

Audience Analysis of *Speak*, *Freaks and Geeks*, and *Spiderman: Homecoming*

By Liza Stanaland

I am analyzing these stories on audience, but I'll be looking at a few other things as well, so bear with me. I'll get there.

Wow... I am in awe of *Speak*. I read this over the Christmas Holidays. I didn't think I would get into this book the way that I did. When the package came in the mail with the reading materials for this class, I flipped through and skimmed all of them. This story sucked me in. I opened it up somewhere around the end of the first third of the story (that's usually what I do to see if I'm going to enjoy reading a book and also keep the ending a secret) and after a half of a page, I started over from the beginning. I love first person, but I'm not usually a fan of first person present-tense. Most authors don't do it right and it's just harder to get emotionally involved. It tends to end up reading like the character is telling instead of showing, very dry and boring. This story was not like that at all.

There are a few topics in this that really got me. Melinda's feelings are very apparent and she's living that nightmare teenage life that all girls are terrified to go through. I'm thirty-seven years old, but I am cursed with reliving my past and feeling everything just as I did back then. I think this is why I have a love/hate relationship with this story. It definitely brought up some old memories that I would rather have stayed hidden. I think this story is great for young adults because most, if not all, girls (I'm sure there are guys in this equation as well) go to school every day with reservations. They all wonder if today is the day that all hell will break loose and their number is up.

Some kids live in a pool of ignorance and over the years I've learned that the old saying "ignorance is bliss" is deadly accurate. Some teenagers live in their own little bubble, some adults do as well. When you don't or have never been taught to see past your own nose, you become blind to people like Melinda... people who are crying out for help but are ignored and shuffled to the bottom of the deck. I feel that this is a lot of the reason young adults can relate so well to this book. Melinda shares the feelings that everyone has but doesn't talk about.

Then there's the BIG issue. The issue of rape. Lord knows I have my own feelings about the different movements and issues of the day with male figures and female victims, but in a situation like Melinda's it's important to teach children (male or female) that rape is not their fault. Adults should know this as well, but we aren't talking about that. This book takes the reader through Melinda's journey without the shock of the rape but with all the emotions and the aftermath. And since we don't know immediately what is causing Melinda's issues, we get to feel her anxiety without knowing what it is stemmed from. It could have been a number of things and I think that makes the reader connect to Melinda a bit more than we would if we knew from the beginning. I had a pretty good idea what happened at the party to make Melinda call the police, but I'm not sure if a teen would think "rape" from the get.

I have never seen *Freaks and Geeks* but for the most part, it's a bit outdated. The peer pressure and normal teenage worries are all the same, but what school now days has a smoking section? Most teens don't smoke or have a desire to smoke. Or maybe they do, but they're vaping. I just about fell off the bed when I saw how young John Francis Daley, James Franco, and Seth Rogan were. I'm not 100% sure on this, but I don't see teens being into this show. I think it may be a bit on the corny side for them.

I feel like *Spiderman: Homecoming* speaks to the “superhero” in all of us. Peter Parker is still young enough that teens can relate to his goofy attitude and childish ideas. Spiderman is cool enough to save the day and makes us all wish we had supernatural powers to be a hero and stand out from a crowd even if we have to keep our identity a secret. It allows the viewer to engross themselves in a fantastical story which takes us out of our own heads and escape from the real world and our real problems. This is one story that you don’t have to be a kid to love. However, because Peter Parker is so young, a lot of his interests are the same as a normal teen, thus cementing the bond between young viewers and himself.