Bronx Masquerade
by Nikki Grimes
THEMES AND MOTIFS IN BRONX MASQUERADE

Themes (the message or idea that an author is trying to convey)

- Art
- Basketball
- Beauty
- Death
- Eyes
- Identity
- Loneliness
- Music
- Race
- Unique talents

Motifs (recurring concept, ideas or objects in literature)

- Making friends
- Fitting in with others
- Refusing to be beaten or abused
- Combating prejudice by speaking your mind and being tolerant
- Showing hatred against others by acts of violence
- Displaying courage by refusing to go with the crowd
- Learning about the varied cultures of a multi-cultural school
- Having the courage to pursue your goals and dreams
- Dealing with death, poverty, and racism
- Reading and understanding dialect
BRONX MASQUERADE STUDY GUIDE

1. Who is Nikki Grimes?
2. What is the difference between "open mike poetry" and "slam poetry"?

KEY CONCEPTS

- encouragement
- prejudice
- expression
- being unique
- participating

Questions:

**Pages 3-33**

1. What makes Tyrone the main character?
2. What does Chankara mean when she says about Johnny, "...I looked in his eyes and saw my sister's reflection"?
3. Think about Diondra's and Devon's feelings, interests, actions, and poetry. List their main characteristics in a Venn Diagram.
4. What is ironic about the similarities between Diondra and Devon?

**Pages 34-64**

1. Why does Lupe want a baby?
2. What is ironic about Gloria and Lupe's views on motherhood?
3. How would Janelle like to be seen? (p. 47)
4. Why does Janelle have such low self-esteem even though she is smart and funny?
5. What do Porscha and Leslie have in common? What does Leslie mean when she says, "Dead is dead, and lonely is lonely, and they both stink"? (p. 53)
6. What effect does Judianne's step-father have on her?

**Pages 57-81**

1. Two themes in the students' poetry are loneliness and insecurity about appearance. Write the feelings Janelle, Leslie, Judianne and Lupe express about these topics in a T Chart.
2. Sheila wants to be called by a different name because she thinks it will better express who she is. What does this say about her?
3. Mike is prejudiced against people who like to read for fun. How does Mike's attitude affect Devon?
4. The students are changing because of "Open Mike Fridays". List how the characters are changing and what they are gaining from participating in "Open Mike".

**Pages 82-145**

1. Raul tells Steve, "If a dream is in your heart, you never lose it." What does this mean? (116)
2. Why is it important that Wesley encourages Sheila to stop trying to be something she's not and just be herself?
3. The newspaper article about the Open Mike session is titled "Student Poets Bloom in the Bronx." What is the reporter comparing the students to? What example of figurative language is this comparison?

**Pages 146-167**

1. Raynard, Steve, Sheila, and Janelle share their poems in this section. List what the characters do or feel and what this shows about them.
2. Which character do you think takes the biggest risk to share his or her poem? Why is sharing the poem so risky?
3. What is the mood in this section?
4. Why does Porscha decide to participate in "Open Mike Fridays"?
5. Open Mike Fridays are affecting the students in a positive way. List four students and how they now feel about themselves or their future.
6. Based on what you know about how the "Open Mikes" are affecting the students you listed above, how do you think the "Open Mikes" will affect the school in the future?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER NAME</th>
<th>FAMILY BACKGROUND</th>
<th>SOCIETAL ISSUE</th>
<th>FUTURE DREAM</th>
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Speak
by Laurie Anderson
## Speak

**Anticipation/Reaction Guide**

Part I Directions: Before reading *Speak*, in the "Before" column, respond to each statement by putting a plus sign (+) if you agree with it, a minus sign (-) if you disagree, and a question mark (?) if you are unsure of your belief.

Part II Directions: For one of the statements below, respond in Deep Thoughts section of your notebook in 500 words or more (MLA format) as to why you have the belief you do. Then, copy and paste your response on our message board at www.mrjeffrey.com. If someone responds to it, they may earn up to 10 points extra credit. Extra credit points both depend on the quality and quantity of the response.

Part III Directions: After reading *Speak*, in the "After" column respond again to the statements. Then, reply in the Deep Thoughts section of your notebook in 500 words or more (MLA format) to a statement where your belief changed since reading the play. If not, write about a different statement than you responded to in Part II. Once again, post your journal on our message board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The pressures of fitting in at high school are greater than any other point in one's life.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Students who are depressed are simply afraid to deal with their real or perceived problems.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>There is a difference between being quiet and being withdrawn.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Students should not tell teachers about their personal problems, no matter how serious.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>A girl who dresses provocatively deserves any negative attention she gets.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Girls are more likely than guys to say they have been sexually harassed.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Whatever happens at a party should stay at the party.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>If someone is drunk or high, she or he is not responsible for her or his actions.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Parents simply don't understand the problems teenagers go through.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>People who are quiet have something to hide.</td>
<td>10.</td>
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SPEAK

FIRST MARKING PERIOD (PGS. 3-46)

1. Why does Melinda miss Rachel so much? (5)

2. Out of the 10 rules about high school, which one do you think is especially a lie? (5-6)

3. Describe Hairwoman, Mr. Neck, and Mr. Freeman (5-6, 10)

4. What is happening to Melinda at school, in the halls etc.? (14)

5. Why do you think Melinda can't stop biting her lip? (16)

6. Why does Rachel change her name to Rachelle? (20)

7. Describe Heather. (24)

8. Why is the janitor's closet a perfect place for Melinda? (26)

9. Why does Melinda resent the cheerleaders? (29-30)

10. Why does Melinda have so many different "smiles"? (33)

11. Why does Melinda admire David Petrakis? (37)

12. Explain why it is so difficult for Melinda to stand up at the board. (39)

13. What happens when Melinda sees "IT"? (45-46)

SECOND MARKING PERIOD (pgs. 49-92)

1. Who is the poster of that Melinda puts up in the janitor's closet? Why are students no longer able to read her books? (50)

2. Describe David Petrakis. (56)

3. What happens to the Sordino family Thanksgiving dinner? (59-61)

4. How does Mr. Freeman describe Melinda's "turkey art"? (65)

5. Why does Melinda almost tell her parents about what happened at the party? (72)

6. "Maybe I'll be an artist if I grow up." What does Melinda's statement mean? (78)

7. What happens to Melinda in Biology class? (81)

8. What effect does IT have on Melinda? Why do you think this is? (86)

9. What happens to Melinda after Andy Evans twirls her ponytail? What do you think this means? (91)

10. What is happening to Melinda's grades after the Second Marking Period? (92)

THIRD MARKING PERIOD (pgs. 95-137)

1. Why does Melinda decide to skip school? (97)

2. Why does she wish she were in 5th grade again? (99)

3. Explain why Heather ends her friendship with Melinda? (105)

4. "These are really sick people, sick that you can see". What does Melinda mean? (113)

5. In your opinion, why does Melinda wear huge jeans and an extra large sweatshirt? (124)
6. Describe the fight that “Melinda One” and “Melinda Two” have over David’s invitation. What is she afraid of? (132)

7. Why did Melinda call 911 at the party? How did the kids at the party react to her once they realized what she had done? (136)

FOURTH MARKING PERIOD (pgs. 141-198)

1. Who is Andy Evans dating now? Why is Melinda concerned about Rachel when Rachel has been so mean to her? (149)

2. What advice does David give Melinda about making a difference? Do you agree? (159)

3. What do you think it means that Melinda wants to plant some flower seeds? Why is this symbolic? (168)

4. How do we know that Melinda is getting stronger emotionally? (180)

5. Where does Melinda ride her bike? Why? (184)

6. Describe the confrontation between Andy and Melinda in the closet. (194-195)

7. How is Melinda like the tree that she is creating?

8. How does the Novel end? Do you think it is a good ending? (198)