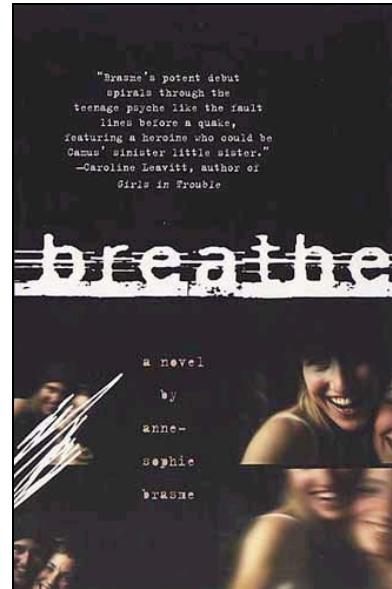


READING GROUP GUIDE

Breathe by Sophie-Anne Brasme

St. Martin's Press
ISBN: 0-312-33153-3 (paperback)



Introduction to *Breathe*

Breathe is the haunting confession of nineteen-year-old Charlene Boher. From her prison cell, Charlene recounts her lonely adolescence. Growing up shy and unpopular, Charlene never had many friends. That is, until she meets Sarah, a beautiful and charismatic American-French girl who moved back to Paris for high school. Much to Charlene's shock and delight, the two girls quickly develop an intense friendship. With Sarah by her side, Charlene finally begins to feel accepted and even loved.

However, after a brief idyllic period, the girls' relationship becomes rocky and friendship veers towards obsession. As Sarah drops Charlene for older, more glamorous friends, Charlene's devotion spirals into hatred. Unfolding slowly and eerily towards a shocking conclusion, *Breathe* is an intense, convincing portrait of a possessive and ambiguous friendship.

Praise for *Breathe*

"Brasme's potent debut spirals through the teenage psyche like the faultlines before a quake, featuring a heroine who could be Camus' sinister little sister."
- Caroline Leavitt, author of *Girls In Trouble*

"*Breathe* fuses gothic angst with something more sinfully existential...A short, dark account of the hothouse atmosphere of tortured adolescence and overheated relationships."
- *Metro*, UK

"Author Anne-Sophie Brasme is set to cause a stir with her debut novel, *Breathe*, about an unrepentant

teen murderer."

- *British Vogue*

Reading Group Guide Questions

1. In the beginning of the novel, Charlene asks, "Would I have turned out a different person had my family circumstances been different?" How would you describe Charlene's relationship with her family? Was her childhood typical?
2. Charlene says that Vanessa is the only person who has always stayed close to her. Can you explain why Charlene feels so close to Vanessa, even though they only knew each other when they were both very young?
3. Why do you think Sarah visits Charlene in the hospital after the suicide attempt? Do you think that she really wanted to help Charlene?
4. Charlene and Sarah's relationship begins to deteriorate during the summer Sarah visits Vendee. That summer, Charlene writes Sarah everyday and Sarah writes one short postcard. How do these two different correspondence styles symbolize the two girls?
5. At the New Year's Eve party, Sarah cruelly locks Charlene in a closet. Why do you think Charlene continues to be friends with Sarah, even after this event?
6. In the bookstore when she meets Maxime, Charlene buys *A Psychological Study of Obsessional Murder*. Do you think Charlene knew then that she would kill Sarah? Or, do you think this book influenced Charlene's actions?
7. Maxime is a kind, loving, and understanding young man. Do you think that Charlene loves Maxime? How does he represent "what could have been" in Charlene's life?
8. At the end of the novel, Charlene leaves hundreds of messages on Sarah's answering machine and writes many letters. Do you consider Charlene's behavior stalking? If you were in Sarah's position, would you have gone to the police?
9. After murdering Sarah, Charlene claims that she has no remorse. Do you believe her?
10. Why do you think this novel is titled *Breathe*?

About the Author

Anne-Sophie Brasme was born in 1984. She lives in Paris and *Breathe* is her first novel.