

Freaky Friday Study Guide

Freaky Friday by Mary Rodgers

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Overview

Freaky Friday is one of this century's funniest books for young adults. The basic idea—an exchange of identities—is hardly new; Shakespeare, Mark Twain, and P. G. Wodehouse, among others, have used this theme. But Rodgers's application is new: an identity exchange between generations. All the humor of the original idea remains, but added to it is the serious and important question of understanding between parent and child.

When the story opens, Annabel is bright and humorous, but obtuse. A classic underachiever at school, she is spectacularly messy at home, disorganized, and unable to get along with her family (although she does have loyal friends her own age). She fails to see how much her little brother admires her, mistaking his adoration for simple peskiness. She also fails to see that her mother is very much on her side. A day spent living her mother's life shows her these and other truths. The book, then, is about the trials of growing up, presented in an entertaining way that minimizes its overt "message."

At the end of the book, Annabel seems prepared to cope much better with her family and her school. She is ready to develop from an insecure and underachieving misfit to a more mature, open, and trusting person.

About the Author

Mary Rodgers, daughter of the composer Richard Rodgers, was born January 11, 1931, in New York City. She graduated from Brearley, a girls' private school in New York, then attended Wellesley College but left in her senior year to marry Julian Beaty. She was divorced from Beaty in 1957 and married Henry Guettel in 1961. She has five children. Rodgers achieved her first major success with the score for the Broadway musical *Once Upon a Mattress*, which captivated audiences, charmed the critics, and introduced a new star—Carol Burnett. Rodgers also wrote the score for *The Mad Show*, which appeared off-Broadway, and contributed to the book and album *Free to Be . . . You and Me*, featuring Mario Thomas. In addition, she worked on a number of children's shows, including a long stint with Leonard Bernstein for the young people's concerts of the New York Philharmonic.

In the early 1970s, encouraged by the reception of her first work for children, *The Rotten Book* (1969), Rodgers continued with two new ventures. Along with her mother, Dorothy Rodgers, she began a column in *McCall's* magazine, "Of Two Minds," in which they gave alternating (and often very different) answers to readers' questions much as they had done in their book *A Word to the Wives* (1970). Her second new venture was *Freaky Friday*, a fantasy novel intended for adolescent readers. *Freaky Friday* was an American Library Association (ALA) Notable Children's Book of 1972 and won the Christopher Award for 1973, as well as three awards voted on by young readers: the California Young Readers Medal (1977), the Nene Award (Hawaii, 1977), and the Georgia Children's Book Award (1978). A sequel, *A Billion for Boris*, appeared in 1974; it was an ALA Notable Children's Book and captured the Christopher Award.

Meanwhile, Rodgers had also become a screenwriter; she adapted *Freaky Friday* for the Walt Disney Studio in 1977. A third volume in the Andrews family comedy, *Summer Switch*, was published in 1982.



Plot Summary

Freaky Friday by Mary Rodgers is a short novel about a young girl who wakes one Friday morning to find she has been switched from her own body to her mother's. At first it seems fun, like some sort of magic game, a chance to prove to her mother that she can handle adult responsibilities. However, a near tragedy leads her to an understanding that only spending a day in her mother's shoes could bring.

Annabel Andrews wakes quite calmly in her mother, Ellen's bed with her mother's face staring back at her from the mirror. Finding that she is now, somehow, a teenager in an adult body, Annabel decides she is quite up to the challenge, sure that being an adult has to be more fun than being a child, the exact sentiment she yelled at her mother the night before during one of their screaming matches.

Annabel's first challenge is breakfast. Annabel does not know how to make coffee, so she fixes instant for her father. Annabel is also a little deficient in the fried eggs department; therefore, she coaxes her little brother into eating cereal. Annabel is not sure what happened to her mother, not knowing if her mother is in Annabel's teenage body or off in the body of the Queen of England. Annabel (in her mother's body,) goes to wake herself and finds her eating marshmallows and reading a comic book. It has to be Annabel because her mother does not even like marshmallows.

After the kids have gone to school and Dad has gone to work, Annabel settles in front of the television to watch some cartoons. However, almost immediately there is a knock on the door. It is the cute boy from upstairs. Annabel, forgetting what she looks like, lets him in and convinces him to stick around for a while and play hockey. Boris thinks Ellen, who Annabel is today, is the coolest mom in the world. However, he has to leave after a little while.

Annabel then focuses on the laundry that she started before Boris came over and discovers the washing machine has overflowed all over the kitchen floor. Annabel calls the repairman, but he cannot come until the following Wednesday. Then the maid shows up with alcohol on her breath. Annabel quickly fires her when she accuses Annabel herself of stealing gin.

The day isn't over yet. Annabel then goes down to the liquor store to buy more gin and scotch and nearly forgets to meet Ben's school bus. Ben is standing on the street when she returns to their apartment building, screaming for his mother. Annabel briefly thinks of leaving him there, but Ben spots her before she can. At home, Ben talks to his mother about Annabel, unaware that his mom is Annabel today. Ben really loves his sister, he says, and he cannot understand why she hates him so much.

Dad calls a few hours later and reminds Annabel about a meeting at Annabel's school that afternoon. Annabel calls Boris to baby sit and runs to the school, arriving forty-five minutes late for the meeting. There, the principal, Annabel's homeroom teacher, and the school psychologist explain to Annabel, who is in her mother's body, that while Annabel



is a good student, she just does not do the work needed to get good grades. Annabel realizes for the first time what a rotten attitude she has had and assures them that a new Annabel will arrive at school on Monday.

When Annabel returns home, Ben is missing. Annabel is at the end of her rope, ready to be herself once more. Annabel goes to her mother's room and screams to her mother to please make things right again so they can find Ben before something bad happens to him. Mom returns and they share their day's experience. Ben makes amends to Annabel by giving her a helicopter he made at school

Boris returns to the Andrews's apartment to check on the their dinner as a favor to Annabel, who was her mother at the time. Annabel looks different now. Her mother bought her new clothes, had her hair done, and had her braces removed. Boris is impressed by her new look and tells her his name is not Boris, it is Morris.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Freaky Friday by Mary Rodgers is a short novel about a young girl who wakes one Friday morning to find she has been switched from her own body to her mother's. At first it seems fun, like some sort of magic game, a chance to prove to her mother that she can handle adult responsibilities. However, a near tragedy leads her to an understanding that only spending a day in her mother's shoes could bring.

Annabel Andrews has just woken up inside her mother's body. Annabel is not surprised, though she knows no one will ever believe her. Annabel introduces the reader to her family. Her brother, Ben, she calls Ape Face because he is six-year-old perfection and she hates him. Her father, Bill, is an advertising executive who does a lot of work for an environmentally-conscious laundry detergent company. Then there is her mother, Ellen. Annabel had a fight with her mother the night before over a boy-girl party her mother will not allow Annabel to attend. The argument ended with her mother making a promise that Annabel would someday understand how difficult it is to be an adult. Annabel figures this is that day.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The plot proceeds when Annabel Andrews discovers that she has been switched into her mother's body. Interest and tension begin to build as the reader wonders how this amazing "switch" happened and how it will affect our young heroine. Descriptions of the various members of the Andrews family foreshadow the plot. Annabel does not hesitate to say that she does not like her brother and that she thinks her mother is much too overprotective. The foreshadowing here is a question of whether or not these opinions will change throughout the course of the novel.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Annabel is excited to be in her mother's body, mostly because her mother does not have braces on her teeth. Annabel brushes her mother's teeth with more enthusiasm than she has shown her own in a long time and then experiments with her mother's various moisturizers and makeup bottles.

Annabel is so excited with her new look, she runs into the bedroom to wake her father. Annabel forgets who she is and punches her father to wake him, something adults do not normally do. Her father resists waking up, giving her only a grudging compliment on her makeup before attempting to go back to sleep. The alarm goes off before he can close his eyes again.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Annabel's enthusiasm is symbolic of her childish nature. Annabel is unhappy with her own adolescent appearance; therefore, in her mother's body, she is thrilled with the unblemished skin and perfect teeth of an adult. This excitement carries into the bedroom where she attempts to wake her father with the behavior of her teenage mentality rather than the adult actions of the body she now occupies. This foreshadows future events in the plot in which the reader must wonder how Annabel will handle adult situations without acting like a child.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Annabel's first responsibility as her mother is to make the family breakfast. Annabel makes fried eggs for her father, something she learned to make years before. However, when Ben asks for scrambled, she bullies him into eating cold cereal because she does not know how to make anything but fried eggs.

Annabel begins to wonder if her mother is now in her old body, or if her mother went off somewhere else, like to be the Queen of England. Annabel goes to her own bedroom and finds herself there reading a comic book and eating marshmallows. Annabel cautiously asks herself what she wants for breakfast, and by the girl's reaction, Annabel is certain her mother could not be in that body. Annabel's mother does not like marshmallows and her behavior is so like the real Annabel that she is convinced that she still is the real Annabel.

Annabel asks Annabel if she is ready for school and what she is going to do about the English composition she is supposed to hand in today that she has not yet finished. Annabel lies, saying that she turned in that report days ago. Annabel then gets dressed and rushes out the door with Ben to catch the bus. Ben hesitates in the doorway. The mother-Annabel realizes he is waiting for a kiss, something the teenage-Annabel would rather not do. However, to keep from being found out, Annabel gives Ben a kiss and discovers it is not all that bad.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Annabel begins her mother's chores, touching on one of the themes of the novel, adult responsibility versus teenage responsibility. Annabel believes it is so much easier to be an adult. Here she begins to sample that theory.

It is ironic when Annabel goes to wake herself and finds herself acting much the same as always. Annabel is convinced by this behavior that somehow her she has remained herself and turned into her mother. The irony stems from the idea of a girl mothering herself. It is also symbolic of another theme of the novel, the mother-daughter relationship.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Annabel is curious where her mother went if not into her own body. A list plays itself through her head, but she is too excited by her own predicament to worry about it long. Annabel goes through her mother's date book to see what she has scheduled to do for the day. There is not much there, only a notation to by scotch and the time 2:30 with a box around it. When Annabel notices that the evening is blank, she decides she must take advantage of this and encourage her father to take her to a movie or something.

Annabel sits down to discuss the evening with her father, and the issue of money sidetracks them. Annabel's father tells her to buy more gin while she is at the liquor store. However, Annabel has already counted her mother's money and does not think there will be enough. This annoys Annabel's father. He gave Annabel's mother forty dollars just the day before. Bill makes Ellen, as Annabel, recount everything she bought the day before. When he learns she had to replace Annabel's raincoat for a third time that year, he begins to scold Ellen, as Annabel, for being too easy on the child. Annabel wants to go to camp that summer, but it will cost too much. Bill says if Annabel goes to camp, then the family will not be able to rent a cabin for July as he wanted to do.

Finally, Annabel talks her father into promising to take her to a movie that night. Bill tells her to arrange a baby sitter and to promise to launder his shirts instead of allowing the maid to do them. The maid has been messing them up. Then he leaves for work, leaving Annabel home alone.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Several events for future chapters are foreshadowed by Annabel looking at the things written in her mother's date book. First, there is the liquor that must be bought and then the mysterious meeting at 2:30. Then she discusses the summer with her father and learns that her own desire to go to camp is interfering with her father's plans for a family vacation. The introduction of a new character is foreshadowed by discussing the maid with her father.

Again the reader sees the theme of mother-daughter relationships when Annabel discusses how she talked her mother into letting her go to camp. It is also there in Bill's anger at Ellen, (who is really Annabel,) for buying their daughter, Annabel, another set of rain clothes. Irony also spills out here when the reader takes into account Annabel's belief that her mother is too hard on her and then listens to Bill talk about how easy Ellen is on Annabel.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Annabel dives right into the laundry, annoyed at her mother for nearly allowing her father to run out of shirts. Annabel collects the shirts and other clothes from her parents' room and then decides to add a few other things: a pair of sneakers, a rug the dog sleeps on, and an old T-shirt of Annabel's. Then she adds nearly two cups of detergent and three quarters a cup of Clorox.

Annabel settles down to watch television. The doorbell rings a minute later, and Annabel finds the boy from upstairs, Boris, a boy she has a crush on, standing on the other side. Annabel lets him in, offers him Vitamin C for an apparent cold, and invites him to play a game of Nok Hockey on her living room floor, all the while extolling Annabel's virtues. Boris catches sight of Annabel's room and thinks it is a real pigpen. Annabel, portraying her mother, sees Boris' reaction and tells him that the messy room is Ben's room despite the doll house and canopy bed.

After Boris leaves, Annabel tries to find cartoons on the television, but there are not any on. The washing machine begins to make a loud noise just as Annabel found an exercise program she likes. Annabel goes to check on the machine and the phone rings. Annabel cannot hear who is on the phone and bubbles begin to spill out from under the laundry room door. Annabel puts down the phone and tries to deal with the washing machine. Finally it stops, and Annabel is convinced it is broken. She picks up the phone to call the repairman and discovers her grandmother on the other end. Grandma wants to know if Ellen and her family will be staying with her on July 4th. Annabel decides this would be the perfect situation to her camp dilemma. Annabel tells Grandma that they would love to spend the whole month of July with her.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Annabel is convinced her mother's life is so much easier than her own and begins by doing the laundry. However, Annabel has no idea how to do the laundry and makes a bigger mess than she has been trying to clean up. This is symbolic of the novel's theme adult responsibilities versus teenage responsibilities. When Boris comes over, Annabel immediately refuses to take credit for her messy room, a room she thinks she ought to be allowed to keep messy because it is hers, and blames the room's appearance on her brother. Her behavior is ironic. Annabel hates her brother, but she uses him when it benefits her. This is also part of the theme of sibling rivalry.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Annabel calls the washing machine repair people and cannot get a repairman to come out that day. Then the maid, Mrs. Schmauss, shows up and tells her the machine is not broken, only filled past capacity. Annabel then begins to tell Mrs. Schmauss what her father said about the shirts, and Mrs. Schmauss tells her that shirts is one of things she refused to do since the day she was hired. Annabel asks what the other thing is that she refuses to do and Mrs. Schmauss takes her to Annabel's room and explains that she does not clean in there.

Annabel has realized that Mrs. Schmauss smells funny. Mrs. Schmauss is the one who brings up the missing gin, not Annabel, but Annabel quickly realizes that the maid has been drinking, explaining why the woman smells funny. Then when Mrs. Schmauss blames the missing liquor on Annabel, Annabel fires her.

Chapter 6 Analysis

It is ironic that Bill does not like the way the maid does his shirts, but it is not the maid doing his shirts. Ellen has been doing them. It is also ironic that Mrs. Schmauss feels the same way about Annabel's room as everyone else and uses that as an excuse to lay the blame of her own bad behavior on Annabel. Mrs. Schmauss tries to convince Annabel, as her mother, that Annabel drinks when in fact it is Mrs. Schmauss who is drinking.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

It takes Annabel a while to get Mrs. Schmauss out of her house, in which time she discovers the more unpleasant sides of Mrs. Schmauss' attitude. Then Annabel decides it is time to take the dog for a walk and to go pick up the liquor she promised Bill she would buy. On the way back from the liquor store, there is a commotion on the street with people standing around and a cop. Annabel thinks it is an accident and wants to see because her mother never lets her see. However, it is only her brother screaming for his mother. Annabel forgot to meet the bus.

Annabel thinks about walking away and letting the cops take her brother to the station until her mother comes back to her own body, but Ben saw her. Annabel is forced to take him home. At home, Annabel tells Ben she fired Mrs. Schmauss and is surprised when Ben is very happy about that. Then Annabel sets out leftovers for their lunch and listens to Ben talk about Annabel. Ben adores his sister and wishes she liked him more. Annabel is surprised by her brother's insightfulness and his concern about her.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Annabel is convinced from the beginning that her mother has it much easier than she does. However, irony strikes again when Annabel forgets to meet her brother's bus. The police are there and ask her if she neglects her son often. Annabel talks her way out of it; however, it is ironic that she thinks her mother's duties are so easy and has messed up a second of these duties.

The theme of sibling rivalry is touched on in this chapter when Annabel and Ben discuss their relationship without Ben being aware that it is his sister he is talking to. Ben adores his sister and will do anything to be more like her, a fact that constantly backfires for the poor kid. Annabel, for the first time, gets to see her brother's true feelings for her. It's ironic she had to be her mother to see it.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Bill calls and informs Annabel that he has invited his most important client and his wife home for dinner. Annabel is supposed to cook a meal for all of them, but she does not know how to cook. Then Bill reminds her that she has a meeting at Annabel's school regarding Annabel's grades and behavior issues. Now Annabel knows what 2:30 is written in the date book for.

Annabel quickly calls Boris and asks him to baby sit. Annabel explains to Ben that he has to pretend that Annabel's room is his own, an idea Ben does not like but agrees to. When Boris arrives, he volunteers to also cook dinner for the family since he is a good cook as a result of his mother's inattentiveness.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Annabel is faced with another task she may not be able to perform that her mother would easily pull off if in her own body. This theme of teen responsibility versus adult responsibility is symbolized again as Annabel rushes around trying to figure out what to do. Boris's volunteering to cook is a lifesaver, and a little ironic since not only is he a boy and boys did not traditionally know how to cook in the seventies, but he is also teenager just like Annabel, but he's much better suited to the situation than Annabel is.

The theme of sibling rivalry is touched on as well. Annabel needs Ben to lie for her about her bedroom, though if things were the way they should have been, Ben would probably be the last person Annabel would turn to for help. Already there has been a change in attitudes as foreshadowed in the first chapter of the novel.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Annabel arrives at her school forty-five minutes late and runs into her own friends leaving the school. They stop and exchange greetings, and then the girls move on, only to stop to inform Annabel, whom they think is her mother, that Annabel ditched school that day. Annabel is now concerned for her body's well-being, worried about where her mind will go if her body is dead and her mother wants her own body back.

When the meeting begins, Annabel must listen to her principal, her homeroom teacher, and the school psychologist discuss her like she is not there, which she is not supposed to be. Annabel is not happy with her grades or what they are saying about her. When her homeroom teacher breaks down and begins to cry, confessing how she feels she has let Annabel down, Annabel becomes aware of what a rotten child she has been to this wonderful teacher.

The psychologist begins to question Annabel, curious what is going on at home to cause Annabel to behave the way she does at school and questioning Annabel's - portraying Ellen, as to her reactions to what they have said at this meeting. Annabel must then defend her mother and admit to her own failings, which she does with new insight into herself. Annabel's homeroom teacher gives Annabel an extension on the English paper she was supposed to hand in that day after Annabel promises that when she returns to school on Monday, she will be a changed student.

Chapter 9 Analysis

There are so many examples of irony in this chapter it is difficult to point them out. The first is Annabel's position in the meeting she is attending. Annabel must sit there and pretend to be her mother while her teacher, her principal, and the school psychologist talk about what a difficult child she is. Any normal person would have difficulty with this, but especially a child. Annabel handles it quite well without once giving herself away. Second, Annabel has to talk to her own friends without letting them know who she is. This is ironic in the fact that in less than twenty-four hours, Annabel has matured enough that she pulls it off without difficulty.

In this chapter, also, Annabel is faced with the ultimate symbol of her own responsibilities versus those of her mother's, forced to play both roles in this situation. This theme is illustrated by Annabel's having to answer questions from the school psychologist about her mother's parenting skills while also being forced to analyze her own behavior. It also brings in sibling rivalry, another theme, when the psychologist suggests it is Annabel's jealousy of her little brother that causes Annabel to behave the way she does. All of this causes Annabel to see herself in a new light, to view her mother with a different perspective, and to use this insight to mature in her own



behaviors right before their eyes. It is ironic that not one of the characters in the novel realizes what is happening right under their noses. The only person who sees these changes is the reader.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Annabel rushes home, terrified for her body's safety and convinced she will be home when Annabel, as Ellen, arrives there. Annabel, the child, however is not home when she arrives. Neither is Ben. All of Annabel's friends are there, however, having a meeting of their club despite the fact that Annabel is not among them. Boris is there as well, fixing the family meal. When questioned about Ben, he has no idea where the boy is. Boris only knows that a beautiful woman picked him up to take him to eat ice cream.

Annabel is in a panic and decides to call the police. Boris follows her down the hall and just before she slams the bedroom door on him, he tells her he loves her. (He thinks he's talking to Ellen.) Despite the fact that she has always wanted to hear this, Annabel ignores him in her fear for her own body and for Ben. Annabel looks up the police department in the phone book and cannot figure out what number to call. She calls two different numbers before she figures out which one to call. When she finally gets through to the police, Annabel finds herself talking to the same cop she spoke to on the street after she forgot to meet Ben's bus.

Annabel begins to tell her story to the police and they find the story so entertaining that they have several other police officers get on the line to listen. Boris gets on the line too. Annabel tells them about Ben leaving with a beautiful girl for ice cream and about Annabel skipping school that day. When she begins to tell them that she switched bodies with her mother and now her mother is missing too, Boris forces her to hang up the phone. Boris is afraid they will take her to the mental hospital if she keeps talking.

Annabel tries to convince Boris she is really Annabel and not Ellen, but he refuses to believe her. However, he does not think badly of her because he loves her. When the doorbell rings, Annabel is convinced the police traced her call and are here to arrest her, or at least take her to hospital. It is not the police, however, just her father's client and his wife. Annabel has Boris take them into the kitchen while she goes into the bedroom and begins to beg for her mother to come back. Suddenly her mother is there comforting her and they are back in their own bodies.

Annabel confesses to all the mistakes she made all day long and that she lost Ben. Ellen assures Annabel that Ben was never really lost and that he is at that moment safe in his room. Ellen tells her that Ben was with Annabel. This means that Annabel is the beautiful woman, she realizes. How is that possible? Ellen had Annabel's braces taken off that day.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Annabel is upset about her missing brother and her own missing body. Annabel is experiencing one of the most tragic sides of adult responsibility in this ironic symbol of



the theme of adult versus teenage responsibilities. Annabel handles it well, however, doing the right thing despite the possible dire consequences, another symbol of what she has learned from the themes of the novel.

Boris has fallen in love with Annabel, except he believes her to be Ellen. This is also ironic because Annabel would like nothing better than for Boris to love her, but it is not her he loves. Boris does not like Annabel the teenager because she once hit him with a shovel. Boris is also a symbol of the teenager's life that Annabel left behind, this boy who is free to behave like a child and love a grown woman without rebuff. Annabel wants to be a child again, too. This is more irony and more symbolism of the themes of responsibility and mother-daughter relationships.

When Ellen returns, she fixes everything for Annabel as any mother should. This too is symbolic of the theme of mother-daughter relationships. Moms are supposed to teach lessons, but they are also supposed to jump in when things become too difficult. This is exactly what Ellen has done.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Annabel's history teacher has her students answer questions at the end of each chapter they read in order to make sure they understand the content. In this way, Annabel has decided to answer the reader's questions to make sure all the plot questions are answered.

The first question is how Ellen spent her day as Annabel. Ellen tells Annabel that she spent the morning shopping with her credit cards, buying Annabel clothes she thought looked better on her. Then Ellen had Annabel's hair done and took herself out to lunch. Finally, she went to an orthodontic appointment Annabel probably would have forgotten and had her braces removed before coming home and taking Ben out for ice cream. The end result is a beautiful new look for Annabel that she hopes will catch Boris's eye.

The next question is how Ellen changed their bodies around in the first place. Ellen refuses to tell.

Next she answers the question, what happened when Daddy came home. The client and his wife have already left because they wanted to meet the children and were told by Boris that they were not home, so they decided to come back the next night when they were having something for dinner other than beetloaf, which Annabel translates as meatloaf. Bill is also upset he does not have any clean shirts still and Ellen confesses to having fired Mrs. Schmauss and promises to get him some the next day.

Annabel poses the question, what happens when Grandma calls? Well, Bill does not like the idea of spending the summer with Grandma, and Grandma does not want the family for a whole month anyway. Annabel decides she does not want to go to camp after all and announces to her parents she is relieved to find out she does not have to go and leaves them free to make different plans for the family vacation.

Annabel makes up several scenarios for what happens when Boris comes over again. The first scenario, Boris faints when he realizes she is the beautiful girl from earlier that afternoon. The second, Annabel spends the evening on the phone to convince Boris what a charming and intellectual person she is. In the third, which is the true version, he comes over to check the meatloaf, he and Annabel exchange mean words before he realizes who she really is, and then she makes a fool of herself when she realizes he really did make beetloaf and not meatloaf and that his name is not Boris, but Morris. Annabel misunderstood him because he drops his m's and n's due to an adenoid problem. The beetloaf is actually pretty tasty.

Annabel works all weekend on her paper for English and turns it in for a B. Annabel thinks she deserves an A, but her teacher says the premise is unbelievable, a repetition of exactly what Annabel says on page one.



Chapter 11 Analysis

Annabel ends all the foreshadowing she began in the first chapter by answering all the questions she predicts the reader will have at the end of the novel. Annabel also reveals a few things about herself, not limited to the maturity she has gained by giving up her desired trip to camp in favor of a family vacation and the irony of the mistake she has made not knowing the real name of the boy she claims to love.

Another symbol of the maturity Annabel has gained is the novel itself. Annabel reveals in the final passages of the book that she has written this as a part of her English composition that was due on Friday. Her teacher sees it as immaturity and fiction, ironically enough. The reader, though, knows it is a true depiction of the maturity she has gained through her experiences.



Characters

Annabel Andrews

Annabel is a typical thirteen-year old who feels that her mother is too overprotective and too fussy about the rules of the household. Annabel does not like to clean her room, a fact she and her mother butt heads over repeatedly. The room is always a little cleaner when she returns from school, so she figures that as long as her mother is making an effort, then she shouldn't have to. Besides, it is her room. She should be able to keep it the way she wants. Annabel also thinks she should be allowed to walk through Central Park with her friends, that she should not have to do homework if it is boring and pointless, and she should not have to deal with her little brother. Annabel is also convinced she's in love with the boy upstairs, a love affair that can never blossom due to the fact that her mother insisted she get braces to fix her crooked teeth.

It is one of these arguments between mother and daughter that propels Annabel into the body of her mother one Friday morning. She believes that being an adult could not possibly be that hard, except for the cooking which she does not know how to do. The laundry poses another obstacle, not to mention the belligerent maid. Then there is Ben to deal with and a meeting at her own school. Annabel spends the day convinced that nothing could be easier than being an adult until she loses her baby brother.

Ellen Andrews

Ellen is Annabel's mother. It is Ellen who comes up with the brilliant scheme to trade bodies with her daughter. The day for Annabel is one catastrophe after another, but for Ellen it is an adventure that only a trip down memory lane could rival. Ellen spends the day shopping for clothing she is sure is much more appropriate and attractive on her daughter's body. Ellen has lunch on her own, takes the time to read the newspaper, and even has her daughter's braces removed from her teeth after a quick trip to the beauty saloon. The only downside to this day for Ellen, (besides her motherly concern for her children), is the fact that she cannot smoke while in Annabel's body.

Ellen is a good mother, patient and creative with her children. No one understands Annabel better than her mother, confident even when handed the reins of the family for one day that Annabel will be able to handle it with, if not grace, confidence.

William 'Bill' Andrews

William is Annabel's father. William is a hard workingman, typical of his 1970's counterparts. William expects his wife to handle all the household chores and the raising of the children without being too soft on them. William surprises Annabel with the knowledge that he thinks that Ellen is too easy on the children. Annabel has always believed it was her mother who was the iron-fisted ruler.



Though a minor character in the novel, William is important to the plot because it is he who initiates the need for Annabel to do the laundry, revealing to his daughter while she is in the body of her mother, that the maid does a terrible job with his shirts and he would prefer if his wife did them. What William does not know is that the maid has always refused to do his shirts and it is his wife who has been doing them all along. The laundry is Annabel's first catastrophe on this strange Friday morning.

Ben Andrews

Ben, or Ape Face as Annabel calls him, is Annabel's little brother. Ben is all of six years old and the bane of Annabel's existence. Ben is perfect where Annabel has too many faults to count. Annabel would prefer if the child had never entered her world.

However, Ben becomes a huge part of Annabel's day when he suddenly disappears from the apartment while Boris/Morris is babysitting him. This is after a conversation Annabel, as her mother, shares with Ben. Ben is quite upfront about his feelings for his big sister. Ben adores Annabel. In Ben's mind, Annabel can do no wrong. Ben tries to be messy so that Annabel will like him, but the maid cleans up after him. Ben tries to be bad, but he's such a good kid his parents do not always believe him when he confesses to Annabel's sins. When he disappears, suddenly Annabel realizes that she kind of likes the kid. It is his disappearance that is a catalyst to Annabel's understanding of the terrible position she often puts her mother in with her careless and occasionally rotten behavior.

Boris/Morris Harris

Boris/Morris is the boy upstairs that Annabel is head over heels in love with. Morris has an adenoid condition that causes him to drop his m's and n's when he talks; therefore, no one knew his name was really Morris until the end of the novel when he tells Annabel.

Morris is a responsible young man who Annabel leaves in charge of Ben while she runs out to the meeting at her school. However, Morris is also the babysitter who loses the child. Morris is also a cook of sorts and he works his magic in the Andrews's kitchen to create a beetloaf that is actually edible.

Mrs. Schmauss

Mrs. Schmauss is the family maid. Mrs. Schmauss has a drinking problem; however, Ellen never realizes it because she cannot smell the liquor on the woman's breath because of her two packs a day smoking habit. However, Annabel smells it immediately, but she is too young and inexperienced to recognize it right away. Annabel follows Mrs. Schmauss through the house to try and figure out what it is the woman does all day long. Mrs. Schmauss begins a long litany against Annabel and her messy habits, even



blaming the missing gin on Annabel. Annabel is beside herself and fires the woman without consulting her parents. She is, after all, in her mother's body for the day.

Miss McGuirk

Miss McGuirk is Annabel's homeroom and English teacher. Miss McGuirk is the kind of teacher who really cares about her students and about teaching them something they will keep with them for life. Miss McGuirk knows that Annabel is a highly intelligent and creative child, but she cannot motivate the child into doing her assignments and performing in class. This is the reason for the meeting Annabel must attend at her school as her mother. It is also Miss McGuirk for home Annabel writes the story of her Freaky Friday that comprises the bulk of the novel.

Mr. Dilk

Mr. Dilk is the principal of Annabel's school. Mr. Dilk is a quirky man who cares about his students but leaves a little to be desired in the bedside manner department. Mr. Dilk calls the meeting that Annabel attends as her mother. Mr. Dilk reads Annabel's grades to Annabel and the comments the teachers have made with very little commentary of his own. Annabel, like many other kids, does not think highly of Mr. Dilk.

Dr. Artunian

Dr. Artunian is the school psychologist. Dr. Artunian is a very attractive young woman who wants nothing more than to make everything all better for Annabel. However, Annabel, as her mother, gives the doctor the opinion that Annabel has a mother who is not only unconcerned about her child but a mother whose attentions border on neglect. It takes Annabel quite a while to convince Dr. Artunian that her mother is really a concerned parent and to promise that young Annabel will be a changed person when she returns to school on Monday.

Jo-Jo, Bambi, Virginia, and Ginger

Jo-Jo, Bambi, Virginia, and Ginger are Annabel's closest friends. These girls run into Annabel, as her mother, just as she is going into the school to her meeting. It is the girls who first inform Annabel that she has ditched school that day. Annabel immediately becomes concerned for her own welfare, wondering what will happen to her mind should her body be hit by the cross town bus. When Annabel returns home from her meeting, these same girls are in her living room having a meeting of their girl's club without regard for Annabel's whereabouts or for the furniture they are destroying with their careless play. Again, Annabel learns a lesson about her own behavior by watching the careless disregard of her friends.



Objects/Places

Annabel's Bedroom

Annabel's bedroom is a big part of Annabel's struggles with her mother that led to her mother causing the switch of their bodies. Annabel feels she should be able to keep her room the way she wants and her mother thinks she should keep it clean.

Annabel's School

Annabel's school is where Annabel, as her mother, goes to discuss Annabel's school work and behavior with the principal, her homeroom teacher, and the counselor.

The Andrews's Family Apartment

The Andrews family lives in an apartment in New York where the majority of the novel takes place.

Orthodontic Braces

Annabel wears braces on her teeth, and they are a source of great distress for her. The removal of the braces, (by Ellen when she's in Annabel's body,) cause Annabel to mature and be more attractive.

Nok Hockey

Nok Hockey is a game Annabel, as her mother, plays with Boris/Morris.

The Washing Machine

Annabel attempts to do the laundry while in her mother's body and accidentally adds too many items and too much soap, causing the machine to overflow.

Beetloaf

Boris/Morris, in an attempt to help out Annabel, as her mother, makes a beetloaf for dinner because he cannot find any other food in the house to prepare.



Velvet and Rhinestone Pantsuit

Annabel, as her mother, dresses in her mother's velvet pantsuit with rhinestone buttons with a date for later in the evening in mind. However, Annabel ruins the outfit by wiping her wet hands on it and laying on the carpet in the living room.

Helicopter

Ben makes a helicopter for Annabel at school and it becomes a sort of peace offering between them at the end of the novel.

Dad's Dress Shirts

Annabel's dad tells her to be sure to do his shirts herself, when he thinks she is the mother, and not to let the maid do them. However, Dad doesn't know that the maid has not been doing them for months, Ellen has.

Setting

Freaky Friday takes place in Manhattan, where the Andrews family has a comfortable apartment. (We learn in a later book that it is located at 72nd Street and Central Park West.) Nearly all the other characters in the book gravitate toward the apartment. Only one major scene takes place outside the building: the conference with the staff of the Barden School. Because nearly all the action occurs inside the apartment, much of the humor centers on domestic mishaps like the misbehavior of the washing machine and Annabel's efforts to deal with a repairman by telephone; her attempts to claim that her messy room is really her brother's; and her struggles with the cleaning woman (in person) and the police (by telephone).

Rodgers writes about the milieu she knows best, where she grew up and raised her own children. It is a quintessentially New York book, as many readers and critics have noticed. The New York of Freaky Friday has no drugs or crime problem, no visible poverty, and no homeless people. It represents an idealized urban setting, a Utopian version of a big city. Some readers will enjoy the affluent uptown setting, perhaps with a sense of enthusiasm for something familiar, while others may be put off by it.

Social Sensitivity

Freaky Friday makes no pretense of being a work of great social significance.

The Andrews family lives a comfortable and affluent life with father employed in advertising, mother not working outside the home, and both children in private school. This is the Manhattan of E. B. White's *Stuart Little*, of Elizabeth Enright's *The Saturdays*, and of E. L. Konigsberg's *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. There are no characters from minority backgrounds, no working class characters except the Andrews' German cleaning woman, no poor people. In fact, no social issues are raised at all, except perhaps that Mrs. Schmauss the cleaning woman's remarks about "colored" people offend Annabel nearly as much as her gin drinking.

Although it is difficult to see how anyone could be seriously bothered by the social attitudes of this book, some young readers might find it hard to relate to the Andrews family. Also, the scene in which Annabel (in her mother's body) asks Mr. Andrews for housekeeping money and gets lectured for being a wasteful housewife might make some readers uncomfortable. Significantly, both of these change in later works; Rodgers moves the Andrews family to a typical suburb in her screenplay and turns Mrs. Andrews into something of a feminist in *Summer Switch*.

Literary Qualities

Rodgers's deft plotting, her expert use of the Manhattan setting, and her accurate ear for teenage language make this an impressive first novel. The plot's premise makes for an unusually tight structure: what if mother and daughter could reverse roles for one day? The author has selected a day which is both typical (a weekday during the school year) and special (the father's most important clients are coming to dinner, and a major conference has been scheduled with Annabel's principal and the school psychiatrist). Most of the events take place in the Andrews' Manhattan apartment, with excursions to a neighborhood liquor store and to the school. This economy of scene, like the one-day time frame, help keeps the story controlled, and, given its initial premise, surprisingly plausible.

The single most striking quality in the novel is Rodgers's mastery of a thirteen-year-old's point of view. Annabel's language, syntax, and emotional reactions are close to perfect. Even the fact that her extraordinary day reaches us in coherent written form is accounted for when the whole narrative turns into a long paper for Annabel's English project.

The literary device of exchanging roles has a long history in the theatre, which is Rodgers's background. Shakespeare was neither the first nor the last to use the idea in *A Comedy of Errors*. Novels in which two entirely different people switch places have often been favorites with young readers. For example, Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1898) is still in print, as are more serious treatments of the same idea, such as Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* and Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. Rodgers's originality is in switching not two separated twins, not two look-alike strangers from different backgrounds, but two generations— combining a subject of guaranteed appeal to young adults (conflict between generations) with a plot device (role reversal) that assures excitement and humor along with its serious possibilities.



Themes

Mother and Daughter Relationships

Every daughter has horrible tales she can tell about her mother and every mother has war stories to tell on her daughter. This novel takes these stories to another dimension, actually creating a situation where the daughter must walk a day in her mother's shoes.

Annabel, a normal, precocious thirteen-year-old has a fight with her mother. Annabel's mother wants her to keep her room clean, do her studies and turn assignments in on time, make good grades,. Ellen wants to keep Annabel safe and therefore forbids her from walking in Central Park alone. Annabel sees all this as overly protective and cruel. After all, it is her room; she should be allowed to keep it the way she wants. School is boring. Central Park is not so dangerous. All the other kids are allowed to do it. Annabel does not see things from her mother's point of view, and this lack of ability to see from a parent's perspective is a problem for both of them.

Children are notorious for pushing their boundaries as far as possible. Daughters have unique issues, and mothers are in the tough position of understanding those issues. They were, after all, teenagers once themselves, and because they have been there, mothers worry about their child's safety, both physical and mental. This creates a relationship that is both rewarding and precarious. Annabel and Ellen's relationship is no exception.

The theme of this novel seems to be that it's tough being a teenager in today's world (the seventies, anyway) but it's not much easier being a parent. Mothers and daughters have a unique relationship, and this novel plays with that idea, stretching it and then bringing it back again to normal parameters, finding that not only is the relationship still intact at the end, but that it is better than ever.

Sibling Rivalry and Sibling Jealousy

Ben is a huge nuisance to Annabel. Annabel is an only child until Ben comes along, seven years after her own birth. Having a little brother or sister who is beautiful and perfect beyond words is hard enough, but to have to deal with that after seven years of being an only child makes having a younger sibling twice as difficult.

Annabel could not be happier than to see Ben step off the ends of the earth and never return. Ben is the perfect child, neat where she is messy, good where she walks the thin line between angel and devil, a brilliant student where Annabel is barely passing. It is a constant competition between the two of them, and Annabel knows who is winning. It is not fair and she does not know what to do about it.

Ben is oblivious to Annabel's plight, though. Ben thinks the sun rises and sets on his big sis. If only Annabel were aware of her brother's devoted feelings, she might understand



better how her attitude affects the little tike. This insight, again, is one of the highlights of their mom's brilliant scheme. Talking to Annabel but thinking he's talking to his mom, Ben expresses his love and understanding for Annabel. Suddenly the common theme of sibling rivalry is no more.

Adult Responsibilities vs. Teenage Responsibilities

No teenager could possibly understand how difficult it can be to be an adult. To children, an adult's life seems like nothing but freedom. They do not see mom slaving away over the dishes every morning or staying up well past midnight to finish the laundry because someone just had to have those tights for tomorrow. Children have no understanding of money and how quickly it can go from a huge amount to nothing. Bills do not mean a thing to a teenager who just has to have the hundred dollar pair of sneakers.

To an adult, a teenager's life is one party after another. Adults see parties every weekend and weekdays spent in a classroom instead of the grinding routine of work. Children spend their evenings playing video games and gossiping on the phone, have their meals made for them. A teenager can go to their dresser drawers and find their clothes freshly laundered there rather than making a time-consuming trip to the drycleaners.

A theme of the novel, *Freaky Friday*, is the lack of understanding on Annabel's part of how difficult it can be to be an adult as opposed to her mother's belief that being a teenager is a piece of cake. The book begins with Annabel's belief that her mother caused them to trade places because of a fight they had the night before in which Annabel announces that she wishes she was an adult because it seemed a lot better than being told what to do all the time. Annabel slowly begins to understand her mother's point of view through the day, beginning with the difficulties of running a home and dealing with the enormous responsibilities of parenthood. Her mother also, to a lesser degree, realizes being a teenager is not all it is cracked up to be.



Themes/Characters

Freaky Friday is Annabel's story, and all the other characters play comparatively minor roles. Mr. Andrews is in advertising; his main accounts are Fosphree detergent and Francie's Fortified Fish Fingers. Mrs. Andrews has a good figure and an even better sense of humor. Six-year-old Ben (also known as Ape Face), unlike Annabel, has blue eyes, long eyelashes, curly hair, a sunny disposition, and—worst of all—a neat room.

Annabel, who tells the story, comes across as bright, unconventional, and unhappy. She expresses strong admiration for her mother's appearance and poise, balanced by an equally strong dislike of nearly everything about her little brother. A surface sophistication, great verbal wit, and a high IQ mask a very vulnerable thirteen-year-old.

Annabel's father plays a rather small part in the book, mistaking her (understandably) for her mother at the beginning, telephoning about a dinner invitation for the Framptons (of Fortified Fish Fingers fame) midway through the day, and returning home late, when the action is over. Annabel's mother Ellen, with whom she switches bodies, is out of sight for most of the book, appearing only near the end when the characters switch back. Only then do we learn that Annabel's body has gone to the orthodontist (no more braces), the beauty parlor, and several department stores; Annabel herself turns out to be the "beautiful chick" who was seen with Ape Face earlier in the afternoon.

Ape Face seems to be a typical bright, six-year-old boy. His main role is to reflect Annabel's insecurity and to reply to all her misapprehensions with an unconditional love.

The other characters fall into two main groups: those at the apartment building and those at the school. Chief among the first group is Boris Harris, a fourteen-year-old who lives upstairs and whom Annabel admires immensely. Boris enthusiastically plays Nok Hockey with the transformed Annabel; later, he agrees to sit with Ape Face while Annabel goes to school for her conference with the principal and school psychologist. Boris is also an ingenious cook, concocting for the Andrews's company supper an emergency "beetloaf" from hard boiled eggs, beets, celery, tuna, granola, onions, and seasonings. Boris, who suffers from adenoids and from adenoids centric mother, becomes a major character in later Andrews books. A less attractive peripheral character is Mrs. Schmauss, the gin-swiggling, bigoted cleaning woman whom Annabel fires.

One other peripheral character, Annabel's grandmother in Larchmont, plays a part in the Andrews family plans by telephone.

Other characters of note are the principal and psychologist of Annabel's school and her English teacher. In addition to providing a chance for Annabel to see herself from the teachers' perspective, this interview gives her a salutary shock when the strict Miss McGuirk breaks down over her apparent failure to get through to the most gifted student she has ever taught—Annabel. In humorous terms, the portraits of the jargon-ridden school psychologist and the slick principal, who is eager to end the conference and



catch the last train to the Hamptons because the sun is already over the yardarm, are among the funniest touches in this very funny book.

Growing up is never easy, and living in a family is not always easy either.

Rodgers has often been quoted as saying that she herself hated being a child— that childhood is a sentence with no parole. Here she deals with the aspects of growing up that concern perspective—the changes that enlarge a young adolescent's narrow viewpoint to a broader one that takes other people and their needs into account.

The impact of physical appearance on self-esteem receives deft and careful treatment in Rodgers's book, from Annabel's initial delight at her "new" appearance in her mother's body to her realization that, restored to herself but with no braces and with a new haircut, she looks like a "new" person, as indeed she is after her day's experiences.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in the novel, *Freaky Friday*, is first person. The narrator is Annabel, a teenage girl who has switched bodies with her mother. In the final chapter, Annabel has listed a group of questions regarding the narration which is almost like she has moved into a third person narrative by guessing what the reader will want to know now that the story has come to an end.

The choice of first person narration in this novel increases the sense of intimacy between the reader and Annabel while keeping the other characters at an arm's length in order for the reader to see them through the eyes of Annabel. By doing this, the writer allows her readers to discover truths about her other characters at the same time Annabel does. Then, by having Annabel answer questions in the end, it allows the reader to discover that the entire story has been written for a school assignment. The reader also gets to find closure to any unanswered story lines.

Setting

The novel is set in New York City in the early seventies. However, the majority of the novel takes place in the apartment belonging to the Andrews family. Annabel feels safe here, feels as though she is safe to do anything she wants to do without the normal repercussions a normal teenager might run into. This safety, though, is tested several times, beginning with the overflowing washing machine to the unfriendly maid, and finally to the missing little brother. It is in the safety of her own home that Annabel discovers the truth all adults eventually come to understand, that home is only as safe as the occupants make it.

The novel also makes brief excursions to the world outside the apartment. First, Annabel goes to the liquor store to replace the gin the maid has been drinking. This trip might have been an enjoyable one if Annabel had not discovered on the way home that she forgot to meet her brother's bus and he is now in front of their building with a police officer. Annabel, in her quick-witted way, manages to get out of this scrap. However, she finds it more difficult to talk her way out of a meeting with the school officials regarding her own behavior as she was before the magical switch into her mother's body. Finally, Annabel returns to the safety of her own home, again a place that is much more secure than the outside world because here she finds her mother and herself back in her old body, with a few minor changes.

The setting of the novel is important to the themes of the book, beginning with the theme of mother-daughter relationships and ending with the idea of responsibility, both for the adult and the teenager Annabel is once more relieved to be. The setting of the home underlines the theme of the mother's responsibilities, and the setting of the school



emphasized the theme of Annabel's responsibilities. Visiting each of these locations in her mother's body gave Annabel a chance to see the world around her through the eyes of someone else without the distorting views of her teenage angst. The writer took ordinary places and turned them into devices to enrich the plot without becoming distracting.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is typical of a teenager of the time period, full of unique conclusions and quirky slang. The words are easy to follow, the flow of the book such an easy progression that it almost feels as though the reader is eavesdropping on a conversation rather than reading a novel. The book moves along at a quick pace, almost impossible to set down between chapters because the reader wants to hurry to what happens next.

There is an equal amount of exposition and dialogue throughout the novel. The writer relies quite a bit on Annabel's feelings and reactions to the various situations she finds herself in and is not afraid to express these reactions even when they may show a side of Annabel the reader might not expect or like. Every scene is well developed, some so full of sharp dialogue as to make the reader laugh aloud when something unexpected is said.

Structure

The novel is divided into eleven chapters. The early chapters tend to be brief, saying what they need to say in a few short pages. The latter chapters are longer, full of more explanations. The last chapter is divided up into question and answers as though Annabel were finishing a school assignment as she herself explains at the beginning of the chapter.

Annabel also thinks in lists from time to time. There are two or three spots in the novel in which Annabel lists scenarios to explain the events that are happening outside of the current scene. When Annabel tries to decide how she ended up in her mother's body, for example, she lists three different scenarios that could explain her current circumstances. Annabel also uses this technique at the end of the novel when she tries to surprise the reader regarding Boris/Morris's reaction to her new look. This technique breaks up the text and is entertaining rather than distracting.

The novel is told in a linear style until the end. In the last chapter, Annabel goes back to the beginning of the day, first to tell her mother what she did with her day and all the disasters that occurred. Next, Annabel's mother tells Annabel what she did all day while she played hookey from school. The pace of the novel is quite quick, each chapter beginning with a crisis from the last.



Quotes

"You are not going to believe me, nobody in their right minds could *possibly* believe me, but it's true, really it is!

When I woke up this morning, I found I'd turned into my mother." Chapter 1, pg. 1

"She said, 'Annabel, when you're a grown-up, people don't tell you what to do; you have to tell yourself, which is sometimes much more difficult.'

'Sounds like a picnic to me,' I said bitterly." Chapter 1, pg. 6

"But Ape Face just stood there. What was he waiting for, I wondered? Then a grotesque thought came to me. He was waiting to be kissed and I was going to have to do it. So I did--as quickly as possible. Actually, it wasn't too bad. He smelled kind of nice. But I hoped he didn't expect it again at lunchtime. Annabel didn't expect it at all, she never does. Just as well. I would have felt funny kissing myself good-bye." Chapter 3, pg. 17

"I fished the bowl of macaroni out of the wastebasket, and turned on the living-room television set. I was hoping to find a good cartoon, but it was after ten and I couldn't even find a bad cartoon. I suppose they figure all the kids are in school and grown-ups like to watch other kinds of shows. Not very thoughtful of them." Chapter 5, pg. 31

"I know just as well as she does people don't wear velvet with rhinestone buttons in the morning, but they do wear them in the evening and that's what I was dressed for. I don't see why grown-ups keep changing their clothes all day long." Chapter 6, pgs. 39-40

"'I'm not saying I wouldn't take an occasional nip or two, but only my own hooch. I wouldn't touch nobody else's. She's never gonna admit it, but you know who's been drinking your gin?'

'Annabel,' I said. My Lord. The woman was crazed!

'You said it; I didn't,' said Mrs. Schmauss.

So then I did something that gave me such pleasure I can't begin to tell you. In a grave and thoughtful voice, I said, 'Mrs. Schmauss, honey, you're fired.'" Chapter 6, pgs. 44-45

"Whoever said 'curiosity killed the cat' must have had me in mind, because when I finally pushed my way to the center of the circle, me and the dog and the five bottles of liquor, what'd I see but the blue-eyed ape himself, screaming and crying at the top of his lungs for 'Mommy.' 'I want my Mommy!' Ai-yi, I forgot to meet the bus!" Chapter 7, pgs. 47-48

"'Can you, Ma? Can you hate someone and love them at the same time?'

'I didn't used to think so, Ape Face, but I guess maybe you can.' Maybe you can."



Chapter 7, pg. 58

"If I didn't go to school, where the heck did I go instead? Never having played hooky before, I had no idea where I might go." Chapter 9, pg. 71

"And with that, she folded her hands and placed them carefully in her lap, opened her blue eyes very wide, and stared, quite deliberately, at nobody in the room. Every kid in the world knows that trick. It's to keep you from crying." Chapter 9, pg. 83

"Do you ever get a premonition about something? Like you've lost your bus pass and all of a sudden you get an insane sixth sense that it's mixed up in your science notebook so you look and there it is? Well, on my way home in the cab, I suddenly realized...I literally *knew* by some miraculous sixth sense that Annabel was home ahead of me! I tell you, it was an enormous relief." Chapter 10, pg. 92

"By now, I was in what the movie mags call The Grip of Naked Terror. I always wondered what they meant when they said "her heart was in her mouth" and "her mind was in turmoil." Well, in case you're interested, a mouthful of heart is something like a mouthful of captured frog, and a mind in turmoil simply means all the blood in your body rushes around in your head, leaving you icy cold from the neck down. As for "butterflies in the stomach," there is no such thing. It's June bugs." Chapter 10, pgs. 98-99

"The doorbell rang.

'Oh, Lord, they traced the call,' moaned Boris.

'Hurray for New York's finest!' I shouted triumphantly and sprinted for the door. Before opening it, I peeked through the burglar hole to see if they had a straitjacket with them. No straitjacket. Just a plainclothes detective and a matron. I guess for crazy ladies, they send a matron." Chapter 10, pg. 109

"'I know why,' said Boris, wearily. 'It's because when a person with adenoids says, "Hello, my dabe is Boris add I've cub to bake you a beetloaf," you automatically translate that into "Hello, my name is Morris and I've come to make you a meatloaf.'"

'Hey, you're absolutely right. Aren't you smart! That's a brilliant theory. As a matter of fact, I bet a lot of people think your name is really Morris!' Boris was standing with folded arms, staring at me, smiling the way you smile at an idiot, and nodding his head up and down.

'Yes, they do. Because it is.' ZONK!" Chapter 11, pg. 142

"Also, she said I shouldn't call it fact when its "basic premise" was so utterly fantastic. Of course, that reaction didn't surprise me very much. After all, I predicted it, didn't I?

When did you do that?



Way back on page one, silly. You're not a very careful reader. Don't you remember page one? The story begins:

You are not going to believe me, nobody in their right minds could possibly believe me, but it's true, really it is.

And the story ends the same way." Chapter 11, pg. 145



Adaptations

In *A Billion for Boris* (1974), Annabel, Ape Face, and Boris discover an old television set that can broadcast events twenty-four hours ahead. Humorous and not-so-humorous results follow when they try to manipulate the future, using their advance knowledge. New characters include a young newsman who develops a romantic interest in Annabel; Annabel's fickle friend Virginia; and Boris's mother, a writer of eccentric habits and poor housekeeping abilities.

The main project is a racetrack gambling scheme to raise money to redo Boris's apartment. Inevitably, the scheme falls through, the apartment is bare, and the television gets sent to Georgia by mistake. While not up to *Freaky Friday* in plotting or incident, *A Billion for Boris* offers a touching portrait of the difficult relationship between the apparently self-reliant Boris and his odd but admirable mother.

The third Andrews story, *Summer Switch*, returns to the idea of identity exchange. This time it is Ape Face, now twelve, who changes places with his father. Mr. Andrews goes to Camp Soonawissakit while Ape Face flies to California for an important project with Galaxy Films. Although the basic idea is the same as in *Freaky Friday*, several changes make this book more than just a replay. The story is told alternately by father and son. The scene has broadened, too, encompassing both Los Angeles and the camp in Maine. Finally, social change seems to have caught up with the Andrews family; not only has Mr. Andrews left advertising for the movies, but Mrs. Andrews has become a cultural anthropologist and now works at the Museum of Natural History. The theme, though, remains much the same; conflict and misunderstanding between generations are helped by a temporary (and hilarious) change of perspective.

The Walt Disney film of *Freaky Friday* (1977) is well known through television showings and videocassettes. The scene has been changed from Manhattan to an affluent suburb. Mr. Andrews is older than in the book (45) and less agreeable; his big project is a marina, which figures prominently in the finale. Mrs. Andrews has become a typical flaky housewife and Annabel has turned into the star of her school's field hockey team. Although the characters are flatter, much of the book's dialogue remains, and the roles are played brilliantly by Barbara Harris and a very young Jodie Foster. Visual gags, many of which Rodgers herself deplores, have been added: a series of delivery men crowding into the Andrews house, a kitchen filled first with suds from the washer and then with smoke from a huge, blackened turkey, a sandlot baseball game starring Annabel in her mother's best clothes. The finale features a chase scene (with numerous police cars) alternating with the opening of the marina (with all kinds of waterskiing mishaps). Perhaps because the film concentrates more on action and less on character, its ending is less satisfying than the book's.



Topics for Discussion

1. When Annabel first discovers that she is in her mother's body, she spends a great deal of time in front of the mirror admiring her new face and teeth, and putting on makeup. What does this reveal about her?
2. Is Annabel's mother partly to blame for Annabel's insecurity? Why do you think they communicate so poorly?
3. What prevents Annabel from realizing that her brother is really fond of her, and why does he irritate her so much?

Does her impatience with him make the reader less sympathetic with Annabel herself?

4. Is Annabel justified in firing Mrs. Schmauss? Why or why not?
5. Boris seems almost too good to be true. Is he a convincing character?
6. The author portrays the police, the school principal, and the psychologist as lacking in ordinary common sense.

Why? Is this exaggeration justified?

7. The Annabel we see at the end of the book looks so different from the old Annabel that Boris fails to recognize her. Is this transformation satisfying, or does it seem shallow?
8. At the end, Annabel's troubles seem to disappear as easily as her braces and old clothes. Is this too neat a wrapup?



Essay Topics

Discuss the idea of role reversal in the seventies and in present times. How effective would it be for a teenager in today's society to trade places with their mother or father? Would it have the same effect as it did with Annabel?

Explore the concept of trading psyches from one body to another. Is it possible? How do you suppose Ellen did it? If you could trade places with one person, who would it be?

Discuss sibling rivalry. What causes sibling rivalry? Does it happen in every family? What if Annabel had traded places with Ben instead of her mother? How would the outcome have been different? How would it have been the same?

Discuss mother/daughter relationships. Are all mother/daughter relationships adversarial? Do you think it is possible for a daughter to understand where her mother is coming from and not fight her decisions? Do you think it is possible for a mother to be responsible and still allow her daughter more independence?

Annabel turns in this story to a teacher for a class assignment portraying it as fact. If you were her teacher, what grade would you give her? Would you believe it were a possibility? What would your English teacher do if you wrote a story like this one? What would you do if you were to trade bodies with your mother/father for a day?

Discuss the point of view of the novel. How would it have been different if it had been written in the third person? If it were written from the mother's point of view? Ben's? The father's?

Discuss the slang used in the novel. Does it make a novel easier to read when slang is used? Does it make it more difficult? How has slang changed from the seventies compared to current uses?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Imagine that you are Miss McGuirk, Annabel's English teacher. You have just finished reading *Freaky Friday*, which Annabel has turned in as a major English project. What would you say in your comments on her project?
2. The film adaptation of *Freaky Friday* is divided between scenes of Annabel's day and scenes of her mother's, while the book follows Annabel all day. Imagine that you are writing to the author to request that she rewrite the book so that it alternates like the film. What reasons would you give?
3. Some people think that the language and society of 1972 are so accurately shown in this book that the story has become seriously "dated" since then. Consider the book as exemplifying its time period, and show how it might differ if written today.
4. Annabel's feelings of being misunderstood by her family and teachers are common to many adolescents, but her New York background is not. How much do you think the setting adds to, or detracts from, the book?
5. Compare *Freaky Friday* to other role-reversal stories, showing what they have in common. Some familiar titles are Mark Twain's, *The Prince and the Pauper* and Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Less well known are M. B. Goffstein's *Daisy Summerfield's Style*, and P. G. Wodehouse's *Laughing Gas*.
6. Compare the idea of understanding between generations in *Freaky Friday* with that in the film *Back to the Future*.



Further Study

"Mary Rodgers." In *Contemporary Authors*, edited by Ann Evory and Linda Metzger. Detroit: Gale Research, 1983. Summarizes both Rodgers's career and major reviews of her books.

Contains a lengthy interview.

"Mary Rodgers: An Interview." *Top of the News* 40 (Winter 1984): 155-161.

Rodgers describes how she began writing, examines the relationship of character and situations to her own experiences, and discusses the influence children's books may have.

"Review of *Freaky Friday*." *Horn Book* (August 1972). An enthusiastic account of a "truly funny" story, in which the reviewer particularly notes the author's "wisdom" and originality.

"Review of *Freaky Friday*." *New York Times Book Review* (July 16, 1972).

Compares Annabel's story to *Alice in Wonderland*; especially notes dialogue and conclusion.

"Review of *Freaky Friday*." *Times Literary Supplement* (November 1973).

A mixed review which praises the theme and certain "very funny" scenes but faults the ending.



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