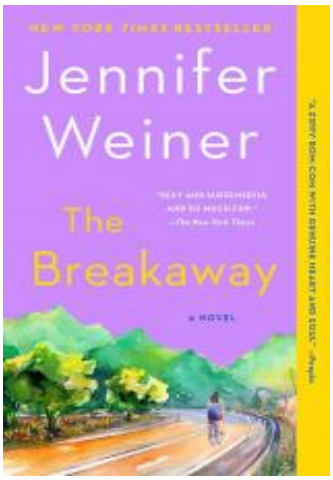
The Breakaway

by Jennifer Weiner



About the Book

From #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jennifer Weiner comes a warmhearted and empowering new novel about love, family, friendship, secrets and a life-changing journey.

Thirty-three-year-old Abby Stern has made it to a happy place. True, she still has gig jobs instead of a career, and the apartment where she?s lived since college still looks like she?s just moved in. But she has good friends, her bike and her bicycling club in Philadelphia. She?s at peace with her plus-size body --- at least, most of the time --- and she?s on track to marry Mark Medoff, her childhood summer sweetheart, a man she met at the weight-loss camp that her perpetually dieting mother forced her to attend. Fifteen years after her final summer at Camp Golden Hills, when Abby reconnects with a half-his-size Mark, it feels like the happy ending she?s always wanted.

Yet Abby can?t escape the feeling that some-thing isn?t right...or the memories of one thrilling night she spent with a man named Sebastian two years previously. When Abby gets a last-minute invitation to lead a cycling trip from NYC to Niagara Falls, she?s happy to have time away from Mark, a chance to reflect and make up her mind.

But things get complicated fast. First, Abby spots a familiar face in the group --- Sebastian, the one-night stand she thought she?d never see again. Sebastian is a serial dater who lives a hundred miles away. In spite of their undeniable chemistry, Abby is determined to keep her distance. Then there?s a surprise last-minute addition to the trip: her mother, Eileen, the woman Abby blames for a lifetime of body shaming and insecurities she?s still trying to undo.

Over two weeks and more than 700 miles, strangers become friends, hidden truths come to light, a teenage girl with a secret unites the riders in unexpected ways...and Abby is forced to reconsider everything she believes about herself, her mother and the nature of love.

Discussion Guide

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 mid-30s, 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 mid-30s 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?

Author Bio

Jennifer Weiner is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author whose books have spent over five years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with more than 11 million copies in print in 36 countries.

She is the author of the novels GOOD IN BED (2001); IN HER SHOES (2002), which was turned into a major motion picture starring Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley MacLaine; LITTLE EARTHQUAKES (2004); GOODNIGHT NOBODY (2005); the short story collection THE GUY NOT TAKEN (2006); CERTAIN GIRLS (2008); BEST FRIENDS FOREVER (2009); FLY AWAY HOME (2010); THEN CAME YOU (2011); THE NEXT BEST THING (2012); ALL FALL DOWN (2014); WHO DO YOU LOVE (2015); MRS. EVERYTHING (2019); BIG SUMMER (2020); THAT SUMMER (2021); THE SUMMER PLACE (2022); GOLDEN HILLS (2023); THE BREAKAWAY (2024); and THE GRIFFIN SISTERS' GREATEST HITS (2025).

She is also the author of *The Littlest Bigfoot* middle-grade trilogy: THE LITTLEST BIGFOOT (2016) LITTLE BIGFOOT, BIG CITY (2017), and THE BIGFOOT QUEEN (2023).

Her nonfiction collection, HUNGRY HEART: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing (2016), was a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein -Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

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