

**DECEIT, DESPAIR, AND DEJECTION:
CONNECTING SPEAK AND THE SCARLET LETTER (begin at Chapter 1
"The Prison Door". Skip The Custom House)**

Please get yourselves a "flash/thumb" drive to save your work on. Be sure to save your document as RICH TEXT FORMAT to guarantee you will be able to open it on the first day of class.

1. Please PRINT out a copy of your finished product and have it with you on the first day of class.
2. Bring both books to our first class. It would be helpful for you to make notes in the books about things that you think are important to understand what is going on in the storyline

General Questions: In ONE paragraph TYPE your answers to the following before reading either book

1. List one unwritten rule for surviving in high school.
 2. What comes to mind when you hear the word "clique?"
 3. In what way do you conform to what is expected of you?
 4. What does guilt look like? Draw a symbol for guilt.
 5. How instrumental is a parent's influence on their child's development?
 6. Write a definition for "scapegoat."
 7. What are some possible reasons someone might not speak up for themselves when they are being treated unfairly or are simply misunderstood?
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The Scarlet Letter / Speak Discussion Questions

Both novels revolve around a strong central female character. Readers may consider them a statement about the status of women. In 1-2 paragraphs answer:

8. **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?

It has been said that Melinda (Speak) 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 silence as her defense but, in reality, it causes her more problems. In 1-2 paragraphs answer:

9. How is this similar to, or different than, Hester's response? Do their approaches to their unique traumas seem understandable? Healthy? Readers are often frustrated by both characters' inability/unwillingness to speak. What other ways, given their respective cultures, could they have regained their voices?

Speak deals very clearly with the issues of stereotypes. A number of stereotypical high school groups are represented in the novel. The Scarlet Letter deals with the issue of clearly defined gender roles and the preconceived notion that a "man of the cloth" is above reproach. Using issues/ideas in both novels, discuss the idea that people find it easier to jump to conclusions rather than searching to find the truth. In 1-2 paragraphs answer:

10. In what ways do the novels show how people are sometimes not who we think they are? How is this reflected in your own high school experience?

Mr. Freeman, in Speak, has a way with words. Certainly these words resonate in Melinda's inner reality. His words also have implications for Hester.

Consider both characters in regard to the following quotes: how can the quotes apply to each?

- a) "You must walk alone to find your soul."
- b) "Art is about making mistakes."
- c) "Nothing is perfect. Flaws are interesting"

Be prepared to discuss these quotes in class...so make some notes you can refer to....

Answer the following. Include at least TWO quotes from each work to support your theories and insights.

Character: Hester and Melinda

11. What are the differences between Hester and Melinda in terms of motivation? How they view the world around them?
12. Do you think Hester would have been better off if everyone just ignored her like they do Melinda, or do you think having to wear a scarlet letter was the easier of the two punishments?

Setting: The Forest

13. Both of the life-changing events happen to Hester and Melinda when they are in the forest away from their community. What do you think this says about the role of community in the outcome of their lives?

Theme: Culpability/Guilt/Responsibility

14. Do Hester and Melinda deserve to be punished? How do their motivations equal up to their punishments?
15. Both Hester and Melinda do not speak up. Hester doesn't tell who the father of her baby is, and Melinda doesn't tell who raped her. Why do you think these women kept their silence, and what do you think would have changed in the story if they had spoken earlier?

Works Cited

Hayn, Judith A., and Brigid Schult. "DECEIT, DESPAIR, AND DEJECTION: CONNECTING SPEAK AND THE SCARLET LETTER." Loyola University, Chicago, 2004. Web.