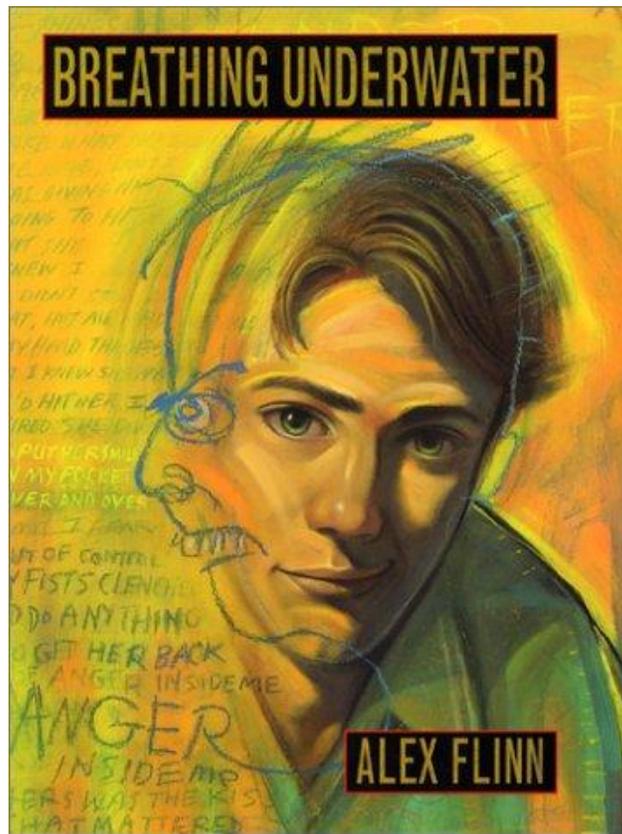


Breathing Underwater



Name: _____
ELA 7th Grade

Group Color _____
Job _____

Essential Understandings

- ☆ 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.
- ☆ 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.

Chapter Summaries

January 5th - January 10th

January 17th - January 21st

January 26th - February 9th

February 12th - February 28th

March 1st - March 18th

March 25th - March 29th

March 30th - April 2nd

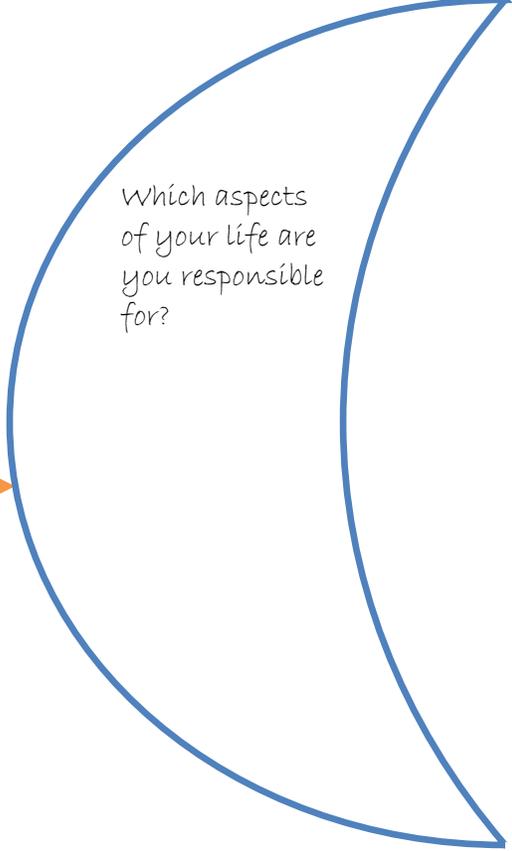
April 4th - A Minute Later

July 11th - September 2nd

Big Questions



To what extent are you responsible for your own behavior?



Which aspects of your life are you responsible for?

Why do girls with low self-esteem sometimes implant themselves in abusive relationships?

Why do boys with low self-esteem sometimes need someone to bully to identify themselves?

1. The beginning of the book, Nick thinks of his abuse of Caitlin: It was a slap . . . One slap, when she pushed me way too far. I never beat her up, would never hurt her.

Does Nick believe this? Why does he not admit the truth to himself?

2. What do you think Judge Lehman hopes to accomplish by making Nick keep a journal, detailing his relationship with Caitlin?

How does keeping the journal differ from discussing the same incidents in Mario's class?

Would simply keeping the journal without the class yield the same result?

What about just attending the class?

3. Comparing himself to Tom, Nick says that Tom is a great guy. "But we'd all be great guys if we had his life." How do a person's circumstances affect the type of person they are? Can you think of circumstances about your own life which have changed the type of person you are?

4. At the beginning of the book, Tom has abandoned his longstanding friendship with Nick because of Nick's conduct toward Caitlin. Was this right?

What, if any, are our obligations to our friends?

5. Should Tom have reacted sooner to Nick's conduct? What is someone's obligation to stop conduct which endangers others if he is not directly involved?

Have you ever had a friend who behaved in a way which was unacceptable? What, if anything, did you do?

6. Nick wishes to conceal his abuse at his father's hands. Why? In what way would it have been to Nick's benefit to tell someone? Could it have been to his detriment?

7. Nick says to Caitlin, "We're two of a kind," and she agrees. Is his statement true?

In what ways are Nick and Caitlin similar? How are they different?

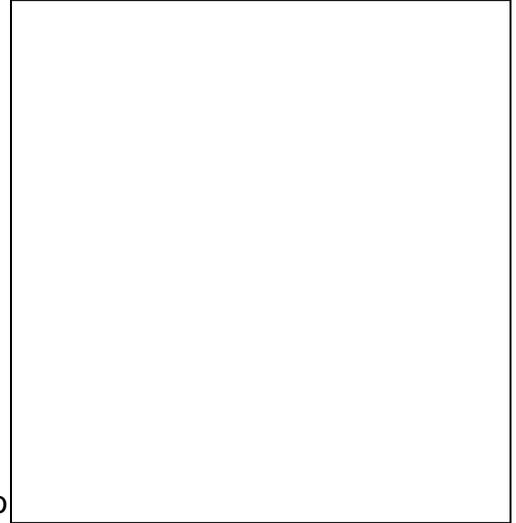
Create a Wanted Ad for your ideal woman.

WANTED ALIVE!

Physical Description: _____

Personality Traits: _____

Also



Specific acts include: _____

Suspect last seen: _____ Favorite hangout(s) _____

If found, please _____

REWARD

In your wanted ad, why did you list those particular traits?

Do you think you will ever find a person who meets all of your expectations?

Which ones would you be willing to compromise on?

8. How are our perceptions of the characters in the book (Saint, Elsa, and Leo, especially) colored by Nick's opinions? If the book was narrated by Caitlin, would our opinions be different? What if it was narrated by Elsa?

9. Nick relates to Leo and is deeply affected by his murder-suicide. Would Nick have gone as far as Leo without help? Why or why not?

10. At the end of the book, Nick tells Caitlin, "I loved you so much," and she responds "I can't believe that anymore." Did Nick truly love Caitlin?

Why or why not?

Does she really not believe him?

11. Does Caitlin have any qualities which make her an easy target for someone like Nick?

Would another girl react differently to him?

Conversely, does Caitlin have any qualities which make it easier for her to leave Nick (and stay away) in the end?

Do you think that the wrong girl can cause you to show your negative (or violent) personality traits?

How much do you think Nick's situation is because of Caitlin?

Have you ever chased after a girl you knew you couldn't have? How did it end? *(If you answered no, have you ever thought about chasing after a girl you knew you couldn't have? Why didn't you?)*

Can you trust your friends with your girl? Why or Why not?

Can you trust your girl with your friends? Why or Why Not?

12. Throughout the book, Caitlin believes that, were she not Nick's girlfriend, she would not enjoy the friendships and popularity she's gained. Is this the only (or main) reason she stays with Nick? What other reasons might there be? Is Caitlin correct in her assessment of their friends?

13. In what ways are the guys in Mario's Family Violence Class different from one another?

In what ways are they the same?

How would Nick's friendships with guys in the class differ from his friendship with Tom?

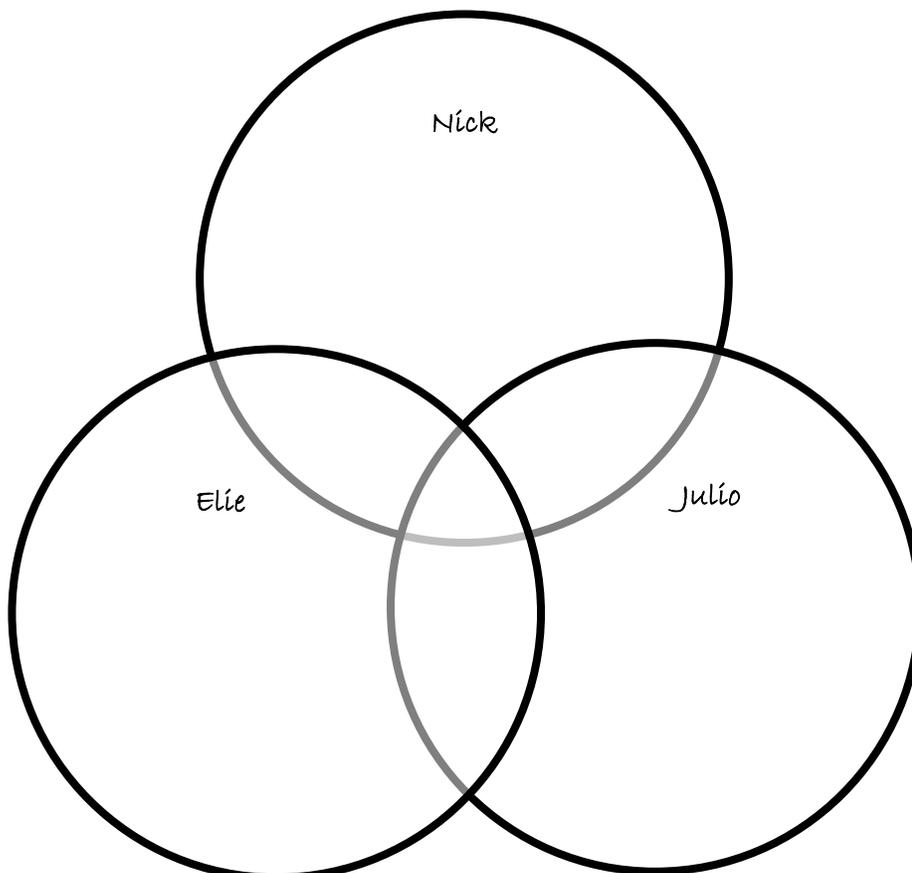
14. At the end of the book, Nick says that his father's gift of an expensive car is "the best he can do," indicating that he believes his father incapable of having a relationship with him. Is this true? Is there anything Nick might do to improve the relationship? Does he want to? Why should or shouldn't Caitlin's decision about her father be different from Nick's?

What role does our parent relationships play in our treatment of others?

15. In the end, Tom says, "I want things like they used to be," and Nick responds, "They aren't." In what ways do you think things will be different for Nick from now on?

Do you think that Nick, given the choice, would want things like they used to be" when he was dating Caitlin?

Compare the characters of our first three stories to one another. How are they the same? How are they different? List some similar and dissimilar character traits they share.



Compare this story and plot to that of *Romiette and Julio*. How are they alike? How are they different?

<i>Breathing Underwater</i>	<i>Romiette and Julio</i>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Who would Nick be without Caitlin?

By the same token, who is Caitlin without him? How badly does he need her to maintain his sense of self?

How well could either of these people stand alone?

Which of the part(s) of the story do you personally identify with the most? Why is that?

Reflect on our essential understanding questions.

- ☆ What does the title phrase, "Breathing Underwater" mean? Discuss the significant scenes involving various forms of water. How do these scenes relate to the title phrase?
- ☆ *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.*
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