Educated By Tara Westover

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Author Note

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**Summary**

In the present world, most of us take the current education system placed in different states for granted. Such was not the case for Tara Westover. She was almost seventeen years of age when she went to study in a school for the first time. She was born in Idaho in a group of survivalists. Her daily activities comprised of preparing for the end of the world and stockpiling peaches and spending her life with as minimum means of survival as possible. She would gather strange herbs with her mother in the summer and would salvage metal from a junkyard with her father.

As she was living as a survivalist, therefore, contact with the “outside” world was rare. The deep suspicion and distrust that her father had for the modern medical establishment made sure that Tara never went to, or was visited by, a nurse or a doctor. All the injuries that she had at the time, minor or major, were treated at home by using her family's inherent art of herbalism. The family did not have access to any means of education due to a lack of contact with the world. Also, there was no one available to help her family as her older brother became emotionally unstable due to excessive stress.

Then something extraordinary happened in her life. One of her brothers managed to escape the region and secured a place in a college. He came back with strange news and information ‘beyond the mountain’ that captured the imagination of Tara. She ended up deciding to give this new kind of life a shot. She taught herself several basic subjects such as grammar, mathematics, and science. She attempted the ACT and managed to secure a place in Brigham Young University. There, she took several subjects such as philosophy, psychology, politics, and history. She learned about the events that had pivotal significance in shaping the world as we know it today including the Civil Rights Movement, the Renaissance, and the Holocaust. Her thirst for knowledge transformed her mentality completely. She ended up at prestigious institutions like Harvard and Cambridge. At the end of her travels, she wondered how she would be able to adjust back home.

**Summary of Social Issues**

There are numerous issues highlighted through the story of Tara Westover that are often taken for granted by the majority of us as we sit in our clean and comfortable homes in cities full of things that occupy our attention on a daily basis. Firstly, there is the question of making sure that there is free education and health for everyone. We, the Americans, are the most technologically advanced nation the world has ever seen. Therefore, the dubious failure of our government to educate every child living within its border is seen as incompetence. The title of this book itself is enough to mock the lack of will by our government to take a step to educate these people.

 Another issue that this book points out is the role of quasi-Christian identity played in her life. Her parents were former members of ‘The Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-Day Saints’. This made sure that most of the beliefs of her family were rigid and affected their lives most negatively. This points to the fact that too much of everything is bad, even faith and religion. Even in the book, the author points out the fact that Bob Marley died to refuse surgery after he was diagnosed with cancer.

 But the most dire and troublesome issue that the author has faced and will continue to face throughout her life, is the issue of identity. She is caught between the world at Buck’s Peak and the world that she later discovered as she received her education. This feeling of the citizen of two worlds is a feeling that should never be experienced by anyone as it is enough to break anyone emotionally.

**Analysis: Resolution and Decision-Making**

The whole memoir of Tara Westover is based on the single doctrine of resolution and firm decision-making. The part depicting the notion of resolution can be seen as Tara decides to receive proper education after she sees the progress of her brother in the outside world. It requires no small amount of resolve to leave one's family, and in this case, clan, to pursue the future that is not only uncertain but also unknown completely. This process of decision-making is not a small feat to leave everything you know behind.

Another point that highlights the resolve and firm decision-making of the author is her making this far in her educational journey. The author not only hails from a family of little means, but her family was actively against receiving any sort of education that did not pertain to her family’s brand of Christian faith. This also shows her father’s resolve as well, as the author decided to rebel against her father’s wishes and received formal education.

Lastly, it takes no small resolve to bear all the truth about one’s past. Most of us are either ashamed of our past or are too timid and frightened to tell. The author not only wrote it all down, but she highlighted all the problems that she had to face as she was growing up. This also shows the resolve of the author to show all the problems in our society that are mostly kept under wraps so that the public image of our society confirms to our foreign policy. Tara Westover is sending a message to us all that the children and people that live in the mountains of Idaho are our children as well, and that it is also our responsibility to make sure that they also receive decent healthcare and education as per their rights as described in the constitution of the United States.

**Critical Reflection and Conclusion**

*Educated* may only seem to many as an account of a girl that made it from rags to riches. Yet to an academic, it is much more than that. Educated is a personal account of the struggle of self-invention. It is the story of one's loyalty to one's family and clan, and the pain that comes with severing all ties with your family and everything you ever knew. With acute insight, the author has managed to draft a real and modern-day inspirational tale, turning into the modern-day "Joan d' Arc", fighting to get recognized as a key player and then fighting further to make sure that she keeps her sanity. In short, this story is not about Tara's educational journey, but it is about the perspective to imagine oneself in a specific role and trying very hard to achieve one imagines about the conditions of that role. It is about dreaming for a positive change and utilizing every ounce of will that one has to achieve that change. It is about telling one’s most painful secret and expressing the desire that no one ever comes to the same pain as you have suffered in reaching the top of the mountain of recognition and achievement.

# References

Westover, T. (2018). *Educated: A Memoir.* Random House.