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Oppression: How it Builds Resilience

Imagine a rule which prohibits you from having the ability to laugh in public. The Taliban has enforced hundreds of oppressive rules that degrade a woman's human dignity. One of the fundamental themes in *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis, is the oppression of women. Institutionalized misogyny caused the Taliban's dehumanizing nature. The fear of women's independence leads them to enforce these limitations, which they see as imperative to preserve a hierarchical system that positions women in subordinate roles to men. They denied women education, jobs, and necessitated strict dress codes. Due to these pronouncements, heroines in the novel learned to retaliate. A character's identity in the book morphed into resilience in the face of trauma, abuse, and poverty.

Deborah Ellis portrays this resilience by using literary devices such as motivations, human dignity, and character choices. Parvana and Mother utilizing their rage as motivation to crush the Taliban stand as an excellent example. According to the text, "She (Mother) marched straight up to the prison gates and said to the guard, 'I'm here for my husband.' ... 'I'm here for my husband!' she kept saying, louder and louder." -pg 42-43. Context-wise, Father got dragged to prison because of his education. Mother viewed this as unjust, so she demanded the Taliban release her husband. Because of the turmoil Mother caused, the soldiers decided to beat her and Parvana up. Surprisingly, Mother stood her ground. This vital scene revealed a glimpse of Mother's resilient spirit and identity. Without this, others might characterize Mother as feeble

and de trop. Also, Parvana watching her mother show fearlessness motivated her to jump in and demand her father's freedom. On the days that follow, Parvana heads out to the market, encountering a Talib soldier. The text states, "The soldier raised his arm and brought his stick down on Parvana's shoulder... 'Stop hitting me!' she yelled." -pg 54. This further elucidated Parvana's resilient identity. Instead of accepting abuse, she fought back and made sure her human dignity was still intact.

Furthermore, laws prevented women's education, and pertaining jobs outside the home. Despite the circumstances, women in the novel found ways to rebel. Mrs. Weera and Mother established a secret women's group and created a magazine that published women's stories; they hoped to attract a clandestine society against the regime. Also, through the secret alliance, they built a school for young girls. I view these as the most important character choices in the novel. This changed our perspective on Mother and Nooria's identities. In the beginning, we saw them as fatuous because they legit do not do anything besides hollow up in despair and fear. When Mother agreed to create this group, it showed us that she is not a quitter, and she's got some resilience in her blood. Moreover, the Taliban rooted that terror into their head. Women worried for their safety; making sure they covered their ankles. Opposing meant receiving a public whipping. They had to assure themselves that only mahrams could hear their voice. Through this group, Nooria received a marriage offer. Of course, she accepted. This demonstrates the idea of Nooria taking control of her fate. She picked herself up, and she did not succumb to fright. This event gave us two major character arcs.

Oftentimes, people forget the actual definition of resilience. According to Eric Greitens, "No one escapes pain, fear, and suffering. Yet from pain can come wisdom, from fear can come

courage, from suffering can come strength - if we have the virtue of resilience.” Resilience is accepting your reality and achieving the ability to move forward or change it.