples, on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: Themes are not central ideas (e.g., The dog's ability to not allow its challenge to stop it from having fun changed the boy's perspective about his own challenge.) Themes are not specific to a text. Notice that example provides an idea specific to the text. That was a central idea. Understanding the central idea, just like understanding the topic, can help you to determine the theme.

S: (Record more about what themes are not, including examples, on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: Instead, a theme is an opinion the author wants to make about the world. However, it is not specific to the text, meaning it is not an opinion directly about the characters or their specific situation, but rather a general opinion about overarching topics, such as their opinion about love, jealousy, war, overcoming obstacles, race, etc. Themes are what we call universal... they apply to many different situations and groups of people. I will explain this more shortly. We will determine a theme now.

S: (Write definition of theme.)

T: Let's discuss some facts about a theme. It is very important to understand that the writer develops the theme(s) of a text through supporting details: character's responses to actions and problems, dialogue, character descriptions, and changes in the main character's actions and/or thoughts from the beginning to the end. These details in the text develop and support the theme(s) by developing characters and moving the plot forward to an ending. Also, the author uses these details to portray his/her opinion about a specific situation, but the opinion can be applied to other situations in which this same type of actions, responses to a problem, and changes occur.

S: (Record this fact in their own words.)

T: Keeping track of these details can help a reader determine the theme. A graphic organizer such as this one will help with that. (Use [RL.4-12.2 Graphic Organizer](#) to model how to keep track of details.)

S: (Record this fact in their own words on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: One detail is the fact that the boy starts out not interested in doing much, especially playing outside despite it being beautiful outside and his mother's encouragement. I would record this as *characterization revealed through action* under *Type of Detail* and put this example under *Example or Quote from the Text*. Then, he gets a puppy dog from his mom, but at first, he is upset by it and even expresses it with a verbal response. I would record this as *characterization revealed through action and dialogue* under *Type of Detail* and put this example under *Example or Quote from the Text*. Then, the puppy starts playing and having fun despite the reaction of the boy and the fact that he has three legs. I would record this as *characterization revealed through action* under *Type of Detail* and put this example under *Example or Quote from the Text*. The puppy's response seemingly makes the boy change his mind because the boy ends by going out to play. I would record this as *changes in the character's actions or attitude* under *Type of Detail* and put this example under *Example or Quote from the Text*. We see that the boy also has a challenge of having a partial limb, which leads me to think that the boy related to the dog and saw that the dog's ability to not allow its challenge to stop it from having fun changed the boy's perspective about his own challenge. I would record this as *characterization revealed through action* under *Type of Detail* and put this example under *Example or Quote from the Text*.

S: (Record this fact in their own words on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: This makes me wonder what the author's purpose is for writing this. Authors choose what details/information to include, exclude, and emphasize based on their specific purpose. Authors have a purpose for writing a text, and this purpose influences the theme developed. For example, if an author wants to understand that others who face the same obstacle can help us accept and change our perspective of our own obstacle, the author chose these specific details to develop that opinion.

S: (Record this fact in their own words on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: Based on all of this information, I know that the theme of this story is the following: Sometimes it takes others who have or have experienced the same obstacle(s) to help someone else accept and change his/her perspective of his/her own obstacle. Notice how this theme applies to this situation but it can also apply to another situation with different characters who face a different problem related to obstacles in a different setting.

Extensions and/or a more advanced text for students who perform/read well above grade level:

- For students who understand theme, have them discuss multiple themes in the same text or have them come up with ideas of how this theme can be developed in a different setting, with different characters, and a slightly different (but related) problem.
- Provide small groups/ individually to identify themes within multiple short stories, since theme is such a difficult concept to understand.

S: (Record this fact and example in their own words on student copy of Frayer model.)

T: When I'm all finished, I write an analysis that includes the theme and how it was developed.

Model for students how to write an analysis. Provide students with the model. And explain how they will keep these notes and apply them throughout the unit.

Explain that as the students read chapters 1-9, they will use Think Notes to record the text based evidence that supports the theme. Think Notes will also be used to record vocabulary in each chapter.

Students use context clues to determine word meaning of each of the vocabulary Tier II and Tier III words as they are found in each chapter.

Note: Another strategy for addressing the vocabulary is to have the students record vocabulary words in a writing journal.

Give students the **Handout 1.1: Bell Work Organizer** at the beginning of class. Students individually complete the first section of the organizer by writing the essential question for the lesson.

Activity 2: Pre-Assessment of Student Awareness of Mental, Physical, and Societal Limitations

Give students the **Handout 1.2: Pre-Assessment** at the beginning of class.

Students individually complete the assessment using prior knowledge and experiences of individuals with mental, physical, or societal limitations. Students then form groups of four. In their groups, students discuss their responses to the self-assessment.

Lead an introduction about the topic of mental, physical, or societal limitations giving definitions and descriptions of these limitations. Give students time to ask and answer questions and share personal experiences about the topic.

Distribute the **Handout 1.2: Pre-Assessment**. Students complete the pre-assessment as the teacher discusses the academic vocabulary words. Upon completion, students form groups of four to discuss their thoughts, feelings, or experiences with others who have had mental, physical, or societal limitations.

Activity 3: Think Notes Reading Guide

Distribute **Handout 1.3: Thinking Notes Reading Guide**. As the students read chapters 1-9, they will record evidence of possible themes for the novel. Be sure to model a few examples of how to complete each material with one or more examples. Students record the page number and the textual evidence to support the theme.

For students who are EL, have disabilities, or perform/read well below the grade level:

- For struggling students, tell a familiar story, such as “The Three Little Pigs”, that has an easily recognizable theme (e.g., sometimes, patience, despite pressure, helps to overcome obstacles). Think aloud to show struggling students how to think through the process of determining the lesson learned from the story of the Three Little Pigs.
- For students who struggle with the determining details that develop a theme using the provided materials, provide them with [RL.4-12.2 Graphic Organizer](#) instead.

Extensions and/or a more advanced text for students who perform/read well above grade level:

- Students who understand determine a theme early, have them look for evidence of another similar or different theme in the same text.

Activity 4: Paragraph Exploring the Theme

State the purpose for this activity is to use the evidence from the Think Notes to write a paragraph explaining the theme of the novel citing textual evidence to support the theme.

For students who are EL, have disabilities, or perform/read well below the grade level:

- Review with students who do not correctly answer the essential question.

Reflection and Closing:

Reflect on how well the students were able to relate to the essential questions for the lesson.

- How do readers determine the theme of a literary text?
- Why is it important to be understanding of other people’s limitations?

- ✓ Students will write a response to the essential question in the Bell Work organizer. Students will turn and talk to a neighbor sharing their answers.

Homework

Students will read parts of the novel at home depending on how much reading needs to be accomplished to stay on track. Students may need to work on the writing of the theme based paragraph at home if not completed during class.

Handout 1.1: Bell Work Organizer

Directions: Copy the Guiding Questions onto the organizer below. Be prepared to write and share your response at the end of the lesson.

Day 1 Guiding Questions: Responses:
Day 2 Guiding Questions: Responses
Day 3 Guiding Questions: Responses:
Day 4 Guiding Questions: Responses:
Day 5 Guiding Questions: Responses:

Handout 1.2: Pre-Assessment

Directions: For the following statements, circle either Agree or Disagree.

Agree	Disagree	People with mental limitations do not get their feelings hurt because they don't really understand fully when people say or do things that are offensive.
Agree	Disagree	People with physical limitations can't do the things that a person without physical limitations can do.
Agree	Disagree	Societal limitations are a thing of the past.
Agree	Disagree	If a person with mental limitations tries hard enough, he can overcome the mental limitation.
Agree	Disagree	People with physical limitations should not be allowed to participate in activities with people without physical limitations.
Agree	Disagree	Being a female is a societal limitation.
Agree	Disagree	People with mental limitations should not be in the same classes in school with people who do not have mental limitations.
Agree	Disagree	People with physical limitations make me feel uncomfortable.
Agree	Disagree	There is no such thing as societal limitations: people just perceive this in their own minds.
Agree	Disagree	People with mental limitations can only be successful to a certain extent.

Handout 1.3: Thinking Notes Reading Guide

THINK NOTES

As you read the novel, record the following for each chapter:

- Chapter number
- Any vocabulary words you do not recognize, page found, and context clues
- Ideas of possible themes with evidence from the text that supports your rationale.
- A summary of the chapter.

Chapter #		
Vocabulary Word	Page	Sentence from text/context clue

Theme	Evidence from text

Summary of chapter

For training or questions regarding this unit,
please contact:

exemplarunit@mdek12.org