

Speak Study Questions

First Marking Period

1. In what tense is the story told? What effect does this choice have on the reader's perception of the narrative?
2. Describe Melinda—her personality and her emotional state. What effect does feeling like an outcast have on her behavior?
3. What information does this first section of the book give us about what Melinda did to make her friends reject her and why she did it?
4. What is Melinda's attitude toward high school life—school itself, extracurricular activities, students, teachers, and school officials? What comments does she make about these things?
5. Describe Heather. How are she and Melinda different? What is their relationship like?
6. Describe Melinda's parents. What is her relationship with them like? What is their relationship with each other like?

Second Marking Period

1. What purpose does Melinda's closet at school serve? Why does she cover the mirror, and why do you think she covers it with a poster of Maya Angelou?
2. How do you interpret the artwork that Melinda makes with the turkey carcass and the Barbie head?
3. Why do you think Melinda views David Petrakis as a hero?
4. What almost makes Melinda tell her parents about what happened? Why does Melinda end up not telling them? What does this passage tell us about the state of their relationship and what Melinda needs from them? What is the symbolic and thematic significance of the cartoon about Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer? (Consider, for example, Rudolph's comment about being independent.)
5. What reaction does Melinda have to her experiences in her parents' workplaces? Why do you think she is so deeply angry with her father?
6. Why does Melinda go along with the basketball coaches' requests at first? Why does she decide that she won't show up to teach the Basketball Pole?
7. Why do you think Melinda has such a strong reaction to dissecting the frog?

Third Marking Period

1. Why does Melinda wish she were "in fifth grade again"?
2. What do you think the author's opinion about analyzing books is—do you think she believes that authors intentionally use symbolism in their writing? How do you feel about that kind of analysis?
3. Why does Melinda consider Mr. Freeman the sanest person she knows?
4. Do you think it's still true that it's "easier to floss with barbed wire than admit you like someone in middle school"?

5. Why does Heather break off her “friendship” with Melinda? Why does Melinda suddenly feel that Heather is very important to her? What thoughts does Melinda have about Heather’s decision? How do you feel about Heather and her decision?
6. What makes Melinda decide to leave the hospital?
7. What reaction do Melinda’s parents have to her skipping school and her reluctance to talk? Why doesn’t she explain her behavior? How do you feel about how her parents deal with this situation? How should they handle it instead?
8. Why did Melinda call the police at the party? Why didn’t she do more to resist what was done to her?
9. What signs do you see in this chapter that Melinda is beginning to change—that she has begun to deal with what happened to her?

Fourth Marking Period

1. What further signs are there in this chapter that Melinda is beginning to recover emotionally?
2. What dilemma does Melinda face regarding Rachel/Rachelle? What conflicting feelings does she have? Why is she uncertain about how to handle it? How does she finally decide to handle it, and why?
3. What topic does Melinda choose for her report? Why is this topic appropriate for her? What is ironic about her refusal to present her report for the class?
4. What conclusion does Melinda come to about whether she was raped? What makes her doubt whether it was really rape? Why do you think she hasn’t spoken up about it?
5. What happens in this chapter to make Melinda and Ivy begin to bond more deeply?
6. What encounter does Melinda have with Heather in this chapter? How does Melinda respond to Heather, and what does this show?
7. What reaction does Rachel have to the revelation that Andy Evans raped Melinda? Why do you think she has this reaction?
8. What is the significance of the trimming of the tree in Melinda’s yard?
9. What is the significance of Melinda’s visit to the site of the rape?
10. What is the climax of the book? How does Melinda deal with the situation she finds herself in, and what does this show?
11. What positive things happen after that incident (the climax) for Melinda, both psychologically and socially?
12. Why do you think Melinda adds birds to her last drawing of the tree?