



## **Breaking Point**

Lesley Choyce

Reading Level: 3.4

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### **Book Summary**

Cameron chooses to go to a correctional survival camp when he is caught breaking and entering, but once he arrives, he isn't sure he made the right decision. Cameron soon discovers he likes the outdoors and he is a natural in a kayak. He even makes a good impression on Chris, the officer in charge. Luckily, the bully Gerard doesn't bother Cameron too much either. But when Cameron starts hanging out with Brianna, he makes some poor choices, and his desire to please Brianna makes what little good judgment he has fly out the window. Together they escape the camp and find themselves caught at sea during a hurricane. After almost losing their lives together, hopefully, they can find them again separately.

### **Prereading Idea**

In order to help students understand the setting, show them a map of the eastern shore of Nova Scotia where Camp Mosher is located.

[www.frommers.com/destinations/destinationmap.cfm?destID=2968](http://www.frommers.com/destinations/destinationmap.cfm?destID=2968)

Also show this YouTube video of kayaking on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiGHsMU5bX0&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiGHsMU5bX0&feature=related)

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Many teens convicted of crimes are sent to boot camp correctional facilities instead of the more traditional detention centers. In small groups, ask students to research alternative placements for troubled teens. What are the alternatives to detention centers? Who can go there? What is the usual sentence? What are the success rates? What are the positive and negative aspects? Have students use their research and news and first-hand accounts of such correctional facilities to write a persuasive paper regarding their value as part of the rehabilitation process of troubled teens. Have students share their pieces in small groups and post in the classroom.
- Cameron frequently states that he had no choice but to follow Brianna's plan. With a partner, ask students to make a list of the decisions Cameron makes from the time he meets Brianna. Beside each choice he makes, have students write what his other choice or choices could have been. Then, pick one choice and write a brief scenario of how "it could have been" if Cameron would have made an alternate choice. Have students work with a partner to tell the alternate scenario from Cameron's point of view and the point of view of one other character. Share the dual scenarios with the class.

**Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*****Characterization***

With a partner, ask students to draw a Venn diagram and list the character traits, life choices and personal issues for Cameron and Brianna in the appropriate circles. Then using the lists on the Venn diagram as prewriting, have the students write a poem in two voices. Each student will take on the "voice" of one of the characters. Working together, students should write the words of the poem line by line, creating alternating individual character lines as well as unison lines. Students can perform their poems for the class.

***Conflict***

Cameron faces both internal and external conflict throughout the story. Ask students to draw two columns on a sheet of paper and label one column "internal conflict" and the other column "external conflict." Then brainstorm as a class, making a list in each column. Ask students to work with a partner to create a flow chart on poster board showing how the conflicts in Cameron's life work together to help him make decisions and how those conflicts ultimately help him. Have students add other visual elements and post charts around the room.

**Setting**

Setting is the time and place of action in a story. Ask students to think about the setting of *Breaking Point* and brainstorm a list of facts about the setting. After the list is complete, ask students to identify which aspects of the setting are crucial to the story. For example, it is crucial that the story occurs on an isolated island. For each item on the list, ask students to determine if that element of setting is crucial and to explain why. As students share their responses, ask the class to corroborate their reasoning using evidence from the text.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. Why does Cameron arrive at Camp Mosher feeling sorry for himself and angry that he made the choice to go there? Why does he choose Camp Mosher over the Youth Facility in Walkerton? What crime did he commit?
2. How does the voice in Cameron's head get him into trouble? Why does he listen to the voice when he knows intuitively that he will end up in trouble?
3. The families and background of Cameron and Brianna are not mentioned in the story. What purpose could the author have for omitting this information? How does not knowing the environment and family Cameron and Brianna come from affect how the reader responds to them?
4. Chris is a positive force in Cameron's life. Why does Cameron lie to Chris? What does Cameron hope to gain by his lies? How is Cameron hurt by his lies?
5. Cameron says in chapter 5 that he should use his brain instead of his emotions to make decisions. What decisions does he make using his brain? How do those decisions save his life? How do the emotional decisions he makes affect his life?
6. Brianna's life choices have left her hopeless and fearful, so she lies to get what she wants. How do her lies to Cameron hurt him? What do her lies cost her? What is Cameron's reaction to her lies?
7. Neither Cameron nor Brianna is willing to accept responsibility for their actions. Who do they blame for being in trouble? How do Cameron's and Brianna's lack of responsibility for their actions perpetuate their "crappy lives"?
8. After spending the day with Phillip, Cameron realizes, "I wasn't feeling sorry for him. I was feeling sorry for me" (chapter 7). What brings Cameron to this realization? What impact does this realization have on Cameron?
9. After Cameron and Brianna safely make it off the water Brianna decides to return to the camp? What brings her to this decision? What is Cameron's reaction to her choice? How is this decision different from the other decisions they have made?
10. What is Cameron's breaking point? How will reaching his breaking point affect his future?

**Writer's Craft***Imagery*

Imagery involves one or more of the five senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, sight). An author uses a word or phrase to help the reader “see” the scene or “feel” the emotion. A well-written description arouses a particular response or emotion in the reader’s imagination. For example, in chapter 1 the author writes of “Buckets of rain falling from a gray dead sky.” This helps paint the picture of Cameron’s emotions as well as his physical surroundings. In small groups ask students to find other examples of imagery and to list associations/connections evoked by the images. Then have students select their favorite image and explain why the author chose this particular image and how it affects the reader. Have students share with a partner and revise to include new insights. Post their analyses around the room.

**Author Biography**

**Lesley Choyce** teaches part-time at Dalhousie University, runs Pottersfield Press and has written over forty adult and young adult books, including science fiction, fantasy, poetry and nonfiction. He is a writer, publisher, educator, musician and television host. His YA novels center on a variety of topics and issues, and his concern for the environment and a renewable energy source often surface in his work. He surfs year-round and has worked as a rehab counselor, a freight hauler, a corn farmer, a janitor, a journalist, a lead guitarist, a newspaper boy and a well-digger. He lives in a 200-year-old farm house at Lawrencetown Beach overlooking the ocean. He says, “I decided to be a writer with high hopes that it would allow me to avoid work. When writing turned out to be work as well as fun, I stuck with it anyway.”