

Breaking Point by Alex Flinn
Reading Group Guide

1. In the prologue, Paul says that people “don’t know what I’ve paid—inside my head where it really matters.” Is this kind of payment real? Aside from his time in juvenile, what, if any, other price(s) has Paul paid?
2. Paul says, “Doing the right thing isn’t always easy.” What factors would Paul say made it difficult for him to do the right thing?
3. Compare the impact that Gate exerts over the various characters, particularly Paul, Binky, and David, but also Amanda.
4. Why does Paul believe that Charlie is acting in his best interests despite Charlie’s various abandonments and the bird seed incident? How does he justify Charlie’s conduct in his own mind?
5. Is Paul, as David says, the only one who is innocent in what happens to him? Why or why not?
6. Who left the note regarding the dog for Paul? Explain your choice.
7. What are Charlie’s motivations for his conduct toward Paul and the other people at Gate? Is he merely evil, or is there some other reason for what he does?
8. Is Charlie lying (as he says) when he tells Paul the story of his conception and birth? Or is he lying later when he says he was lying? Why would he lie either time?
9. What is Binky’s motivation for her initial and continued friendship with Paul?
10. How does Paul’s relationship with his parents impact the type of person he is and his conduct within the story? Contrast Paul’s relationship with his mother and Charlie’s relationship with his father.
11. Going back to Paul’s statement that he has “paid” for his conduct “inside his head,” has Charlie also paid a price in the end? Has Charlie truly gotten away with his conduct? Does he think he has?
12. Would Paul and Charlie have gotten away with the bomb attempt but for Paul’s confession? Why or why not? Why do you think Paul was suspected and brought to the principal’s office? Why does he confess?
13. Why are people, hearing Paul’s and Charlie’s stories, inclined to believe Charlie and disbelieve Paul? What insights does Charlie offer into this?
14. Does Mrs. Good know about Charlie’s involvement in the bomb scheme, as Paul suspects? What are her justifications for what she does?
15. Why does the author choose to end the book as she does, with the conversation between Paul and Mrs. Good, then the newspaper article, rather than telling us in more detail what happens to the characters? What do *you* think happens to the characters?
16. In *Breaking Point*, one student is driven to suicide by constant peer taunting while another commits an act of school violence. Why would peer taunting drive someone this far? Why do students engage in taunting others? Have you ever engaged in this type of behavior and, if so, has the story in *Breaking Point* changed your perception at all?