

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period \_\_\_\_\_

The movie *Awakenings* features Dr. Malcolm Sayer who is hired to work at a chronic hospital in the Bronx. He works with a group of catatonic patients who are suffering from the effects of the disease, encephalitis lethargica (“sleeping sickness”). Through research and working with the patients, Dr. Sayer tries to help find a way to “awaken” the patients. He gives them an experimental drug, L-Dopa (used for Parkinsons disease) with the hope of giving them a chance to live again, if it is successful. The movie is based on real life events and people who were afflicted with the 1917-28 epidemic of encephalitis lethargica.

**Directions:** Respond to the following questions about the movie *Awakenings*. Be specific and complete in your responses.

1. How would you characterize Dr. Sayer? Explain your response.
2. What is Dr. Sayer trying to do for the patients in the hospital?
3. Read the poem below and answer the question that follows. This is the poem that Leonard was referencing when using the Ouija board with Dr. Sayer.

### **The Panther by Rainer Maria Rilke**

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold  
anything else. It seems to him there are  
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,  
the movement of his powerful soft strides  
is like a ritual dance around a center  
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils  
lifts, quietly--. An image enters in,  
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,  
plunges into the heart and is gone.

**How does this poem relate to Leonard and the other patients' situations?**

