

English 10 Honors (1283)

Summer Reading Assignment

Your assignment over the summer is to read two specific works of literature (*The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson) and complete an assignment. The assignment has several components all pertaining to your reading experience with the novels and your understanding of the material. Please make sure to read the instructions for each section carefully. Several options for each section are provided below; you do not have to complete all of the questions listed.

****Please note:** In addition to completing the following assignment, you will have to complete an in-class assessment at the beginning of the English 10 Honors course. If you are taking the honors course in January, please review your notes and your assignment prior to the start of class so you are prepared for the assessment.

Assigned Works: *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

****Please do not consult Sparknotes, Shmoop, or other online novel resources when completing this assignment. These novels will be referenced during the semester so it is important that you know and understand the material.**

I. Heading

Please include a proper, MLA heading with your assignment in the upper left corner.

Your Name

Teacher's Name

English 1283

Inverted Due Date (24 August 2017) or (22 January 2018)

II. Character Analyses

Please select ONE character from *The Scarlet Letter* and ONE character from *Speak* (TWO characters total). For each character, identify ONE dominant personality trait. In order to defend the trait you selected, go back into the novels and find TWO quotes that support your chosen trait (FOUR quotes total). After choosing a trait and finding two quotes from the novel to defend it, you must then **discuss** how these quotes support the character trait. Your discussion should be a solid paragraph for each character (TWO detailed paragraphs total).

III. Discussion Question

Select ONE of the questions below to answer about either novel. Please make sure to provide a detailed discussion in your response. You must also reference at least TWO quotes from the novel in your answer.

*****You may select either book for your discussion question response; however, you must select the other novel for your literary device response (section IV).**

The Scarlet Letter

1. How do you think Hawthorne viewed Hester Prynne's adultery? Does he condemn or condone her actions? How is this evident in the novel?
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne changed his last name in his 20s, adding the "w" to the original "Hathorne." Some critics believe the purpose was to distance himself from Puritan ancestors, particularly one who presided over the Salem Witch Trials. Based on your reading, do you agree with these critics? Why or why not?
3. *The Scarlet Letter* was written amidst the American literary movement called transcendentalism (c. 1836-60). However, Hawthorne was skeptical of transcendentalist ideas. Research transcendentalist beliefs and contrast them to Hawthorne's messages in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Speak

4. Discuss the social hierarchy of Merryweather High High. What role does the concept of identity play in the novel? Why is belonging to one of the many clans so important to some characters and so unimportant to others?
5. 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 your 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?
6. Read this poem by Emily Dickinson:

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

How does this poem relate to *Speak*? Please consider the following questions: Is the speaker of this poem really nobody? What is the speaker's mood? Bitter? Playful? Sad? What is the poem really talking about? Is the desire to be alone always a sign of poor mental health? Poetry offers an outlet for expressing individual feelings, and many people enjoy poetry because they can relate to the message. How would Melinda react to Dickinson's poem?

IV. Literary Devices

Select ONE of the following questions about Nathaniel Hawthorne's use of literary devices in the novel. Again, please be sure to reference at least TWO quotes from the novel in your response

*****Remember – This must be the other book not chosen in section III.**

The Scarlet Letter

1. Critics argue that the issue of ambiguity and knowledge is a central theme of the novel. One of the most profound expressions of ambiguity surrounds Arthur Dimmesdale. Explain the connection between this character and ambiguity.
2. Hawthorne's skillful use of color in the description of his settings greatly contributes to the mood. Identify and analyze examples of this in the novel.

Speak

3. Mr. Freeman, Melinda's art teacher, introduces a project for the year. Each student must select a piece of paper with one word on it. Each student must turn that word into a piece of art. "But there's a catch—by the end of the year, you must figure out how to make your object say something, express an emotion, speak to every person who looks at it." Melinda pulls the word "tree." "Tree? It's too easy. I learned how to draw a tree in second grade. I reach in for another piece of paper. Mr. Freeman shakes his head. 'Ah-ah-ah,' he says. 'You just chose your destiny, you can't change that.'" How is Melinda's word symbolic in the novel? How is this object her destiny? How does this project "say something, express an opinion, and speak to every person who looks at it"?

4. In addition to Melinda's art project, Laurie Halse Anderson uses many other symbols to discuss Melinda's emotional struggle in the novel. Identify another important symbol in *Speak* (the tree is not acceptable for this answer). Please explain the symbol and its presence in the novel. Discuss its significance and what it represents. Why does the author use this particular symbol when writing about Melinda's story?

V. Further Exploration

Select ONE of the topics below to complete some additional research about BOTH novels. Please make sure you document the outside sources you used to write your response. ****You must reference outside research when writing your response. This is part of the assessment for this question.**

1. Both novels revolve around a strong central female character. Readers may consider them a statement about the status of women. What was the status of Puritan women as reflected in *The Scarlet Letter*, and what was the changing status of mid-19th century women, the period in which the novel was written? If one sees *Speak* as a statement about the status of women today, what statement is being made? Has the status of women changed, and, if so, how and by how much?
2. It has been said that Melinda is "more an observer to her own life rather than a participant. She holds herself back because it's too painful to engage." Melinda uses her silence as her defense, but, in reality, it causes her more problems. How is this similar to, or different than, Hester Prynne's response? Do their approaches to their unique struggles seem understandable? Readers are often frustrated by both characters' inability or unwillingness to speak. What other ways, given their respective cultures, could they have regained their voices?