

The Traveling Girl Lesson Plan

Overview:

In this lesson plan, middle school students will become acquainted with one girl's experiences in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Students will gain access to a world that they may not have encountered before, while deepening their knowledge of the Middle East and its connection to their own worldview.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Consider the question of travel.
2. Read one of the books from Deborah Ellis' trilogy *The Breadwinner*, *Parvana's Journey*, and *Mud City*. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
3. Answer reading questions.
4. Write a response paper about their inner travels while reading Ellis' book.

Activity:

1. Ask students what they think about when they think about travel. Most students will respond with positive images of vacations and enjoyable journeys. Tell students that they will be embarking on a different kind of journey to a place where travel is neither easy nor enjoyable, but a necessity of survival. Introduce the novels by Deborah Ellis explaining their historical, geographical, and political background in Taliban ruled Afghanistan.

Traveling Girl Books Available from CSAMES

- a. Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books / House of Anansi Press, 2006.
The Breadwinner is the first in a trilogy of books by Ellis following the young heroine Parvana. Perfect for middle grades, this book details the difficulty of life for eleven-year-old Parvana in the early years of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Parvana rarely leaves home and is not allowed to attend school, shop at the market, or play in the streets. When the Taliban takes her father away, Parvana becomes the breadwinner of the family by disguising herself as a young boy. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)
- b. Ellis, Deborah. *Parvana's Journey*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002.
This novel is the story of a young teenage girl, Parvana, left alone to survive in a war-ravaged Afghanistan. Separated from the rest of her family, and disguised as a young boy to avoid the Taliban, she travels alone in her quest to find her family. Along the way, she adopts a little baby and later befriends a young boy and girl. Making their way through

fields dotted with landmines and scrounging for food, they learn the art of survival. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)

- c. Ellis, Deborah. *Mud City*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books / House of Anasi Press, 2006.

The third part of Ellis' trilogy (*The Breadwinner* and *Parvana's Journey*) that follows the young heroine Parvana, *Mud City* is a book for middle grades. In this book, Parvana's best friend Shauzia flees from the hardships of Afghanistan and attempts to survive on the streets of Peshawar, Pakistan. Driven to find a way to take control of her own life, Shauzia's desperate struggle to survive is illustrated in graphic detail. (Available to loan from the CSAMES library.)

2. Assign one of the texts or all three to different students, asking them to answer the following reading questions when they have finished. These questions are available in a worksheet format, titled *Traveling Girl Worksheet*, on the *Magic Carpet Lesson Plans* page.
 - a. Who is the protagonist? What kind of characteristics does she have? Explain why you think she has those characteristics.
 - b. Where does the protagonist's journey begin?
 - c. What are the reasons for the protagonist's journey?
 - d. Through what kind of terrain does the protagonist travel?
 - e. What kind of transportation does the protagonist use on her journey?
 - f. What does the protagonist take with her on her journey? What must she give up or leave behind?
 - g. What kind of struggles does the protagonist encounter on her journey?
 - h. How does she manage to overcome them?
 - i. Who or what does the protagonist have as a companion on her journey? What is their relationship?
 - j. What kinds of people does the protagonist meet on her journey?
 - k. Where does the journey end?
 - l. Is the story resolved?
3. Ask students to write a book report about the "inner journey" they took while reading. Since they are reading about a place and an experience that they have not encountered before, request that students share in their report what reading this book taught them about this particular time and place.