

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_/50

**Assignment:**

1. Number the paragraphs.
2. **Underline** the **Attention Getter**
3. Place *brackets* [ ] around the **Connector Statement**
4. *Highlight* the **Thesis Statement (TS)**
5. *Circle* the **Summary Statement**.
6. *Highlight* the **evidence** in the three body paragraphs
7. Using your highlighter, **underline** the **links**
8. Place a \* in the paragraph that contains the **counterargument**
9. *Circle* the **transition words** found in the counterargument.
10. In the **conclusion**, *highlight* the two sentences where the writer revisits the main ideas (claims) made in the essay.

**Steve Harmon's Guilt**

Anyone can imagine and write beautifully about their experiences, but when people write, are the experiences that are written down real, or are they just experiences that are a concoction of the mind? Writers have tremendous talents – to reveal, to report, to claim, and even to fabricate information in the form of lies. The book “*Monster*” by Walter Dean Myers, is about teenager Steve Harmon who has a gift for screenplay writing. Steve lives in Harlem, New York and is on trial for allegedly being the lookout in a serious crime that involved robbery and murder. In this story, he tried to pacify himself by denying (in his mind and to the jury) his part in the murder. To detach himself from the crime, Steve writes in a journal. Steve Harmon is clearly guilty because throughout the story, Steve reveals gaps in his thinking and also mentions that he wanted to tough, just like Osvaldo James King. Since Steve Harmon used a journal to record his memories, readers who carefully read his thought processes will come to see that Steve was guilty.

In the beginning, Osvaldo, an important witness in prosecuting Steve, identifies both King and Steve at the beginning of his testimony. Osvaldo's reason for joining the crime was because of fear. This shows that not only is Steve involved with these “scary” guys, he *is* one of them. Proof for this is found in Steve's 4<sup>th</sup> journal entry on July 9<sup>th</sup>: “All the times I had looked at him [King] and wanted to be tough like him” (Myers, 96). This evidence shows that Steve aspires

to be a tough criminal like King and Bobo. Furthermore, this journal entry implicates Steve even further in the crime of killing Mr. Nesbitt. If Steve wanted to be “tough” like King, perhaps he was involved in the crime in order to prove himself to his peers.

Obviously, there were many gaps in Steve’s story; nevertheless, Steve can also be viewed as innocent in the eyes of the law because he really didn’t know Bobo Evans. For example, in the novel, when O’Brien is cross-examining Bobo, she asks him, “Did you talk to Steve Harmon?” Bobo responds by saying, “No.” Furthermore, O’Brien asks him “But you had not spoken to Mr. Harmon prior to the stickup?” Bobo again responds by saying “Naw” (Myers, 197). This evidence shows that Steve and Bobo never saw each other. The evidence also shows that Steve and Bobo had never heard of each other. Clearly, Steve Harmon did not know Bobo Evans, so this part of the prosecution worked in his favor.

Another gap in Steve’s thinking occurs when he refers to his mind. In a journal entry that is dated Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, Steve says that the moment the murder was committed he was “walking down the street, trying to make his mind a blank screen.” (Myers 128). The idea that his mind is a blank screen implies that he may have been involved and was trying not to remember his participation in the crime. It’s almost as if Steve is in denial as he refers to his mind as a blank screen. The idea of denial clearly indicates that Steve may have wanted to forget about the crime.

There is no doubt then that Steve fabricated information – even when he told his story by writing it down in the form of a journal entry. False claims, lies, and deceit can all be part of a good story that anyone can believe. Steve tried to deny to himself, and to his readers, that he was at the scene of the crime, referring to his mind as a blank screen. He also tried to be tough like King, and even revealed that he admired him. In the story, Steve continually tried to convince himself of his innocence, and seemed to have faith that if he told his version of the truth, that he would be found innocent. Even though the jury found Steve Harmon innocent, the reader should see that he is guilty because of the facts that are revealed by his guilty conscious.