**Close Reading Activity (Module 7)**

**When will the close reading activity occur in the unit?**
- Close Reading #1 will occur on the fourth day of the unit.
- Close Reading #2 will occur on the sixteenth day of the unit.

**Text Excerpt: pages 178-180 of *The Bean Trees***

After dinner one night Lou Ann came into my room while the kids were listening to their "Snow White" record in the living room. I'd skipped dinner; I wasn't eating much these days. When I was young and growing a lot, and Mama couldn't feed me enough, she used to say I had a hollow leg. Now I felt like I had a hollow everything. Nothing in the world could have filled that space.

Lou Ann knocked softly at the door and then walked in, balancing a bowl of chicken-noodle soup on a tray.

"You're going to dry up and blow away, hon," she said. "You've got to eat something."

I took one look and started crying. The idea that you could remedy such evil with chicken-noodle soup.

"It's the best I can do," Lou Ann offered. "I just don't think you're going to change anything with your own personal hunger strike."

I put down my book and accepted her hug. I couldn't remember when I had felt so hopeless.

"I don't know where to start, Lou Ann," I told her. "There's just so damn much ugliness. Everywhere you look, some big guy kicking some little person when they're down-look what they do to those people at Mattie's. To hell with them, people say, let them die, it was their fault in the first place for being poor or in trouble, or for not being white, or whatever, how dare they try to come to this country."

"I thought you were upset about Turtle," Lou Ann said.

"About Turtle, sure." I looked out the window. "But it just goes on and on, there's no end to it." I didn't know how to explain the empty despair I felt. "How can I just be upset about Turtle, about a grown man..."

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<th><strong>Text-Dependent Questions</strong></th>
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<td><strong>First set of questions: To be covered on the fourth instructional day.</strong></td>
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<td>1. How would you describe the narrator’s tone and mood? Think about how reading this passage makes you feel and include a description of your thoughts and emotions. Specifically mark and write down words and/or descriptions that you felt were the most powerful.</td>
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<td>2. Which sentence or paragraph do you feel is the most powerful/important? Why?</td>
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<td>3. Overall, do you agree or disagree with what Taylor has to say here? Specifically identify her ideas that you agree and/or disagree with and write them down, along with your ideas/opinions.</td>
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<td>4. Does this passage make you wonder anything? What are you curious about after reading this passage?</td>
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| **Second set of questions, text-dependent: To be covered on the sixteenth day of instruction.** |
| 1. Throughout this passage we are exposed to Taylor’s feelings and frustrations, while Lou Ann “just listen[s]”. Based on her actions and characterizations throughout the novel, what do you think Lou Ann is thinking and feeling during this conversation? Do you think she agrees with Taylor? Why or why not? |
| 2. Which sentence would you pick as Taylor’s thesis...
hurting a baby, when the whole way of the world is to pick on people that can't fight back?"

'You fight back, Taylor. Nobody picks on you and lives to tell the tale.'"

I ignored this. "Look at those guys out in the park with no place to go," I said. "And women, too. I've seen whole families out there. While we're in here trying to keep the dry-cleaner bags out of the kids' reach, those mothers are using dry-cleaner bags for their children's clothes, for God's sake. For raincoats. And feeding them out of the McDonald's dumpster. You'd think that life alone would be punishment enough for those people, but then the cops come around waking them up mornings, knocking them around with their sticks. You've seen it. And everybody else saying hooray, way to go, I got mine, power to the toughest. Clean up the neighborhood and devil take the riffraff."

Lou Ann just listened.

"What I'm saying is nobody feels sorry for anybody anymore, nobody even pretends they do. Not even the President. It's like it's become unpatriotic." I unfolded my wad of handkerchief and blew my nose.

"What's that supposed to teach people?" I demanded. "It's no wonder kids get the hurting end of the stick. And she's so little, so many years ahead of her. I'm just not up to the job, Lou Ann."

Lou Ann sat with her knees folded under her, braiding and unbraiding the end of a strand of my hair.

"Well, don't feel like the Lone Ranger," she said. "Nobody is."

during her conversation with Lou Ann? Provide evidence and main ideas to backup your selection.

3. Taylor describes various frustrations throughout this passage, however, her central concern is Turtle’s recent trauma. How does Turtle’s experience relate to the topics Taylor presents here? Do you understand the connections? Why or why not?

4. Identify this excerpt’s most powerful words (considering tone, mood, and purpose). Do these words relate? How do these words work together? What do these words have in common?

5. Is Taylor reacting characteristically here or is the reader exposed to a new side of her? Provide evidence from previous sections of the book as well as this passage to answer the question.

6. Now that you have actually read the book, how has your understanding of this passage changed from when we first read it? Did anything stand out to you during this reading that you did not notice before? Did your feelings about the passage change? What improved your understanding of this passage this time around?