**Developing a Claim**

(otherwise known as a thesis statement)

A. Identify 2-3 scenes or passages from the novel that are particularly compelling, interesting, or memorable to you. Give them a title ("scene where x happens") and list them below (including the page number). Alternately, if you prefer to begin with an idea or theme (i.e., "silence in *The Chosen*") instead of a passage, you may do this. In this case, list three passages relevant to your idea below and then skip to step C.

*Example:*

*The scene where Reb Saunders speaks to Danny through Reuven, pp. 279-288.*

1.

2.

3.

B. Next to each one, in a new color of ink, identify what each one is essentially "about," in your eyes. These are the themes you might be interested in exploring. List them below.

*Example: Danny's relationship to his father.*

1.

2.

3.

C. Among the three ideas or themes you have listed above, choose the most compelling or complex one. Write it below. Next, make a list of thoughts or ideas that might be true, but would need to be argued/demonstrated regarding this theme in the novel. This will become a list of possible claims, which you will eventually refine and develop into a thesis statement. Also list what is *not* true about the theme. A good claim will insist both on what is true and what is *not* true about a particular theme or aspect of the novel. Sometimes it is useful to format a claim, at least in the first stages, as follows: X seems to be true; however, if we take a closer look, Y is in fact true, not X.

*Example: One could claim that Danny learns compassion through his father's unorthodox yet effective techniques. However, it can also be argued that Danny learns compassion only by overcoming Reb Saunders's extreme techniques, which could easily have alienated him and made him cold. I will argue that. . .*

D. Lastly, find other scenes or passages from the novel that are relevant to the theme or claim you are developing. Include both passages that support your claim and passages that could potentially be used against your claim, even if you interpret them differently.

*Example:*

*1. The first scene in which Reuven meets Reb Saunders, when we see Reb Saunders test Danny by making intentional mistakes in the sermon (pp. xx).*

*2. Reb Saunder’s strictures regarding who Danny interacts with socially (pp. xx).*

*3. Reb Saunders shedding tears at the dinner table (pp. xx).*