Harrison Bergeron Theme Questions

Bring on the tough stuff - there’s not just one right answer.

1. What are the benefits to everyone being equal? What are the drawbacks? Should everyone be equal?
2. How do you define equality? Are the citizens of the United States in 2081 truly "equal"? How about citizens today?
3. Did Harrison's rebellion accomplish anything?
4. Why was Harrison able to break the basic laws of gravity after freeing himself from handicaps?
5. Why aren't George and Hazel more affected by seeing the death of their son on TV?
6. If Harrison were allowed to declare himself Emperor, how do you think he would have changed society? Would it have been better, worse, or the same?
7. What handicaps does society impose on people today? Are all talented people encouraged to develop their talents? If so, how? If not, why not?

Questions About Manipulation

1. George and Hazel seem pretty content with the way things are in the world, and Vonnegut doesn't give us any reason to believe that other citizens (aside from Harrison) think differently. Why are they satisfied with the status quo? Why doesn't anyone rebel against this oppressive government?
2. Do you believe that Harrison is as large and imposing as his mugshot makes him out to be?
3. Why does George believe that he, and everyone else, should be handicapped?

Questions About Competition

1. Why is George Bergeron afraid of competition? Who does he see himself as potentially competing with?
2. Everyone in the story is "equal." Is any sort of competition possible when everyone is equal?
3. "Harrison Bergeron" only depicts what is going on in the U.S. in 2081. Would America be able to compete on a global scale if all its citizens were "equal"?