***Speak* Guided Reading**

**First Marking Period**

1. Consider Melinda’s reaction to the first day of high school and why her fears seem more intense than those of others.  Think about why she says, “I am Outcast.”

1. Examine the meanings of the “clans” and the prevalence of high school cliques.  Why do we sometimes not like people who are really good at things, like sports, music, art, or school?  Is this fair?  Are adults like this?

1. Consider the “first ten lies they tell you in high school.”  Do you think Melinda’s assumption that they are “lies” is valid?

1. Examine Melinda’s characterization of the teachers.  What do these descriptions reflect? Which teachers does she have nicknames for and why? Are there any teachers she seems to connect with?

1. Consider Mr. Freeman’s approach to teaching art.  Why does Melinda like this class?

1. Think about Melinda’s home life.  How does communication break down in Melinda’s family?  What could each person do to improve it?  If you were a parent, how would communication be in your family? Do Melinda’s problems at home make it even harder for her to deal with what she is going through at school?

1. Are Melinda and Heather friends? What brings them together?

1. Are we sometimes different people on the outside than we are in the inside?  How?  Why?

**Second Marking Period**

1. Pay attention to Melinda’s decline, including physical symptoms.

1. Analyze the social studies “debate” and its aftermath.  Note who challenges the teacher and the position each person takes.  How do you feel about this type of debate? Is the teacher right or wrong? Do students have a right to challenge a teacher?

3. Consider Thanksgiving at Melinda’s house. Why is this holiday so important?

4. Examine Melinda’s references to her secret and what this reveals about her

relationship with her parents.  What do you think happened at the party?

1. Describe the process Melinda goes through to create her art in this section.

What is Mr. Freeman’s reaction? How does this artwork symbolize her life?

1. Why do Melinda’s parents require that she stay after school? What does

Melinda do during this time?

1. Think about Melinda’s athletic ability, her attitude toward being on the basketball team, and the comparison she makes between basketball and life.

1. Analyze the deterioration of the relationship between Melinda and Heather.  Why is it that people sometimes like us more when they can get something out of us?  Are the Marthas good friends to Heather?  Why or why not?

1. What should we value in other people?  What qualities are important in a person?  What do you usually notice first about people?  Does that really matter?

1. Pay close attention to Melinda’s references to IT.

1. Read closely when you get to the school conference with Melinda’s parents and its aftermath.  What do you think about Melinda’s suicide attempt?  Was it real?  What does it indicate?  What do you think about her mother’s reaction?

**Third Marking Period**

1. What precipitates Melinda’s skipping school? What does she do?

1. Was being a child better than being a teenager?  In what ways?  In what ways is it better to be older?  Why is it hard to be in between childhood and adulthood?

1. Analyze the reference to the symbols in *The Scarlet Letter* and how Melinda would adapt the letter “A.”

1. Consider the dissolution of Melinda and Heather’s friendship and the effect it has on Melinda.  What is the meaning of friendship?

1. Analyze the events and effects of Valentine’s Day and its aftermath on Melinda.

1. Melinda wishes her science teacher would teach them about love and betrayal instead of about the birds and the bees.  Where do we learn about things like that?  Can we learn about love from a book?  Explain?

1. What happens when Melinda is placed in In-School Suspension? How would you react to this situation?

1. Analyze Mr. Freeman’s effect on Melinda, inside and outside the art class.  Do you agree with his statement, “When people don’t express themselves, they die one piece at a time”?

1. Mr. Freeman tells his class, “You must walk alone to find your soul.”  What does this mean?  Is it true?

1. Mr. Freeman also says that “art is about making mistakes and learning from them.”  What else is like this?  Explain.

1. Examine Melinda’s self-image and her survival techniques after Heather’s rejection.

1. Examine Melinda’s revelation about the night of the party and its residual effect on her.

**Fourth Marking Period**

1. Reconsider the evolvement of the name of the Merryweather High mascot and the debate over each name.

1. What draws Melinda and Ivy together?

1. Do you agree or disagree with “Ten More Lies…”?  Why?

1. Describe Melinda’s inner turmoil when she discovers Rachel is dating Andy.  What should she have done?  Did she do the right thing?

1. What is the significance of Mr. Freeman’s statement, “…trees are flexible, so they don’t snap.  Scar it, give it a twisted branch-perfect trees don’t exist…Be the tree” (p. 153).

1. How does Melinda begin to assert herself and find her voice?

1. What happens when Melinda decides to talk to Rachel?

1. What do the entries under Melinda’s initial graffiti in the bathroom reveal?

1. What is the correlation between Mr. Sordino’s treatment and explanation of the diseased tree with Melinda’s “survival?”

1. What happens at the Prom?