

Persepolis Reading Guide



Questions and Ideas for Consideration

- Graphic Narrative:** How does the comic style of *Persepolis* affect the message and meaning of the story? How does it differ from other books we've read this term?
- Culture:** Do you think Marjane Satrapi portrays Islamic culture effectively? Why or why not? As an American reader, how did you interact or relate to the story?
- Institutions and Relationships:** What does this book say about parent/child relationships, friendships, and other relationships? How are institutions presented, and how do these relate to relationships Satrapi builds in the story?
- Heroine:** How does Marji defy gender roles in the story, and how is this concept complicated by her relationships, religion, and culture? Why does she want to rebel, and if so, what challenges does she face in attempting to do so?
- Depiction Details:** What illustration choices does Satrapi make to purposefully present certain ideas? Consider use of line, color, perspective, framing, etc.
- Humor:** How is humor used in the story? How does this affect its message?
- Childhood/YA:** How is the shift from childhood to adolescence presented here?

Daybook Possibilities

- Research Iran, Islam, or some of the historical events of the story to build you context for the text.
- Try your hand at graphic narrative art yourself by drawing a short comic of a story you've read or an experience you have had in your life.
- Visit the library and check out some of the other graphic narratives or comic books for teens. How is *Persepolis* similar or different to these? Which draw your attention and why?
- Watch the film version of *Persepolis* and compare. How does animation shift the story, and how does this differ from other film adaptations you've seen?
- Consider some of the design choices that Satrapi makes, such as color, use of text/dialogue, frame shape/size, and the other elements we discuss in class. How do these affect the story?
- Learn about how graphic novels are viewed and what people's perceptions of them are (possibly looking at news or web forum spaces). Do you agree/disagree?
- Compare the portrayals of the Bildungsroman in this book to others we've read this semester.
- In what context might you teach this book or other graphic novels? Do some research about classroom uses of graphic narratives and how/why teachers might use them in classroom settings.

Suggested Critical Reading

- "Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*: Eluding the Frames" by Ann Miller
- "Frames and Mirrors in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*" by Babak Elahi
- "The Texture of Retracing in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*" by Hillary Chute
- "Melancholy Ties: Intergenerational Loss and Exile in *Persepolis*" by Kimberly Wedeven Segall
- "Graphic Ethics: Theorizing the Face in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*" by Joseph Darda
- "The Graphic Novel and the Age of Transition: A Survey and Analysis" by Stephen E. Tabachnick

Background and Context

Published in 2000 as a two-volume text (*A Story of a Childhood* and *A Story of a Return*) Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novel shares her experiences during and after the war between the Iran-Iraq War (First Persian Gulf War). Originally published in French, Newsweek ranked the book as #5 on its ten best fiction of the decade. It has been received to great critical acclaim and adapted into an animated film in 2007, which was nominated for an academy award.