SPEAK

Pre-Reading Activities

Pre-Reading Activity 1

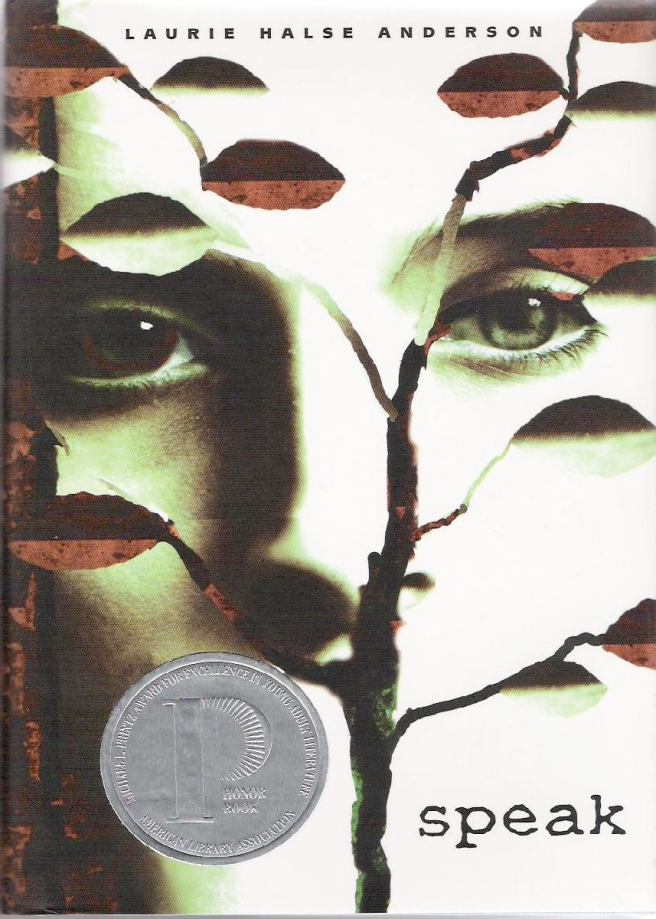
While reading, you will journal how you feel (find this activity in Guided Reading Activity 1). But for now, to start you off, choose 3 out of the 5 following prompts to answer in three separate journal entries:

1. Write about a time when either you or someone that you know has been outcast or alone. How did you/the person you know feel?
2. Write about some of your teachers, or other adult figures in your life, and how they impacted your life either positively or negatively.
3. Write about a time when you had something happen to you, or you witnessed something that you felt that you could not talk about.
4. Write about someone you’ve felt has been there for you or would be there for you no matter what. What are the characteristics/qualities of this person? Why are they so special to you?
5. Write about a time in which you overcame one of your greatest fears, stood up for yourself, or spoke clearly and honestly about something that you didn’t believe in.

Pre-Reading Activity 2

Answer the following questions in a group discussion.

Look at the cover of your copy of *Speak*. Without opening the book, make predictions about what you think it will be about.

* What colors do you see? Why do you think that these colors were used? What might they represent?
* What images are used? What might they symbolize?
* What can you already tell about the girl on the cover by looking at her eyes? What type of character do you think she is?
* Based on what you see on the cover, what clues do you have about the book’s plot and characters?

Now look at the title:

* What role do you think the word “speak” plays in this book? Think about your own life. How do you speak on a daily basis? Is speaking important? Why or why not?
* Think about speaking and listening. Are they related? How? Can one exist without the other?

Pre-Reading Activity 3

Every day you experience a range of emotions. These emotions play a major role in who we are as people. Think about the different emotions that you have experienced today. In your journal write a list of ten different emotions that you have felt today. Leave room on the page to make another list later in the book next to yours.

Pre-Reading Activity 4

The work “speak” can be expressed in a variety of ways. In your journal find 10 synonyms for the word speak.

Pre-Reading Activity 5

Research the author of *Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson.

In your journal, answer the following questions, as well as any additional information that you find interesting or helpful.

* What type of literature does Laurie Halse Anderson write?
  + What influences her writing?
  + Who does she write for? (Who is her target audience?)
* What do you like about her and her writing style? Why?
* What might you dislike about her and/or her writing style? Why?
* Which, of the books that she has written, would you like to read? Why? What makes these books seem interesting to you?
* If you could meet Laurie Halse Anderson, what is one question that you would like to ask her?
* When you came across the book *Speak* in your research, did you find yourself excited about the prospect of reading it? Why or why not?
* Did you have any expectations about Laurie Halse Anderson before researching her? If so, were your expectations met? How or how not?

Pre-Reading Activity 6

Read the following poem by Laurie Halse Anderson.

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

Write a response to this poem in your journal. Your response can be a poem, too. Or you can just write about your reaction to it.

Pre-Reading Activity 7

What is setting? How do authors typically introduce setting in their books? Why is setting so important? Can you think of a book that you have read that might have been completely different if the setting changed? Why is that the case?

Scan the book *Speak* and find words that could describe its setting. Create an artistic representation of what your idea of the setting is. Don’t worry about getting it completely right. Just use what you find to create what you think might be an important aspect to the setting of *Speak*. We’ll compare representations in class and determine once you have finished the book how your idea played into the book as a whole.

SPEAK

Guided Reading Activities

Guided Reading Activity 1

As you read *Speak*, you will be maintaining a journal. Each time you read, or we read a selection of the book as a class, you will be required to journal your feelings/thoughts/questions. If you have a reaction to any particular quotation, you might include the quote and your reaction. If something that Melinda (or any of the other characters) says/does strikes you, write about it!

The teacher will not read your responses, as they may be personal. BUT, the teacher will be scanning your journal to make sure that you include at least one entry for each time that you read. Be sure to look out for the use of literary devices as well as signposts. You must have a minimum of 9 journal entries (one for each chapter)

Guided Reading Activity 2 (to be typed and submitted)

Give the characters a chat screen name. Create a dialogue between two of the characters as if they were chatting online. Make sure that you designate (before you create your dialogue) which characters have which screen name. Make the conversations relevant to the story and meaningful.

To get you thinking:

* What would they talk about?
* Who, of the characters in *Speak*, would be most likely to talk to each other?
* What would the tone of the conversation be (i.e. angry, friendly, concerned…)

Type your dialogue using a chat format. An example is found below:

Silentartist: hey how are you toady?

Silentartist: \*today

Pretty\_n\_Pink: Im SOOOOO gr8!!! How r u???

Silentartist: I’m sad. I have a horrible secret that I can’t tell anybody…

Pretty\_n\_Pink: Oh no! What’s your secret???? I promise I won’t tell anybody!

Guided Reading Activity 3

Create an alternative book cover for *Speak*. Make sure you include important symbols and that the cover accurately embodies the overall tone of the book.

Write one to two paragraphs explaining why you chose the elements that you chose for your cover design.

Guided Reading Activity 4

“Art without emotion is like chocolate cake without sugar. It makes you gag." He sticks his finger down his throat. "The next time you work on your trees, don't think about trees. Think about love, or hate, or joy, or pain- whatever makes you feel something, makes your palms sweat, or your toes curl. Focus on that feeling.”

–Mr. Freeman, *Speak*

In the above quotation from Mr. Freeman, Melinda’s art teacher, he speaks to Melinda about her frustration with drawing trees. Throughout the entire novel, Melinda almost obsessively draws trees. Why do you think that is?

Think about the quotation from Mr. Freeman and then think about what you know about Melinda. Compare those things to your own life. Then, draw a tree that is most representative of you: who you are and what you are going through.

Write a few brief sentences, a poem, a song/rap, or journal entry describing your tree in context with your life.

Guided Reading Activity 5

The Ten Lies They Tell You…

In the beginning of the book *Speak*, Melinda references “The Ten Lies They Tell You in High School.” Can you relate to these “lies?” Are Melinda’s assumptions correct? Why or why not?

Now, think of other falsities that you may have been told in various contexts. Like Melinda, you can think about these misconceptions in reference to high school. Or, you can think about them in other contexts; for example, misconceptions about the country, you, your friends, people your age, race…

Be prepared to share your list with the class. We will vote on the top ten best misconceptions, and discuss why these things aren’t what one necessarily expects.

Guided Reading Activity 6

Throughout the novel *Speak*, Melinda consistently gives herself a report card. For example, she gives herself the following report card for the first grading period:

Plays Nice B Social Studies C Spanish C Art A

Lunch D Biology B Algebra C+

Clothes C English C Gym C+

Write your own personal report card in which you “grade” yourself in several different areas of life. Include this in your journal, and if you wish, you may share your report card with the class. Make sure that you include an explanation for your grade in at least 5 of the subject areas. Also, you won’t be including actual grades that you receive in your academic classes. You’re giving yourself a “life grade!”

SPEAK

Post-Reading Activities

These assignments will be

Post-Reading Activity 1 (to be typed and submitted)

Research the topic of sexual assault. Find as much information as you can.

* How can a person protect themselves?
* What are precautions that a person could take to avoid date rape?
* What laws exist pertaining to date rape within your state?
* What is the definition of date rape?
* Who is at risk?
* What are some statistics related to date rape?
* What resources are available for people who experience date rape and sexual assault?

Using the information that you find, create a pamphlet informing people your age about the issue of date rape. Think about what might have been helpful for Melinda. What information would you include that could have helped her avoid the situation altogether?

You will create your pamphlet in groups of two to three. You will also be required to submit a list of resources that you used along with the pamphlet that your group creates. Finally, your group will be asked to present your pamphlet to the class.

Post-Reading Activity 2 (to be typed and submitted)

Laurie Halse Anderson, the author of *Speak* obtains a great deal of her inspiration from her readers. As you already gathered from the Pre-Reading Activity – in which you read Anderson’s Poem “Listen,” she receives numerous letters from her readers. These letters are often in response to the books that she has written.

You will be required to write a letter to Laurie Halse Anderson explaining your reaction to her book *Speak*. You can make it a personal letter, or you can just explain what the book meant to you in general terms. As a class, we will actually be mailing our letters to Mrs. Anderson.

Post-Reading Activity 3

In Pre-Reading Activity 3, you were asked to create a list of emotions that you experience in a normal day. Now that you have completed reading *Speak*, you are asked to write ten emotions that you think Melinda experienced on a normal day. Write a journal entry in your notebook comparing and contrasting your lists.

Post-Reading Activity 4 (to be typed and submitted)

Imagine that you are a character from the novel *Speak*. You’re watching Melinda and writing about your reactions to her.

Choose a scene from *Speak* and re-write it from a different character’s perspective. What do you notice about Melinda? What is your reaction to her, and what is your reaction to some of the same situations that Melinda finds herself in?

Post-Reading Activity 7 (Completed on Padlet)

Toward the end of the book, Melinda talks about her experience with yearbook day. As you probably experience in your own school, it is common for peers to write messages in each other’s yearbooks.

Now that the novel *Speak* has concluded, much as a school year ends, write a message to Melinda in her yearbook.