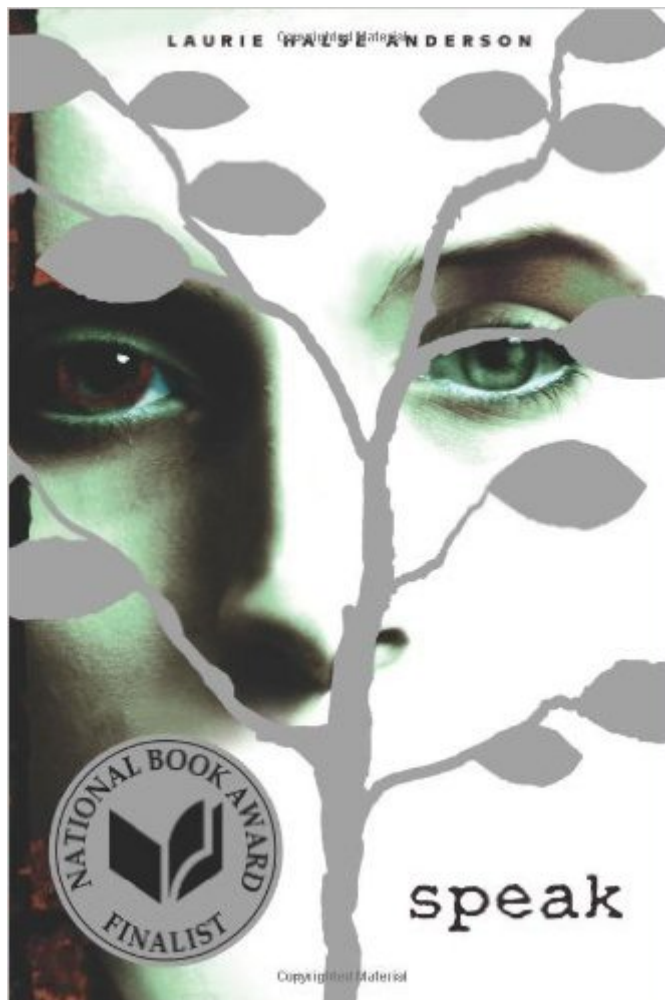


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# Speak



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2,039 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #575 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Depression & Mental Illness #1 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Sexual Abuse #2 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Since the beginning of the school year, high school freshman Melinda has found that it's been

getting harder and harder for her to speak out loud: "My throat is always sore, my lips raw.... Every time I try to talk to my parents or a teacher, I sputter or freeze.... It's like I have some kind of spastic laryngitis." What could have caused Melinda to suddenly fall mute? Could it be due to the fact that no one at school is speaking to her because she called the cops and got everyone busted at the seniors' big end-of-summer party? Or maybe it's because her parents' only form of communication is Post-It notes written on their way out the door to their nine-to-whenever jobs. While Melinda is bothered by these things, deep down she knows the real reason why she's been struck mute...

Laurie Halse Anderson's first novel is a stunning and sympathetic tribute to the teenage outcast. The triumphant ending, in which Melinda finds her voice, is cause for cheering (while many readers might also shed a tear or two). After reading *Speak*, it will be hard for any teen to look at the class scapegoat again without a measure of compassion and understanding for that person--who may be screaming beneath the silence. (Ages 13 and older) --Jennifer Hubert --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In a stunning first novel, Anderson uses keen observations and vivid imagery to pull readers into the head of an isolated teenager. Divided into the four marking periods of an academic year, the novel, narrated by Melinda Sordino, begins on her first day as a high school freshman. No one will sit with Melinda on the bus. At school, students call her names and harass her; her best friends from junior high scatter to different cliques and abandon her. Yet Anderson infuses the narrative with a wit that sustains the heroine through her pain and holds readers' empathy. A girl at a school pep rally offers an explanation of the heroine's pariah status when she confronts Melinda about calling the police at a summer party, resulting in several arrests. But readers do not learn why Melinda made the call until much later: a popular senior raped her that night and, because of her trauma, she barely speaks at all. Only through her work in art class, and with the support of a compassionate teacher there, does she begin to reach out to others and eventually find her voice. Through the first-person narration, the author makes Melinda's pain palpable: "I stand in the center aisle of the auditorium, a wounded zebra in a National Geographic special." Though the symbolism is sometimes heavy-handed, it is effective. The ending, in which her attacker comes after her once more, is the only part of the plot that feels forced. But the book's overall gritty realism and Melinda's hard-won metamorphosis will leave readers touched and inspired. Ages 12-up. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I could not put this book down. This book is an amazing reflection of the effects of trauma and

depression on youth. While this story is mainly taking place inside Melinda's mind it is heart wrenchingly beautiful and tragic as she explores her world in a new way with a new perspective. Her wit and unique personality really shine as she observes her world. This is an emotionally charged story that explores how a girl reclaims her identity and sense of self worth after enduring a traumatic event that essentially breaks her but luckily we join her on her journey of healing and growth.

Melinda as the protagonist is perfect and amazing. I did not want the book to end, I want sequels just to read more of her thoughts and to learn more about how she views the world. She is the most unique and clever character I've ever read and you feel her pain, you feel her stress, you feel her happiness, you feel a connection to her even when you aren't reading, she stays with you because she is inspiring and clever. This book captures emotional highs and lows beautifully and you feel for Melinda not just because of her beautiful characterization but also because the author captures the emotionally complex aspects that leave you feeling as if you were there.

My freshman son was reading this in school. At his teacher's suggestion, I bought a copy so that I could know what he was reading and be able to talk to him about some of the adult themes. Great book! Even though it is a mature book for 14-year-olds it is also an appropriate book. The themes are presented realistically and thoughtfully. It is obvious that the writer has a pulse on her audience. My child and I both thought that this was a great read.

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 recognize 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. I hope my review has been helpful to you. It encourages me to continue writing and updating my reviews. Please leave a comment if you have any questions, I will be more than happy to answer if I can be of help.

**TRIGGER WARNING:** This book was amazing. This girl finds her voice again, literally, after

something traumatic happened to her. (being raped). She stops speaking for a while. The majority of the book takes place in Melinda's freshman year of high school. She calls the cops at an 8th grade party after she was raped by a guy. The majority of her freshman year, she is hated by her peers. She escapes everything through her art and she bonds with her art teacher, Mr. Freeman. This is where she starts to find her voice. Through this, Melinda accepts what happened, starts to face her problems, and find her voice. This book will touch a lot of people. Especially victims of rape and rape survivors. If this book doesn't hit you in any way, you are HEARTLESS. I'll just leave it at that.

I read this book for the first time when I was in High School and I loved it. I've seen the movie, which doesn't even compare to the greatness of the book, but that seems to be the way it is for a lot of movies from books. Speak is about a High School freshman named Melinda, a bad thing happens before her first year and she finds herself traumatized, alone and hiding a secret because of the fear of what happened. I love watching Melinda grow throughout the book, moving from scared child to brave young woman who finally lets the truth be known to the world.

So if you've heard about this book or think of this as nothing more than a 'problem' novel for teens, understand it is so much more. And I don't mean that in a clutch-my-well-worn-copy-to-my-heart, mega earnest way either. I finished it less than an hour ago at the gym, after diving in for three reading marathon sessions over the past week, and afterward felt utterly revived about my regard for humanity somehow. Despite the totally real & tragic content that the main character deals with, her journey will not beleaguer you. Anderson deftly portrays her story with verve, brutal honesty and beauty. It is sorta astounding.

My 9th grader brought this book home after it was assigned in her English class. It sounded pretty good so I ordered it on my Kindle. It's a very well written story about a sensitive subject and it opens up the door to speak to your child (again) about dating violence and date rape specifically. It also gives parents an opportunity to say again, if you get raped, even if you were in the wrong place and shouldn't have been there, it is not your fault. It is the fault of the perpetrator. It's also great to have someone else say it since your kid is probably tired of hearing you say it! It reinforces what we say to our kids, "make sure you tell me immediately because I'm always going to be there for you". The book showed the victim's sense of humor, which was the thing that first got my attention, and I was so glad to see her as an overcomer. Fast, easy read. I had never read this author before but I'll

definitely add her to my preferred list of authors.

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