

TURNING POINT

BY: PAULA CHASE



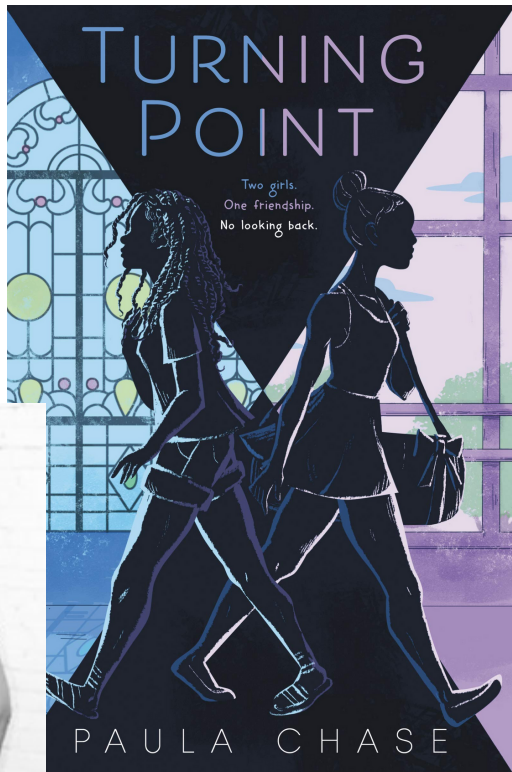
Two girls.
One friendship.
No looking back.


SYNOPSIS

Distance threatens to tear apart a friendship. That is, of course, if a secret doesn't ruin it first. Told in dual perspectives. Best friends Rasheeda and Monique are both good girls. For Sheeda, that means keeping her friends close and following her deeply religious, Bible-quoting aunt's every rule. For Mo, that means not making waves in the prestigious and mostly White ballet intensive she's been accepted to. But what happens when Sheeda catches the eye of Mo's older brother, and the invisible racial barriers to success as a ballerina turn out to be not so invisible?

Reading Level/Interest level: 6th grade and up

Themes: friendship, relationships, family structure, stereotypes





Two girls.
One friendship.
No looking back.

Before reading discussion:

- Have you ever wondered if people treat you differently because of the color of your skin?
- How would you feel if your best friend liked one of your siblings or your sibling like one of your friends?
- Do you tend to act differently around people when you are with your friends? Would you be hesitant to stop your friend from doing something wrong?
- Have you ever felt like you weren't good at something? Explain why you doubted yourself.
- Why do you think the book is titled Turning Point? (Read the synopsis to get an idea about the book to help with thoughts and ideas)
- What does it mean to code switch? How do you think it pertains to the book?

- Have students look at the cover of the book and analyze the cover.
- What do you think the book is about?
- Does the cover give a positive vibe or a negative vibe?
- Look at the characters on the cover. Why do you think it looks like they have their backs to each other?
- Read the first two chapters (Rasheeda and Monique's chapter). What do you think the problem will be between the characters?
- Think about you and your best friend. Create a venn diagram and list out how you are similar and different.

Before reading activities:

Purpose for reading:

- As students are reading, they should pay attention to:
 - The main characters' relationship as friends and how it has changed throughout the book due to them being separated for the summer.
 - How keeping things inside affects the characters.
 - The impact family has on the main characters.
- Think about how it feels to be the only boy in a room of girls or the only girl in a room of boys, or the only person of color in a room of all white people. How would you feel?
- Pay attention to why the characters may feel like they are constantly on guard and why.
- As you read, look for example on how code switching is shown throughout the book.



Literal and higher level comprehension questions:

- Describe Rasheeda and Monique. How are they similar and different?
- Describe Rasheeda's family.
- Describe Monique's family.
- What do you think will happen with Rasheeda and Lennie at the beginning of the book? Do you think Monique will approve of them if they have a relationship? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Monique is hesitant when going to the ballet intensive for the summer?
- Do you think Rasheeda is jealous that Monique got into the TAG program and accepted to a summer ballet program? Why or why not?
- Do you think Brenna's mom was really surprised to see Monique and Mila in the room or more surprised that they were black? (pg. 65-67)
- Why do you think Monique is both nervous and scared to be at the summer ballet program? (pg.68)
- Does the way Katie talks come off as rude the way Monique is taking it? (as if Mila and Mo should know the ballet vocabulary or about the summer camp) (pg. 76-80)
- What were Monique's first impressions of Katie and Brenna?
- How do you think Rasheeda feels about having to live with her Aunt D and not her mother? (pg. 88-90)
- Do you think Rasheeda really misses her mother when she stopped going to visit her?
- How do you think Monique and Mila feel about being the only Black dancers at the Ballet intensive? (pg 101)
- Why is it important for Monique and Mila to not show weakness at the Ballet intensive? Why would they need to act strong even when they feel scared or nervous?
- Why would Mila be embarrassed by the way Monique is acting when Brenna gets into the shower first? (pg 133-134)
- What do you think has happened in Monique's past that has made her so guarded with white people?
- Why do you think Rasheeda's Aunt D is so protective?
- Katie and Monique like to get to class early. Why is this important for them? (pg.163)
- How do you think Monique is feeling when Ms. Sharon tells her to "tuck her bottom"? (pg. 165-167)
- Does it seem like Ms. Sharon is being harder on Monique than the other dancers? Explain. (Use pages 161-171)



Literal and higher level comprehension questions continued:

- How does Monique feel about Ms. Sharon's compliment? (pg. 231-233)
- Is Monique right to get mad at Katie for not having her back with Adrian? Explain. (pg. 234-238)
- At this point in the book, what do you think Aunt D would say to Rasheeda if she told her about Lennie? (pg. 234-238)
- What are your thoughts about what Lennie really wants from Rasheeda? Does he want to be boyfriend and girlfriend or does he want something else? (pg. 251-255)
- What is it like for Monique and Mila being the only Black dancers at the ballet intensive? How does this make Monique feel? (pg. 270-273)
- Why does Lennie get lumped into people thinking he is a troublemaker when he talks about his mom saying she didn't want him on the Rauders' basketball team? How do you think being lumped into a stereotype makes Lennie feel? (pg. 289-290)
- In Monique's chapter on page 292-310, Monique talks to Ms. Sharon about what it takes to attend a pre professional ballet intensive. Why do you think Ms. Sharon might be thinking Monique isn't ready for this type of ballet program? Do you think Monique is right when she asks if it is because she is black? Explain.
- How do you think Monique is feeling about not getting into the ballet school? (pg. 311-312)
- Rasheeda decides to go to Lennie's house without Tai. Is this a good or bad idea? Explain. (pg. 317)
- Do you think Rasheeda's feelings about Lennie have changed because of the situation that happened at his house with Quan? Explain.
- Does Aunt D blame Rasheeda for Quan assaulting her? Explain.
- How has Monique and Rasheeda's relationship changed since they have been apart for the summer?



Reading response question/writing:

- Compare and contrast the main characters Rasheeda and Monique.
- After reading the book, how do you think Rasheeda and Monique's will be going forward? Pretend you are writing a synopsis to book two of Turning Point.
- At the end of the book, Rasheeda gets almost assaulted by Lennie's friend Quan. In your opinion write about what you think Lennie's should have done in that situation.
- Pick a character from the book and identify their character trait(s) using evidence from the book to support your thinking.
- In the book, Monique struggled to fit in with her roommates and in the ballet school in general. Why do you think Monique has such a difficult time letting her guard down?
- Pretend you are Monique. Write a journal entry that she would have written while at the ballet intensive.
- Pretend you are Rasheeda. Write a journal entry about how she feels about her Aunt not letting her have a little bit of freedom and choice.
- Throughout the book, Rasheeda would get a feeling of sickness when she lied or thought about a lie. What does this tell you about her?
- How is racism shown throughout the book? Does this play a role in how Monique responds to different situations in the book? Use evidence from the book to support your response.
- On page 265, Monique tells herself (It's not always me being mad. I be protecting my friends sometimes. I'm not gonna let you say whatever you want , how you want, to me. People act like they can say what they want but I never can.) as she prepares for a defence to why she gets mad so easily. Write about how this shows how much Monique is misunderstood.
- Did being apart for the summer bring Monique and Rasheeda closer as friends or push them away as friends? Explain using evidence from the book.



ELA (Writing) activities:

- Write about the theme or themes of the book *Turning Point*. Make sure to talk about how this theme develops throughout the book. Use evidence from throughout the book to support your theme.
- Choose a character from the book (Rasheeda, Monique, Lenny, Aunt D, etc). Write about how that character changed through the book. Use evidence to support your thinking.
- Analyze the quotes below from the beginning of *Turning Point*:
 - Jealousy burned her chest. She didn't want it to. But it did. (pg. 3)
 - He spent so much time being punished for one thing or another that Rasheeda had been afraid of him. Afraid that merely being in his presence might get her in trouble. (pg. 9)
 - Ms. Noelle always praised her for her dedication and how focused she was in class. Mo took the W however she got it. (pg. 14)
 - The thought of his bare chest made Sheeda's cheeks burn. (pg. 25)
 - I'm not about to be taking care of you and a baby--from the book of Auntie D, first chapter, second verse. (pg. 59)
- Create a two column chart on the positive and negative consequences of the decisions made by Rasheeda and Monique. On one side, identify the decisions and who made the decision, and, on the other side, identify the consequence of the decision and whether it was positive or negative.
- As you are reading, identify figurative language being used in the book and the meaning of the figurative language. This can be similes, metaphors, personification, and hyperbole. Keep a list on your teacher-provided graphic organizer.