



Speak: The Graphic Novel

Laurie Halse Anderson , Emily Carroll (Illustrations)

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The modern classic *Speak* is now a graphic novel.

"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 this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless--an 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. Through her work on an art project, she is finally able to face what really happened that night: She was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her.

Speak: The Graphic Novel Details

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Author : Laurie Halse Anderson , Emily Carroll (Illustrations)

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David Schaafsma says

"I said no."--Melinda

7/12/18: Just re-read this for my summer 2018 Graphic novels/comics class focused on kick-ass girls. Everyone in my class loved it and it sparked some great talk about the rarity of talking about real life issues in English classrooms. Some are future teachers and can't wait to teach it.

3/27/18: Ooh, I just finished this and can't wait to tell you about it! As I said in my review of Speak, (the version without illustrations, the YA book that was published in 1999 by Anderson), it was a landmark moment in the history of YA, a book about (teen) rape, and it changed YA and the teaching of literature in school forever. (Yes, sexual violence had been part of literature before, but bringing to the English classroom YA on sexual violence--and to suggest it might be a daily occurrence for teens--was new). Speak is now in the canon of YA and is (still) taught everywhere. The book is surprisingly bright and funny and witty and caustic when it needs to be, and scary all the way through. It tells us some important things about the culture of schooling and sexual harassment/abuse in the hallways (especially) for girls. Trigger warnings on rape and self abuse are relevant, I'll admit that, but I hope if you can read it, you will be able to get some comfort and inspiration from it. I have kids in this house in middle school, and I hope they will all read it.

This graphic novel, in this #metoo moment in history, is also a publishing landmark. We didn't maybe "need" it in graphic novel fashion, but this project joins forces of 1) a woman already lauded for her lifetime contributions to YA, who has written many celebrated novels (though none in my opinion as powerful or as personal as this one), and 2) an up-and-coming and also to-be-rock-star cartoonist and illustrator Emily Carroll (who is already an Eisner Award winner). This brings Anderson's important story back into the spotlight and/or introduces it to a new generation of girls. No, it doesn't "replace" the original, but is a very good version.

The graphic novel format is right for this book because 1) for much of the book, Melinda is essentially silent, so Carroll's/Melinda's visual images speak for her in the absence of words, and 2) Melinda's salvation happens through Mr. Freeman's art class, and 3) Carroll knows horror, and the real-life, inexpressible horror that Melinda experiences and struggles to articulate is assisted so well by a horror-maven to tell her story.

I love how an earlier raped and silenced "caged bird" Maya Angelou serves in this work as muse to Melinda. Powerful!

I just finished it, and I was moved again (in spite of having taught the book without pictures many many times) as I finished it. Was it perfect? No. I felt throughout that this was often more illustrated story than graphic novel (Anderson kept too many of her good words in it; I think Carroll should have had an even greater hand in telling this story through the images, since Melinda was silent so long, but still, the words and images we have are great and will reach some girls and women (and boys and men, necessarily) and maybe help them to consider the original, fuller, text. But even if this is all anyone reads, it may be enough. A work of graphic art by an emerging master.

Courtney says

I read this for the first time when I was 14 or 15. It was really great to read it again in graphic novel-form.

Erin *Help I'm Reading and I Can't Get Up* says

I was clearly not the target audience for this.

Shortcake says

"I said no."

WOWOWOWOWOWOW.

This was one of those books where you can't stop reading it because it's amazing and like when you're not reading you're thinking about it, wishing you were reading it.

It was SO powerful. I'm totally glad I read it. I don't really have a review for this, but it really is amazing, PLUS Emily Carroll's art brings it to life.

<3

PinkAmy loves 💕 books📖, cats😻 and naps🛏 says

SPEAK is one of the most important books ever written for young adults. It was a first dealing with date rape, years before #MeToo . Laurie Halse Anderson captured Melinda's quiet vulnerability and burgeoning voice with enough sarcasm to feel authentic, making Melinda's pain even more poignant.

Because of Melinda's artwork and art as a metaphor, SPEAK transfers seamlessly to a graphic novel. Emily Carroll's illustrations brought the characters to life. I've seen the movie, listened to the audio and read the book countless times, so Carroll's drawings could have felt "wrong" if she hadn't imagined the people as Anderson depicted them. Carroll's Melinda looked different than Kristen Steward in the movie and seemed different than the reader in the audio version, but she ****was**** just as much Melinda.

SPEAK is only the second graphic novel I've read, so while I'm not an expert, I can say that I LOVED it. My only complaint was that the formatting on my kindle was a bit tricky. Viewing was landscape, which was fine, but I would have liked to be able to enlarge some of the pages with greater ease. Even my aging eyes could read all the words, but I had to strain a bit.

Lola says

It's rare for me to enjoy an adaptation more than the original version of the story, but I found this graphic novel adapted from the novel *Speak* twice as affective as the book itself.

It affected me.

As I read this story, I thought about why that is. I was never raped. I was never close to being raped. I was touched inappropriately by guys and men without my permission, but certainly nothing like Melinda endured.

But it's such a universal theme – consent.

Everyone, whether you're a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, or both, you understand that there are boundaries – or there should be – between people and no one should ever cross those boundaries unless you allow that to happen.

No one should touch you if you don't want them to. No one should kiss you if you don't want them to. No one should even hug you if you don't want them to, if the people make you uncomfortable.

And of course, no one should use you like a sex toy. Ever.

IT, the teenage boy who raped Melinda, made the hair on my arms stand up. It's not that he scared me per se, but the fact that he was able to smile so nonchalantly after committing a crime (and not realizing that what he did was wrong) creeped me out.

That kind of person does not understand the need for boundaries and the importance of consent. That kind of person takes what they want and doesn't look behind as the other person's world is unravelling.

That kind of person, unless caught, becomes an adult, becomes a parent maybe, and has a little girl or boy... and what then? How can that person teach their little girl or boy about respect and consent if they don't understand it themselves?

In my review of the novel, I mentioned feeling disappointed that IT's personal life is never revealed, that we know close to nothing about him except for what he did to Melinda and other people.

But I was wrong to feel disappointed. We don't need to empathize with IT, and it's certainly easy not to when we learn that he is rich and popular and gets any girl he wants. Even if his father had been abusive to him and this was revealed to us, that wouldn't make his own behaviour any less wrong.

I seem angry right now. I'm actually not. I'm very satisfied, and you will be, too.

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Rachael says

uh, so that was amazing. also my first five-star read of 2018!

full rtc

destiny ? howling libraries says

Content warnings: sexual assault, self-harm, depression, anxiety, PTSD, victim-shaming

"When people don't express themselves, they die one piece at a time."

I first picked up a copy of *Speak* at the library some time in the very early 2000s, when I wish I'd been too young to know how the world worked, the ways in which it chewed children up and spat them back out. Sadly, I was one of many children who learned these things early, and *Speak* made me feel acknowledged. I remember thinking, for the first time, that someone understood me, and I will never, ever let go of the special place that feeling carved out in my heart for this famous little story. When I found out that one of my favorite graphic novel artists was taking it on for a new spin, I had to have it, and I literally sat down to devour it the moment I opened the package.

"I wonder how long it would take for anyone to notice if I just stopped talking."

Unfortunately, Laurie Halse Anderson speaks from a place of understanding and experience on this topic, but it shines through in how authentic the events of *Speak* feel. The story not only discusses the ramifications of rape and how Melinda views her attacker now – especially in a scenario when a victim is forced to continue interacting with their abuser – but it also touches on the depression that can come along with the event, and the ways those feelings manifest themselves for many victims: isolation, silence, anger, self-harm, anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and apathy for anything in life that isn't crucial to survival.

"I have never heard a more eloquent silence."

While the story itself is as wonderful and haunting as it always has been, Emily Carroll's artwork genuinely takes things to a new level. She manages to depict small things that don't come across as so important in the text – like Melinda's nervous tics, or the way she views herself as an endangered rabbit when the vicious wolf (her attacker) is near. When it comes to the heaviest and darkest scenes, Emily manages to convey the hurt and fear without going overboard on graphic depictions. There is one panel, in fact, that is so subtle, but left me breathless because it so *perfectly* portrays the helpless claustrophobia that comes with facing one's attacker.

"It happened. There is no avoiding it, no forgetting. No running away, or flying, or burying, or hiding."

I could tell you, for those of you who haven't experienced *Speak* before, that there's a silver lining, or a lightly humorous subplot to cut through the grime, or a perfectly happy ending, but none of that would be true. Laurie Halse Anderson is too authentic for that. This isn't a story about a girl who happens to have been raped; **this is a book about rape**, and the tragic things it can do to a survivor's psyche. I recommend the utmost caution when proceeding with this story, in its original format or this new graphic novel style, but I also have to say that I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

Scott says

"Sometimes I think high school is one long hazing activity. If you're tough enough to survive this, they'll let you become an adult . . . I hope it's worth it." - Melinda Sordino

Powerfully succinct graphic novel adaptation of the popular young adult best-seller, illustrated in a sparse black / white / gray format that seemed appropriate for the dark story, that is more timely than ever during the on-going issues in the entertainment industry.

James DeSantis says

My wife was reading the actual novel and it looked good so figured I'd borrow from the Library the graphic novel.

This is a tale of a girl going through her first year at high school. Beyond friends betraying friends, weird social issues, fitting in, and more you get a darker and deeper story here. Melinda is raped the summer before high school and she keeps it all in because it's hard to talk about the events. Physically, emotionally and honestly a survival tale, this is Melinda story of how to survive through it all.

Good: The art is great. Not too overly detail, and just enough emotions to get the bigger moments across on faces. I thought the dialog was pretty solid, a bit outdated at parts, but that's all high school lingo. I thought the ending was very powerful and gave hope in an otherwise dark story.

Bad: I thought the pacing was a bit odd. Sometimes scenes thrown in make it hard to keep interested and unneeded at times.

Overall a great story about a girl's survival through probably the worst part of her life. A 4 out of 5.

Mackenzie Lane says

I want to wrap Melinda in a big, fresh out of the dryer blanket & spoon feed her chocolate ice cream while we watch The Princess Bride because she needs a friend who would do that for her!!

This story is important and strong. It's heartbreaking, but it brings to light a struggle that I personally, have never had to endure, and it's a struggle that should never leave the victim feeling powerless or ashamed or isolated.

I liked that the graphic novel didn't focus solely on what happened to Melinda at the party. It brought up normal high school issues, like cliques and rumors, and didn't try to romanticize the high school experience. I'm not going to lie, I went to a small private school my freshman and sophomore year of high school, so I was never subject to the kind of harsh insults that were hurled at Melinda. But girls can be downright cruel at that age (I know I had my moments of jealousy) & guys can be just as big of jerks, and I wanted to throw Heather down a trash chute !!!!! Sorry had to mention that ??

Only thing that I would have liked to have seen was Melinda's parents working out their issues, or talking with Melinda after finding out about what happened to her. (this may have been wrapped up in the actual novel but I wouldn't know because I haven't read it)

It ended quite abruptly for me, but at least it ended on a hopeful note.

It's moving and sad, but worth the read. And the art is superb. ??

Kim says

How can this book be so great? I know the story, the ending, and yet I was gripped with emotions on every spread. I feel lacerated anew to experience Melinda's story in a new, wholly amazing way. The art is PERFECT. The script is perfectly chosen for the medium. It really is a new book.

A seven on the Orbiting Jupiter scale. Five tissues and two ugly cries (the last page and when Melinda sees her art teacher in Cubist form. . . so powerful.)

emilie.♥ says

If you're a fan of the original novel, you are going to adore the graphic novel.

The art is flawless. Every setting, character and emotion looks just how I pictured them. Kristen Stewart was great in the movie, though the Melinda depicted here is more accurate to how she briefly described herself in the book. I enjoyed the little background details, like Melinda's tree sketches on her bedroom walls and the TV in the living room during Christmas.

While I have never experienced assault myself and cannot begin to imagine what that's like, I feel the art captured depression very well. The long, quiet days that always feel like winter. Only being able to see a smudge, or an empty shell of a person in the mirror. The voices in your head. The feeling of constantly wanting to crawl in bed and not come out. Seeing those emotions expressed in the book and then vividly brought to life through pictures made me tear up...more than once. Emily Carroll did a wonderful job and I'll be checking out more of her work in the future.

Since *Speak* was published in 1999, making it almost 20 years old, expect to find a few up-to-date references. They're brief and definitely not obnoxious. There are references to Instagram, Nutella, and the inclusion of smart phones. The book doesn't feel dated at all to me, though a lot of teens today might find the lack of internet a little jarring. I'm glad the graphic novel gave it just a touch of modernization without feeling awkward or too "fellow kids."

All this to say, this version is amazing and I'm very happy with how everything turned out. The story is important, timeless, and its message needs to be spread. I'd highly recommend this for school libraries and anyone who was touched by Melinda's story. You won't be disappointed!

(view spoiler)

Amelia's Fantastical Bookends says

Just as heart-wrenching and harrowing as the first time I read it. Anderson' prose combined with Emily Carroll's illustrations bring this book to life in an intensely gripping and creative way; the story itself holds up as the reader is transported into Melinda's world.

This book explores the topic of rape and how it changes the entire world of one girl's life; from the truly dark to the growth that can come from being a survivor from a traumatic situation.

Laurie Halse Anderson wrote a short prologue for the book, too, describing her own emotional turmoil when deciding to write the original book back in the 90s, and how thankful she is for all the people who have continued to support her and other survivors on the long road to recovery and self-love.

This novel has been and always will be poignant and special. It ranges from a whole smattering of topics: depression, self-hate, and becoming an outcast in a social environment, but it also teaches about the beauty and hope that people can find in art, friendship, and inevitably in themselves.

Rachel Reads Ravenously says

4 stars!

I read this based on a recommendation from a coworker and I really enjoyed it. Speak was a book that came out when I was in middle school and I remember reading and loving it at the time. So much so I even have the movie with Kristen Stewart on DVD. Hardcore, I know LOL.

So 15ish years later and reading the graphic novel reminded me of why I love this story and the character of Melinda and her struggle. I feel she represents a lot of girls and women, too many sadly. But she's empathic and relatable and what happened to her shouldn't happen to anyone.

I also really like how the graphic novel subtly modernized the novel, adding in cell phones and making this story up to date without being too obvious.

A solid read, I recommend it to everyone who enjoyed the original book.

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