

Protagonist	The main character in a story
Antagonist	The character that opposes the protagonist
Identity	The characteristics that make up who a person is
Survival	The process of navigating and overcoming threats to life
Narrator	The voice of character that tells the story to the audience
Relationships	The connections that people have with the people in their life.
Quotation	A piece of evidence from a text
Develop	Change over the course of a text
Plot	The sequence of events in a story

Plot

In Taliban-controlled Kabul, 11-year-old Parvana disguises herself as a boy named "Kaseem" after her father is unjustly arrested, leaving her family without a way to earn money. As Kaseem, she works various jobs to support her mother and siblings, facing the dangers of the streets and forming a bond with another girl disguised as a boy. While her mother and siblings travel to another city, Parvana stays behind and eventually reunites with her freed father. Together, they begin a journey to find their family, carrying hope for the future.

Author

Deborah Ellis was born Ontario, Canada in 1960. Ellis is an anti-war activist and has written many children's books which reflect this. She travelled to Afghanistan in 1997 to interview women in refugee camps and The Breadwinner was inspired by an interview with a mother she met there.

Context

The Breadwinner takes place in Taliban-era Afghanistan (1996-2001, also 2012-present) in the city of Kabul. Kabul is the capitol of Afghanistan and is also the largest city in the country. During the hard-line Taliban regime, Kabul became a ruined city, most infrastructure was already destroyed, many residents had long left, poverty levels were high and there was little to no education or public services.

Key Quotes

"Afghanistan, my homeland." - Parvana

"Maybe if I were a boy, things would be different." - Parvana

"It's important to remember who you are, even when they try to take it from you." - Parvana's father

"Stories can be powerful things." - Parvana

"Even in the worst of times, people still helped each other." Parvana

"My name is Parvana," she said clearly. "I am not Kaseem anymore."

Key Themes

The Importance of Family



Survival

Identity



The impact of war

Parvana	11 year old protagonist. She disguises herself as boy named Kaseem.
Father (Nurullah)	A former teacher. His arrest is the catalyst for Parvana's actions.
Mother (Fatana)	Becomes depressed after Father's arrest but finds strength in writing.
Nooria	Parvana's older, bossy sister.
Mrs. Weera	Moves in to help the family. She is a figure of support.
Shauzia	A girl from Parvana's school who also disguises herself as a boy. (Shafiq)
Maryam and Ali	Parvana's siblings
Hossain	Parvana's older brother who died years earlier.

How to use an extract

1. Read through the extract (a short part of the whole book/novel)
2. What is going on in the extract? Are we at the start or end of the book? How do you know?
3. Track through the extract - what impressions do you get about the character?
4. Highlight your evidence that made you think about that impression.

Challenge - are there any other parts of the book/novel that support your impression?

How to structure a paragraph

Point: What is your impression of the character?

Evidence: Pick a quotation from the book that shows that.

Explain: How does that quotation create the impression?

Analyse: Can you pick out a specific word that creates that impression? Or a technique? **Why** do you think the writer wants us to feel that way?

Link: Could you explore an alternative interpretation or link to the context of the book? Or to the intentions of the author?

