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Language and Literature

December 10, 2020

Parvana's Bravery Saves Her Family

Living in Afghanistan, females are very limited, so how can a household of females make a living when they can't even go outside unless a man escorts them? In the novel, *The Breadwinner* by Debora Ellis, Parvana shows undeniable bravery to help her family survive by taking risks and sacrificing her original identity as a child and daughter to become the breadwinner for the family. Character traits create a character's identity, especially through difficult times. What character traits do these women need?

Bravery and new ways of thinking, that's what. Bravery plays a significant part in Parvana's identity. When a dire situation arises, Parvana shows her bravery by transforming herself into a boy. Males may come and go as they please. With their father gone in jail, Parvana's family begins to suffer because income and food become scarce. Her bravery begins by going to the prison with her mom to demand to have her father released. Parvana confronts the prison guard by saying, "He was arrested last night. He has committed no crime, and I want him released!" (p. 43) With no other option, her mother and neighbor decided that Parvana should mimic a boy so she could get food and supplies for the family. As she ventures out for the first time as a boy, Parvana thinks "I'm a boy, she kept saying to herself. It gave her courage." (p. 67) That courage allows Parvana success on her first day.

Now that Parvana feels the courage inside her, she starts to get creative in ways to earn money. With a girl from her class, they discover that they could make more money if they dug up bones to sell to the bone broker. Once they have enough money from the bone sales to buy trays to sell their goods, they set out to work the market. Parvana reads letters and translates them, sells goods from their house, and sells cigarettes and gum. Truly, Parvana sees the benefits and success of her new role in earning the money her family needs to survive.

In conclusion, Parvana's identity changes as difficult situations present themselves. Her bravery intensifies as she gains confidence in her new role as breadwinner for her family. Living in Afghanistan has limited Parvana as a female, but she is able to experience freedom and gain confidence as she faces new situations. Parvana accepts her identity, but longs to be an ordinary daughter again. But no matter how Parvana's identity may alter, her bravery will always exist.