

Persepolis

Film Study Guide

Director: Vincent Paronnaud, Marjane Satrapi

2007 | Animation | 96 Minutes | France, USA

| French, English, Persian, German | Rated PG-13

Synopsis: In 1970s Iran, Marjane 'Marji' Statrapi watches events through her young eyes and her idealistic family of a long dream being fulfilled by the hated Shah's defeat in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. However as Marji grows up, she witnessed first hand how the new Iran, now ruled by Islamic fundamentalists, has become a repressive tyranny on its own. With Marji dangerously refusing to remain silent at this injustice, her parents send her abroad to Vienna to study for a better life. However, this change proves an equally difficult trial with the young woman finding herself in a different culture loaded with abrasive characters and profound disappointments that deeply trouble her. Even when she returns home, Marji finds that both she and her homeland have changed too much and the young woman and her loving family must decide where she truly belongs.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about the Iranian Revolution? How is the Iranian Revolution similar to the recent events in Egypt, Libya and London? How is it different?
2. What is the role of women in the story? Compare and contrast the various women: Marji, her mother, her grandmother, her school teachers, the maid, the neighbors, the guardians of the revolution. How do they respond and react, rebel against and conform to their environment?
3. Discuss the role and importance of religion in Persepolis. How does religion define certain characters in the book, and affect the way they interact with each other? Is the author making a social commentary on religion, and in particular on Fundamentalism? What do you think the film is saying about religion's effect on the individual and society?
4. Think of key scenes/moments that sum up Marji's Character for you. Compare these with your first thoughts on the film's title or when you were told you'd be watching an Iranian film.
5. Marji challenges her teacher in class, bringing up points that are not being taught or discussed. We then see her at home. How do her parents react? Can you understand the different viewpoints they express?

6. Think about other animated features you have seen. What are the differences between these and Persepolis? What did you think about the style used in Persepolis?
7. How would you describe Marjane's interaction with Western culture?
8. Marjane Satrapi's grandmother told her: 'Always keep your dignity and be true to yourself,' and her mother told her: 'Don't forget who you are and where you come from.' What, in your opinion, does it mean to say that one needs to be true to oneself? In what sense is it important not to forget where one comes from?
9. When Marjane decides to leave Iran, what does she do? What does she take with her? Have you ever had to say goodbye to a place or to a family member? How do you say goodbye to a place you love?
10. What role do family stories play in shaping Marji's sense of who she is and who she should be? What does she learn from her Uncle Anoosh's story, her mother's story, and her grandfather's story?

Useful Links:

Film Education site with clip-specific questions and resources for teachers

<http://www.filmeducation.org/persepolis/index.html>

Gradesaver site with further information about the film, graphic novel and author

<http://www.gradesaver.com/persepolis-the-story-of-a-childhood/study-guide/>