

Online Resources

Pictures Tell the Story: Improving Comprehension With Persepolis

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1102

"In this lesson, students examine the art and craft of the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and assess the impact of visual elements on their comprehension of the beginning of the story. The goal of the lesson is to get students started so that they can successfully read and analyze the rest of the book. Additionally, students explore the recent history of the Middle East as presented by Satrapi."

Good for: introduction, visual arts, language arts

Gaining Background for the Graphic Novel *Persepolis*: A WebQuest on Iran

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1063

"This lesson includes a WebQuest in which students research relevant and reliable information in groups, and a technology-enhanced presentation that allows them to share the information with their classmates."

Good for: introduction, social studies

Storyboarding Revolution

<http://www.gclass.org/node/140>

"Students will translate their knowledge into a new context create a storyboard based on one important event of a revolution. Students will compose a historical narrative from a particular perspective of someone living during that particular revolution."

Good for: visual arts, social studies

Iran Issues

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20090213friday.html#ic>

"In this lesson, students read an article exploring U.S.-Iran relations on the anniversary of the 30th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, research the events of that period, and write historical fiction based on photographs of Iran then and now."

Good for: introduction, social studies



2010 ONE BOOK ONE PHILADELPHIA

New York Times Article: I Must Go Home to Iran Again

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/04/opinion/04iht-edsatrapi.html?scp=3&sq=marjane%20satrapi%20opinion&st=cse>

By MARJANE SATRAPI

Published: July 3, 2009

PARIS — Six years ago, I went to listen to a man, whom I will not name, in a café in Paris.

He said it had been 24 years since he had been back to Iran, that he had to leave right after the revolution of 1979 for political reasons.

He talked of many things, and he ended by saying: “Once you leave your homeland, you can live anywhere, but I refuse to die anywhere other than Iran — or else my life will have had no meaning.”

His statement touched me very deeply. I’ve thought about what he said, not just understanding him intellectually but feeling his meaning with all my heart. I, too, was convinced that I must die nowhere other than in my country, Iran, or else my life will also be meaningless.

At the time I heard this man speak, it had already been four years since I had been home.

Yes, I call Iran home because no matter how long I live in France, and despite the fact that I feel also French after all these years, to me the word “home” has only one meaning: Iran.

I suppose it’s that way for everyone: Home is the place where one is born and raised.

No matter how much I am in love with Paris and its indescribable beauty, Tehran with all its ugliness will in my eyes forever be the “bride” of all cities around the world.

It’s a question of geography, of the smell of the rain, of the things we know without ever having to think why we know them.

It’s a question of the Alborz Mountains protecting my town. Where are they? Who will protect me now?

It’s a question of the unbearable smell of pollution, a smell I know so well.

It’s a question of knowing that the blue of the sky is not the same everywhere, nor does the sun shine the same way in every place.



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It's a question of wanting to be able to walk under my own blue sky, of wanting my own sunshine to caress my back.

At the time I heard that man speak it had already been four years since I had been home. Today it has been more than 10 years. To be precise, 10 years, six months and three days.

During all that time, I believed I would live a few more decades without ever being able to walk in my mountains. But 18 days ago, June 12, 2009, something happened, something I never believed I would see in my lifetime: Iranians, crowding into an extremely tiny space of democracy, usually left just large enough for them to vote for a president whom the Guardian Council had already approved, truly voted.

The question much of the media asked before the election was: "Are Iranians ready for democracy?"

"YES!" came the answer, loud and oh, so clear.

With a voter turnout of 85 percent, they started to dream that change was possible.

They started to believe "Yes they can," too.

It's likely needless to remind you that this was not the first time Iranians showed how much they love freedom. Look only at the 20th century: They launched the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 (the first in Asia); nationalized the oil industry in 1951 (the first Middle Eastern country to do so); mounted the revolution of 1979; and engineered the student revolt of 1999. Which brings us to now, and that deafening cry for democracy.

Almost 20 years ago, when I started studying art in Tehran, the very idea of "politics" was so frightening that we didn't even dare think about it. To talk about it? Beyond belief!

To demonstrate in the streets against the president? Surreal!

Criticize the supreme leader? Apocalyptic!

Shouting "Down with Khamenei"? Death!

Death, torture and prison are part of daily life for the youth of Iran. They are not like us, my friends and I at their age; they are not scared. They are not what we were.

They hold hands and scream: "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! We are together!"

They understand that no one will give them their rights; they must go get them.



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They understand that unlike the generation before them — my generation, for whom the dream was to leave Iran — the real dream is not to leave Iran but to fight for it, to free it, to love it and to reconstruct it.

They hold hands and scream: “We will fight! We will die! But we won’t be humiliated!”

They went out knowing that going to each demonstration meant signing their death warrants.

Today I read somewhere that “the velvet revolution” of Iran became the “velvet coup,” with a little note of irony, but let me tell you something: This generation, with its hopes, dreams, anger and revolt, has forever changed the course of history. Nothing is going to be the same.

From now on, nobody will judge Iranians by their so-called elected president.

From now on, Iranians are fearless. They have regained their self-confidence.

Despite all the dangers they said NO!

And I’m convinced this is just the beginning.

From now on, I will always say: Once you leave your homeland, you can live anywhere. But I refuse to only die in Iran. I will one day live in Iran...or else my life will have had no meaning.

MARJANE SATRAPI is a writer and filmmaker whose works include the book and film “Persepolis.” Her most recent graphic novel is “Chicken With Plums.”



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ON WRITING PERSEPOLIS

By Marjane Satrapi, as told to Pantheon staff

<http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/graphicnovels/satrapi2.html>

Chances are that if you are an American you know very little about the 1979 Iranian Revolution. "This revolution was normal, and it had to happen," says Marjane Satrapi, author of *Persepolis*, a totally unique memoir about growing up in Iran after the Shah left power. "Unfortunately, it happened in a country where people were very traditional, and other countries only saw the religious fanatics who made their response public." In her graphic novel, Satrapi, shows readers that these images do not make up the whole story about Iran. Here, she talks freely about what it was like to tell this story with both words and pictures, and why she is so proud of the result.

Why I Wrote *Persepolis*

From the time I came to France in 1994, I was always telling stories about life in Iran to my friends. We'd see pieces about Iran on television, but they didn't represent my experience at all. I had to keep saying, "No, it's not like that there." I've been justifying why it isn't negative to be Iranian for almost twenty years. How strange when it isn't something I did or chose to be?

After I finished university, there were nine of us, all artists and friends, working in a studio together. That group finally said, "Do something with your stories." They introduced me to graphic novelists. Spiegelman was first. And when I read him, I thought "Jesus Christ, it's possible to tell a story and make a point this way." It was amazing.

Writing a Graphic Novel is Like Making a Movie

People always ask me, "Why didn't you write a book?" But that's what *Persepolis* is. To me, a book is pages related to something that has a cover. Graphic novels are not traditional literature, but that does not mean they are second-rate. Images are a way of writing. When you have the talent to be able to write and to draw it seems a shame to choose one. I think it's better to do both.

We learn about the world through images all the time. In the cinema we do it, but to make a film you need sponsors and money and 10,000 people to work with you. With a graphic novel, all you need is yourself and your editor.

Of course, you have to have a very visual vision of the world. You have to perceive life with images otherwise it doesn't work. Some artists are more into sound; they make music. The point is that you have to know what you want to say, and find the best way of saying it. It's hard to say how *Persepolis* evolved once I started writing. I had to learn how to write it as a graphic novel by doing.

What I Wanted to Say



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I'm a pacifist. I believe there are ways to solve the world's problems. Instead of putting all this money to create arms, I think countries should invest in scholarships for kids to study abroad. Perhaps they could become good and knowledgeable professors in their own countries. You need time for that kind of change though.

I have been brought up open-minded. If I didn't know any people from other countries, I'd think everyone was evil based on news stories. But I know a lot of people, and know that there is no such thing as stark good and evil. Isn't it possible there is the same amount of evil everywhere?

If people are given the chance to experience life in more than one country, they will hate a little less. It's not a miracle potion, but little by little you can solve problems in the basement of a country, not on the surface. That is why I wanted people in other countries to read *Persepolis*, to see that I grew up just like other children.

It's so rewarding to see people at my book signings who never read graphic novels. They say that when they read mine they became more interested. If it opens these people's eyes not to believe what they hear, I feel successful.

You Have to Think Freely to Know What to Write

My parents were very proud when they read *Persepolis*. If I criticize them once in a while, it's because it's the truth, and they laugh. My father always says, "It is only an idiot who never changes his mind." My parents accept that times change, and they are not right anymore. They've taught me that you can make mistakes.

They were extremely open-minded about what I said and they were demanding. I'm also tender with them because they were magnificent parents. They gave me the most important thing -- the freedom of thinking and deciding for myself. The best present anyone can receive is not being formatted because the world or a religion wants you to be.



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'Persepolis' paints Iran from a kid's perspective

By Christopher Theokas, USA TODAY

http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/reviews/2003-08-06-persepolis_x.htm

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi, an Iranian artist living in Paris, is a memoir of growing up in Iran during the 1979 revolution that deposed the shah. With the recent publication of two other Iranian memoirs, *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas and *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi, Persepolis offers readers another link to understanding a country whose politics is gaining attention in the American media.

Satrapi presents her story as a graphic novel — a book-length comic book — and the stark drawings owe much to Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus*, which chronicled his father's experiences at Auschwitz. Although Satrapi is able to convey a wide range of emotions, the simplicity of the artwork lacks the texture of *Maus*, thus keeping Persepolis from rising above a child's point of view.

But the simple lines and shapes of Satrapi's drawings lend poignancy to the story. The fact that she is able to portray such a vast range of emotions with a few simple strokes of a pen is impressive. That she does this consistently for 153 pages is a mighty achievement.

The dialogue seems somewhat stilted, as when a fundamentalist protester remarks to Satrapi's more liberal mother: "What was more important, to fight against the satanic influence of Western imperialists or to obstinately hold on to a personal preference that created divisions among the ranks of the revolutionaries?" But Satrapi defends her writing style: "In those days, people really talked that way. One had a feeling, in revolutionary and intellectual circles, that they spoke from a script, playing characters from an Islamized version of a Soviet novel."

Persepolis covers Satrapi's story from when she was 6, living in Tehran with her intellectual parents, to when she was 14 and had to flee to Vienna to continue her education. At its strongest, it's an inspiring coming-of-age story.

Illuminating the similarities between the Western and Islamic worlds is what Satrapi does best. In both worlds, kids grow up and rebel against their parents and society. They try to shape their own identities. The only difference between a girl growing up in the USA and a girl growing up in Iran is that in Iran, rebellious behavior we take for granted could lead to jail time — if not worse.

Satrapi tried to live in a world that was falling apart, a world that she understood better than her parents imagined, but a world that was — and is — absurdly unfair.



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