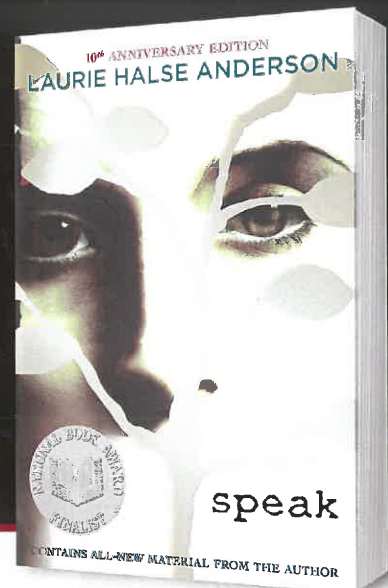


Celebrating Ten Years of  
**speak**  
the Novel That Changed  
the Face of Young Adult Fiction

Tough, tender, and darkly funny,  
Speak is still the perfect teen book club title.



10th Anniversary Edition • 978-0-14-241473-6 (PB) • \$11.99  
Platinum Edition • 978-0-14-240732-5 (PB) • \$10.00

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss the title of the novel and its significance. What roles do silence and truth play in the story?
- Is there a relationship between speaking and listening? Can one exist without the other?
- What is friendship? Describe the important elements of Melinda's relationships with Heather, Ivy, Nicole, and Rachel. Is she ever really friends with any of them? Can friendship mean something different to different people? Cite different passages in the novel as evidence of your opinion.
- Melinda says: "It is easier not to say anything. Shut your trap, button your lip, can it. All that crap you hear on TV about communication and expressing feelings is a lie. Nobody really wants to hear what you have to say." Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Do the events in the novel support or negate her statement? Does her outlook change at any point in the novel? How so?
- What keeps Melinda silent? What is she afraid of?
- Discuss the social hierarchy of Merryweather High. What role does the concept of identity play in the novel? Why is belonging to one of the many clans so important to Heather and so unimportant to Melinda?
- Why does Melinda isolate herself from her friends? Is she justified in doing so?
- Melinda nicknames many of the other characters throughout the novel. Discuss the significance of this habit and how it contributes to the development of the story and your experience as a reader.
- Why do you think Melinda refers to Andy Evans as "it" in the beginning of the novel? At what point does she start to call him by name? Why?
- In what places is Melinda able to find sanctuary at school? How do the characteristics of these places provide a window into her character?
- What does Melinda learn in Art class? What does the tree she spends the year creating finally come to symbolize?
- How does David Petrakis contribute to Melinda's quest to find her voice? How does Mr. Freeman influence her? What role do her parents and the other adults in the novel play in Melinda's journey?
- Despite her internal sense of humor, Melinda seems depressed to the outside world. In what ways is her depression evident? How do the people around her react to her behavior? Do you think they respond appropriately? How would you respond?
- What role does rumor play in the story? Discuss how rumors and truth can be connected. Is one more powerful than the other?
- Reflect on Melinda and Rachel's written conversation they have in the library. Discuss Rachel's reaction to what Melinda tells her. Why do you think she behaves as she does? Does she believe Melinda?
- How does nature manifest itself in the story line and contribute to meaning? Discuss how the changing of the seasons could be argued to mirror Melinda's ability to speak.
- Is it possible to speak without spoken words? Why or why not? Identify passages in the novel to support your position.
- Discuss the ending of the book and the relevance of the last scene.
- What finally allows Melinda to speak?

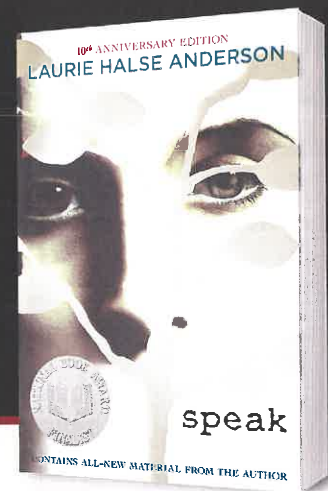
**SPEAK UP  
ABOUT SPEAK—  
Blog at**  
<http://speakupaboutspeak.blogspot.com>

Puffin Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group  
[www.writelady.com](http://www.writelady.com) • [www.penguin.com/teens](http://www.penguin.com/teens) • <http://speakupaboutspeak.blogspot.com/>  
Visit [www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians) to download more great FREE discussion guides

This discussion guide has been provided by Penguin Young Readers Group for classroom, library, and book club use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.

The following poem was written by  
**LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON**

in honor of the 10th anniversary of *Speak*.  
With the exception of the first and last stanzas,  
all of the words come from letters or emails  
written to her by readers.



10th Anniversary Edition • 978-0-14-241473-8 (PB) • \$11.99  
Platinum Edition • 978-0-14-240732-5 (PB) • \$10.00

## Listen

You write to us  
from Houston, Brooklyn, Peoria, Rye, NY,  
LA, DC, Everyanywhere USA to my mailbox, My  
Space Face  
Book  
A livejournal of bffs whispering  
Onehundredthousand whispers to Melinda and  
Me.

You:  
I was raped, too  
sexually assaulted in seventh grade,  
tenth grade, the summer after graduation,  
at a party  
i was 16  
i was 14  
i was 5 and he did it for three years  
i loved him  
i didn't even know him.

He was my best friend's brother,  
my grandfather, father, mommy's boyfriend,  
my date  
my cousin  
my coach  
i met him for the first time that night and—  
four guys took turns, and—  
i'm a boy and this happened to me, and—

... I got pregnant I gave up my daughter for adoption ...  
did it happen to you, too?  
U 2?

You:  
i wasn't raped, but  
my dad drinks, but  
i hate talking, but  
my brother was shot, but  
i am outcast, but  
my parents split up, but  
i am clanless, but  
we lost our house, but  
i have secrets - seven years of secrets  
and i cut  
myself my friends cut  
we all cut cut cut  
to let out the pain

... my 5-year-old cousin was raped –  
he's beginning to act out now ...  
do you have suicidal thoughts?  
do you want to kill him?

You:  
Melinda is a lot like this girl I know  
No she's a lot like  
(me)  
i am MelindaSarah  
i am MelindaRogelio i am MelindaMegan,  
MelindaAmberMelindaStephenTori  
PhillipNavdiaTiaraMateoKristinaBeth  
it keeps hurting, but

but  
but  
but  
this book cracked my shell  
it keeps hurting I hurt, but  
but your book cracked my shell.

You:  
I cried when I read it.  
I laughed when I read it  
is that dumb?  
I sat with the girl—  
you know, that girl—  
I sat with her because nobody sits with her at lunch  
and I'm a cheerleader, so there.

speak changed my life  
cracked my shell  
made me think  
about parties  
gave me  
wings this book  
opened my mouth  
i whispered, cried  
rolled up my sleeves i  
hate talking but  
I am trying.

You made me remember who I am.  
Thanks.

P.S. Our class is gonna analyze this thing to death.

Me:  
Me:  
Me: weeping

Puffin Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group  
www.writerlady.com • www.penguin.com/teens • <http://speakupabouteSpeak.blogspot.com/>  
Visit [www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians) to download more great FREE discussion guides

This discussion guide has been provided by Penguin Young Readers Group for classroom, library, and book club use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.