

Speak noah

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Bogeyman Mrs.. Johnson February 14, 2013 English Honors Period 3 An Untold Story " There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. " (Maya Angelo) The novel Speak details the life story of Melinda Sordid, a freshman in high school, and how both the traumatic and happy events of her life shape her character. In the summer before entering high school, Melinda is invited to a party that changes her life; and it is not for the better. A senior in high school named Andy Evans rapes her, and since she is so scared, she calls the police, they arrive shortly, and proceed to reek up the party.

Throughout Speak, Melinda is reassured by a poster of Maya Angelo, who was also raped as a child, but went on to become a successful public figure and author. A major theme that echoes throughout the novel Speak is that all people are made smarter not by aging, but by the experiences they have been through. This fact that experience defines a person is evident in Melanin's life by both the traumatic experience she has of rape and the enjoyable experience she has attending Mr.. Freeman's art classes. These two opposite influences wage war and, in he end, Melinda decides to emerge from her shell.

When she speaks to her middle school friend-turned-enemy Rachel about the event at the summer party, Melinda is accepted with open arms and forgiven of her accusations. Through the symbol of the white couch and the metaphors of the seasonal change and the tree, which is each effectively inserted into Speak, one can tell that a person grows through learning from his experience rather than by mere aging. Most trees are a symbol of life

when they are full of leaves in the summer, or a symbol of death when they have lost all their leaves in winter.

In *Speak*, however, as shown on page 12 by Mr. Freeman and Melanin's brief conversation, the tree actually represents Melanin's life story, " 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. " This introduction to art by Mr. Freeman turns out to play a big role in Melanin's life because the object she chooses mirrors the Journey of her life. Melinda thinks to herself, " Some people groan. My stomach flutters. Can he really let us do this? It sounds like too much fun. Tree?

It's too easy. I learned how to draw a tree in second grade. I reach in for another piece of paper. " Just as she is about to grab the second paper, Mr. Freeman dissuades her by saying, Mimi Just chose your destiny, you can't change that. " This quote is the beginning of a book-long metaphor for the progression of Melanin's life; as Melinda improves her drawing of the tree, her life improves. Throughout the rest of *Speak* there are many other references to the tree metaphor; with each successful encounter of Melanin's tree project, her artistic ability has shown improvement.

This correlates with her life improving through the experience she has gained. On page 15 of *Speak*, Melinda returns home from school, sits down on her white couch, and orders pizza. The white couch symbolizes Melinda; this is shown by the following trick to eating on it is to turn the messy side of the cushions up. The couch has two personalities: 'Melinda inhaling pepperoni and mushroom' and 'No one ever eats in the family room, no

ma'am. ' Flip, flip, flip - cushions reversed to show their pretty white cheeks" (15).

This quote is a symbol of Melanin's life because the hidden underside of the couch is symbolizing Melanin's secrets that are buried and not visible to people on the outside. Although, what makes the couch such a great example, is that the visible exterior of the couch is white, which symbolizes purity. On the contrary, the white couch looks repulsive if it is dirty; this relates to a possible reality for Melinda because if she does not speak up, but instead buries her abuse underneath a clean exterior, she cannot be fully clearness of her burden.

Thus, by not peaking up to the world about how she was raped at a party last summer, she can never reach her true potential of the beautiful, white couch. Melanin's reasoning behind hiding the real couch and the truth behind the party is that she fears that people will Judge her for her imperfections. Through the experience she has gained in her freshman year of high school, Melinda realizes that the only way for her to conquer her fear is to use those various positive and negative incidents to help her grow in maturity through experience.

A final example of metaphoric language append to occur on the final page of Speak. It is the last day of Melanin's freshman year and the person she must talk to is Mr.. Freeman. Melinda ideates, " The tears dissolve the last block of ice in my throat. I feel the frozen stillness melt down through the inside of me, dripping shards of ice that vanish in a puddle of sunlight on the stained floor" (198). The ice in this quote represents Melanin's secrets that are

weighing her down, not allowing her to speak up for herself, and harming her physically (Andy hurt Melinda after she told Rachel Andy raped Melinda).

The tears signify the experiences she has undergone in high school and how those experiences allowed her to mature. The sunlight on the stained floor symbolizes Melanin's artwork of the tree; how the tree emanates warmth to cure Melanin's ailment of a frozen mind. Without the experience Melinda had by communicating with Mr.. Freeman, she would never have been able to face her fears and come out of her shell. Speak is overflowing with metaphorical expressions, but many readers do not understand the implications behind the author's use of a particular metaphor in a even situation.

People think, " Oh, I know this is a metaphor," and then move on reading. This ignorance of the meaning behindsymbolismis actually a symbol for how those individuals live their lives. The following quote by Maya Angelo shows this ignorance of symbolism in a real world sense, " Most people don't grow up. Most people age. They find parking spaces, honor their credit cards, get married, have children, and call that maturity. What that is, is aging. " For example, whenever a person attends a party, the driving factor behind that party's success is the quality of inversion.

If everyone there was one of the " most people" that Maya Angelo mentions, the party would be dull and boring, and it would only age the people rather than provide them with new experiences. In summation, if one is to truly live and contribute to society, he must be so overflowing with experiences that he will use metaphors to describe accurately a situation that he has

encountered; without wasting the time that could be spent living through more life Journeys and garnering experience, rather than aging by merely passing through life.