

BREATHING UNDERWATER

By Alex Flinn

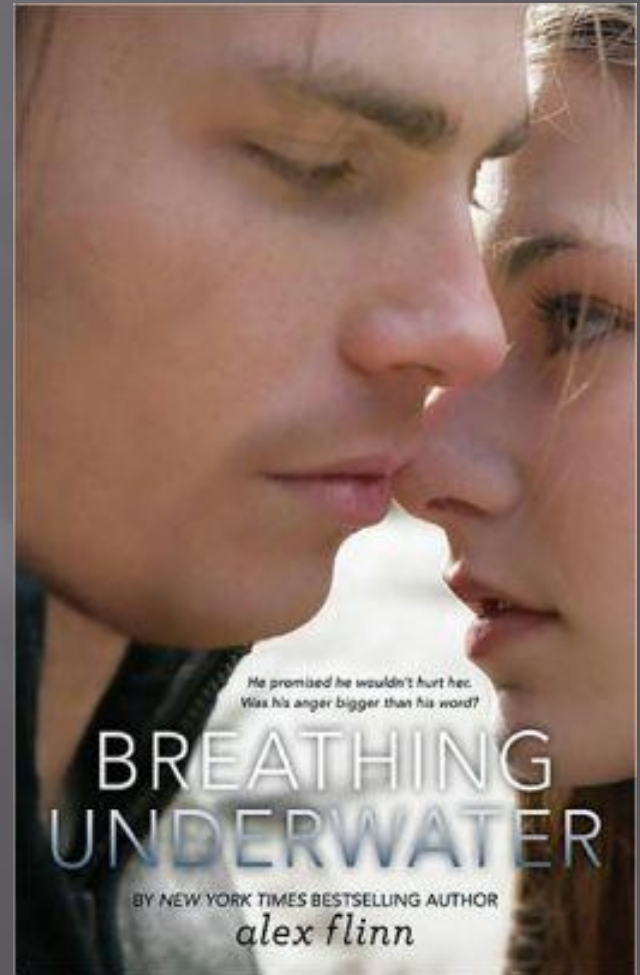
Bell-Ringer

Prediction Guide:

Examine closely the cover art.

List a possible number of topics that the book could be about.

What do you think the author means by the title?



About Alex Flinn

When Alex Flinn was five, her mother informed her that she would be "an author" when she grew up. Never one to follow instructions, Alex studied theater and opera and became a lawyer before finally writing her first novel, *Breathing Underwater*. Alex lives in Miami with her husband, Gene, and their daughters, Katie and Meredith.

Other Books written by Alex Flinn

- ▣ *Towering*
- ▣ *Bewitching*
- ▣ *Cloaked*
- ▣ *A Kiss in Time*
- ▣ *Beastly*
- ▣ *Diva*
- ▣ *Fade to Black*
- ▣ *Nothing to Lose*
- ▣ *Breaking Point*

Main Characters

- ▣ Nick Andreas: At sixteen, he's ordered into therapy for abusing his girlfriend; he used to have the reputation of being one of the coolest guys in school.
- ▣ Caitlin McCourt: Nick's girlfriend, formerly plump, still harbors low self-esteem.
- ▣ Deborah Lehman: the judge who hears the case between Caitlin and Nick.
- ▣ Mr. Andreas: Nick's only parent, his abusive father, a wealthy self-made man who constantly tells Nick he's a loser.
- ▣ Mrs. McCourt: Caitlin's mother.
- ▣ Tom Carter: He's Nick's best friend, but he doesn't know about what Nick's father does to him, or why he abused Caitlin.

More Characters...

- ❑ Mario Ortega: He teaches Nick's family violence class.
- ❑ Kelly Steele, Leo Sotolongo, Tyrone/Tiny Johnston, A.J./Psycho, Ray DeLeon: members of Nick's family violence class.
- ❑ Mr. and Mrs. Carter: Tom's parents who treat Nick like one of the family because he's there so much, but who are not accepting of anyone outside their social circle.
- ❑ Liana Castro: A girl Tom dates, despite his parents' disapproval.
- ❑ Saint O'Connor: Star quarterback, Tom's new best friend and Caitlin's new boyfriend.
- ❑ Miss Higgins: Nick's honors English teacher, who sees more of Nick than he knows he's revealed.
- ❑ Derek Wayne: He's in choir with Caitlin and is smart and geeky.

Setting...

- ▣ The story takes place in Key Biscayne High School. The high school is located in Florida. The high school is portrayed as a “rich kid” school. As you read you will be able to see that the high school does have ethnic diversity.

Major Themes to think about...

MAJOR THEMES AND IDEAS

- Hitting people, even once, no matter what the reason, is wrong.
- Sometimes it's a good thing when life kicks you in the butt so you'll take a good look at the messes you've made.
- Exploring the past brings out feelings that cause us to become insecure, controlling, or violent.
- What happens to you at home is the cornerstone of your other relationships.
- Control freaks are frequently also violent.
- People interpret your behavior differently from the way you do, and may see patterns you are denying or blind to.
- Abusive behavior is both physical and mental.
- It's important to acknowledge your emotions, and find positive ways of dealing with them.
- You're not a loser because someone calls you that, over and over. You become a loser when you tell that to yourself, over and over. So, figure out how to turn off both those voices, and be a winner.
- You can't respect yourself if you're letting someone beat you up, whether they use their words, or their fists, or both.

Literary Devices

Nick is the first person narrator. The story is told in two time frames, the PRESENT, and the past. There are different fonts to help keep the text from becoming confusing. Pay close attention to the anger in the narrative and journal voices fade as Nick realizes what he has really done.

Conflict that is presented..

- ▣ There is an initial conflict with two of the main characters. Throughout the book there will be conflicts between one of the main characters and other minor characters. Ultimately the conflict you will notice will be INTERNAL.
- ▣ Things to think about as we read..
 1. What are the conflicts throughout the novel
 2. How will he overcome the INTERNAL conflict.
 3. Will he overcome the EXTERNAL conflict(s)

Essential Questions

Discuss.....

- ▣ How do families and friends affect us?
- ▣ How does one prioritize the things in his/her life?
- ▣ Why is it important for people to develop a code of behavior?
- ▣ How do a person's actions define him or her?