

Title- *Breaking Night*

Author- Liz Murray

Publisher- Hyperion

Genre- Memoir

Number of pages- 329

Copyright- 2010

The Journey of Survival

The first thing you see when you pick up a new book is the title, which creates an impression and unleashes endless thoughts, ideas, and questions on what the book is going to be about, this is true about the memoir *Breaking Night* by Liz Murray. Even the title *Breaking Night* has a deeper meaning: “Staying up through the night until the sun rises.” This message signifies the hardships and challenges as one breaks through the night. In her memoir, Murray portrays the challenges and obstacles she encountered as a naïve homeless teenager while aspiring to create a better life for herself, despite her parent’s drug addiction and life on welfare.

Murray’s memoir follows two central conflicts and how she addresses, deals with and resolves each conflict. At the age of six, while most kids were at school learning how to read and write, Murray stayed home to help her parents who were always high on drugs. Although it hurt Murray that her parents were constantly high, she never stopped loving them. As evidenced in her memoir she stated, “I couldn’t heal my parents, as much as I wanted to, but I could forgive and love them.” This internal conflict and her personal desire to forgive is a theme in the memoir. Being around drugs at such a young age was not the only conflict she faced from all of the chaos and unfortunate situations. When

Murray was only fifteen years old she decided to get away and leave her family for good and as a consequence she became homeless.

A strength of Murray's memoir is how she engages her readers in her writing. With the use of dialogue and descriptive detail, readers can get an understanding of what Murray's life was like. Through her word choice and vivid description, readers are able to feel her pain, uncertainty and challenges, ultimately understanding the personal situations that Murray encountered. The way she describes her life story is motivational and shows how one can overcome the most horrific things in life when you put your mind to it.

Unfortunately her story is not truly captured by the description on the front page of the book: "A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard." The description is misleading because one would believe that the memoir would be more about the college experience and less about the daily hassle of being homeless. If Murray was able to attend Harvard, then how could her obstacles and challenges be that difficult? Even then I knew that she ultimately went to Harvard, which distracted me from feeling the real pain of her life. The description does not help convey the importance of her story and the horrific life she had.

High school students should read Murray's memoir because it shows how someone can overcome extremely difficult situations at a young age. The book demonstrates that an independent and self-sufficient teenage girl can not only survive her struggles, but also can succeed and achieve. Despite this, Murray shows how anything can happen when you persevere and try to turn your life around. Murray's memoir teaches you that: "It's not about having more stuff, it not about the next accomplishment

but its really about being peace with yourself and finding a way to integrate the thing you value with the actually way you live.” This memoir shows that you can excel and work hard to accomplish anything to be successful, something that may seem so out of reach is tangible with some determination, dedication, and motivation. The content of the memoir can go way beyond the limits of education and relate to any students’ personal life. Regardless, it will open one’s mind, and readers will be able to learn and hear, a very personal story from tragedy to success.