```
    Triangle t = new Triangle(10, 8);
    Figure figref;

    figref = r;
    System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());

    figref = t;
    System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());

    figref = f;
    System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());
  }
}
```

The output from the program is shown here:

```
    Inside Area for Rectangle.
    Area is 45
    Inside Area for Triangle.
    Area is 40
    Area for Figure is undefined.
    Area is 0
```

Through the dual mechanisms of inheritance and run-time polymorphism, it is possible to define one consistent interface that is used by several different, yet related, types of objects. In this case, if an object is derived from **Figure**, then its area can be obtained by calling **area( )**. The interface to this operation is the same no matter what type of figure is being used.

Using Abstract Classes

There are situations in which you will want to define a superclass that declares the structure of a given abstraction without providing a complete implementation of every method. That is, sometimes you will want to create a superclass that only defines a generalized form that will be shared by all of its subclasses, leaving it to each subclass to fill in the details. Such a class determines the nature of the methods that the subclasses must implement. One way this situation can occur is when a superclass is unable to create a meaningful implementation for a method. This is the case with the class **Figure** used in the preceding example. The definition of **area( )** is simply a placeholder. It will not compute and display the area of any type of object.

As you will see as you create your own class libraries, it is not uncommon for a method to have no meaningful definition in the context of its superclass. You can handle this situation two ways. One way, as shown in the previous example, is to simply have it report a warning message. While this approach can be useful in certain situations—such as debugging—it is not usually appropriate. You may have methods that must be overridden by the subclass in order for the subclass to have any meaning. Consider the class **Triangle**. It has no meaning if **area( )** is not defined. In this case, you want some way to ensure that a subclass does, indeed, override all necessary methods. Java's solution to this problem is the *abstract method.*

You can require that certain methods be overridden by subclasses by specifying the **abstract** type modifier. These methods are sometimes referred to as *subclasser responsibility* because they have no implementation specified in the superclass. Thus, a subclass must override them—it cannot simply use the version defined in the superclass. To declare an abstract method, use this general form:

abstract *type name*(*parameter-list*);

As you can see, no method body is present.

Any class that contains one or more abstract methods must also be declared abstract. To declare a class abstract, you simply use the **abstract** keyword in front of the **class** keyword at the beginning of the class declaration. There can be no objects of an abstract class. That is, an abstract class cannot be directly instantiated with the **new** operator. Such objects would be useless, because an abstract class is not fully defined. Also, you cannot declare abstract constructors, or abstract static methods. Any subclass of an abstract class must either implement all of the abstract methods in the superclass, or be declared **abstract** itself.

Here is a simple example of a class with an abstract method, followed by a class which implements that method:

```
// A Simple demonstration of abstract.
abstract class A {
  abstract void callme();

  // concrete methods are still allowed in abstract classes
  void callmetoo() {
    System.out.println("This is a concrete method.");
  }
}

class B extends A {
  void callme() {
    System.out.println("B's implementation of callme.");
  }
}

class AbstractDemo {
  public static void main(String args[]) {
    B b = new B();

    b.callme();
    b.callmetoo();
  }
}
```

Notice that no objects of class **A** are declared in the program. As mentioned, it is not possible to instantiate an abstract class. One other point: class **A** implements a concrete method called **callmetoo( )**. This is perfectly acceptable. Abstract classes can include as much implementation as they see fit.

Although abstract classes cannot be used to instantiate objects, they can be used to create object references, because Java's approach to run-time polymorphism is implemented through the use of superclass references. Thus, it must be possible to create a reference to an abstract class so that it can be used to point to a subclass object. You will see this feature put to use in the next example.

Using an abstract class, you can improve the **Figure** class shown earlier. Since there is no meaningful concept of area for an undefined two-dimensional figure, the following version of the program declares **area( )** as abstract inside **Figure**. This, of course, means that all classes derived from **Figure** must override **area( )**.

```java
// Using abstract methods and classes.
abstract class Figure {
  double dim1;
  double dim2;

  Figure(double a, double b) {
    dim1 = a;
    dim2 = b;
  }

  // area is now an abstract method
  abstract double area();
}

class Rectangle extends Figure {
  Rectangle(double a, double b) {
    super(a, b);
  }

  // override area for rectangle
  double area() {
    System.out.println("Inside Area for Rectangle.");
    return dim1 * dim2;
  }
}

class Triangle extends Figure {
  Triangle(double a, double b) {
    super(a, b);
  }

  // override area for right triangle
  double area() {
    System.out.println("Inside Area for Triangle.");
    return dim1 * dim2 / 2;
  }
}

class AbstractAreas {
  public static void main(String args[]) {
  // Figure f = new Figure(10, 10); // illegal now
    Rectangle r = new Rectangle(9, 5);
    Triangle t = new Triangle(10, 8);
    Figure figref; // this is OK, no object is created

    figref = r;
    System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());

    figref = t;
```

```
      System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());
  }
}
```

As the comment inside **main( )** indicates, it is no longer possible to declare objects of type **Figure**, since it is now abstract. And, all subclasses of **Figure** must override **area( )**. To prove this to yourself, try creating a subclass that does not override **area( )**. You will receive a compile-time error.

Although it is not possible to create an object of type **Figure**, you can create a reference variable of type **Figure**. The variable **figref** is declared as a reference to **Figure**, which means that it can be used to refer to an object of any class derived from **Figure**. As explained, it is through superclass reference variables that overridden methods are resolved at run time.

Using final with Inheritance

The keyword **final** has three uses. First, it can be used to create the equivalent of a named constant. This use was described in the preceding chapter. The other two uses of **final** apply to inheritance. Both are examined here.

Using final to Prevent Overriding

While method overriding is one of Java's most powerful features, there will be times when you will want to prevent it from occurring. To disallow a method from being overridden, specify **final** as a modifier at the start of its declaration. Methods declared as **final** cannot be overridden. The following fragment illustrates **final**:

```
class A {
  final void meth() {
    System.out.println("This is a final method.");
  }
}

class B extends A {
  void meth() { // ERROR! Can't override.
    System.out.println("Illegal!");
  }
}
```

Because **meth( )** is declared as **final**, it cannot be overridden in **B**. If you attempt to do so, a compile-time error will result.

Methods declared as **final** can sometimes provide a performance enhancement: The compiler is free to *inline* calls to them because it "knows" they will not be overridden by a subclass. When a small **final** method is called, often the Java compiler can copy the bytecode for the subroutine directly inline with the compiled code of the calling method, thus eliminating the costly overhead associated with a method call. Inlining is an option only with **final** methods. Normally, Java resolves calls to methods dynamically, at run time. This is called *late binding*. However, since **final** methods cannot be overridden, a call to one can be resolved at compile time. This is called early binding.

Using final to Prevent Inheritance

Sometimes you will want to prevent a class from being inherited. To do this, precede the class declaration with **final**. Declaring a class as **final** implicitly declares all of its methods as **final**, too. As you might expect, it is illegal to declare a class as both **abstract** and **final** since an abstract class is incomplete by itself and relies upon its subclasses to provide complete implementations.

Here is an example of a **final** class:

```
final class A {
  //...
}

// The following class is illegal.
class B extends A { // ERROR! Can't subclass A
  //...
}
```

As the comments imply, it is illegal for **B** to inherit **A** since **A** is declared as **final**.

The Object Class

There is one special class, **Object**, defined by Java. All other classes are subclasses of **Object**. That is, **Object** is a superclass of all other classes. This means that a reference variable of type **Object** can refer to an object of any other class. Also, since arrays are implemented as classes, a variable of type **Object** can also refer to any array.

Object defines the following methods, which means that they are available in every object.

Method	Purpose
Object clone( )	Creates a new object that is the same as the object being cloned.
boolean equals(Object *object*)	Determines whether one object is equal to another.
void finalize( )	Called before an unused object is recycled.
Class<?> getClass( )	Obtains the class of an object at run time.
int hashCode( )	Returns the hash code associated with the invoking object.
void notify( )	Resumes execution of a thread waiting on the invoking object.
void notifyAll( )	Resumes execution of all threads waiting on the invoking object.
String toString( )	Returns a string that describes the object.
void wait( ) void wait(long *milliseconds*) void wait(long *milliseconds*, int *nanoseconds*)	Waits on another thread of execution.

The methods **getClass( )**, **notify( )**, **notifyAll( )**, and **wait( )** are declared as **final**. You may override the others. These methods are described elsewhere in this book. However, notice two methods now: **equals( )** and **toString( )**. The **equals( )** method compares two objects. It returns **true** if the objects are equal, and **false** otherwise. The precise definition of equality can vary, depending on the type of objects being compared. The **toString( )** method returns a string that contains a description of the object on which it is called. Also, this method is automatically called when an object is output using **println( )**. Many classes override this method. Doing so allows them to tailor a description specifically for the types of objects that they create.

One last point: Notice the unusual syntax in the return type for **getClass( )**. This relates to Java's *generics* feature, which is described in Chapter 14.