**“If you’re lucky enough to not understand what it’s like to be surrounded by darkness, I’m telling you someone near you needs kindness. They need it today. They need it desperately. Offer it” (257).**

**-----Paige Rawl**

***Positive* Journal Prompts**

**Pre-reading Prompts**

What do you think you already know about HIV/AIDS? Write about facts OR myths/stereotypes you have heard.

Look at the wedding photo on page 8. Paige’s parents look so happy and full of hope. Photos often do that; they can preserve a moment for all eternity. Her parents’ future did not turn out the way they had planned.

Think about (or find) a photo from your family’s past. What moment is preserved? What does the photo say about you/ your family? Do you still see that moment the same way today? Why or why not?

**Reading Reflections**

For each of the prompts listed below, write a full-page reflection in your blue book. You may skip one prompt from the list.

* Full credit (50 points ) will be given for reflections that are through, thoughtful, and a full-page long. If you use additional pages for a single prompt, you will need to add extra pages or start a second blue book.
* Write the number of the prompt on the top of the page.
* If you find the topic to be too personal, you may select a character from a book or film to discuss. Make sure that it is clear in your reflection whether you are talking about yourself or a fictional character.
* You will turn in the completed blue book at the end of the unit.
1. On page 14 Paige goes to middle school. Her new principal says, “when you come to Clarkstown, you come as you are… and leave different” (25). Do you think this is true about middle school? Write about your own experience as you agree or disagree with this statement.
2. On page 42, Paige describes her relationship with her best friend, Yasmine. She says, “I had a friend the likes of which I hadn’t known before. I barely needed anyone else. I trusted her, wholly.” What are the pros and cons of having a friend like that? How does it help you? Does it make you vulnerable in some way?
3. Why do you think Yasmine reveals Paige’s secret to everyone at the lock-in? (65) How would you react if one of your good friends told you that he/she had HIV? Explain.
4. When Miss Ward finds out that Paige has HIV, she says, “You could just deny having HIV!” (71). How do you feel about the way she handled it? What would you have done if you were Miss Ward?
5. The Power of Words: Anonymous notes and social media comments cause Paige a great deal of pain. She finds a note taped to her locker that states, “No AIDS at Clarkstown” (84). Why are anonymous notes and comments so hurtful? Discuss this idea in relation to our world today (think of Yik Yak, Instagram, Facebook comments, etc.).
6. When Paige finally gets the courage to tell Miss Ward about the bullying she has been enduring, Miss Ward says, “Yasmine is a straight-A student…Yasmine could have been a good friend, you know…This is your warning” (95). She is clearly favoring Yasmine over her. Does this type of favoritism happen regularly in schools? Who gets favored? Who is treated less fairly? Or, do you think the example in the book is grossly exaggerated? Use your own experiences in your response, but do not use names.
7. Ethan liked Paige, but other students made fun of him because of his association with her. What do you think about his decision to tell Paige, “Let’s not tell people we’re hanging out anymore…We can still hang out, of course. We just don’t have to let anyone know” (127). How would you have reacted if you were Paige?
8. Do you think Miss Ryan, Paige’s soccer coach, had a right to ask, “I heard…that you had AIDS. Is that true?” (131). If you were on a soccer team with someone with HIV or AIDS, do you think you would want to know? Explain. If you were Paige, would you tell the truth?
9. Because of her troubles at Clarkstown, Paige left to be home schooled (139). What are your feelings about home schooling? What would be the positives? Negatives? Did she have any other options at that point?
10. When Paige’s mom shows her the film, *The Ryan White Story*, she realizes that others have fought the same fight she is fighting. Write about a film you have seen that has made a significant impact on you (emotionally or intellectually, or both!). (142)
11. When Paige’s story is covered in local and national newspapers, she received encouraging messages from strangers and realized how important it was for her story to be told. She writes, “It was only later, much later, that I would begin to recognize those moments for what they were: a dawning awareness of my own influence, the idea that I could make a difference” (151).

We all have special talents that enable us to make a difference in the world. Considering your own talents and strengths now, how do you think you will influence the world positively in your lifetime?

1. The school nurse at Heron High “picked up a bunch of information…about HIV and AIDS in order to educate herself and the students. Why was this so important? Why does education promote acceptance while ignorance causes fear, hatred, and bullying? (172)
2. Pages 177-183 describe Paige’s suicide attempt. What is powerful about the way this section is written? How does the author convey the sense of desperation and urgency of both Paige and her mother?
3. Through texting, Paige confronts Ethan about the way he treated her. He explains, “They were making fun of me, too” (201). Discuss texting. Is it an effective form of communication? What are the positives and negatives?
4. Paige attends Camp Kindle in Fremont, Nebraska. Write about a time that you went somewhere without your parents (a trip, camp, a sleepover). Were you homesick? Was it fun? What do you remember most about it? (228)
5. Tragically, bullying is the cause of many teen suicides every year. Paige writes, “Last month, another boy in Indiana had died. Billy Lucas had also been teased for being gay. He’d had chairs pulled out from underneath him. Some kids had told him to go hang himself. So he had. Billy hung himself from the rafters in his family’s barn” (230).

Why does this happen? What can we do to stop it? Be specific.

1. When Paige sees photos of her former friends/tormentors online, she realizes that they were not demons at all; they were just a bunch of kids. She sees them at a party in someone’s basement in the suburbs of Indiana. She thinks they looked dull. She states, “My world now was so much broader than that. It was more colorful. It was infinitely more textured” (245).

Write about an experience that has broadened your world in some way, **or** write about an experience you plan to have in your future (traveling, college, a club, a hobby, etc.) that you think will teach you new things and enrich your life. Explain the experience AND the effect it had (or will have) on you.