

<https://www.common sensemedia.org/book-reviews/speak>

Parents' Guide to

# Speak

By Norah Caroline Piehl, Common Sense Media Reviewer

age 14+

Controversial book about rape is powerful and painful.

Book Laurie Halse Anderson Coming of Age 1999

[Add your rating](#)



Parents Say: age 13+      18 reviews

Any Iffy Content?      [Read more](#)

Talk with Your Kids About...      [Read more](#)

## A Lot or a Little?

What you will—and won't—find in this book.

### Educational Value

This National Book Award finalist will grip teen r

### Positive Messages

Melinda's pain and ultimate hope for healing is de

### Positive Role Models

The main character, Melinda, cuts class, steals pa

**Violence & Scariness**

Melinda is raped. She recalls her rape, and is thr

**Sex, Romance & Nudity**

The narrator refers to cheerleaders sleeping with

**Language**

Moderate swearing typical of high-schoolers.

**Products & Purchases** Not present**Drinking, Drugs & Smoking**

Thirteen-year-old Melinda and her friends drink at

**Parents Need to Know**

Parents need to know that this National Book Award finalist is about a girl traumatized by a rape (and is then isolated from her peers). Wounded, silent Melinda ditches class, steals passes from teachers, and deliberately cuts herself. Accurate descriptions of the minutiae of high school will appeal to any teen who...

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/laurie-halse-anderson/speak/>

# SPEAK

BY LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON · RELEASE DATE: OCT. 22, 1999

A frightening and sobering look at the cruelty and viciousness that pervade much of contemporary high school life, as real as today's headlines. At the end of the summer before she enters high school, Melinda attends a party at which two bad things happen to her. She gets drunk, and she is raped. Shocked and scared, she calls the police, who break up the party and send everyone home. She tells no one of her rape, and the other students, even her best friends, turn against her for ruining their good time. By the time school starts, she is completely alone, and utterly desolate. She withdraws more and more into herself, rarely talking, cutting classes, ignoring assignments, and becoming more estranged daily from the world around her. Few people penetrate her shell; one of them is Mr. Freeman, her art teacher, who works with her to help her express what she has so deeply repressed. When the unthinkable happens—the same upperclassman who raped her at the

party attacks her again'something within the new Melinda says no, and in repelling her attacker, she becomes whole again. The plot is gripping and the characters are powerfully drawn, but it is its raw and unvarnished look at the dynamics of the high school experience that makes this a novel that will be hard for readers to forget. (Fiction. 12+)

**Pub Date:** Oct. 22, 1999

**ISBN:** 0-374-37152-0

**Page Count:** 198

**Publisher:** Farrar, Straus and Giroux

**Review Posted Online:** May 19, 2010

**Kirkus Reviews Issue:** Sept. 15, 1999

**Categories:**

TEENS & YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL THEMES