

Jennifer Weiner The Breakaway

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Jennifer

Weiner

The  
Breakaway

A NOVEL

READING GROUP GUIDE

# TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



**1.** Many of the characters in this book struggle with the concept of choice: Abby is choosing between settling down as a podiatrist's wife or choosing a man she is inexplicably drawn to; Morgan is grappling with a choice that complicates her relationship with her faith and family; Eileen tells Abby that the reason she sent her to Camp Golden Hills was to make sure she had options—the freedom to choose a life and a partner she wanted. Discuss what guides these characters' choices. How are they impacted by their own beliefs and experiences versus those of broader society? How does the novel contribute to the larger conversation of women's choice and freedom in the United States today?

**2.** A “breakaway” is a cycling term for the moment during a race when one rider separates from the pack and attempts to build a lead toward victory—a strategy with risks but also potential rewards. What is Abby “breaking away” from during the events of this book? How are other characters also “breaking away”?

**3.** With Mark, Abby has found a relationship that makes her feel comfortable and accepted, with a man she's known for most of her life. By contrast, a relationship with Sebastian would push her out of her comfort zone. Is being comfortable in a relationship the same thing as settling in a relationship? Is it bad?

**4.** Sebastian insists he didn't do anything wrong to the women online because he never misrepresented himself to them. How do dating apps change how we think about relationships? Do they encourage authenticity, or do they reward people who perform what they think would-be partners desire? Who's at fault—Alyssa, who assumes men will realize that no one just wants hookups forever, or Sebastian, who takes her at her word?

**5.** Abby's friend Lizzie (not to mention the Spoke'n Four) represents an alternate path to a life well lived compared to the one Abby saw modeled by her own mother as well as other adults in her life. What appeals to Abby about Lizzie's path, and what scares her? How do Abby's values change throughout the course of the book?

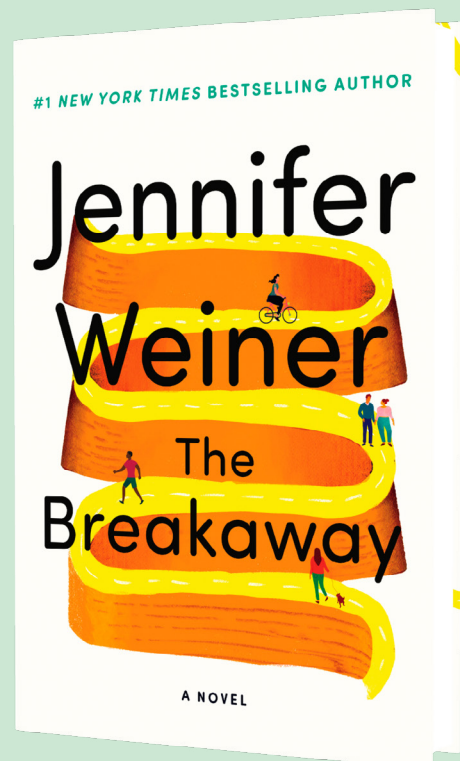
**6.** Abby is in her midthirties, an age when most of her friends are settling down. She has resisted putting down the traditional roots of a desk job, a marriage, and a house in the suburbs. To what extent is Abby's struggle timeless versus a unique situation faced by women in their midthirties today? Did this conflict resonate with you or remind you of anyone in your life? Why or why not?

**7.** Morgan seeks help from Kayla, an adult outside her own family, because she fears her mother's judgment. It is so important for teenagers to find adults they can trust, but when should adults keep the secrets of somebody else's child, and when are they obligated to involve the child's parents? Do you think Kayla, Abby, and Eileen did the right thing? What would you have done in that situation?

**8.** The bike trip brings together a group of strangers. While everyone on the trip knows somebody else, they all spend time getting to know new people, and we see the group come together in surprising ways by the trip's end. Discuss the theme of building community in the novel. Are we our truest selves among strangers? How are the main characters influenced in powerful ways by conversations with people they've just met?

**9.** Several characters spend their journeys reflecting on their relationships with their mothers, and many of them have things they wish they could have told their mothers, or wish their mothers knew. In what ways are the different characters' mother-child relationships unique and in what ways are they universal? How have you seen this play out in your own life? What do you wish your mother knew, or had known, about you? If you could tell your mother anything, what would it be?

**10.** What will you remember most about *The Breakaway*?



# The Breakaway TRAIL GUIDE

1. New York, NY

2. Hudson, NY

3. Utica, NY

4. Syracuse, NY

6. Rochester, NY

5. Seneca Falls, NY

7. Medina, NY

8. Buffalo, NY



# WHERE TO STOP ON YOUR JOURNEY

## NEW YORK, NY

1. Empire State Building
2. Edgar Allan Poe Museum

## HUDSON, NY

1. Olana State Historic Site
2. Hudson Area Library

## UTICA, NY

1. Utica Zoo
2. Utica Bread

## SYRACUSE, NY

1. Amazing Mirror Maze
2. Erie Canal Museum

## SENECA FALLS, NY

1. Women's Rights National Historical Park
2. Wesleyan Chapel

## ROCHESTER, NY

1. Canandaigua Wine Trail Experience
2. Susan B. Anthony Square Park

## MEDINA, NY

1. Medina Railroad Museum
2. Medina Falls

## BUFFALO, NY

1. Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens
  2. General Mills Factory
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