

"speak" assignment

Literature



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English "Speak" Essay Melinda escaped her tough times by going to her art class. She was assigned to draw and sculpt trees. Her art had a really strong connection with her personal feelings throughout the book. Melinda goes through tough times and her problems show in her art. In her first phase (the confused phase) she really isn't sure of her art assignment. This is similar to her life, because on her first day of high school she wasn't sure of what class she was going to be in. She is just getting used to her tree making assignment in art class.

Also as she starts high school she is just getting used to how things work. The scariest period of Melinda's art was the "dead period", where all of the trees she made looked dead or dying. This is the most traumatic part of the story because here Melinda's spirit starts dying. Some big examples are her constant truancies, her in school suspensions, her lack of words, her falling grades, and her lack of respect for authority. Melinda really doesn't care about her life here and it shows through her art.

Her final stage is the feelings stage, where she really lets her feelings pour into her art giving her a much better project. In this part of the story she tells Rachel that she got raped. She shows her feelings, when throughout the entire story she never could. This stage is the climax of the story and is where Melinda really shows that she is going to make it through this difficult time. Finally at the end of the book Melinda makes her masterpiece and overcomes bad times and heals. Symbolism-Trees In art class, Melinda learns how to express her emotions.

Her art teacher, Mr. Freeman explains, “ Art without emotion is like chocolate cake without sugar. It makes you gag. ” He helps her to communicate her emotions through art instead of keeping them inside of herself. The tree is symbolic of Melinda’s personality and life and is one of the main things that helps Melinda cope with her emotions in the novel. It also provides a way for Melinda to deal with the rape. Throughout the novel, Melinda little by little becomes better at drawing the tree, which is symbolic of her search to find her identity and her emotional recovery.

In the beginning of the novel, Melinda feels dead, so she focuses on dead trees. She comments, “ I can feel the wind blow and hear the mockingbird whistling on the way back to her nest. But when I try to carve it, it looks like a dead tree, toothpicks, a child’s drawing. I can’t bring it to life. ” She is able to visualize what she will be like when she can be more open but is not able to fully make the change yet. She also says, “ For a solid week after the pep rally, I’ve been painting watercolors of trees that have been hit by lightning. I try to paint them so they are nearly dead, but not totally. She is upset about what happened at the pep rally, so she feels like she is almost to the point of death. Melinda is able to show this through her paintings of the trees. Her expression through art is progressing at this point. When the tree is torn down in front of Melinda’s house, she says, “ He is killing the tree. He’ll only leave the stump. The tree is dying. There’s nothing to do or say. We watch in silence as the tree crashes piece by piece to the damp ground. ” Melinda feels that she can identify with the tree, and she feels sad that it must die.

She is also scared that the tree representing her will fall and crash onto the ground like this tree. Throughout the novel, Melinda strives to draw the tree

that represents herself and her emotions, at the same time mending the scars that Andy Evans has caused. By the end of the novel, Melinda finds a way to begin again and bring the tree to life. She says, " My tree is definitely breathing; little shallow breaths like it just shot up through the ground this morning. The new growth is the best part. " The picture of the tree becomes a picture of Melinda by the end of the story.

In the last scene of the novel, Melinda is finally able to overcome her emotions about the night she was raped and paint the tree. She says, " I look at my homely sketch. It doesn't need anything. Even through the river in my eyes I can see that. It isn't perfect and that makes it just right. " She comes to realize at this point the significance of the tree she has been determined to represent properly throughout the story and that it was meant to be a portrait of her and her healing, not a tree at all. The symbolism of the tree adds a new depth to the story.