



BARRON'S EDUCATIONAL SERIES
TEACHER'S GUIDE

BREAKING FREE

True Stories of Girls
Who Escaped Modern Slavery

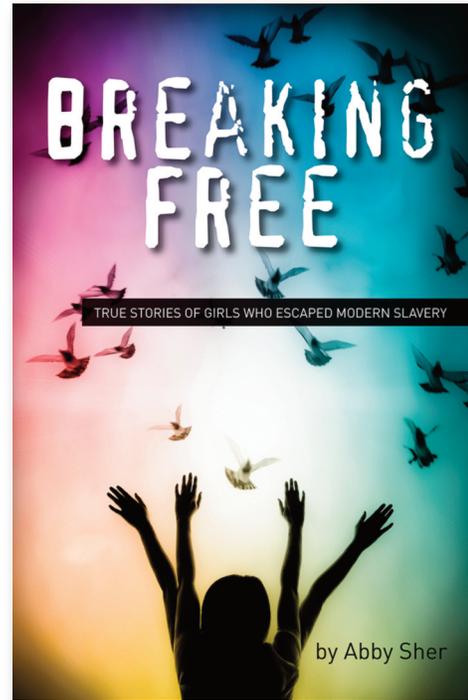
By Abby Sher

To the TEACHER

Breaking Free is a powerful book that will spark a lot of questions for teens and from teens. With riveting stories and vivid images, *Breaking Free* shares the voices of young women who have overcome tragic pasts and have emerged with empowering futures. This book is not so much about the horrors of trafficking as it is about the girls who have survived this tragedy and have made new lives for themselves. It is also about the passion and purpose they find in speaking out about their experiences. Readers will not only learn about this horrific crime and its victims, but how they can be a part of the solution.

That's where educators come in. There is a lot to digest and dissect from the stories in this book: different cultures treating girls as property; relationships that seem benign but turn abusive; the idea that trafficking can happen to anyone; and how people in the sex trade have no freedom to choose. These are just some of the issues that are examined in this complex topic.

There is also a great chance for readers to see themselves as part of the anti-trafficking movement. Each survivor in this book speaks about making a positive difference, no matter how small that difference is. It could be sharing this book with a friend or asking a teacher to explain a passage. That's the point of this book. The reader becomes a part of this story just by opening the first page.



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PREPARING to READ

This Teacher’s Guide is written for educators who want to use *Breaking Free* in the classroom, or for any group of young adults who are interested in examining this topic further. It is meant to challenge readers to find their own connection to the material. One of the biggest concepts addressed is how the girls in this book are not so different than anyone holding the book in her/his hand. We hope each section of this guide will give students the opportunity to see themselves as playing an active part in the fight to end sex trafficking.

Just weeks after *Breaking Free* was published, Somaly Mam resigned from the helm of the Somaly Mam Foundation because of allegations that her story of survival wasn’t entirely true. Her resignation has been a huge loss for the anti-trafficking movement, and the accusations have led to serious questions about what we should believe.

If there’s one thing the Somaly Mam scandal makes clear it is this: the anti-trafficking movement needs us more than ever before. We can’t let one fabricated story weaken the voices of all of the sex-trafficking victims in the world who desperately need to be heard. We still need to listen. And we still need to share their stories and increase awareness of sex trafficking on a global scale.

READING and UNDERSTANDING the BOOK

1. In the Preface, why do you think the author begins by saying, “I was so wrong?” What does that make you think about her as an author? Provide evidence from the text.
2. Why does the author say, “It’s much easier to see survivors of sex trafficking as superhuman warriors?” Do you have anything in common with these survivors? Do they have any ideas or traits that you can relate to? If so, which ones? Explain your answers.
3. After the publication of this book, there were allegations that parts of Somaly Mam’s story were false. How do you think this affects other survivors who are telling their stories?
4. Why do you think it is still important to read Somaly’s account of her life in Cambodia? How do you feel about Somaly, knowing that some of her details could be exaggerated?
5. Do you think the work Somaly has done for the anti-trafficking movement is still important? Why or why not?
6. When Somaly Mam says, “Of course you can’t forget it, but I am sure that you can forgive...” (p. 3) who do you think she forgives? How do you know? Provide evidence from the text.
7. What is the Voices for Change program? Why do you think Somaly tells the girls who want to join VFC that they don’t have to do it?
8. Why do you think Minh Dang doesn’t ask her teacher for help? Why didn’t she tell anyone what was happening to her at home?
9. What is Minh’s “Freedom Day?” How did her life change after this day? Provide evidence from the text.

10. What do you think Minh means when she says, “I have had to learn (or re-learn) that I am human” (p. 125)?
11. How did Minh transform her wardrobe and why? What do you think it means about her recovery? Give examples (evidence) from the text.
12. Minh has a quote from Cornell West on her wall: “Justice is what love looks like in public.” What do you think this quote means to her? To you?
13. What is “transition age youth” (p. 113)? Why does Minh want to help people who are this age?
14. How does Minh feel about being a celebrity? Do you ever want to be a celebrity? Why or why not?
15. Why does Maria Suarez say, “In prison, I felt free” (p. 150)?
16. Maria had a nightmare that helped her learn how to forgive her trafficker. What was the nightmare and how did it help her?
17. How did Maria keep herself busy in prison? What did these activities do for her and the inmates with her?
18. How did a bird tapping on a prison window change Maria’s life? Do you think the bird was a messenger or some sort of sign? Explain your answer.
19. What is debt bondage in India and how does it keep girls trapped?
20. In the **WHY...does this happen section**, why does the trafficker say, “You’re very pretty” (p. 195) to girls in the mall? How does this tell him who could possibly be his next victim?
21. Where are some of the places in the United States and abroad where sex trafficking happens a lot? Did you know about these places before reading this book? How do you feel about these places now? (See question 11 under “Questions and Exercises for the Class.”)
22. Why are statistics on sex trafficking “guesstimates?”
23. Why does Anita Channapati say, “Even if you’re just talking about it to a friend, it’s raising awareness” (p. 218)? Do you agree? Why or why not?

QUESTIONS and EXERCISES for the CLASS

1. Before reading, write down seven to ten words that you think of when you hear the term “sex trafficking.” After you have written them down, get into groups of four and see how many of your words are the same. The teacher should hang blank posters/paper around the room with the following topics on each poster: definition, location, causes, stereotypes, and miscellaneous. Each group then should go and list their words on the proper paper. Then discuss these lists as a class.

After reading the book, complete a graphic organizer that has the 5 W’s (where, what, when, why, who) and how. Then turn to the person next to you and compare your answers. Then discuss as a class.

2. As a class or in smaller groups, write down your own timeline of important life events. (Be able to explain why they are life events to you.) Then compare it to the section **WHEN...will we all be truly free** (p. 203)? Are there dates or events that you share with some of the people written about in this book? Explain your answers.
3. Secrecy is a very big theme in this book. Can you think of a time when you kept a secret that you didn't want to keep? Using poetry, prose, or a sketch describe what this secret felt like.
4. There are a lot of references in this book to finding common humanity with both survivors and traffickers. Split up into groups of three or four and write down ways that you are all the same. Some questions to help in your research: What's your favorite food? Who is your favorite movie star? Do you practice any religion? When was the last time you laughed out loud? What do you do when you have a whole day to be lazy? Now that the list is written, discuss your similarities. Then, discuss how these similarities can be differences, too. For example, you may all like ice cream but different flavors. What does this say about us?
5. The words "choice" and "empower" both come up a lot in this book. Write your own definition for these words. Then write down a list of choices you've made that felt empowering, like choosing to apologize after a fight or eating an apple instead of candy. Now in pairs, write a list of choices you think many people in your community take for granted, like the right to vote or the freedom to wear whatever they want to school. Lastly, write a list of times when you and/or your partner feel like you had no choice. Explain why. Compare and discuss your lists with the class.
6. In groups of three or four, make a list of twelve questions that will help you get to know someone better. (Open questions are always more helpful than yes/no choices).
Then interview (individually) either:
 - (a) the oldest person you know
 - (b) a local business owner from the community
 - (c) a teacher you've never had
 - (d) anyone you've known only for a few months
 - (e) a school administrator
7. Traditions and cultural obligations play a big role in this book. Pick a custom in your family, religion, or native culture and research its origins. It could be as common as saying the Pledge of Allegiance in front of a flag, or as specific as making Grandma's cinnamon roll recipe every Sunday morning. Write a one to two page essay about how this tradition started and what it means to you.
8. Many of the people interviewed in this book make a distinction between surviving and starting their lives over. What do you think the difference is? Prepare your answers for a class discussion.

9. Do you think of this book as hopeful or tragic? (There is no “right” answer!) Using poetry or stream of consciousness, explain your verdict.
10. Using pictures from magazines, Google, and hand-made sketches, make a collage of what you think are the strongest images from the book or the images in the book that have affected you most.
11. Print out an outline map of the world. Split into groups of two. The teacher should assign each group an area of the world. Each pair will then research where sex trafficking occurs in their area and label it on the map. Then they will pick one country in that area and give background information on the sex trafficking problem and research what is going on to help prevent this from happening.

TERMS to DEFINE and DISCUSS

Create a chart with the words listed below. Students can fill it in for easy reference. (See example chart below.)

Abolitionist	Khmer Rouge	“Orange woman”
AFESIP	<i>Meebon</i>	Safe Harbor Laws
Brujo	Minnesota Pipeline	Stockholm Syndrome
CSEC	Modern slavery	Swedish model of prosecution
Groomer		The Trafficking Victims Protection Act
Intergenerational prostitution		

Term	Location where it’s used a lot	Importance or relation to the book and sex trafficking
Abolitionist		
AFESIP		
Brujo		

SUGGESTIONS for FURTHER READING and WAYS to get INVOLVED

If you or your students would like to find out more information about the anti-trafficking movement, there are a lot of ways to get involved.

Here are some books and organizations that are at the forefront of the anti-trafficking movement. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is important for readers to understand that every action makes a difference, even if it's just talking about this subject with a friend. There are also resources listed in the last section of the book.

BOOKS

Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale (a memoir),
by Rachel Lloyd

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide,
by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Radhika's Story: Surviving Human Trafficking,
by Sharon Hendry and Joanna Lumley

ORGANIZATIONS

Apne Aap (www.apneaap.org)

Breaking Free (www.breakingfree.net)

CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking) (www.castla.org)

Children of the Night (www.childrenofthenight.org)

Courtney's House (www.courtneyshouse.org)

Don't Sell Bodies (www.dontsellbodies.org)

ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) (www.ecpatusa.org)

Equality Now (www.equalitynow.org)

Fair Girls (www.fairgirls.org)

GEMS (Girls Educational & Mentoring Services) (www.gems-girls.org)

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide
(www.halftheskymovement.org)

Polaris Project (www.polarisproject.org)

The SAGE Project (Standing Against Global Exploitation) (www.sagesf.org)

Somaly Mam Foundation (www.somaly.org)

ABOUT the AUTHOR

Abby Sher has written for *The New York Times*, *The L.A. Times*, *Self*, *Jane*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *HeeB*, *Redbook*, and *GOOD*, and is a regular contributor for *Psychology Today*. She wrote the young adult book, *Kissing Snowflakes*, and essays for numerous anthologies. Her memoir, *Amen, Amen, Amen: Memoir of a Girl Who Couldn't Stop Praying* got a nod from Oprah and won ELLE Readers' Prize, Chicago Tribune's Best of 2009, and Moment Magazine's Emerging Writers Award. Before moving to New York, Abby wrote and performed for The Second City and ImprovOlympic. She continues to perform at different theaters in New York and narrates audiobooks for kids. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and three children.



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**Want to set up a school visit or a Skype session
with Abby for a classroom discussion?
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