

## THE INNER CIRCLE by Patricia Loughrey

*THE INNER CIRCLE is the story of MARK, who, not too long ago, tried drugs for the first and only time in his life. Since then, he's found a close group of loving friends and was almost able to forget the isolated incident. Unfortunately, like too many of our youth, MARK was catastrophically reminded of his mistake when he tested positive for HIV. He and his friends are forced to test the strength of their friendship and deal with the new realities of sexuality, taking drugs, and the consequences of remaining ignorant -- death.*

## MARK

No, you don't know. AIDS is not something I can will away like a cold or an attitude. I want to live damn-it, probably more than you because I'm beginning to understand what living is. Living is telling you I like you, I care about you. Living is telling Danny he's the best man I know and I'm proud to be his friend. Living is dressing for P.E. and cutting math and seeing my mom getting out of the car with a bag of groceries and just sitting there watching because she's such a great mom, which I never knew, but I can't even do that right now. I can't even just sit and look at my mom because I can't sit. All I can do is open my eyes, so I do that. And I count. I count the corners of the room and the teeth in my mouth with the tip of my tongue and I count the inkspots on the chair. I don't count sheep because there aren't any. I count the real things because they're here and that means I'm here too.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INNER CIRCLE (Mark's Monologue)

- What does MARK begin to understand about the importance of the people close to him?
- Why is MARK angry with his friend who is trying to help him?
- How does MARK's fear make him start to take special note of the people and things that make his life worth living?
- What physical gestures and responses would show MARK's anger while also letting us see his fear?