

# So Much to Tell You

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE HEART

## Exploring the Text

Check with your teacher about which questions to try.

- ① Why was Marina sent to boarding school? (p. 1).
- ② For what reasons could Marina not stay in hospital? (p. 1).
- ③ Marina crashed over a hurdle. Why was that significant for her? (p. 3).
- ④ **'It seems he's too powerful still, like a radioactive cloud, finding his dark way into everything'** (p. 3). Why would Marina use the image of a radioactive cloud to describe her father?
- ⑤ **'Is music a kind of talking, I wonder?'** (p. 5). What do you think and why? Are there any ways, other than speech, that you could 'talk'?
- ⑥ **'I've been reading back over this journal, fragments of my life here, tears in the curtain'** (p. 15). What ideas come to mind when you think of 'fragments' and 'tears'? What do you think these images signify?
- ⑦ **'I had trained myself to live without my voice and now I have almost been forced into using one again'** (p. 17).
  - (a) What does Marina use as her voice?
  - (b) Can it be heard?
  - (c) To whom does Marina speak?



Page references are to the Thomas C. Lothian Pty Ltd 1997 paperback edition of *So Much to Tell You*.

8 Marina writes about her 'living death' (pp. 23–4). What do you think she means by that? What do you think it will take to 'bring her back to life'?

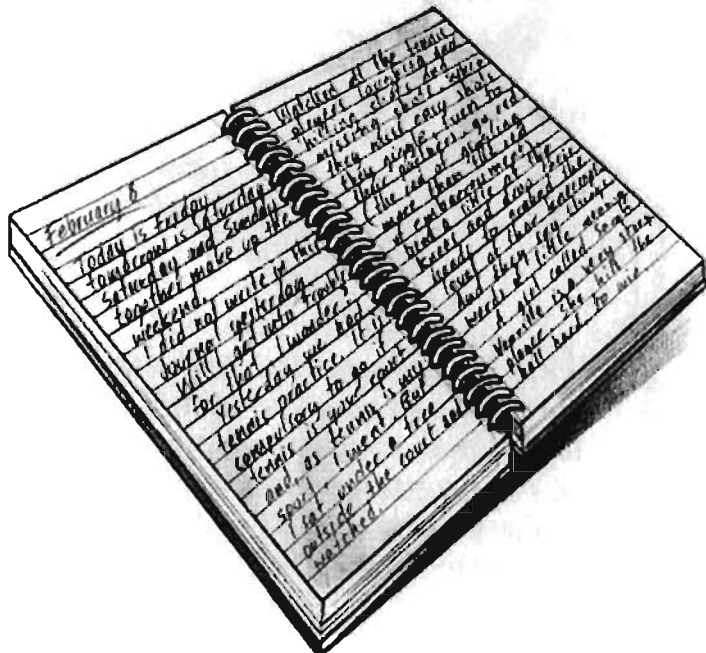
9 Cathy writes Marina a note of apology (p. 25). Why was this situation too hard for Marina to handle?

10 'What signals do I make? ... But there's so much glass. Very thick – but no matter how thick it is, it's still transparent' (p. 33).

(a) Apart from her inability to speak to anyone, what other signals does Marina give?

(b) Why is the glass so thick but 'still transparent'?

11 'I've succeeded, I guess, but sometimes maybe to succeed is to fail' (p. 45). What do you think Marina meant by this statement?



12 'I realised ... the worst worst suffering anyone would ever be called upon to endure: it would be to have to sit in a chair and listen to people saying nice things to you' (p. 50). In your opinion why was it not possible for Marina to listen to compliments?

13 Marina learns in English class that many girls have secret feelings or emotions, 'but there was no reading those skilful masks, no guessing what was going on underneath those smiles' (p. 53).

(a) What makes a skilful mask so necessary?

(b) Do you ever hide behind a smile? What do you hide and why?

14 Marina is constantly fearful about trouble, even though it is never of her own making. 'I blot their fear up too: it soaks slowly into me' (p. 54). 'I hate all that garbage. It scares me' (p. 45). Imagine you are Marina. Why are you so frightened even though you have nothing really to do with the fuss that is occurring at the time?

15 'Little dark islands floating in the shadows of the school, occasionally touching, bumping together for a moment or two' (p. 60). Can you explain this image in your own words? Why 'floating', 'shadows', momentarily 'touching, bumping'?

16 'But what's he doing here? What's going on? It's too exciting!' (p. 71). Marina had smiled. List three (or more) things that, in your opinion, helped Marina make the progress people were beginning to notice.

17 '... you think that's not me, that's not my face. So am I my face? I mean is that *all I am*?' (p. 75). Why would anyone so closely identify with his or her face? Explain.

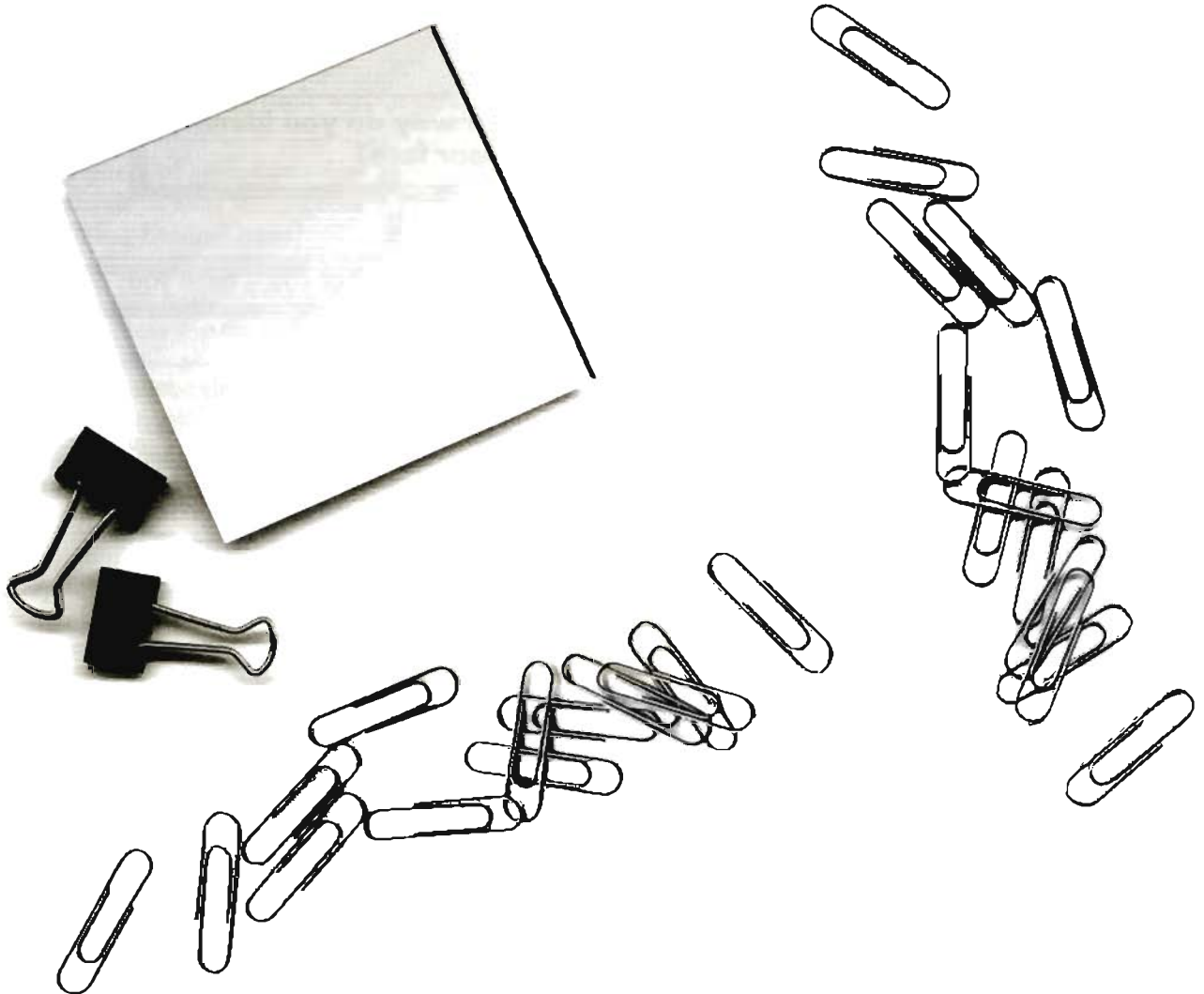
18 'I drew a lot of stripes, which weren't stripes at all, but were bars, prison bars' (p. 80). In what ways are both Marina and her father 'in prison'?

19 'Everything changes, everything stays the same' (p. 93). In what ways does this apply to Marina? How does it apply to you?

20 'I know what I am most scared of – I've always known that' (p. 105). Do you think that knowing what you are scared of makes the situation better or worse? Give reasons.

21 Imagine you are Marina's father (p. 109). What might be your feelings when you heard your daughter's name being called?

22 Why did we not know Marina's name until her father spoke to her? What was the significance of this omission?




**Think it through** talk it over

In groups or as a class, discuss one or more of these topics.

### 1 Pain – scars

Marina considers Lisa 'not a very happy person, yet no-one else is aware of that' (p. 11).

Why is Marina so perceptive?

Do you have to feel pain to recognise another's pain?

How do Marina's scars help her?  
How do they hold her back?

Can you have hidden scars?

Are they better or worse than scars you can see?

### 2 Who am I?

'So am I my face? I mean is that *all* I am?' Marina felt she had changed. 'I'm not the person I was before' (p. 75).

In what way do you identify with your face?

In what way do you identify with your name?

What part of you is most you?

Has the 'person that Marina once was' gone forever?

Suppose Marina's scars were removed by plastic surgery. Would Marina be the 'old' Marina again?

How would you feel about who you were if your face changed?

### 3 Marina and her father

'I cannot say what is in my heart and anyway I do not think I have the right' (p. 98).

In your opinion did Marina's father have the right to say what was in his heart?

Would Marina have wanted to know?

Does someone who hurts someone else have any rights?

What right have we to hurt anyone?

Why might we want to hurt someone?

## 4 Masks

'But there was no reading those skilful masks' (p. 53).

What does a mask do, and why do people use them?

What makes a mask skilful?

What would happen if you let your mask drop?

If you wear a mask for too long, what happens?

**Can you wear a mask forever?**

What would it take to remove your mask?

Do you mask your true feelings in different ways with different people?

## 5 Bars

'I drew lots of stripes, which weren't stripes at all, but were bars, prison bars' (p. 80).

What sorts of situations can you think of that would feel like being behind bars?

Are bars the same as masks?  
How are they the same?  
How are they different?

**Would a mask hide the bars?**

Would the bars stop you removing the mask?

If you do not hide behind a mask or a smile, and you are not behind bars, how do you hide your true feelings when you feel the need?

**Would there be anyone who did not need to hide feelings? Explain.**

## 6 Loneliness

Marina is thinking about the English exercise in which they had to write down their feelings. 'I was so surprised – most of them were about loneliness' (p. 53).

Were these girls lonely because they were in boarding school?

How would you cope with boarding school?

**Do you think a lot of people are lonely?**

Is lack of friendship the only thing that can make you lonely?

Can you be lonely when you are surrounded by lots of people?

# ANYTHING GOES

How can you capture the loneliness of Marina other than in writing? Brainstorm ideas with the whole class. You might have a really expressive way in which you would like to present an idea or a scene from the story, or you could try one of the ideas below.



**careers** List the girls in the dormitory and write beside each girl's name the career you think she might choose and give your reasons.



**what if...?** Find a partner and write a series of 'what if' questions about three or four of the characters, e.g., What if Marina's father had disfigured her mother? Answer your partner's questions.



**coping with feelings** Draw a series of six circles, one inside the other. Write Marina's name in the centre. Inside each of the spaces made by the circles write some of Marina's feelings. Write in the same space, someone or something that might help Marina overcome that feeling.



**sounds** Find songs or sounds that represent feelings of the girls at different times – Lisa sobbing – Anne when she found her statue broken – Marina when she accidentally broke the statue: 'Inside I was dead, I wanted to die' – Cathy 'so intense' – Sophie, angry and yelling at Marina.



**portraits** You will need:

- three pieces of plain white art paper
- a packet of textas, coloured pencils or paints, or even black lead pencils (if you are good at sketching)
- some cardboard (coloured, white or black, whichever suits your artwork best)
- scissors and glue.

In lines or shapes or even in a recognisable form, use the art materials to represent three of the girls in the dormitory. When you have finished your 'portraits' hang them on the classroom wall.

**readings** Get together with a couple of friends and discuss, then decide on three or four 'extracts' that show different sides of Marina's character. Prepare them as readings and present them to the class. Explain why you chose each reading and what it tells you about Marina. Find some suitable music to play in the background.

