



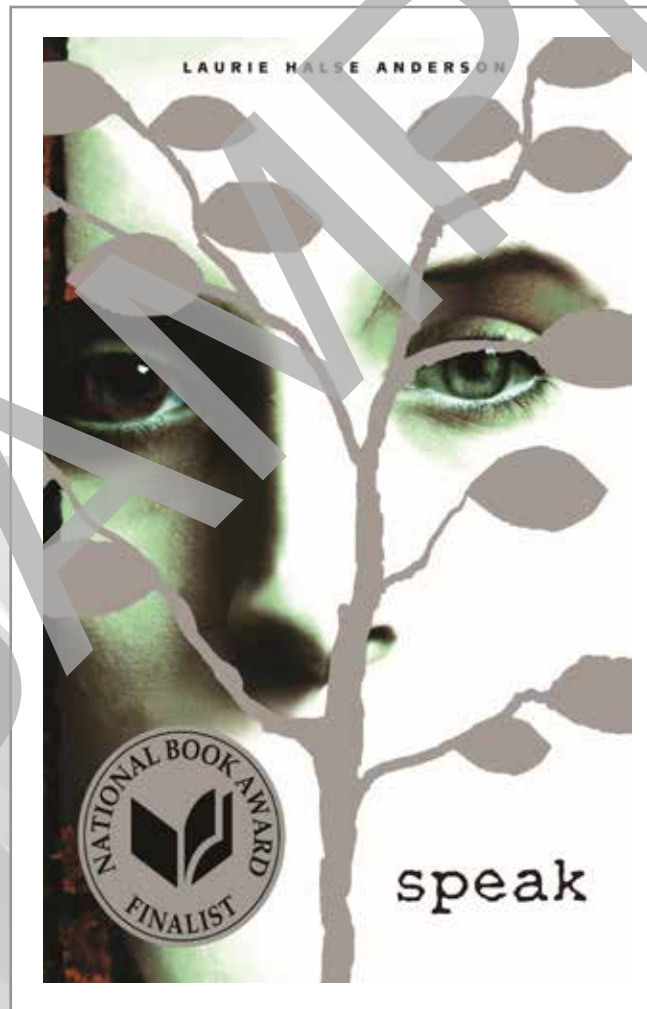
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Speak

Laurie Halse Anderson



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Speak

Laurie Halse Anderson

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Writing

Compare/contrast, poetry, letter, sequel, TV script, dialogue, reflection

Comprehension

Cause/effect, predicting

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, dramatizing, music

Vocabulary

Target words, definitions, application

Literary Elements

Characterization, simile, analogy, metaphor, allusion, theme, alliteration, figurative language, symbolism, plot development

Thinking

Research, analysis, critical thinking

Across the Curriculum

Art—caricatures, drawing, collage

Genre: fiction

Point of View: first person

Themes: ostracism, withdrawal, isolation, aftermath of rape

Setting: Merryweather High School

Style: narrative

Summary

The protagonist of the story, Melinda Sordino, enters her freshman year at Merryweather High School as an outcast because she called the cops when she had some trouble at an end-of-summer party. Several of her friends were arrested and all became angry and turned against her. She becomes increasingly alienated and silent as the school year progresses. Her parents, who live separate lives in their own worlds, offer little help. Melinda finds solace in her art class, and an art project eventually helps her face the truth about the party. High school senior Andy Evans, whom she refers to as “IT,” raped her at the party and continues to hover in the background of her life. When her tormenter again accosts her, Melinda at last finds her “voice” and her ability to defend herself. Her vindication paves the way for her recovery.

Honors: 1999 National Book Award Finalist for Young People’s Literature; Parents’ Guide to Children’s Media Award for Outstanding Achievement; New England Children’s Booksellers Association Fall Pick, Junior Library Guild Selection; Bookreporter.com Top 10 Teen Books of 1999; Booklist—Top 10 First Novels of 1999; amazon.com—Top 10 Teen Books of the Month; Fanfare—*The Horn Book’s* Honor List; *School Library Journal*—Best Book of the Year.

Characters

Melinda Sordino: protagonist; freshman at Merryweather High School; ostracized by her former friends; suffers aftermath of rape

Melinda’s parents: preoccupied with jobs, they both often communicate with Melinda through notes left on the kitchen counter; reflect their strained relationship and insensitivity to Melinda’s needs

Students at Merryweather High

Heather: newcomer to Merryweather High; becomes Melinda’s pseudo-friend who uses her when she needs her, then drops her in favor of more prestigious friends

David Petrakis: Melinda’s highly intelligent biology lab partner; friendly toward her; becomes Melinda’s “hero”

Rachel: Melinda’s former best friend; seeks friendship with foreign-exchange students; begins to date the boy who raped Melinda

Nicole: athletic; although not formerly a close friend, she does not treat Melinda as a pariah

Ivy: friend from junior high; fellow art student who treats Melinda kindly

Andy Evans: the boy who raped Melinda, a.k.a. “IT” and “Andy Beast”; senior at Merryweather High; handsome “ladies’ man”

Pages 3-24 “Welcome to Merryweather High” through “Heathering”

The narrator, Melinda Sordino, reveals the trauma of her first two weeks as a freshman at Merryweather High School. Her friends have all turned against her, and she alludes to something that happened during the summer.

Vocabulary

obscene (3)
thespians (4)

abstinence (4)
predator (5)

idiot savants (4)
indoctrination (5)

fascists (4)
morphing (6)

Discussion Questions

1. Analyze Melinda’s reaction to the first day of high school and why her fears seem more intense than that of others. Analyze why she says, “I am Outcast.” (*She feels sick. No one will sit with her on the bus, and she feels she has the wrong hair, the wrong clothes, and the wrong attitude. Her ex-friends ignore her, and her former best friend mouths the words “I hate you.” Something has obviously happened that has turned everyone against her. pp. 3-5*)
2. Examine the meanings of the “clans” and the prevalence of high school cliques. (*Responses will vary. Jocks: athletes; Country Clubbers: social climbers; Idiot Savants: intelligent but no common sense; Cheerleaders: popularity based on position of cheerleader; Human Waste: those who do nothing with their lives; Eurotrash: foreign exchange students; Future Fascists of America: want to overthrow the school administration; Big Hair Chix: bouffant hair styles; the Marthas: do-gooders; Suffering Artists: primarily interested in art; Thespians: members of drama club; Goths: members of a subculture favoring black clothing and dark music; Shredders: careless, destructive. p. 4*)
3. Discuss the “first ten lies they tell you in high school.” Compare with first-day orientation in your school. Discuss whether or not students think Melinda’s assumption that they are “lies” is valid. (*Read list aloud. Elicit student response. pp. 5-6*)
4. Examine Melinda’s characterization of the teachers and what this reflects. (*She characterizes some of them by distinguishing features: English—Hairwoman; Social Studies—Mr. Neck. Spanish teacher is unnamed, indicating Melinda’s lack of understanding of Spanish. She calls the art teacher, Mr. Freeman, by name because she feels more comfortable in this class. Principal Principal refers to his authority. pp. 6-7, 10, 13, 17*)
5. Discuss Mr. Freeman’s approach to teaching art. Ask students to relate similar experiences in classes with this type of teaching style. (*His classroom is student-oriented, reflecting the artistic endeavors of his students and the opportunity for self-expression. He does not give rules and expectations but guides students in self-discovery and creativity. Each student will spend the school year learning how to turn one object into a piece of art. He compares their adventure in art to a journey. pp. 9-12*)
6. Discuss Melinda’s home life. (*Her mother works long hours, her father is preoccupied with his own life, and the family has very little interaction. They communicate by leaving notes on the kitchen counter. Melinda’s room reflects her interests as a fifth grader, but she feels that a request for change would result in an argument between her parents. pp. 14-17*)

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7. Discuss the interaction between Melinda and Heather. (*She and Heather, a new student, begin a friendship by sitting together at orientation and lunch; Heather wants Melinda to join a club with her.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Have students draw a caricature of one of the teachers based on Melinda's description.
2. Analyze the analogy on p. 9, "Art follows lunch, like dream follows nightmare." Have students write an analogy from their own experiences.
3. Note the literary devices: **Metaphors**—I (Melinda): a wounded zebra (p. 5); Vietnam or Iraq: TV wars (p. 7); flow of students: stream (p. 7); Melinda: a fish (p. 7); eyebrow maneuver: telegraph (p. 11); Melinda's room: postcard of who she was in fifth grade (p. 15); Nicole: Warrior Princess (p. 19) **Similes**—Mr. Freeman's big old grasshopper body like a stilt-walking circus guy, nose like a credit card sunk between his eyes (p. 10); clay streaks the word like dried blood (p. 10); look on his face like Daffy Duck's when Bugs is pulling a fast one (p. 17); Heather geeking around me like a moth (p. 19); black mess looks like goose poop (p. 21); dropped like a hot Pop Tart on a cold kitchen floor (p. 21)

Pages 24-46 "Burrow" through "Nightmare"

Melinda attends a pep rally where she is taunted and harassed by other students because she called the cops to an end-of-the-summer party. Tensions mount between Heather and Melinda.

Vocabulary

potpourri (26)
expiration (30)
drones (39)

paparazzi (28)
floundering (31)
ecology (41)

synchronized (29)
blathers (33)
steroid (41)

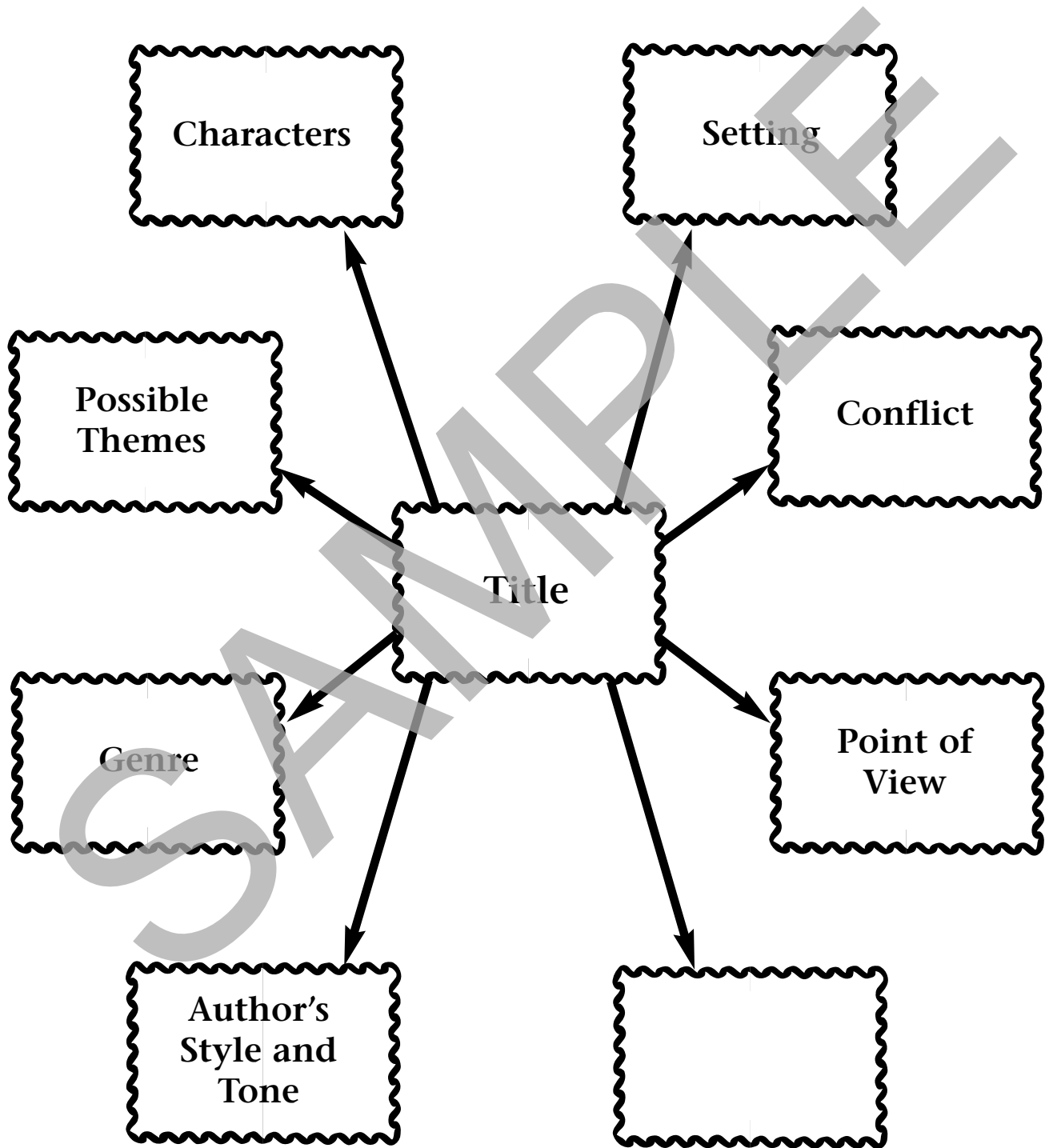
inspiration (30)
interim (35)
irony (43)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Melinda's "place of refuge" and how she describes it. (*While trying to avoid her social studies teacher, Melinda steps into an old janitor's closet. With its old furnishings and isolation, it is the perfect retreat for Melinda because it is abandoned, has no purpose, and no name. This is exactly the way Melinda feels. pp. 25-26*)
2. Examine what happens to Melinda during the first pep rally and what the events reveal. Ask students why they think Melinda called the cops at the party. (*She goes only because Heather insists. A girl calls her by name and announces that she is the one who called the cops at the party. Others speak up of arrests and embarrassment because of Melinda, but she is unable to tell them what really happened. She is harassed by girls jamming their knees into her back and yanking her hair and is knocked down three rows of bleachers as the pep rally ends. pp. 26-30*)
3. Discuss the significance of Melinda's painting for a week after the pep rally. (*Melinda paints watercolors of trees that have been hit by lightning. The trees are nearly, but not totally, dead. One picture is so dark the tree is barely visible. These trees symbolize Melinda: she feels she has been struck by something as terrible as lightning and that it has left her barely alive. Some days are worse than others. pp. 30-31*)

Story Map

Directions: Use the diagram below with a partner or small group to free-associate thoughts about the novel after you have finished reading it. Jot down your thoughts in a similar format on a large piece of paper.



Character Interaction Chart

Conflicting Characters

Interaction of Characters

Source of Conflict

Compromise Interactions

Cooperative Interactions

Control Interactions

Results of Conflict