



Speak

Laurie Halse Anderson

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The first ten lies they tell you in high school.

"Speak up for yourself--we want to know what you have to say."

From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her. Her healing process has just begun when she has another violent encounter with him. But this time Melinda fights back, refuses to be silent, and thereby achieves a measure of vindication.

In Laurie Halse Anderson's powerful novel, an utterly believable heroine with a bitterly ironic voice delivers a blow to the hypocritical world of high school. She speaks for many a disenfranchised teenager while demonstrating the importance of speaking up for oneself.

Speak was a 1999 National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature.

Speak Details

Date : Published May 10th 2011 by Square Fish (first published October 22nd 1999)

ISBN : 9780312674397

Author : Laurie Halse Anderson

Format : Paperback 198 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Contemporary, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Speak for online ebook

Zoë says

2017 Reread: I read this for my young adult literature class along with scholastic articles about the book, which added a great new layer to my interpretation of the novel.

Original Review: I've owned this book for years and never got around to reading it until yesterday. I'm happy I did because this was one of the best books that I have read lately. Speak was very well paced and I never found the story to be dragging or boring. I loved the character development and Melinda's voice throughout the story. (Original rating: 5/5 stars)

Lola says

Well, I can't help but feel a little disappointed. I mean, the summary doesn't reveal much (kind of like Melinda herself) and so, obviously, I made my own assumptions of the plot. Turns out, **there's no killing involved.** It's not a mystery or a thriller; it's a psychological story. If I had known before, I think I might have enjoyed this a tiny bit more.

So, Melinda. She's confused, scared—terrified—and convinced that she's alone in this wide, animalistic world. Things are somewhat bearable, but that is prior to her losing her only friend at school and seeing IT. **We witness her trying her best to shut down everything around her and take nest in her own mind.** It's not pretty to see and it does make for tragic moments, but they're all part of the process she creates to survive high school.

I really think that the outline of the book is fairly original. It feels like it's written in journal entries, which gives such an **authentic atmosphere** to the story. It makes us believe in Melinda and hope that everything turns out for the best for her. **The writing makes the story flow in a perfect rhythm for this type of story... lent, that's for sure, but deep and reflective.**

A couple of things that could have been better: the secondary characters, Melinda's parents and the tragedy around IT itself. Basically, this is a Melinda's world: we're in her head... and since she's not the most popular girl in school, there aren't many interactions between her and other kids. This equals scarcely any secondary characters. There's David, the headstrong and could-not-be-more-different-than-Melinda David. But what about him? We only get to know him a little through short "journal entries" of Melinda's.

Melinda's parents are puzzling... At least, to me. For most of the book, they're extremely mad and annoyed at her, especially the mother. She never tries to actually ask Melinda what's wrong. No wonder Melinda can't muster the force to do so. But then, at end of the story, we see the dad showing such benevolence and I'm there squinting my eyes, like why is this the first time we see this facet of his personality? Surely because Melinda prefers limiting her interactions with her parents.

And the last thing that let me down is the details around IT. Or, shall I say, the lack of them. **We don't know his past, why he does what he does or, even, what will happen to him.** Alright, so the last part is easy to imagine, BUT STILL. The ending is very open, so that's something to remember. I find it sad that we don't get any kind of info on IT... I wish we knew what his life at home looks like, just so we can understand his motives for doing what he does better.

This book didn't take me by surprise, as I have read a panoply of novels with similar (if not exact same) themes. But I can guess that, when it was first published, there were reasons to fuss about it. I am still recommending it, seeing that it's so profound and realistic and I grew quite attached to Melinda. Hopefully, you will as well.

April (Aprilius Maximus) says

Hmmmm I can definitely see how important this book is and would have been at the time of its publication, but the thing is, I was bored until the last 30 pages. I felt really disconnected to the story and I don't know why. I am so glad that books like this exist in the YA genre though, and that this one was around a long time ago because these things happen and really do need to be discussed. Such an important message.

Maureen says

3.5/5

This is such an important book for the content and message it presents. The writing was fantastic and Melinda was such an interesting character to read. I didn't totally LOVE everything about it, but overall it was a fantastic book.

Emily May says

I didn't think I'd be so gripped by this book but the author captures the pains and troubles of everyday high school life with such honesty and emotion that I couldn't help recognise half the characters from my own high school days. There's Rachel, the ex best friend who's had a personality transplant over the summer... Heather, the temporary friend who's only waiting to be snapped up by a cooler clique... and, of course, the protagonist who doesn't quite fit in anywhere.

The beauty of this novel is that it could have survived alone without the much more sinister story behind it. But, that said, it also served as a very sad and moving voice for rape victims, particularly the vast amounts who feel at fault or scared or embarrassed by what happened. It was a quick, easy teen read but it's also the kind that plays on your mind repeatedly after finishing it.

Elyse says

Library - Overdrive-ebook!

I'm very late to this reading this really wonderful young adult book.....but oh,I'm sooooo glad I read it!

Melinda Sordino, sarcastically witty, bright, and courageous, is very memorable character. A freshman in High School, most of the time Melinda's goal in life is to go home and take a nap.

We emphasized with her.....as she is misunderstood- and shunned by friends. Melinda doesn't understand her own situation clearly enough to speak out for herself.

She's an average normal girl dealing with many of the same issues that many teenagers deal with - self esteem - changing schools from middle school to High School - changing friends - and family dynamics- except ...back in 8th grade just before beginning High School — Melinda was raped at a party one night. This is her story!

There is so much honestyso well written....(who doesn't read this book in just one sitting?)....characters that are powerfully drawn....and a gripping plot....

This story touches every part of us. Our mind and hearts are actively expanding.

It's an empowering book for teens, parents, educators, and the rest of us.

I'm only sorry I waited so long to read it.

Madeline says

"THE FIRST TEN LIES THEY TELL YOU IN HIGH SCHOOL

1. We are here to help you.
2. You will have enough time to get to your class before the bell rings.
3. The dress code will be enforced.
4. No smoking is allowed on school grounds.
5. Our football team will win the championship this year.
6. We expect more of you here.
7. Guidance counselors are always available to listen.
8. Your schedule was created with your needs in mind.
9. Your locker combination is private.
10. These will be the years you will look back on fondly."

I'm trying to think of ways to go about describing this book, and I'm not really sure how to start. It's dark, depressing, terrifying, and amazing. Everyone should read it. You might hate it (and I'll get to you), but you must read it.

The story starts with Melinda, the narrator, starting 9th grade. Everyone, even her old friends, won't talk to her. It's revealed that during the summer Melinda called the cops on a party and it got busted - a few people got arrested, and now everyone hates her. Something happened to Melinda at that party, something she hasn't told anyone about. She retreats into herself, withdrawing from school, her family, and any possibility of friendship. It isn't until the middle of the story that we learn what really happened at the party, but Anderson gives us a big fat hint in this scene where Melinda and her lab partner dissect a frog in biology class: "Our frog lies on her back. Waiting for a prince to come and princessify her with a smooch? I stand over her with my knife. Ms. Keen's voice fades to a mosquito whine. My throat closes off. It's hard to breathe. I put out my hand to steady myself against the table. David pins her froggy hands to the dissection tray. He spreads her froggy legs and pins her froggy feet. I have to slice open her belly. She doesn't say a word. She is already dead. A scream starts in my gut - I can feel the cut, smell the dirt, leaves in my hair."

Holy god. Remember what I said about the terrifying stuff?

The main reason I loved this book is because I was very, very similar to Melinda in high school. Her attitude about school, her cynicism towards the whole "high school is the best time of your life" crap, her opinions about classes and teachers and the uselessness of guidance counselors...that was me. I kind of wished I could

transport myself into the story, so Melinda and I could sneer at pep rallies together.

And then I felt bad, because nothing bad happened to me in high school. Nothing like the stuff Melinda went through. She had a *reason* for being so withdrawn and unhappy and angry about everything. I didn't. It's sort of an unpleasant realization - *wow, I was a total snot for absolutely no reason*. I was okay with this eventually, but some people might not be. I can imagine someone criticizing this story for being too emo, or saying that Melinda was too much of a downer.

(Okay, I didn't want to give away spoilers, but I can't talk about my next point without revealing some stuff. So, just to be clear...

HERE BE SPOILERS, YOU'VE BEEN WARNED:)

Then again, they could be like a certain reviewer YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE who wrote, and I quote, "I'm so sick of this [sic:] stories about girls who got raped and spend the entire book pitying themselves."

takes breath, counts to ten.

Apparently Laurie Halse Anderson gets this a lot. My edition of the book has an interview with her, and she said, "I have gotten one question repeatedly from young men. These are guys who liked the book, but they are honestly confused. They ask me why Melinda was so upset about being raped."

I'm...they...why...what the *fuck*. I think I need to go sit in a corner and do some yoga breaths, be back later.

Read for: Social Justice in Young Adult Literature

Laurie says

Just okay. I was particularly disappointed with the ending and felt that there was an element of glorification in this novel that I didn't appreciate. Let me explain:

Although I loved the fact that Melinda finally finds her voice and a way to express herself, I felt as if the story was wrapped up a little too quickly and too neatly. Let's be honest, that ending was more than a little unrealistic. You can't simply put a pretty bow on the end of this novel, otherwise the entire tale becomes trite. Having been through this myself and sadly listened to countless stories similar (and worse) than mine, I can say that 9 times out of 10 you don't get closure, let alone retribution. And having someone swoop in to save you is pretty much unheard of, otherwise we wouldn't have such a thing as "rape culture" which tragically pervades our country. I think this particular ending potentially puts across the wrong message to girls who might find themselves in a similar situation or who are in this situation.

Nevertheless, it's an important story to be told and there were scenes and emotions that were absolutely right on and very relatable.

Maddie says

ALL AGES - Can read this Gem!

According to me a Prologue or the 1st Chapter of a book is THE reflection →

Be Tougher Than Your Life Is - 2016 Motivation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyDlB...>

Herewith my review!

Type of Characters and my choices according to pictures! :

Eminem - Not Afraid

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5-yK...>

Relationship development

Chapter Development

This book made me cry, and laugh and cry!!

I had WTF moments, laughing moments then sobbing like a baby moments.

I did not know how to do this review – and it took me about 2 weeks to straighten my thoughts regarding this little gem: →

Melinda Sordino – A good girl who's life changed in one night

She went to a party – got drunk – got raped – and when she called the police all her friends turned against her, because they thought she set them up because of underage drinking! She was bullied a lot after this incidents!

BECAUSE MELINDA DID NOT SPEAK!

Nouela - The Sound of Silence (Amazing cover of Simon & Garfunkel's song)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4oIn...>

WHEN IT HURTS - 2016 MOTIVATION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=259jB...>

This book take you through her sadness and depression step by step and her healing process. She did not tell her parents what was going on – because if you read this gem her parents never really cared about her – if they did speak to her it was BLAH-BLAH-BLAH I cannot understand parents like that – my kids and me have such a good friendship we share about anything and everything!

At school all her friends abandoned her – then she met this new girl – well the friend was a bit of a pain as she only cared for herself – but she was a friend in the end who helped Melinda, even if it was only a person to take her to parties and to climb out of her shell!

I do not really want to give more info I think this is just such a good book to read!

But I want to tell teenagers the following: →

- 1. DO not leave your drinks unattended at parties**
- 2. Stay with your friends do not leave the group even to go to the toilet alone, if you do always tell your friends where you are going**
- 3. Do not leave parties with people you do not know**
- 4. Trust a person or a friends SPEAK to somebody do not be afraid if something like this happened to you IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT!**
- 5. Do not hurt yourself seek people to assist you with your depression and coping skills.**
- 6. Look for signs of depression in your friends and family members – they will not know how to cope with this**

A video clip of a young girl with depression, just see in the end SHE is a HERO YOU CAN BE ONE 2 DO NOT EVER GIVE UP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHJRB...>

- 7. Do not think you are crazy if you are depressed it is a chemical imbalance, sometimes caused by incidents out of your control like – like this book a good girl Melinda Speak**
- 8. BE Strong BE YOURSELF – be brave, and look after yourself – THERE IS JUST ONE YOU BELIEVE IT OR NOT and even if you do not think so – PEOPLE DO LOVE YOU!!!!!!**

A few paragraphs / quotes → I loved

Just quoting and some funny paragraphs:

”Better the devil you know than the Trojan you don’t”

Spanish teacher: “No English rule” – I don’t know why she hasn’t figured it out yet. If she taught us all the swearwords the first day, we would have done whatever she wanted us to do the rest of the year”

“SOUL”, he writes on the board. The clay streaks the word like dried blood. “This is where you can find your soul, if you dare. Where you can touch that part of you that you’ve never dare look at before. Do not come here and ask me to show you how to draw a face. Ask me to help you find the wind”

PROVE THEM WRONG - Motivational Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPQ1b...>

Epilogue! →

AMAZEBALLS – That's it!! Read the book you will not be sorry

Recommend to the following type of readers: →

Over 10 upwards etc.

Why my rating?→

OMG this book was amazing do not know how to describe it otherwise!

Will I read it again?→

Maybe not this year but I will definitely again in the future

My feelings while reading this and to the author: →

Thomas says

"Speak" is about Melinda Sordino, an angst-filled freshman who is hated by all of her "best friends" because she called the cops during the end of the summer senior party. Everyone got busted. Her parents aren't much help either, always fighting about what's best for Melinda and communicating through post-it notes on the refrigerator wall. These are only a few of the things that have Melinda depressed. When what really happened at the senior party is revealed, it will be easy, although painful, to understand Melinda's unbreakable silence.

I just finished my second read through of the book, and I still loved it. I actually had to read this for school, which surprised me because of the subject matter. Anyway, "Speak" is a novel I think all teenagers should read. Melinda's voice, although cynical and outspoken, was dead-on and as a teenager I felt like I totally connected with her through the entire book. I also loved the "tree" symbolism in Melinda's art class, subtle enough to not be cliché but powerful enough to make me feel growth. Some YA authors don't really understand how cliques and stuff work nowadays, but Anderson hit the nail on the head, which made me like the book even more. I stayed up to midnight last night finishing this novel, and I'm sure you will to once you get a hold of this book.

Cara says

Once I finished reading the last word I **knew** I was going to reread it. Yes that profound.

Honest. Authentic. Real. Use all those words and their synonyms and you have this book. I literally wanted

to hop into the sea of words and tell Melinda Sordino " *I'll be your friend! Don't despair !*" Alas I couldn't do that though. I had to see her struggle. It's painful but since I watched the movie (which was done well by the way) first before reading the book I knew where she was coming from. Melinda's voice was so...normal. She wasn't there to make you like her or hate her. She just who she really was. I liked her immensely though and in real life think would have been friends with her. Her whole take on high school was hilarious and kind of scarily accurate. I totally love the character of David Petrakis. He would have been my hero in ninth grade. No joke.

The cover fits the story like a glove. Not all book jackets can boast that, so let's give the jacket cover artist a round of applause!!! Ok I need stop raving about the cover so much but I couldn't help it. The visual person inside of me had to let it out.

Melinda is never really described in detail of how she look likes, so you get the sense the author wanted to make her as relatable as possible, and that she is. We all might not have had to go through the same demons she has, but I know we all have felt alone and without help and that is what makes her the perfect narrator. The ending was done so utterly well I'm not sure I can say anything about it. I'd probably give it away if I try. Let's just say getting back at people is very rewarding.

It is getting added to my all time favorites. If you like this book read *You Don't Know Me*. Not quite the same style but definitely the same feel.

Jessica Abarquez says

Reference information:

Title: Speak

Author: Laurie Halse Anderson

Publisher: Penguin Group Year: 1999

of pages: 198 Genre: intense read

Reading level: 9th grade Interest level: late high school

Potential hot lava: Thoughts of suicide and rape.

General response/reaction:

This book was so moving. Yes, it was difficult to read and very intense, but it was extremely good! I sort of knew how it was going to end because I cheated and looked it up, but it was still so good to read this book. I was glad that Anderson did not go into detail about the rape because that would have been too intense for me. I liked the way she kept the narration in Melinda's head. The dialogue in her head remained realistic because no girl would want to replay the details over and over again. This novel was amazing because Melinda grew through her tragedy. I think that this book can be very therapeutic for many students.

Subjects, Themes, and Big Ideas:

- Trust
- Friendship
- Pain
- Suffering
- Growth
- Strength

Characters:

- Melinda – main character, narrator, was raped when she was 13, goes through her first year of high school as an outcast because she cannot fully grow past the tragedy in her life, expresses herself through art
- Heather – a girl who befriended Melinda at the beginning and then blew her off at the end
- Ivy – an old friend from middle school, in art class with Melinda, at first was mad at Melinda but then warmed up to her by the end
- Rachel – Melinda’s ex-best friend, hangs out with the exchange students at school, starts dating Andy Evans (the boy who raped Melinda)
- Andy Evans – the boy who raped Melinda, has a history of doing the same thing to every girl he meets.

Plot summary:

Melinda is starting high school with all the problems imaginable. She is an outcast because she is “weird,” her friends from middle school don’t want to associate with her because she called the police that broke up a party, and the teachers are “out to get her.” At first, she befriends a girl who is new to the school, Heather. For a while, things seem to work out between the two. Unfortunately, Melinda keeps to herself all the time and barely speaks. She has a secret inside of her that torments all the words. Most of the school thinks she is weird and her parents and teachers think something is wrong with her. They think she is just being a delinquent, but there is more to the story than what Melinda lets on.

Melinda goes through the motions of school and barely passes. She makes some friends, but she is so scarred from the summer that she is still uncomfortable getting too close to anyone. Melinda does not trust anyone, nor can she trust herself. The only thing in school Melinda enjoys is her art class. She works hard all year by creating and letting her emotions flow through her art (although she does not know it at the time).

As the year goes on, she encounters the boy who raped her. He knows that he still has the power over her and continues to use it to scare her into silence. However, when Andy starts dating Rachel, Melinda cannot stand back and let Andy do the same thing to her former best friend. It takes a while for Melinda to get the courage to tell Rachel, but she finally does. Of course Rachel does not believe Melinda and she thinks that Melinda is just jealous, but Melinda at least tried. When Rachel breaks up with Andy (because he was trying to do the same thing to her as he did to Melinda), Andy becomes furious and goes after Melinda. She fights him and makes enough commotion for her friends to come back to find out what was going on and Andy gets exposed for who he really is.

Strengths (including reviews and awards):

- The book is funny.
- It is written in the mind of a teenager so it’s easy for students to relate to.
- It has won many awards (School Library Journal Book of the Year just to name one)
- It has been turned into a Lifetime movie (so students could have a visual instead of just Melinda’s thoughts).

Drawbacks or other cautions:

- There is a short section where Melinda thinks about and attempts suicide.
- It talks about at 13 year old getting raped.
- There are some parts that do not seem realistic (David suing Mr. Neck)

Teaching ideas:

Pre-reading

- Journal: What was your first year of high school like?
 - o Hopefully I will be teaching this book to a higher grade than freshmen, so this question would be appropriate. I would hope that I get journals that reflect on how much they have changed since that first year.
- Discussion: Cliques in high school
 - o What kinds of cliques exist in our school?
 - o Do they get special privileges?

- o How can you differentiate between the cliques?
- o Who decides who joins which clique?
- o This could also be a journal topic

During reading

- More journaling or discussions about cliques
- o How do certain cliques treat others in school?
? How does that relate to the novel?
- o Have you witnessed treatment like this?
- Writing Activity (these could be quick daily journal activities)
- o Inner-monologue
? Write a number of inner-monologues like Melinda does.
- Artwork
- o Try to describe each section of the book in drawings
- o Explain the story to someone without using words

Post-reading

- Possibly watch clips of the movie
- o I haven't seen it so I would definitely have to preview it before I showed it to the class.
- More artwork
- Compile the daily inner-monologues into a "book" like hers
- Discussion
- o How has this book educated you?
? About cliques, rape, outcasts, reaching out to others
- o What can we do to change the dynamic of the social scene in high school? Is there anything at all?

V. PARENTAL GUIDANCE ALERT: A Court of Wings and Ruin is NEW ADULT/EROTICA but Goodreads editors won't tell you says

The following review will touch upon serious topics and under the spoiler section I might hide TMI (too much information) tags. If you don't want to know about my own personal journey don't read because it might be uncomfortable and triggering. I'll use strong language.

I also want to point out that I read this book long ago and that I won't re-read for this review. I just want to discuss the following question(s) which I found in the review of one of my favorite Goodreads reviewers ever: my dear Meredith. BTW I recommend following her reviews.

Meredith wrote this:

Should Laurie Halse Anderson's book "Speak" be placed in the adult section because it deals with rape? No. It is a teen book that touches upon a serious topic that teens are very much aware of. How many people were assigned "The Handmaid's Tale" in high school which basically is all about women being used for their bodies to reproduce since a majority of the population can not. Should that be added to the adult section only? No.

I agree with Meredith 100%. I'll go even beyond that. I think this book along with any other book that deals

with rape culture should be mandatory read in every high school of this messed-up planet. Even if parents might feel uncomfortable with their kids reading this book, the sad reality is that rape is a crime that has no respect for the victims' age. Kids might be better prepared to deal with this crime if they get the right information.

If you have been following my reviews you'll notice that lately I've been adding trigger warnings and explicit content warnings for YA books. That's because lately you can find almost the same amount of nudity, violence, sexuality, erotic content, and edgyness in YA books as you would find in New adult reads, even erotica books. I've been mentioning *A Court of Mist and Fury* a lot because it's erotica book mislabeled as Young adult by the greedy publishing company and their kirkus reviews minions. *Paper Princess* by erotica authors Elle Kennedy and Jen Frederick along with Sarah J Maas *Empire of Storms* have been mentioned as well.

Yet I won't add those kind of warnings for this review.

I wouldn't try to get 13- 19 YO teens away of this book

I disapprove of anyone who wants to keep teens away from this book

You'll wonder Why?

Because

1) Rape is a crime. Some people might consider that this book contains sexual content because rape, at times, involves a form of fornication/copulation. But to make it clear, sex is one thing: a natural act that isn't a sin, that isn't dirty, that it's a healthy expression of affection, a natural instinct. Rape is everything but.

2) Anyone who reads the book synopsis can make an informed decision whether to buy/read/borrow this book or not. The blurb is a trigger warning in itself. Unlike *Mist and Fury* and *Paper Princess* the author and her publishing company didn't try to pretend that this book is something different that what it is: Edgy, dark and uncomfortable.

Yes. This book isn't a fluffy happy reading, yet I remember enjoying Melinda Sordino's journey back when I was 16 YO. The author has a way with words, it was like Melinda was directly speaking to me, she was so relatable. This book didn't make me feel uncomfortable back when I read it, it was dark and gritty, but it was also a quick read and the quotes were to die for. I highlighted this book so much it became almost unreadable and I'm only sorry that I'm completely incapable to read this book now after TMI (view spoiler) I hate that word, but I hate it more when that thing is called "abuse" "violation" or any other term. Rape is an ugly world, sounds terrible it disgusts you as IT SHOULD. "Abuse", on the other hand, seems to elicit a less dramatic response.

But guess what word is closer to what living that terrible experience is? The word rape conveys it better, at the very least it'll make people squirm uncomfortably. TMI ALERT (view spoiler) That's what this book is about, and for such a dark topic, I think the author did a wonderful job using a beautiful prose, almost poetic, to talk about how SCARY rape is. She never went graphic with that. The movie is in my humble opinion, way much more explicit and visual, but the book wasn't explicit. Laurie Halse Anderson really wrote about the subject with enough delicacy to not scare the reader away, but still she managed to do it on a realistic

way. TMI (view spoiler)

I know the topic of this book might scare some people away, but I highly recommend it, specially for high school readers. As long as this book is used to elicit discussions on rape culture and parents talk to their kids honestly this book should be mandatory reading. I repeat, there's much more than just drama in this book, it's actually a quick read and enjoyable despite the dark topic. Unlike *A Court of Mist and Fury* the purpose of this book isn't to portray erotic scenes or sexual content because again, sexuality and rape are opposite concepts. This book conveys a powerful message that can help teenagers who are living in violent places. I'll repeat, maybe parents and children can read this together so that the parents can convey their values and their own views on consent.

Consider letting Melinda Sordino story enter your life. I did, and it was like a light at the end of a dark tunnel, it might sound cheesy, but that's the truth.

Emma Giordano says

4.5 stars! I think this is a really powerful novel that should be read by so many, especially teens. *Speak* is a fascinating tale of learning to use your voice when you previously believed it did not matter. The message is one I think all can benefit from and I'm so glad I finally read it.

Trigger warning: rape

Laurie Halse Anderson is a fabulous writer. She has a very distinctive writing style; It's an unfiltered stream of consciousness that feels so real. I previously read *Wintergirls* and found them to be written very similarly. Melinda's narration is authentic and raw – she's not here to make you love her or hate her, she's here to tell her story as is. Her humor is dry and loveable which creates an interesting dynamic with the rest of her character.

I will say, there really isn't a plot, which is usually a letdown for me. The entire book is essentially Melissa navigating her freshman year with a heavy weight on her shoulders and few people in her company. There is definitely a large amount of character development which was executed well and I understand that is the intention of the story, so I'm not going to complain that it didn't feed into my reading preferences. The novel didn't need a large plot because the story is of personal growth and strength, not high school drama or romance.

I will say, the ending felt a little abrupt. I would have loved even just an epilogue to have a more concrete ending (and justice), though many people in Melinda's situation do not get closure, so maybe that was the author's intent.

What's interesting is that this book was always described to me as a revolutionary story about sexual assault, but I only found out in the middle of reading that this aspect of the story is not commonly known before reading? Apparently, the point of the story is to find out WHY Melinda cannot speak, though I went into this story already knowing the reason. I definitely don't think my knowledge of the events of this story affected my reading experience at all. If anything, I think I got more out of the story because I was able to read into details as they were being revealed instead of having to decode them later. I really wish the content of this story was more widespread (though I do seem to be a little late in reading this one) because I think it's so

important people know the sensitive topics they are reading about. Sexual assault is not a plot twist (and I am **not** suggesting *Speak* feeds into this because I think the topic was handled with accuracy and respect in this case, I'm making a general statement) and I would love for us to not have to silence discussion on its inclusion in the book in fear of ~*s p o i l e r s*~. I think people should know the content of this book before reading, if only to help protect those who may be deeply affected by the events of this novel, where reading unprepared could cause a lot of harm.

I really loved this book and would definitely recommend it!

Susanne Strong says

4 Stars.

Speaking. Sometimes it's absolutely impossible, isn't it? Sometimes you are so filled with anxiety and fear, you can't even think of the words, let alone spit them out. And sometimes, life itself is crippling. You will undergo something that overtakes you, that consumes every waking thought, that fills you with fear and changes every aspect of your life and still you cannot talk about it. To anyone, whether you have someone to confide in or not.

Melinda is that girl. She is a misfit. A pariah. A freshman, who everyone in her class hates. No one talks to her, except to make fun of her. She wasn't always this way though. Not until she called the cops at the end of a summer party and got caught doing so by her former best friend who now hates her for it. And that was what did it. That party changed everything for Melinda. That one night. And now, she doesn't talk to anyone. Not even her parents. Her grades are sinking and her parents are furious over it and she can't explain why. And except for caring about her grades, her parents aren't all that concerned about their daughter. No wonder she decided to keep quiet.

At some point, Melinda finds herself in a situation wherein she realizes that must find her voice. She then discovers a resilience that she never knew she had and then she SPEAKS.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson is full of emotion. It is captivating yet devastating. I was overwhelmed by the honesty that was portrayed by Melinda thought out. Laurie Halse Anderson did an incredible job of capturing Melinda's feelings and describing the awkwardness of High School, being an outcast and feeling completely alone during the most desperate of times. This is a powerful YA novel about learning to accept the things you cannot change and finding the strength and power within to fight for yourself, no matter how difficult it may seem.

Published on Goodreads and Amazon on 4/3/17.
