

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Lesley Wolf	School:	Hyatts
Book Title:	Breaking Point	Genre:	Fiction- Mysteries & Thrillers
Author:	Alex Flinn	Pages:	240
Publisher:	HarperCollins	Copyright:	2003

*In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.*

**Book Summary and summary citation:** (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Paul is new to Gate, a school whose rich students make life miserable for anyone not like them. And Paul is definitely not like them. Then, something incredible happens. Charlie Good, a star student and athlete, invites Paul to join his elite inner circle. All Charlie wants is a few things in return - small things that Paul does willingly. Until one day Charlie wants something big - really big.

Now Paul has to decide how far he'll go to be one of the gang.

The electrifying follow-up to Alex Flinn's critically acclaimed debut novel, *Breathing Underwater*, *Breaking Point* is a tale of school violence that explores why and how a good kid can go 'bad'.

**Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s):** (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

10. Examine author's purpose and style.

13. Analyze plot, character, theme, point of view and setting in varied genres.

6. Write responses to literature that organize an insightful interpretation around several clear ideas, premises or images that support judgments with specific references to the original text, to other texts, authors and/or to prior knowledge.

**Include two professional reviews of this title:** (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

### Review #1

Publishers Weekly: Heavy-handed writing undermines Flinn's (*Breathing Underwater*) stated goal for her second novel, namely, to "stimulate discussion" among teens about why kids commit violent acts. When geeky ex-homeschooler Paul Richmond enrolls as a sophomore at an exclusive Miami private school, he is immediately targeted for harassment. Living in a shabby apartment with his needy, newly divorced mother (her job in the school office lowers Paul's tuition), Paul would feel miserable even if the jocks weren't calling him "faggot" and trashing his locker. Then popular Charlie Good suddenly befriends him outside of school, that is and Paul seems willing to do anything to stay in favor. First Paul vandalizes mailboxes, then he hacks into the school computer system to change Charlie's transcript. Charlie's hold on Paul intensifies until he persuades Paul to

plant a bomb in the school. Characterizations are stock, and no one, particularly not the all-powerful Charlie, seems convincing. The boys' reasons for wanting to blow up the school remain murky, and many of Flinn's devices, like the school sermons that parallel the plot, are contrived. For a more developed treatment of similar themes, readers may appreciate Gail Giles's *Shattering Glass*,

Review #2

*Voices of Youth Advocates*: Homeschooled by his mother since second grade and recently abandoned by his father, fifteen-year-old Paul must learn to adjust to his new life. This adjustment includes living in a small, low-rent apartment and attending the prestigious Gate-Brickell Christian School, where his mother has just taken a job. Paul's lack of a trust fund gets him shunned by his snobby, spoiled classmates, and he is subjected to cruel practical jokes until Charlie Good, the golden-boy tennis star at Gate, befriends him. Charlie first tests Paul's loyalty by challenging him to destroy mailboxes, then by persuading him to drink and steal, and finally by convincing him to use his mother's office key and his computer expertise to change one of Charlie's grades. Paul continues to follow Charlie's lead while simultaneously being pulled into a dangerous, complicated web of lies and bomb-making Internet sites.

Paul's struggle with his situation at home, his turmoil at school, and the painful realization that his relationship with Charlie is not as it seems, help to paint him in a sympathetic light, but Paul ultimately must pay a high price for acceptance and popularity. Not since Cormier's *The Chocolate War* have characters been drawn to be so brilliantly twisted. Flinn's flair for creating disturbing characters in completely realistic situation is uncanny and leaves the reader thinking of Columbine and other school violence incidents whose perpetrators could have been quite similar to Charlie and Paul. This timely, engaging book is certain to grab the interest of teens.

**What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?**

<u>Title:</u> <b>Breathing Underwater</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Alex Flinn</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>Shattering Glass</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Gail Giles</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>Nothing to Lose</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Alex Flinn</b>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

Multiple uses of the word "shit" and "ass" as used in context with the setting of the book. Also deals with school violence issues.

**Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)**

Gifted/Accelerated  Regular  At Risk

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 6  7  8  9  10  11  12

**Reading level of this title (if applicable):** Grades 7 and up

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** Jan. 31, 2008

**Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:**

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults