

# ***Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Approved for use in Grade 9

## **Summary**

"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 that 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 this 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. --  
*BookBrowse*

## **Connection to Curriculum**

*Speak* can support Unit 1 and Unit 2 of the ELA 9/HELA 9 curriculum. Reading, writing and discussion of the novel fit Unit 1 Guiding Questions "How does the author convey and develop themes of identity throughout a text?," "How do we as individuals express our personal identity?," and "How does the process of reading, speaking and writing inform our ability to grasp our own identity?" Reading, writing and discussion of the novel fit Unit 2 Guiding Questions "How do characters interact with their communities?," "How does the author's choice of setting influence the characters?," "How do characters interact with each other, advance the plot, or develop the theme?," "How is cultural experience reflected in a work of literature?," and "What systems are in place that capture our identity?"

## **Standards**

### **Reading: Literature**

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. **RL.9.1**
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development. **RL.9.2**
- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. **RL.9.5**
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading. **RL.9.10**

**A Note on the Text**

*Speak* was named a 2000 Printz Honor Book, 2000 Horn Book Fanfare Best Book of the Year, and 1999 National Book Award Finalist, among many other honors. The novel contains sensitive subject matter -- the main character is the victim of sexual assault.

**Additional Unit Design Connections**

*Speak* allows students to consider real-world issues that are immediately relevant to teenagers. The novel can readily be connected to Unit 1's Essential Question "Why is personal identity important?" and Unit 2's Essential Question "How does community influence identity?"