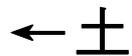


**FAT
FREDDY
FLOATS**

by



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Fat Freddy Floats

Setting:

Places:

West Pine Elementary School playground and Setogo Lake county and state parks in and around Goldray, Setogo County, MI, USA, Earth

Time:

September

Characters:

Fat Freddy	the main character, a walking encyclopedia
Slim Pickins	a problem child
Percy	Freddy's friend
Mrs. Singam	a teacher
Mr. Singam	Mrs. Singam's husband (no dialogue)
Freddy's mom	a great and thoughtful mom
Freddy's dad	pleasant and reliable (no dialogue)
Slim's parents	(mentioned but not seen)

About Fat Freddy:

Fat Freddy is in the fourth grade. He is kind, considerate, fair, brave, honest, decent, observant, smart, and really really fat.

Fat Freddy spends his free time reading encyclopedias, science books, dictionaries, and novels. He loves to read comic books, too. He usually reads in front of the TV.

Fat Freddy wants to be a superhero when he grows up. He looks to science as a way to achieve his dream.

[To give it a regional flavour, the following story is written phonetically in a vernacular which the author refers to as “Michigan Hillbilly”. English has many variations amongst different groups of users. Upon my first several trips to rural Michigan, I found that I had frequent difficulties understanding the locals, and likewise, the Michigan locals occasionally found it difficult to understand my “proper” British English. Testing of this text with various rural Michiganders has shown that while they have no difficulty fully understanding their own vernacular when it is read aloud, they usually have great difficulty in reading the text as written more or less phonetically. The author considers this to be an indicator of a tremendous disparity between English as it is written and English as it is actually spoken, which in turn supports the desperate need for a new and better *lingua franca* than English, specifically, ⊕T_. Herein, the reader will find frequent usage of apostrophes ('). In addition to their familiar usage for standard contractions, they frequently indicate glottal stops. Thus, “ it ” is written as “ i' ” when the speaker would end the word without an aspirated *t* sound. Likewise, “ ain't ” becomes “ ain' ”. ♥ANON]

Fat Freddy Floats

One sunny Friday at lunch recess, Freddy and Percy were watching tetherball on the playground at West Pine Elementary School. Slim Pickins took his final shot and slammed the ball to rest against the pole.

“I win uhgen!” shouted Slim. “Nex’!”

“I’s no’ fair!” shouted the boy who lost. “Y’re in fourth grade, ‘n’ y’ *always* hog th’ tetherball station. U’m only in firs’ grade. I wanna play tetherball with my friends.”

“Jus’ bea’ me, ‘n’ you c’n stay a’ th’ pole,” said Slim, snidely.

“I *can*’ bea’ y’,” complained the smaller boy. “Besides, even if I did, y’d jus’ go d’ th’ backa th’ line ‘n’ then hog th’ station again after y’ged another turn.”

“Winner makes th’ rules,” said Slim.

Freddy stepped up to Slim. “Th’ kid’s righ’, Slim. Y’sh’d share.”

Slim stepped out of the boundary circle and got in Freddy’s face. “Lemme alone, Fatso. If y’bea’ me, *you* c’n make th’ rules.”

“I c’n bea’ y’a’ lotsa things,” said Freddy. “How ‘bout a spelling bee?”

“How ‘bout a spor’, fatso?” chided Slim. “There ain’ no spor’ y’c’n bea’ me a’.”

While Slim was arguing with Freddy, the younger kids took over the tetherball station.

“If I bea’ y’ad a spor’, will y’led everyone take turns a’ tetherball for th’ resta th’ year?”

“Sure,” said Slim. “But there ain’ no spor’ y’c’n bea’ me a’.”

Freddy was calm and serious. “This’ll be a test of endurance.”

“Ain’t gonna be no tes’,” snapped Slim.

“The test is a race,” said Freddy. “Swimming.”

Slim smiled. “Okay.”

“I’ll race y’across Setogo Lake alla way from th’ county park t’ th’ state park,” said Freddy.

Slim laughed. “Y’ll drown.”

“D’ we have a be’?” asked Freddy.

“Wha’ do I ged if I win?” asked Slim.

Freddy thought for a moment. “I’ll carry y’r books t’ school f’r th’ res’a th’ school year.”

“Y’re on!” shouted Slim.

They shook hands on it.

“We need a referee,” said Freddy.

Mrs. Singam was signaling for the first graders to go to their classrooms. Freddy and Slim walked up to Mrs. Singam.

Freddy waited for Mrs. Singam to acknowledge them. “Mrs. Singam. W’d jou be willing d’ referee a contes’?”

“Wha’ kinda contes’?” asked Mrs. Singam.

“Slim ‘n’ I’ve come d’ loggerheads regarding tetherball rotation,” replied Freddy. “We’ve decided d’ seddle ahr differences with ‘n athletic competition.”

“W’re gonna race,” piped in Slim.

“Across Setogo Lake,” added Freddy.

A worried look crossed Mrs. Singam’s face. “That’s dangerous.”

“I won’ be dangerous if we have some responsible adults t’ watch us,” explained Freddy. “I know my parents’ll help ou’.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Singam, “my husb’n’ ‘n’ I’re already plannin’ d’ go swimmin’ d’morrow morning anyway. I s’pose we c’d make sure y’re both okay. How ‘bout ten AM?”

“Tha’s great,” said Freddy. “Thank you, Mrs. Singam.”

“Y’re welcome, boys.”

Slim spoke quietly out of the side of his mouth. “Y’re gonna drown, fa’ boy.”

“Slim Pickins!” scolded Mrs. Singam, “Thad is no way d’ talk.”

“It’s okay, Mrs. Singam,” said Freddy. Freddy turned to Slim. “See y’Sadurday. Ten o’clock sharp.”

“See y’,” said Slim as he darted back to the tetherball station.

That afternoon, Freddy was walking home with Percy. Percy was a little worried. “Freddy, y’re gonna hafta carry Slim’s books t’ school f’r th’ whole year.”

Freddy was not worried. "Relax, Percy. I've go' 'n angle."

"I hope it's a right angle," said Percy.

Freddy grinned. "Have y'ever seen Slim read 'r carry a book?"

Percy puzzled for a moment. "Um, no. Oh, I ged i'!" he exclaimed. "He never carries books, so if y'lose, y'don' lose."

"Now y're thinkin'," replied Freddy.

"Bu' Freddy," objected Percy, "whad if y'lose 'n' Slim makes y'carry a buncha books t' school jus' t' spite y'?"

Freddy Chuckled. "No worries. F'r one thing, I'm no' gonna lose 'cause I've go' 'n angle."

"Sure, sure, Freddy, bu' whad if y' *do* lose?"

"I only promise' t' carry his books *to* school," explained Freddy. "Ge'in' 'em back is his problem."

Percy was amazed. "So if y'win, y'win, and if y'lose, y'don' lose."

"I'm gonna win," said Freddy, matter-of-factly.

"If you think so," said Percy. "I' sure would be nice f'r someone d' teach Slim a lesson. He's a jerk."

"Y'godda have some sympathy f'r Slim," said Freddy. "His dad isn' aroun'. His mom had 'im when she was real young, 'n' the cops put 'er in jail f'r bein' sick 'n' usin' medicine d' make 'erself better."

"How c'n y'go d' jail f'r usin' medicine?" asked Percy in disbelief.

"Ever hearda th' Drug War?" asked Freddy.

Percy was confused. “Wha’ do drugs hafta do with medicine?”

“Drugs *are* medicine,” said Freddy. “Use a dictionary.”

“I’ll hafta look thad up,” said Percy. “Why di’n’ she jus’ go see a doctor?”

“F’r one thing,” answered Freddy, “she was poor. Besides, back then y’c’dn’ ged a prescription f’r th’ medicine she needed.”

“So she went t’ jail f’r bein’ sick ‘n’ tryin’ d’ make ‘erself bedder?” asked Percy, incredulously.

“Yep,” said Freddy.

“Tha’s horrible!” exclaimed Percy.

“Tha’s America,” said Freddy.

Percy objected. “But America’s a democracy! W’re free. Tha’s whad America’s all about.”

Freddy was firm. “No, America isn’ a democracy, and w’re no’ free. America’s ‘n oligarchy pretending d’ be a republic.”

“Oli-wha’?” asked Percy.

“Oligarchy,” repeated Freddy. “Look id up in a dictionary.”

Percy was incredulous. “But ahr teachers always say thad America’s a democracy.”

“America is no’ an’ never has been a democracy,” replied Freddy. “It was designed d’ be a republic, bu’ now it’s ‘n oligarchy.”

“Freddy,” said Percy in consternation, “I don’ have a dictionary with me. Jus’ tell me wha’ ‘n oligarchy is.”

Freddy gave one of his calm and clear explanations. “An oligarchy is when a small groupa people with special priv’leges gets t’ call alla shots.”

“I can’ b’lieve that ahr teachers lie to us,” said Percy.

“If they told us th’ truth, they’d never work again,” said Freddy.

“So ‘n oligarchy is like a gang?” asked Percy.

“Egzac’ly,” answered Freddy.

Percy continued his line of questioning. “An’ America is run by a gang tha’ wants us t’ think we live in a democracy?”

“You god i’,” replied Freddy.

“Why don’ they jus’ tell us th’ truth?” asked Percy.

“People wouldn’ stan’ for i’,” said Freddy.

Percy was starting to understand a little. “Bu’ they’ll stan’ f’r a gang tha’ pretends it’s a democracy.”

Freddy smiled with satisfaction that his friend understood him. “Y’re pretty observan’, Percy.”

“Freddy,” inquired Percy, “d’you sid a’ home reading encyclopedias alla time?”

“Sure,” answered Freddy, “and dictionaries, usually while I’m watchin’ TV.”

Percy thought for a moment. “What if I ask Mrs. Singam abou’ this?”

“She’ll tell y’l’m wrong,” replied Freddy, “an’ she’ll probably chuckle a little while looking scared. D’you b’lieve everything everyone tells y’?”

“I b’lieve my teachers,” answered Percy.

“If they told y’th’ truth,” explained Freddy, “they’d ge’ fired.”

“So they *hafta* lie to us t’ keep their jobs?” inquired Percy with an extra dose of incredulous amazement.

“You god i’,” said Freddy, casually.

Percy was starting to get a headache. “Freddy, tha’s a lo’ t’ think about.”

“Take y’r time,” said Freddy.

Percy wanted to change the subject. “About th’ race...wha’s y’r angle, Freddy?”

“Science,” said Freddy. “Basic fac’s. Slim’s body densidy exceeds thada th’ wadder, so he has t’ constantly expend energy d’ stay above th’ wadder. My body densidy is less than th’ densidya th’ wadder, so I don’ need d’ expend energy d’ stay above th’ wadder.”

“Huh?” asked Percy. He was used to Freddy giving long-winded explanations using five-dollar words, but one thing Percy always counted on was that no matter what, Freddy could break it all down into little, easy words that everyone could understand.

“Lean sinks. Fa’ floats,” said Freddy. “Slim has t’ swim. I don’.”

Percy giggled. "So Slim is too lean d' win, and y're too fa' t' lose."

"Yep," grunted Freddy.

The next morning, everyone gathered at Setogo Lake County Park for the race. Freddy's parents along with Mrs. Singam and her husband brought their canoes. They packed extra life jackets to make sure nothing went wrong.

Slim was feeling cocky. "Ge' ready d' lose, fa' boy. I'm th' fastes' swimmer aroun'. You won' even make i' halfway."

"I'll do y'one better, Slim," answered Freddy. "U'm'nna bike pedal alla way acrossa lake."

"Y'can' bike across a lake!" shouted Slim.

"So y'think it's impossible?" asked Freddy.

"There's no poin' 'n talkin' t' y'," snapped Slim. "Y're nuts!"

"Get ready d' see the impossible happen," said Freddy.

Freddy's mom handed a bottle of lotion to Freddy. "Don' f'rget y'r sunscreen, Freddy."

Freddy accepted the bottle. "Thanks, mom."

Freddy's mom spoke to Slim, "Would you like some sunscreen?"

"Nah!" said Slim, "I'm nod a sissy like Freddy." Slim was anxious to get started and trotted to the edge of the water. "Hey, Freddy! I'll give y'a head star'."

Freddy was busy putting on sunscreen. "Y'c'n have th' head star', Slim."

“Fine,” said Slim. “You lose.” Slim jumped into the lake and started swimming. The Singams followed him in their canoe.

Freddy finished covering himself with sunscreen.

Percy looked out at Slim, nervously. “Freddy, y’d better ge’ goin’ or y’ll never catch up.”

“Relax, Percy,” replied Freddy. “I don’ need d’ catch up. Slim’ll never finish.” Freddy looked out across the lake toward the state park. “It’s five miles. D’y’think Slim c’n swim five miles?”

Percy pondered for a moment. “Um...well, I know I can’. Freddy, c’n you swim five miles?”

“No problem,” said Freddy calmly. “U’m’nna bike pedal th’ whole way.”

Freddy waded out into the water up to his neck. Then he gracefully let his legs rise above the surface with his feet pointed at the state park.

“Freddy!” shouted Percy, “Y’re facing th’ wrong way.”

Freddy began to pedal his legs, slowly. At first, nothing seemed to be happening, but gradually, the energy of his pedaling in the water overcame his inertia, and Freddy started to gain momentum. He began to move slowly forward out into the lake.

“Wow!” exclaimed Percy. “He really *is* gonna bike pedal across Setogo Lake.

Slim was furiously churning the water with his best breast stroke. When his arms got tired, he switched to a crawl

stroke. The Singams casually kept pace behind him in their canoe.

Freddy pedaled at a steady pace. When he got tired, he just floated. He took his time.

Halfway across the lake, Slim was in trouble. He started gasping for breath. Mrs. Singam tensed when Slim went under for a moment, but he soon resurfaced.

Slim raised an arm above the water and shouted, "Help!"

Mrs. Singam threw a life jacket to Slim. Slim grabbed it and held on for dear life while the Singams maneuvered their canoe over to him. Slim was breathing hard when they pulled him on board.

It took Freddy four hours to bike pedal across Setogo Lake to the state park, but he had no trouble going the distance.

Everyone was there to greet him. Most of them cheered.

"Y' *did* i'!" shouted Percy.

Slim was standing a little off to the side with a wet towel wrapped around his head and shoulders to soothe his sunburn. He was furious. "You cheaded!"

"No, I didn'," said Freddy.

"Y'di'n' swim," snapped Slim. "Y'floaded."

"I made id across on my own power," answered Freddy. "Tha's more'n I c'n say f'r you."

"Jus' because y're so fa'," added Slim, venomously.

“Yeah,” said Freddy in an explanatory tone. “Fa’ floats. Basic science fac’.”

“You stink!” exclaimed Slim.

Freddy ignored the insult. “Y’re jus’ sore ‘cause I bea’ y’in a physical contes’.”

“You did *not* bea’ me,” said Slim.

Mrs. Singham spoke up. “Slim, you agreed d’ le’ me be th’ referee f’r this contes’. Freddy *did* bea’ you.”

Slim kicked the sand and walked away.

Percy was deeply amused. “Slim sure is a sore loser.”

Freddy jogged down the beach to Slim. “Slim, waid up!”

“Whaddaya wan’?” snapped Slim.

“I jus’ wanna talk,” said Freddy.

They sat down together on the sand.

Slim was as conciliatory as he could be. “Y’won th’ stupid be’. Everyone takes turns playing tetherball.”

Freddy was sympathetic to Slim’s feelings. “I know that i’ feels good d’ win.”

“You bed i’ does,” said Slim. “Tha’s all I go’. Now I ain’ go’ tha’ no more, neither.”

“Y’c’d have some’m’ bedder,” suggested Freddy.

“Wha’?” asked Slim.

“Y’c’d show th’ other kids how d’ be bedder a’ tetherball,” said Freddy.

FAT FREDDY

“Why w’d I wanna do that?” asked Slim.

“I’ feels good d’ win,” explained Freddy. “I’ feels good d’ help people, too.”

Slim was silent for a minute. “Maybe.”

“Jus’ tell me y’ll think about i’,” said Freddy.

“Maybe,” said Slim with no real conviction.

“There’s one more thing,” added Freddy. “My family’s havin’ a barbecue d’morrow. Y’re invided.”

Slim was startled. “Are you serious?”

Freddy nodded. “Please come.”

Slim was awestruck. “I’ll think about i’.”

[You c’n finish th’ story.]

Tetherball

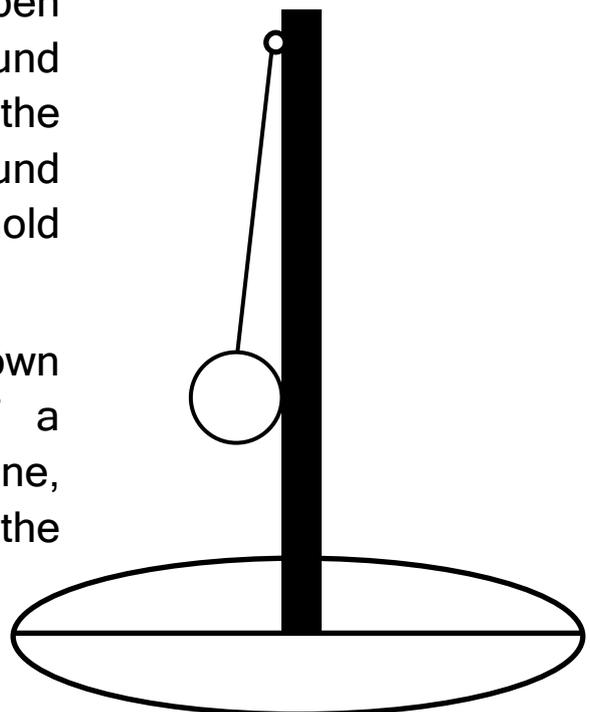
What you need:

1. a post that is taller than the players
2. a round ball (One that is bigger than a softball and smaller than a soccer ball is best. A spongy foam ball might work.)
3. rope
4. a way to attach the rope to the ball
5. a way to attach the rope to the post
6. a way to get the pole to stand up straight and firm

Tetherball is played in a bisected circle. There are two players and a referee. Each player gets half of the circle. A player may not leave that player's half of the circle.

The referee holds up the ball and lets it drop to hit the pole. The players hit the ball with their open hands to try to get it to go around the pole. The first player to get the ball to wrap all of the way around the pole wins. Players may not hold the ball.

Players may make their own rules about what happens if a player crosses the dividing line, steps out of the circle, or holds the ball.



Help Freddy!

Freddy is trapped in a room. All he has is a mirror and a stool. How can he get out?

(You can find the answer at the bottom of this page.)

Vocabulary

Freddy knows all of these words. He can spell them correctly and use them in sentences correctly. He can also tell his friends what each one means. Can you?

amazement

amused

anxious

athletic

awestruck

barbecue

boundary

casual

competition

conciliatory

consternation

conviction

dangerous

democracy

density

dialogue

encyclopedia

endurance

exclamation

expend

explanatory

figurative

furious

graceful

impossible

incredulous

inertia

literal

loggerheads

maneuver

momentum

observant

oligarchy

physical

plutocracy

ponder

prescription

privilege

promise

referee

regarding

republic

responsible

resurface

satisfaction

soothe

suggest

sympathetic

venomous

.was eh tahw ees ot rorrim eht ni skool eH
.flah ni loots eht stuc dna was eht sekah eH
.elohw a ekam sevlah owT
!hguorht lwarC nac eH

FAT FREDDY

Use this page to draw your own picture of Fat Freddy.

THE FAT FREDDY THEME

Who's the coolest science nerd around?

FREDDY! FAT FREDDY!

Are you ready? Here comes Freddy.

HE'S FAT! HE'S COOL!

He's the smartest kid in town.

FREDDY! FAT FREDDY!

Are you ready? Here comes Freddy.

HE'S FAT! HE'S COOL!

He's a student at school,
the coolest student at school.