

## Composition 8: *Speak* the Unspeakable

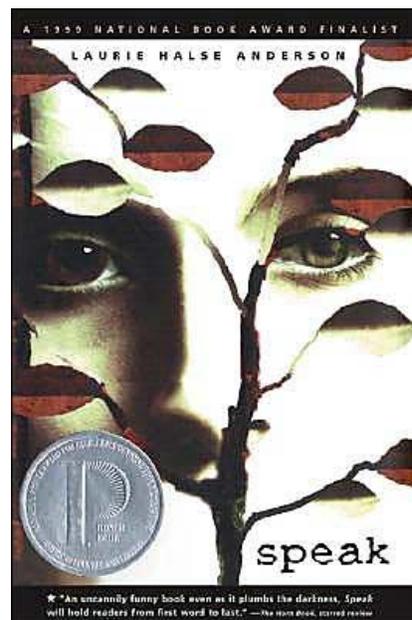
Essential Question: How do writers critique the value of a literary work?

**PROMPT:** After reading the novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, recommend that other high school students either read it or avoid it based on its figurative style, satirical tone, and relevant conflict.

**Gifted Differentiation:** GIEP students must devise their own critical standards for recommendation, OR they may also if they wish substitute their own literary work of interest for this assignment should they prefer a work of greater classical significance—*Brave New World* by Huxley, for instance, fits the assigned thesis quite well.

**INTRODUCTION:** Either use the plot summary technique to discuss the heart of Melinda Sordino's conflict, or use the imagine technique to help your readers visualize themselves in Melinda's difficult situation.

**CONCLUSION:** Start with this critic's opinion about the novel from *Kirkus Review*, "*Speak* presents a raw look at the dynamics of the high school experience." You are a real high school student, not just a book critic, so you are in an expert position to agree or disagree with this statement. Specifically, how does your high school experience mirror the fictional high school experience portrayed in *Speak*?



Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Signet Books, 2000.

**CLASS READINGS:** The 198-page novel will be split into 10 readings of about 20 pages each. We will read well over half of these 20 pages per day in class, leaving minimal reading time outside of class. On even numbered reading days, we will spot check your subtopic notes for *five* 10-point check-ups. On odd numbered days, we will have *five* PSSA reading quizzes of at least 10-points each.

### Focus Skills

1. TS/Subs/Intro/Concl
2. Frag/Run
3. Sp
4. 6 Quotes from the Text & Specific Detail
5. Formal, Proper Usage
6. 3.5 Pages Final Copy Calibri or Arial 12

**\*1 Citation / MLA Works Cited Required**

*The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Classic Literature

**Google Books User ratings as of 12/17:**

5 stars	0
4 stars	0
3 stars	0
2 stars	0
1 star	0

**DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER IN *THE SCARLET LETTER*:**

He was small in stature, with a furrowed visage, which as yet could hardly be termed aged. There was a remarkable intelligence in his features, as of a person who had so cultivated his mental part that it could not fail to mould the physical to itself and become manifest by unmistakable tokens. Although, by a seemingly careless arrangement of his heterogeneous garb, he had endeavoured to conceal or abate the peculiarity, it was sufficiently evident to Hester Prynne that one of this man's shoulders rose higher than the other. Again, at the first instant of perceiving that thin visage, and the slight deformity of the figure, she pressed her infant to her bosom with so convulsive a force that the poor babe uttered another cry of pain. But the mother did not seem to hear it.

*Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson: Contemporary Literature

**Google Books User ratings as of 12/17:**

5 stars	3694
4 stars	2648
3 stars	1302
2 stars	368
1 star	154

**DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER IN *THE SPEAK*:**

My English teacher has no face. She has uncombed stringy hair that droops on her shoulders. The hair is black from her part to her ears and then neon orange to the frizzy ends. I can't decide if she had pissed off her hairdresser or is morphing into a monarch butterfly. I call her Hairwoman.

- What connection do you see between these passages and their user ratings?
- Which would you rather read and why?

## Mega-Tips for Content Development

- As you read each day, take notes in the subtopic charts that follow so that you have specific details with page numbers ready to quote when you rough draft.
- Keep your quotations brief, using a tag before and a page-number citation after each one of the six subtopic quotes [two quotations per subtopic]. Do not simply lift the ellipsis-shortened quotes from the packet—you need fuller details within the quote so that it makes sense to your reader.
- Lead into each quotation with background to set the stage; quote to prove the subtopic; then follow up the quote with personal observation, explanation, and commentary. [see model paragraph at end]
- Do not plot regurgitate. Stick to the subtopics.

Date	Pages Due That Day	Quizzes & Journals*	Points
		<b>Journals are cumulative</b>	
	3-22	Quiz on 3-22	20
	22-41	Journal Notes: 3-22 and 22-41	10
	41-61	Quiz on 22-61	20
	61-80	Journal Notes: 41-61 and 61-80	10
	80-99	Quiz on 61-99	20
	100-119	Journal Notes: 80-99 and 100-119	10
	120-137	Quiz on 99-137	20
	141-159	Journal Notes: 120-137 and 141-159	10
	160-180	Quiz on 141-180	20
	180-198	Journal Notes: 160-180 and 180-198	10

All dates subject to change due to weather.

## Figurative Style:

Students [a] should or [b]should not read *Speak* because Anderson’s figurative style is [a] rich with imaginative metaphors and symbols or [b] filled with too many distracting symbols with predictable meanings.

PSSA Terminology Mini-lesson: *Style* is the way an author uses words. Anderson’s style is often figurative instead of literal—that is, she uses comparisons like *metaphors, similes, and symbols* to develop her characters, especially Melinda.

Reading Assignment Page s	Page on which comparison can be found.  What is being compared and what type of comparison is it?  What do the details of the comparison reveal about the character?
3-22	<p>WOUNDED ZEBRA / PREDATOR: “I stand...blood sport” (5).</p> <p><i>METAPHOR comparing Melinda to a wounded zebra and Mr. Neck to a predator. Melinda is vulnerable emotionally and socially for some undisclosed reason, and, unfortunately, some insecure teachers who have a need to exert their authority and power [aggressive, blood-sport coaching types] prey on weaker students rather than try to protect and support them.</i></p>
22-41	TREE: “For a solid....at all” (30-31). Compare to pruned tree in Melinda’s yard on 187.
41-61	MIRRORS: “I wash...slick nothing” (45)...see also 17 [mirror turned to the wall] , 50 [mirror covered with poster of famous author-rape victim Maya Angelou], and 124[looking into a 3-way mirror], and 195 [mirror used as a weapon of attack ]
61-80	BARBIE DOLL SCULPTURE: “I pop the head off a Barbie doll...over Barbie’s mouth” (63-64).

80-99	FROG: “Our frog...in my hair” (81).
120-137	MIRROR AND NEW SKIN: “I scurry...skin bag” (124-125). <i>Compare to:</i> “I wash...slick nothing” (45).
141-159	THE MASCOT CRISIS: Reflect on the identity crisis that the school has undergone on the following pages: Trojan to Blue Devil (3-4); Blue Devil to Tiger (41); Tiger to Wombat to Hornet to Who-Knows-What-Next (49-50, 95, 141-142). Possible symbolism of this crisis?
160-180	RABBITS: “Somebody flicks...roots” (160) & “My stuffed rabbits...hundreds of them” (177). See also (96-97) for a great rabbit comparison at the doughnut shop. See title of section on (24)—how is her school closet like a burrow?
160-180	SEEDS: “Pale green shoots...grow” (166) and “Can you buy some seeds?” (168) See also (125-126) “Germination” chapter.

# Satirical Tone

Students [a] should or [b] should not read *Speak* because of Anderson’s satirical tone, which is [a] humorous and well-deserved or [b] whiny and sometimes undeserved because of its stereotyping.

PSSA Terminology Mini-Lesson: *Tone* is the author’s attitude toward her topic or characters. Anderson voices a *satirical* tone toward high school society—that is, her tone is one of deserved ridicule. One way that she conveys that satire is through her exaggerated descriptions of characters and her *sarcastic* humor.

Reading Assignment	Page on which satire can be found.
Page s	Who is being satirized? Why is the person or group being satirized—in other words, why do they deserve to be ridiculed?
3-22  <i>[example]</i>	<p>“The school board...I guess” (3-4).</p> <p>WHO: <i>school boards</i></p> <p>WHY: <i>because as elected officials who may have minimal experience or training in education [and who do not even need to have high school diplomas to be in charge of multi-million dollar school systems], school board members sometimes are less concerned about important education issues and more concerned about being politically and morally correct so that nothing will prevent their re-election...thus their obsession with the mascot and the moral issue that it poses about sex</i></p>
22-41	<p>“Finally...call it football” (28-29) and all of “Cheerleaders” on 29-30.</p> <p>WHO: <i>football players</i></p> <p>WHY:</p> <p>WHO: <i>cheerleaders</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>

41-61	<p>Entire chapter “The Marthas” on 42-43. Compare to “The Marthas...It helps a little” (127-128).</p> <p>WHO: <i>Martha Stewart in particular but high school cliques in general</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>
61-80	<p>“Heather says....no cultural” (69).</p> <p>WHO: <i>school board</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>
80-99	<p>“Mr. Freeman...cricket husk” (91).</p> <p>WHO: <i>school board</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>
100-119	<p>“It’s all...straightforward” (100). Compare to “She has a...pay for a sub” (84-85).</p> <p>WHO: <i>English teachers</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>
141-159	<p>“The PTA...Hornet heinies” (141).</p> <p>WHO: <i>PTA’s, like school boards</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>
180-198	<p>“By Monday...accident” (190). Compare to “The climax...salon” (176).</p> <p>WHO: <i>prom-goers and prom supporters</i></p> <p>WHY:</p>

## Relevant Conflicts

Students [a] should or [b] should not read *Speak* because Anderson depicts conflicts which [a] are or [b] are not relevant to modern-American teenagers.

PSSA Terminology Mini-Lesson: Conflict is the *emotional, psychological, social, moral, or physical struggle* that a character must confront and try to overcome. Authors often withhold from the reader all of the details of the conflict to build suspense and intrigue. A “relevant” conflict is one that the reader considers important, for whatever personal, ethical, social, economic, or political reason.

Reading Assignment	Page on which signs of Melinda’s conflicts can be found.
Page s	What signs of conflict do you see—what seems to be the source or cause of the conflict and how is the character dealing with it?
3-22	“We fall into clans...Outcast” (4).
[example]	<i>Melinda is socially shunned at school—she fits into no particular clique, as is true of many high school students. No one sits with her on the bus, trash is thrown on her, and her best friend tells her that she hates her. The cause of this shunning is not yet clear but the author suggests that it has something to do with something that happened over the summer.</i>
22-41	“When we get to...she cares” (22).
41-61	“I see IT...throw up” (45-46).
61-80	“I bet....lives” (70).
80-99	“I open...cowards” (87-88).

100-119	Whole chapter "Clash of the Titans" (113-116).
120-137	"We were...get up" (135).
141-159	"I don't want to see him....Me" (154-155).
160-180	"Was I raped?...I can't hear you" (164-165).
180-198	"My fingers wave....enough" (195).

### Subtopic 1--excerpt from student's *Speak* essay

LEAD INTO  
QUOTE #1  
WITH  
BACKGROUND  
DETAIL

Students should read *Speak* because of Anderson's figurative style, rich with metaphors and symbols that bring her characters to life. Through much of the novel, Melinda searches to regain a sense of personal identity. Part of the emotional fall-out from being raped is that she feels like an outcast and no longer has a voice to express the truth about what happened. Anderson introduces mirrors early in the story as symbols for Melinda's search for a new self, one that is strong enough to speak up. As Anderson writes in the bathroom scene, "I wash my face in the sink until there is

FOLLOW  
QUOTE #1 W/  
INTERPRETATI  
ON &  
EXPLANANTION

**nothing left of it, no eyes, no nose, no mouth. A slick nothing**" (Anderson 45). *That Melinda cannot see herself in this bathroom mirror may symbolize that Andy Evans has stripped her of a sense of who she is socially and emotionally. Frightened and friendless, she must regain her identity by regaining her voice. In other words, she must rebuild enough of her old confidence that she can name and confront her rapist. This rebuilding is no easy task because Melinda does what many rape victims*

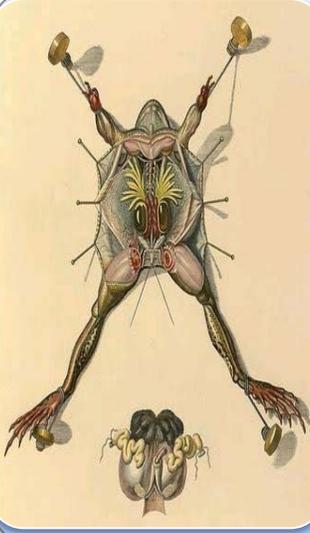
LEAD INTO  
QUOTE #2  
WITH  
BACKGROUND  
DETAIL

*do—she blames herself.* The mirror symbolism pops up later at Effert's Department Store when Melinda is trying on a pair of blue jeans. She looks into a three-way mirror, but this time she sees a reflection—correction, she sees multiple reflections. Anderson writes, "I lean into the mirror.

**Eyes after eyes stare back at me. Am I in there somewhere? A thousand eyes blink**" (Anderson 124). *Perhaps Anderson is suggesting here that Melinda is exploring multiple identities, trying them*

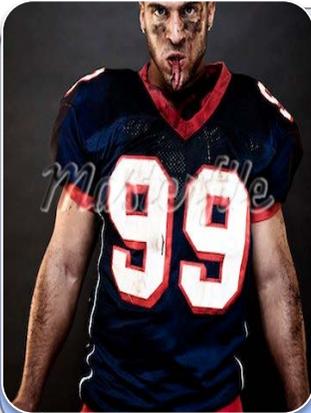
FOLLOW  
QUOTE #2 W/  
INTERPRETATI  
ON &  
EXPLANANTION

*on for size to see which fits best. The "Martha" identity does not fit, nor do the identities of glamorous model, dutiful daughter, or honor student. Ultimately, the identity that fits Melinda best is that of a fearless suffragette who speaks up at the climactic conclusion to warn Rachel Bruin of oncoming disaster.*



## **FIGURATIVE STYLE (symbols & metaphors)**

- 3-4, 41, 49-50, 95, 141-142-THE ONGOING MASCOT CRISIS
- 5-PREDATOR/PREY
- 30, 31, 187-TREES
- 17, 45, 50, 124, 195-MIRRORS
- 63-64- BARBIE DOLL
- 81-FROG DISECTION
- 24, 96-97, 160, 177-RABBITS
- 124-125, 166, 168-SEEDS



## **SATIRICAL TONE (deserved ridicule)**

- 3-4, 69, 91, 141-SCHOOL BOARDS
- 28-30-FOOTBALL PLAYERS & CHEERLEADERS
- 42-43, 127-128-MARTHA STEWART AND CLIQUES
- 84-85, 100-ENGLISH TEACHERS
- 176, 190-PROMS



## **RELEVANT CONFLICT (physical, social, psychological, familial, emotional)**

- 4-SOCIAL SHUNNING
- 22-PARENTAL APATHY
- 45-46-STALKING
- 70-FAMILY BREAKDOWN, DIVORCE
- 87-88-DEPRESSION, SUICIDE
- 113-116-SCHOOL /PARENT PRESSURES
- 135, 195-SPOILER ALERT!
- 154-155-SPEAKING UP
- 164-165-SELF-BLAME, MISPLACED GUILT

# Why do victims stay silent?

By: Diana Mehta The Canadian Press, Published on Fri Oct 31 2014

“Why didn’t you go to police?” A simple question, but without a simple answer when it is posed to sexual assault victims. Experts agree that the reasons why sexual assault victims are often reluctant to step forward are myriad. Mabel Athena is all too aware of the complexity surrounding the issue. She says a man she’d known for just a few hours raped her twice while she was touring a foreign country. She was in shock and faulted herself for trusting her attacker. She didn’t go to police. “For the longest time I blamed myself for putting myself in that situation,” she said.

Crisis workers, lawyers and police agree there are many reasons a victim may not come forward — ranging from emotional trauma and fear of authority to a lack of clarity over just what constitutes sexual assault.

Even for those who do come forward, taking action against an alleged assailant is not easy. Elizabeth knows that only all too well. The now 25-year-old — who did not want to give her last name — says a man she met at a bar took her to his home, bit her, choked her unconscious three times, threw her against a mirror so hard it broke, and sexually assaulted her four times, all while she tried to scramble away. She went to police. After an investigation that lasted over a year, she says police told her they didn’t have substantial evidence to press charges. “I am glad I did it just on a personal level to know that I did the best that I could, but I would never judge someone for not going forward. It’s a horrible process. You have to share your story with so many strangers,” she said. Speaking generally, Amanda Dale, executive director of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic which supports women survivors of violence, says the criminal justice system is set up to protect the rights of the accused.

Compounding the issue is the fact that women may have a relationship or regular acquaintance of some sort with their assailants and may fear additional attack.

Another barrier victims face is re-victimization, as observers might raise questions about what they were wearing, how much they were drinking and how hard they tried to ward off sexual advances, said Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer. Simply put, they fear that they will be made out to be the guilty party—that she asked to be raped.

Altering these biases will take a change of values, as many major religions for thousands of years have blamed and punished not the rapists—but the victims of rape—for the crime that has been committed against them. [see other side]

MAJOR WORLD RELIGION	HOW RAPE VICTIMS ARE TO BE VIEWED / DEALT WITH
<b>ISLAM</b>  <i>The Quran</i>	<p><i>Under Islamic law, rape can only be proven if [a] the rapist confesses or [b] there are 4 male witnesses. Otherwise, the sex act is to be construed as consensual—and if outside of marriage—punishable by stoning to death. It is obviously better to choose a public place [like the town square] to be raped as you must have enough witnesses to ensure justice is served.</i></p>
<b>JUDAISM</b>  <i>The Book of Deuteronomy</i>	<p><i>If a man is caught in the act of raping a young woman who is not engaged, he must pay fifty pieces of silver to her father and marry the young woman [at the father’s discretion] because he violated her. Unlike in Islam, it best either to choose non-public, unpopulated area to be raped or else to have a really big mouth—because whether you are judged a victim or else a willing participant will be based upon whether others actually heard you cry out. If you have a quiet voice and are raped in a city, you are S.O.L. Here’s how it is written:</i></p> <p><i>“If within <u>the city</u> a man rapes a woman, you shall bring them both out of the gate of the city and there stone them to death: the girl because she did not cry out for help though she was in the city [the assumption is that if she was not heard crying out, then she must have consented to the act], and the man because he violated his neighbor’s wife.” You’d have better luck getting justice if you would choose to be raped in the countryside—then it would be clear why no one heard you scream. You didn’t want the abusive sex. There was simply no one around, silly!</i></p>
<b>HINDUISM</b>  <i>The Brhadāranyaka Upanishad</i>	<p><i>Surely, a woman who has changed her clothes at the end of her menstrual period is the most auspicious [attractive and desirable] of women. When she has changed her clothes at the end of her menstrual period, therefore, one should approach that splendid woman and invite her to have sex. Should she refuse to consent, he should bribe her. If she still refuses, he should beat her with a stick or with his fists and overpower her, saying: “I take away the splendor from you with my virility and my splendor” (6.4.9,21).</i></p>
<b>CHRISTIANITY</b>  <i>The New Testament</i>	<p><i>The New Testament does not make any direct reference to how a rape victim should be treated. Instead, it teaches compassion and forgiveness toward everyone—as long as the sinner shows remorse. When a sinful but remorseful prostitute is about to be stoned to death, for example, Christ shows mercy by saying, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” Needless to say, everyone dropped his stone. The only assumption that can be made is that if Christ would show mercy to a guilty prostitute, he would do likewise to an innocent rape victim.</i></p>