FREE WRITE ASSIGNMENT FOR "HARRISON BERGERON"

What is your best quality? Don't be modest! You can discuss something you do well, such as:
- sports
- writing
- acting
- playing a game (like chess, etc.)
- music
- video games
- drawing
- public speaking
- solving problems
- working with computers
- etc.

You can discuss something you just are, such as:
- generous
- cheerful
- fashionable
- loyal
- imaginative
- fast
- friendly
- intelligent
- good listener
- creative
- kind
- handsome/beautiful (fine)
- funny
- hardworking
- tolerant
- strong
- independent

Tell me about your best quality in specific detail. Write at least one sentence answering this question, explaining what the quality is and how it shows in your personality and in your life. And remember, don't be shy! It happens to know that each and every one of you has some wonderful quality or other. If you really run into trouble, ask your parents or friends (or teachers) for suggestions.

"HARRISON BERGERON" READING LOG REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When you're done reading "Hi," reflect on the following prompts in your reading log. Consider what it would be like to live in a world like Harrison's.

1. Is there a moral to this story? What is it? As in, what is the message of this story?
2. Reflect again on your "best quality/yes." If you lived in Harrison Bergeron's society, what sorts of handicaps do you think you might be given? Why? Why do you think these are your strengths? What sort of weaknesses do you have that would force other people to be given handicaps to bring them down to your level?
3. Consider how "handicap" is a negative word. How does this change our perception if instead we used the words "differently abled" when referring to people we have referred to as "handicapped"?

Possible 15 Vocabulary words (extra credit or for choice words):
1. oppression
2. calibrated
3. consternation
4. cover
5. hindrance
6. luminous
7. synchronizing
8. vigilance
9. virtuoso
10. anarchism
ANTICIPATION/REACTION GUIDE FOR "HARRISON BERGERON"

Before you begin reading "Harrison Bergeron," read the following statements below. In the blanks in the Anticipation column, write a yes or a no to show whether you agree with the statement. When you're finished reading the story, you'll go back to these statements and see if you've changed your mind about any of them by filling in a yes or no in the Reaction column.

Anticipation   Reaction

1. You can never have too much of a good thing.  

2. It is the government's job to make sure that every citizen is treated equally.

3. Because someone always has to lose in a competition, and because losing usually makes people feel bad, people should avoid competition.

4. People should put the needs of others before their own.

5. People should never compromise their ideals.

6. A person should be allowed to do and be what they want, even if it bothers someone else.

HARRISON BERGERON

by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April, for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that daffodil month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

It was tragic, all right, but George and Hazel couldn't think about it very hard. Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except short hours. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains.

George and Hazel were watching television. There were tears on Hazel's cheeks, but she'd forgotten for the moment what they were about.

On the television screen were ballerinas.

A buzzer sounded in George's head. His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm.

"That was a real pretty dance, that dance they just did," said Hazel.

"Huh?" said George.

"That dance was nice," said Hazel.

"Yup," said George. He tried to think a little about the ballerina. They weren't really very good as ballerinas; anybody else would have been, anyway. They were hardened with sweatbands and bags of birdshot, and their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or
And it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her headless body was as big as those worn by two hundred pound men.

And she had no apology for her voice, which was a very warble voice for a woman's use. Her voice was a warm, Harrison, timeless melody. "I'm sorry," she said, and she began again, making her voice absolutely uncomprehensible.

"Harrison Bergerson, age fourteen," she said in a crackle squawk, "has just escaped from jail, where she was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. He is a genius and an athlete, to be feared, and should be respected as extremely dangerous."

A police photograph of Harrison Bergerson was flashed on the screen square down, then sideways, upside down, then right side up. The picture showed the full length of Harrison against a background calibrated in feet and inches. He was exactly seven feet tall.

The rest of Harrison's appearance was Halloween and hardware. Nobody had ever worn heavier leathers. He had grown leathers faster than the H-H men could transport them. Instead of a little car radio for a mental handicap, he wore a tremendous pair of earphones, and spectacles with thick, wavy lenses. The spectacles were intended to make him not only blind, but give him whistling headaches besides.

Scrap metal was heff all over him. Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the leathers worn by strong people, but Harrison looked like a walking junkyard. In the race of life, Harrison came in three hundred pounds.

And as for his good books, the H-H men required that he wear at all times a red rubber ball for a nose, keep his eyebrows shaved off, and cover his sheer white teeth with black caps at snack-tooth random.

"If you see this boy," said the ballerina, "do not - I repeat, do not try to reason with him."

There was the shrinkle of a door being torn from its hinges.

Streams and bursting cries of contamination came from the television set. The photograph of Harrison Bergerson on the screen jumped again and again, as though dancing to the music of an earthquake.

George Bergerson correctly identified the earthquake, and will be mighty happy, for many was the time his own home had danced to the same rushing tone. "My God," said George, "that must be Harrison!"

The realization was blotted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head.

When George could open his eyes again, the photograph of Harrison was gone. A living, breathing Harrison filled the screen.

Clacking, clownish, huge, Harrison stood in the center of the studio. The back of the sprangled studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers covered on their knees, before him, expecting to die.

"I am the Emperor!" cried Harrison. "Do you hear, I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say or else! He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

"Even as I stand here," he bellowed, "crippled, hobbled, sickened - I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I can become!"

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

Harrison's scrap iron handicap crashed to the floor.

Harrison thrust his thumb under the bar of the postblock that secured his hand harness. The bar snapped like candy, Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.

He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

"I shall now select my Emperor," he said, looking down on the covering people. "Let the first woman who does her feet claim her mate and her throne!"

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow.

Harrison plucked the normal handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicap with marvellous delicacy. Last of all he removed her mask.

She was indescribably beautiful.

"Now," said Harrison, taking her hand, "shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Must!" he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their handicaps, too. "Play your best," he told them, "and I'll make you forget and drive out cares."

The music began. It was normal at first, cheap, silly, false. But Harrison..."