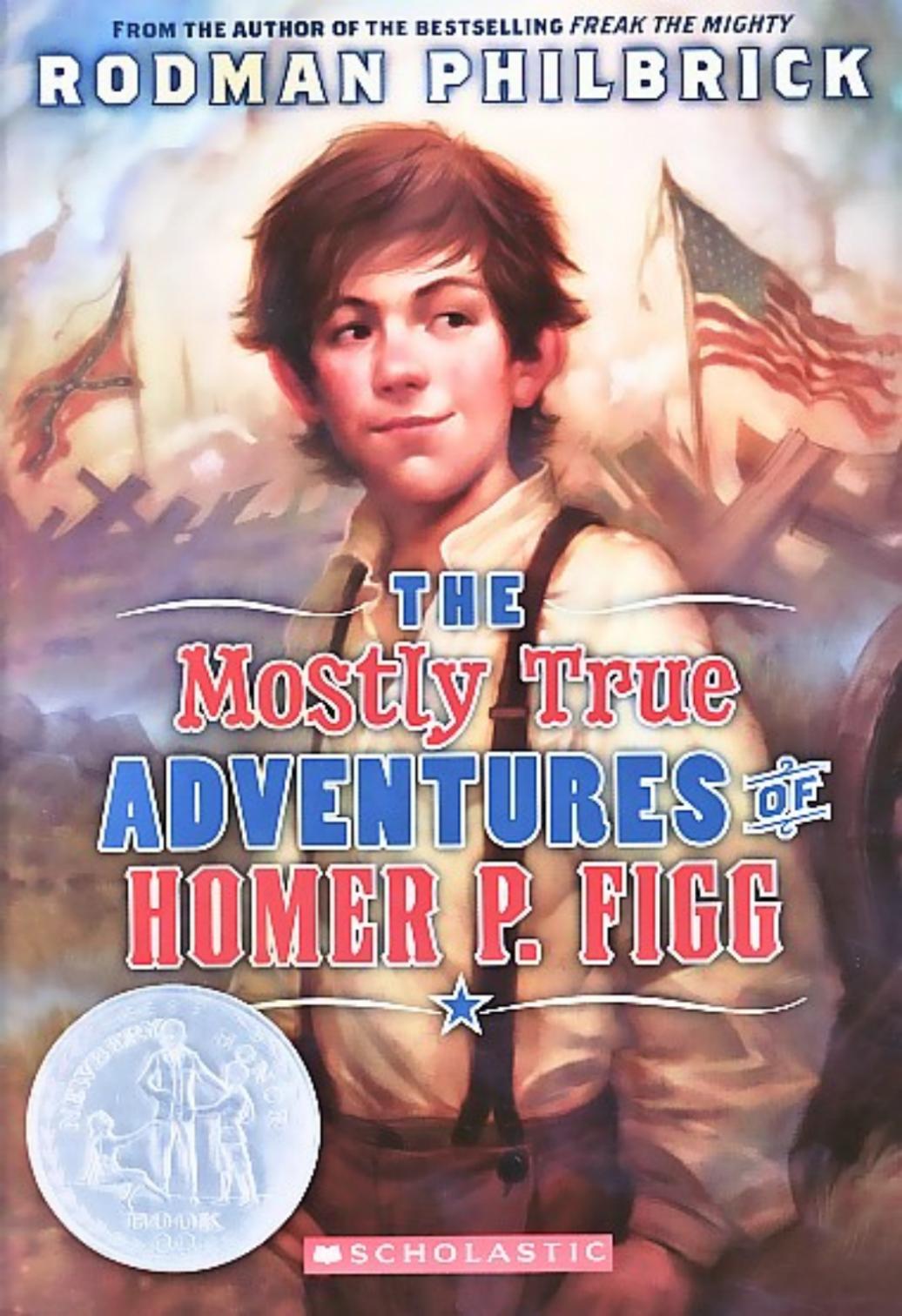



FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING *FREAK THE MIGHTY*

RODMAN PHILBRICK



THE
Mostly True
ADVENTURES OF
HOMER P. FIGG



 **SCHOLASTIC**

THE MEANEST MAN IN MAINE



MY NAME IS HOMER P. FIGG, and these are my true adventures. I mean to write them down, every one, including all the heroes and cowards, and the saints and the scalawags, and them stained with the blood of innocents, and them touched by glory, and them that was lifted into Heaven, and them that went to the Other Place.

I say my "true" adventures because I told a fib to a writer once, who went and put it in the newspapers about me and my big brother, Harold, winning the battle at Gettysburg, and how we shot each other dead but lived to tell the tale. That's partly true, about winning the battle, but most ways it's a lie.

Telling the truth don't come easy to me, but I will try, even if old Truth ain't nearly as useful as a fib sometimes.

The *P* stands for Pierce, which I got from our mother, Abigail Pierce Figg, that perished of fever and left me and

Harold under the care of her late sister's husband, Squinton Leach. Our father, Henry Figg, died of a felled tree before I came into this world, and when Mother passed away, our fortunes went from bad to worse, because Squinton Leach was the meanest man in the entire state of Maine. I tell a lie—there was a meaner man in Bangor once, that poisoned cats for fun, but old Squint was the hardest man in Somerset County. A man so mean he squeezed the good out of the Holy Bible and beat us with it, and swore that God Himself had inflicted me and Harold on him, like he was Job and we was Boils and Pestilence.

Squinton Leach. Just writing down his name gives me the shivers. Our mother was a kindly schoolmarm and taught us to speak proper, so I can't tell you exactly what I think of Squinton Leach, but it approximates what I think of a rabid skunk, or scabs on my backside, or a bad toothache.

Me and Harold tried not to take it personal because Squint hated everything. We just happened to be included, as he'd got stuck with us.

Once I made a list of the things Squint can't abide.

THINGS UNCLE HATES

1. HATES THE LAND HE WORKS, BECAUSE
IT'S FULL OF FLINTY ROCKS THAT DULL HIS PLOW.

2. HATES BOB THE HORSE THAT PULLS THE PLOW,
BECAUSE IT COSTS HIM HAY.

3. HATES HIS TWO COWS, BESS AND FLOSS,
BECAUSE THEY NEVER GIVE ENOUGH MILK.

4. HATES HIS HOUSE, BECAUSE
THE ROOF LEAKS.

5. HATES HIS BARN, BECAUSE
ME AND HAROLD LIVE THERE.

6. HATES WOMEN, BECAUSE
THEY DIED AND LEFT HIM TWO BOYS TO RAISE.

7. HATES SOUTHERNERS, BECAUSE
THEY OWN SLAVES.

8. HATES NEGROES, BECAUSE
THEY COMPLAIN OF BEING ENSLAVED.

9. HATES SENATOR DOUGLAS,
BECAUSE DOUGLAS IS SHORT.

10. HATES PRESIDENT LINCOLN,
BECAUSE LINCOLN IS TALL.

11. HATES THE SKY, BECAUSE
IT DIDN'T MATTER IF THE SKY IS SUNNY AND BLUE,
IT'S BOUND TO RAIN SOMEDAY.

Then I run out of paper. Parson Reed, of the Pine Swamp Congregational Church, he once said Squinton Leach was aggrieved of life, but I think he just flat out enjoyed being

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