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### Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things

Have you ever done something extraordinary or terrifying just to survive? In *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis the main character, Parvana, goes from being wealthy to being poor due to the Taliban's inhumane rules. She and her family realized that in order to survive war, they needed to work together, support each other and take extraordinary risks. In addition, adapting to sudden change, and overcoming fears impacts a character's identity.

First, Parvana lived through dangerous situations for survival that were out of the ordinary for a young girl. One example was disguising herself as a boy to be able to work and to dig bones of dead people to earn more money to buy food for the family. Parvana became financially responsible for her family when her father was arrested by the Taliban. Many of the jobs she endured were likely illegal and certainly out of the ordinary. Often, when she was digging for bones, Parvana longed to be an ordinary girl and freely run through the market. But, she would quickly suppress those desires and would press on, so she could bring groceries home. Having experiences out of the ordinary influenced Parvana's identity and strengthened her character. Growing up in Afghanistan during wartime, forced Parvana to mature rapidly and face her fears and insecurities, even though children her age should be care-free and attend school. At her

young age, she learned responsibility and what it meant to put others' needs before her own.

Another significant experience that transformed Parvana's identity was that she had to adapt to sudden change. She adjusted to change by disguising as a boy and becoming the breadwinner of her family. She agreed to disguise as a boy because she understood that it was a necessity to survive. For instance, “ as a boy [she would] be able to move in and out of the market, buy what [she] needed, and no one would stop [her].” (pg. 61). Pretending to be a boy was a trying experience for her, as she did not have the freedom to be herself. This shaped Parvana's identity and strengthened her character, because she became more and more independent and empowered as a young woman.

Lastly, Parvana's identity was transformed by overcoming her fears in a series of heart-breaking events. Throughout the book, she was faced daily with injustice and brutality, which challenged her bravery. At one point in the book, Parvana showed her bravery and her desire to protect her family from the Taliban, “She threw herself at the soldiers with such force that they both fell to the ground. She swung at them with her fists until she was knocked aside. She heard rather than felt the thwack of their sticks on her back. She kept her head hidden in her arms until the beating stopped and the soldiers went away.” (pg. 36) Such a young girl should never have had to stand up to several aggressive men, but Parvana did, demonstrating her maturity and survival instincts.

Throughout the book, there are many experiences that developed Parvana's character and challenged the deepest parts of her identity. Overall Parvana became a

stronger and better person. She was no longer the scared little girl and she grew to be brave in the face of adversity. Parvana is an amazing example of how people sometimes have to do extraordinary things to survive, and how these experiences can change them from the inside out.