

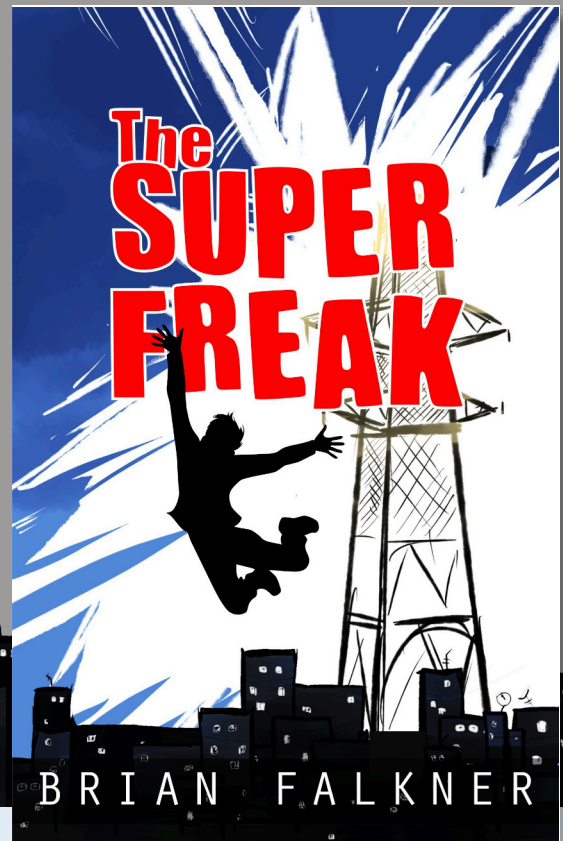


teacher notes

The SUPER FREAK

By Brian Falkner

- Primary School Ages 8+
- Junior/Middle Grade Fiction



Synopsis

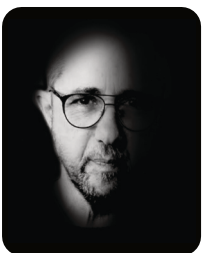
“The Super Freak” by Brian Falkner tells the story of Jacob Smith, a teenager who discovers he can influence people’s thoughts. Jacob, often the new kid due to his father’s job relocations, struggles with making friends and facing bullies like Blocker Blüchner. His family’s financial instability adds to his stress, as his father pursues an acting career.

Jacob’s life changes when he makes his teacher write a nonsensical word on the board. Realizing he can implant thoughts, Jacob faces ethical dilemmas about using his power. His friendship with classmate Ben grows as they navigate school life together. Jacob also has a crush on Erica a beautiful but aloof girl.

Using his power, Jacob tries to defend himself from Blocker, leading to unintended consequences. The tension between using his ability for good versus personal gain becomes a central conflict. A climactic showdown with Blocker forces Jacob to confront the true nature of his power and its ethical implications.

In the end, Jacob embraces his identity and responsibilities, forging stronger relationships with family and friends. “The Super Freak” is a humorous, thought-provoking exploration of teenage life and the complexities of power.

About the Author



Brian wanted to be an author ever since he was a child. It only took him thirty years to realise that dream. Along the way he worked as a reporter, advertising copywriter, radio announcer and internet developer. Now an award-winning author, with twenty-one books published internationally, he is also an internationally acclaimed writing coach, running workshops and writing camps around Australia, the USA and New Zealand. He lives in Queensland.





Key Learning Areas

- Literature and Language Arts
- Psychology
- Social Studies
- Ethics
- Philosophy



Themes

- **Identity and Self-Discovery:** Jacob's journey in understanding his unique abilities and himself.
- **Power and Responsibility:** The ethical considerations of influencing others.
- **Bullying and Peer Pressure:** The impact of bullying and strategies for coping.
- **Family and Relationships:** The role of family support and dynamics in personal growth.
- **Change and Adaptation:** The challenges of relocations and making new friends.



Characters

- **Jacob John Smith:** The protagonist with a mind-influencing ability.
- **Blocker Blüchner:** The school bully.
- **Ben Holly:** Jacob's friend
- **Erica McDonald:** The object of Jacob's affection
- **Mr. Saltham:** The strict PE teacher.
- **Fuhrer Blüchner:** The tough French teacher (Blocker's mother).
- **Tupai White:** The toughest kid in school



Genres

- Junior/ Middle Grade Fiction
- Supernatural Fiction
- Coming-of-Age
- Humor

Writing Style

Brian Falkner's "The Super Freak" features an engaging, humorous, and accessible writing style that captures the voice of its young protagonist, Jacob Smith. Written in the first person, the narrative offers direct insight into Jacob's thoughts and feelings. Falkner uses humor and wit to address serious themes like bullying and ethical dilemmas, while vivid descriptions and authentic dialogue bring the characters and settings to life. The pacing is brisk, balancing tension with reflective moments. Emotional depth and relatable language make complex themes approachable for young readers. Falkner's style combines levity and depth, making the novel both entertaining and thought-provoking for a young audience.

Activities

Character Diaries: Have students write diary entries from the perspectives of different characters, such as Jacob, Ben, or Blocker. This activity encourages empathy and deeper understanding of character motivations.

Power Ethics Role-Play: Divide into groups and assign each group a scenario where Jacob must decide whether to use his power. Students role-play the scenario, debating the ethical implications and consequences of each choice.

Mind Influence Experiment: Students conduct a classroom experiment to explore influence and persuasion. They can create posters or speeches to persuade their peers about a topic, discussing the effectiveness and ethical considerations afterward.

Comparative Analysis: Have students compare "The Super Freak" with another young adult novel featuring a protagonist with unique abilities, such as "Percy Jackson & The Olympians" or "Harry Potter". They can analyze similarities and differences in themes, character development, and ethical dilemmas.



Exercises and Questions

Mind Matters

Exercise:

Have students write a short story about a random thought they had during class and where it might have come from.

Questions:

1. What is Jacob John Smith's initial attitude towards his unusual thoughts?
2. How does the opening scene set the tone for the novel?

Words of Wisdom

Exercise:

Ask students to list and define ten uncommon words Jacob enjoys using.

Questions:

1. How does Jacob's use of language reflect his personality?
2. What challenges does Jacob face with changing schools frequently?

The First Clue

Exercise:

- Prediction: Students predict how Jacob's ability might impact his school life.

Questions:

1. Describe the first instance where Jacob uses his power intentionally.
2. How does Jacob feel after influencing Mr. Saltham's decision?

Detention

Exercise:

- Essay Writing: Students write a brief essay on their views about using detention as a punishment in schools.

Questions:

1. Why does Jacob find himself in detention frequently?
2. How does Jacob's view on writing essays differ from other students?

The Artificial Kid

Exercise:

- Character Sketch: Draw a character sketch of Ben Holly and list his peculiar behaviors.

Questions:

1. Why does Jacob suspect Ben Holly might be a robot?
2. How does Jacob's relationship with Ben start to develop?

GWF

Exercise:

- Role-Playing: Act out the confrontation between Jacob and Blocker in the stairwell.

Questions:

1. What is the Glenfield Wrestling Federation?
2. How does Jacob's challenge to Blocker demonstrate his courage or desperation?

My Dad

Exercise:

- Family Tree: Create a family tree for Jacob's family and note their occupations and relationships.

Questions:

1. How does Jacob's father's career affect the family's financial stability?
2. What is Jacob's relationship with his sister April like?

What I did in the Holidays

Exercise:

- Diary Entry: Write a diary entry from Jacob's perspective about his holiday.

Questions:

1. How does Jacob plan to avoid fighting Blocker in the GWF ring?
2. What role does Ben play in Jacob's plan?

The Lightning Tower

Exercise:

- Science Experiment: Research and present a small project on how lightning is formed.

Questions:

1. Why do Jacob and Ben decide to go to the power pylon during a storm?
2. How does the storm setting enhance the tension in this chapter?

Epilogue

Exercise:

1. Book Review: Write a book review that includes a summary, analysis of the themes, and personal reflection on what you liked or didn't like about the story.

Questions:

1. What does Jacob's decision in the final chapter suggest about his future?
3. How does the author use humor to address serious themes in the novel, and is this approach effective in the final chapter?



Discussion Questions

- How does Jacob's ability to influence others affect his relationships with his peers and family?
- What are the moral dilemmas Jacob faces with his power? How does he resolve them?
- How do Jacob's frequent relocations impact his sense of identity and belonging?
- What role do Ben and Erica play in Jacob's journey of self-discovery?
- How does the author use humour to address serious themes such as bullying and family dynamics?



Essay Topics

- Analyze the theme of power and responsibility in "The Super Freak" and its relevance to teenage life.
- Discuss how Jacob's character evolves throughout the novel and the factors that influence his growth.
- Explore the role of family in shaping Jacob's identity and coping mechanisms.
- Evaluate the ethical implications of Jacob's ability to control thoughts and actions. Is he justified in using his power?
- Compare and contrast the relationships Jacob has with Ben and Blocker. How do these reflect different aspects of his personality and challenges?



Crossword Puzzle

Can you identify these Brian Falkner books by their tagline?

CLUES:

1. Daniel's playing in the NRL. He's twelve.
2. Coca Cola's in deep trouble
3. He's no ordinary freak
4. Crack the code, or tomorrow is history
5. In cyberspace everyone can hear you scream
6. He's been hiding all his life. That's about to change
7. In space, everyone can watch your stream
8. They depend on each other. Humanity depends on them
9. It's a weapon of Jurassic destruction
10. Schoolboy. Spy. Assassin
11. You think you are above the law. But I am outside the law. And I'm coming for you
12. His life could change the world. His death could save it
13. The strange (and probably not true) story of Cecilia and the black lions
14. She can speak a lot of languages. That's not going to save her
15. He's seventeen. His life expectancy: two weeks.

