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YALit

LENS #5: Critical

***Persepolis***

Persepolis is a graphic novel focusing on revolutionary Iran, written by Marjane Satrapi who is also the main character in the book. Through comic strips, Satrapi tells her life story as an Iranian women living in the time of war, under complete political power. While reading this novel, the reader is able to get a glimpse of Marjane’s life as a child through early adulthood. Majane seems to be lost throughout the story; lost in a world where she doesn’t know who she really is and what her beliefs actually are. I can concur with Marjane; I mean who would be able to find themselves in a country where utter freedom doesn’t exist? The fundamentalists forced Iranian women to wear a veil that covered all of their hair, they had to dress, look and act a certain way that was seen as just in the eyes of the Iranian government. For this reason, Marjane and her family found themselves protesting the government’s laws and standing for their own beliefs. While still a teenager, Marjane’s parents moved her to Austria, to get away from the war against Iraq. After living several years in Austria, she found herself alone, longing for life back in Iran with her family which in turn would take back her freedom. Not until the end of the story does the reader learn that if living in Iran, freedom would have a price, and that price would be death.

I really enjoyed the way that Satrapi used comic strips to emphasize the meaning behind the story she was trying to relay to the reader. Although I enjoyed the way she told her story, I don’t necessarily believe that this graphic novel is appropriate for young adults. As we have discussed in class, certain language use and situations that arise, can emphasize characters in the story. I believe that parts of Persepolis were crude and shouldn’t be used in any school setting. In the chapter titled The Trip, Mrs. Satrapi quoted, *“They insulted me. They said that women like me should be pushed up against a wall and fucked and then thrown in the garbage”.* While reading this as an adult, my jaw dropped. I was shocked that such literature would be considered appropriate for students in middle and high-school. I know as a future elementary teacher, I may look at literature through a different lens than a pre-service secondary teacher would. In my opinion, this novel is geared towards *adults* who are trying to educate themselves on revolutionary Iran. I think the topics and the language that ascend throughout the text would best be interpreted through the eyes of an *adult*. It’s also a great book for *adults* who may struggle with regular novels that tell stories only through words.

I believe graphic novels would be great to add to a classroom library and use in class if the material is both age appropriate and is centered on a good topic. As a teacher, I believe it’s vital to expose students to various forms of literature. Exposing students to different genres and forms of literature, students can grow cognitively and develop new reading strategies while experiencing various texts.