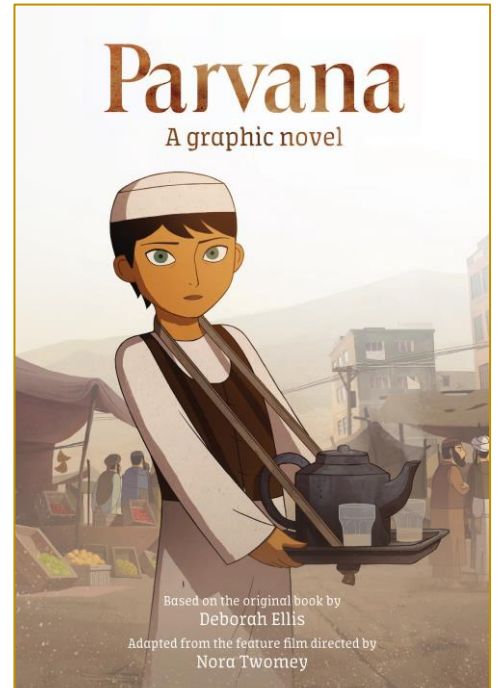


Parvana: a graphic novel

By Deborah Ellis

February 2018 ISBN 9781760631970 paperback
Recommended for 9 – 13-year-old readers



Summary

This beautiful graphic-novel adaptation of the animated film, inspired by Deborah Ellis's beloved novel, tells the story of eleven-year-old Parvana.

When soldiers burst into her home and drag her father off to prison, Parvana is forced to take responsibility for her whole family, dressing as a boy to make a living in the marketplace of Kabul, risking her life in the dangerous and volatile city.

By turns exciting and touching, *Parvana* is a story of courage in the face of overwhelming fear and repression. Multi-themed, the story is an excellent springboard to discussions about women's rights, refugees, Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the consequences of war on individuals and families. This exciting graphic retelling features an innovative mix of 2-D animation with acrylic and digitally painted environments, as well as digital paper cut-out segments—opening the story to a wider audience and introducing students to a range of visual media.

Use in the curriculum

Parvana: a graphic novel is directly aimed at middle years readers and presents an opportunity to investigate visual literacy with an excellent text – one which is also studied in novel form in many Australian schools. Metalanguage to discuss visual texts can be introduced and used by students.

In addition, the graphic novel can be compared with the novel *Parvana* and the film *The Breadwinner*. (Both the film and the graphic novel are based on the original novel *Parvana*.) Students can study the compression of language in visual texts and the technological developments that have enabled the telling of stories in different media.

Students can also investigate modern Afghanistan, the place of girls under the Taliban and changes that occurred when the Taliban were forced out of areas of Afghanistan.

The state of almost constant war since the 1980s is another point to explore, enabling historical and political learnings and philosophical discussions.

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Themes

- war
- refugees
- women's/girls' rights
- courage
- friendship
- violence
- oppression

Background research

Allocate a lesson in the library to find the answer to the following questions before reading *Parvana: a graphic novel*:

- i) Locate Afghanistan on a world map.
- ii) Name and locate the capital of Afghanistan
- iii) What languages are spoken in Afghanistan?
- iv) What was the Silk Road and why is it important in Afghanistan's history?
- v) Who are the Taliban?
- vi) What role do the Taliban believe women should play in society?
- vii) Who invaded Afghanistan this century?
- viii) How has life changed for women in Afghanistan since the Taliban left?

Analysing a visual text

1. Ask students if they have heard the saying, 'an image is worth a thousand words'? Encourage students to explain what this saying means.
Now turn to the first double page spread in the book and discuss what the three images of Kabul tell us about life there.
How does the colour, framing and perspective added to our understanding?
2. Turn the page and look at the next page. Do you think this man and his daughter are rich now? Might they once have been rich? Do you think they are educated? What in the words and images make you think this about them?
3. Turn to the page showing the different invaders of Afghanistan. How has the artist conveyed the idea of Afghanistan suffering from a long history of invasion and war in these four images?
How does colour and framing heighten the way you feel when you look at these images?
4. Now turn the page again and look at the three panels featuring women in burkas. How has the artist shown this form of dress as an 'imprisonment'? How does the choice of colour influence your reading here?
Find other examples in the book where the artist has chosen a colour to heighten your feelings about a scene.
5. Sometimes sounds can be shown using visual techniques. See if you can find examples of this in *Parvana: a graphic novel*.

Comprehension Questions

1.
 - a. Explain why Parvana's mother says, 'But we have no way of surviving without him,' after her husband is arrested?
 - b. What does Parvana do to help her family survive?
 - c. How does Parvana earn money when she is a boy?
 - d. What does the scene between Parvana and the old man who buys her red shirt tell you about forced marriages in Afghanistan?
2. Why do you think that the story ends with Parvana repeating the story that her father told her earlier, 'We are a fractured land in the claws of the Hindu Kush mountains...'? What does the repetition of this story tell us about the Afghani people?
3. 'Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that makes the flowers grow, not thunder.' The author of this quote is a poet called Rumi who lived in the thirteenth century. What do you think this quote means and how does it relate to the story of Parvana?

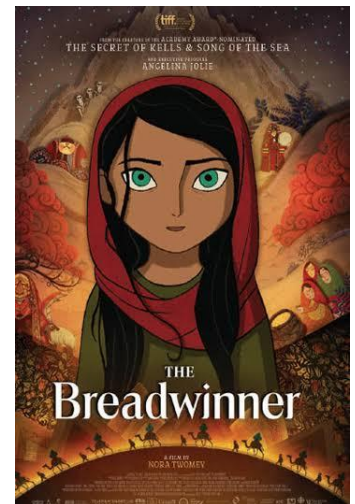
Class discussion

Is Parvana's story ultimately happy or sad? What makes you feel this way?

The film

Watch the trailer of *The Breadwinner* here
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKxzINE9_7Y

NB: The novel *The Breadwinner* was originally published in Australia under the title *Parvana*. The title of the film will remain *The Breadwinner* when released in Australia.



Author/Director/Executive Producer's Motivation:

Deborah Ellis, in an online interview with ccbc.education.wisc.edu.

'I've been doing antiwar work since I was 17, in one form or another, and the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 1996 fit into what I was doing. It brought together issues of women's rights, foreign intervention, and war. I got together with some women in Toronto and we started to raise money for women in the camps. I thought that I could be useful by going over and interviewing women about their lives over the course of this terrible war, what [they were] like both now and in the past. But I hadn't planned to do a children's book until I met the mother of a daughter who was still back in Afghanistan masquerading as a boy in order to feed her family. As a writer, sometimes you just get bolts of lightning through your brain that tell you that this is really important and you need to pay attention. I knew at that point that I'd write the book, *The Breadwinner* [published in Australia as *Parvana*].'

Nora Twomey – Director of *Parvana*, the film, in an online interview with Screendaily.com.

'I read the novel in an evening – I was absolutely enthralled. It was the most refreshing way to handle subject matter like Afghanistan and the Taliban regime, through the eyes of a child.'

'When you read something like that, as a director and storyteller you can see how that would translate to screen. It was a simple matter, I felt I had to do it.'

Angelina Jolie from an online article on variety.com.

'There are few countries in the world where it is harder to be a young girl, where barriers between girls and their dreams and their rights are so high and so painful to experience and observe,' Jolie said, adding that the story was also able to highlight Afghanistan's 'deep humility, rich culture and a resilient warm people.'

'It's not just an Afghan story, it's a story of our times and a story of a world in which equal rights for women remain a central burning issue of our time.'

Author Background:

Deborah Ellis has achieved international acclaim with her courageous and dramatic books that give Western readers a glimpse into the plight of children in developing countries. She has won the Canadian Governor General's Award, Sweden's Peter Pan Prize, the Ruth Schwartz Award, the University of California's Middle East Book Award, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award and the Vicky Metcalf Award. A long-time feminist and anti-war activist, she is best known for the Parvana series, which has been published around the world in seventeen languages, with more than a million dollars in royalties donated to Street Kids International and to Women for Women, an organization that supports health and education projects in Afghanistan. In 2006, Deb was named to the Order of Ontario.

Other books by Deborah Ellis

The Parvana books – set in Afghanistan and Pakistani refugee camps

Parvana, Allen and Unwin, 2002.

First published as *The Breadwinner* by Groundwood, Canada, 2000

Parvana's Journey, Allen & Unwin, 2002.

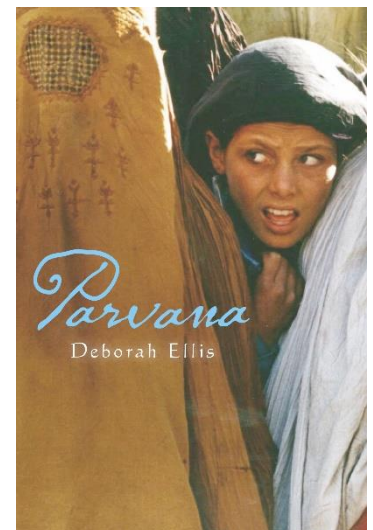
First published by Groundwood, Canada, 2002.

Shauzia, Allen & Unwin, 2003.

First published as *Mud City* by Groundwood, Canada, 2003.

Parvana's Promise, Allen & Unwin 2012

First published as *My Name is Parvana* in Canada



Novels for middle years

Cat at the Wall, Allen & Unwin 2015

The Best Day of My Life, Allen & Unwin 2011

First published as *No Ordinary Day* in Canada

Diego's Pride, Allen & Unwin 2008

First published as *Sacred Leaf* in Canada

Diego, run! Allen & Unwin 2007

First published as *I am a taxi* by Groundwood, Canada

The Heaven Shop, Allen & Unwin, 2005

First published by Groundwood, Canada, 2004.

A Company of Fools, Allen & Unwin, 2004.

First published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside, Canada, 2002.

Looking for X, Allen & Unwin 2003.

First published by Groundwood, Canada, 1999.



YA novels:

Moon at Nine, Allen & Unwin, 2015

No Safe Place, Allen & Unwin 2011
First published by Groundwood, Canada

Jackal in the Garden (WatsonGuptil, 2006), YA novel about the medieval Persian painter Bihzad

True Blue, Pajama Press, 2011

Children's non-fiction:

Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak, Allen & Unwin, 2005
First published by Groundwood, Canada, 2004

Children of War: Iraqi Children Speak Allen & Unwin 2009
First published by Groundwood, Canada

Off to War: Soldiers' Children Speak Allen & Unwin 2009
First published by Groundwood, Canada

Kids of Kabul: Living Bravely Through A Never-Ending War Groundwood, 2012

Adult non-fiction:

Women of the Afghan War, Praeger, USA, 2000

Resources and further reading

Ziba Came on a Boat by Liz Lofthouse and Robert Ingpen. Penguin Australia 2007
A picture book for younger readers about an Afghani refugee girl.

One Half from the East by Nadia Hashimi. HarperCollins, US 2016
Like Parvana, Obayda must become a boy to support her family. She revels in her new freedoms and becomes firm friends with another *bacha posh*, Rahima/Rahim.

Mahtab's Story by Libby Gleeson. Allen & Unwin 2008.
Follows Mahtab and her family on their refugee journey to Australia.

Soraya the Storyteller by Rosanne Hawke. Lothian Books 2004
Soraya's story highlights the sensitivity needed to hear and understand refugee stories.

Naveed: Through My Eyes by John Heffernan. Allen & Unwin 2014.
Naveed survives with his family in the city of Bagram, site of a major US and allied forces air field. What will happen when the soldiers leave?

US Scholastic News: Kids in Afghanistan. Units of work based on multimedia news, interviews, research, quizzes.

http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/old_reports/afghanistan/index.htm