**The Breadwinner**

by Deborah Ellis

*Paperback ©2005  ISBN – 0-88899-416-8*

**Overview**

Eleven-year-old Parvana lives with her family in one room of a bombed-out apartment building in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. Parvana's father--a history teacher until his school was bombed and his health destroyed--works from a blanket on the ground in the marketplace, reading letters for people who cannot read or write. One day he is arrested for the crime of having a foreign education, and the family is left without someone who can earn money or even shop for food. As conditions for the family grow desperate, only one solution emerges. Forbidden to earn money as a girl, Parvana must transform herself into a boy, and becomes the breadwinner.

**Grade 5**

**LEARNING TARGETS**

**5th Grade**

* I can explain how the Bill of Rights would have protected the characters in the Breadwinner. By contrast, I can explain how they do protect citizens of the United States.
* I can explain how unlimited power of government damages individual rights and the general welfare in the Breadwinner.
* I can identify government services, paid for by taxes and fees, that are not available to the characters in the Breadwinner and how it impacts their lives.

**STANDARDS**

**5.1.3.5.1** Explain specific protections that the Bill of Rights provides to individuals and the importance of these ten amendments to the ratification of the United States Constitution.

**Grade 5**

**Civics**

**5.1.4.7.3** Identify taxes and fees collected, and services provided, by governments during colonial times; compare these to the taxes and fees collected, and services provided, by the government today.

**5.1.4.8.1** Explain how law limits the powers of government and the governed, protects individual rights and promotes the general welfare.

**5.1.1.1** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**Grade 5**

**Language**

**Arts**

**5.1.6.6** Describe how a narrator’ s or speaker’ s point of view influences how events are described.

**5.2.1.1** (Informational Text) Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**5.2.4.4** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

**GUIDE**

**Chapters 1-7**

1. On page 17, Parvana asks her father how women in burqas manage to walk on the streets because they are so broken up. What does her father tell her? (Her father says that the women fall down a lot.) Why are the streets broken up? (continual war and bombings) In the United States who fixes the streets when there is a pothole or other damage? (The government, city, state or federal, depending on who has responsibility for management of that road. City streets are maintained by city government. State highways by state government. Interstate highways by the federal government.) How are these repairs paid for? (taxes) Name some other services that taxes pay for. (police, fire department, public schools, military, street lights, garbage collection, snow removal)

Civics Standard: 5.1.4.7.3

Language Arts Standard: 5.1.1.1

1. Parvana’s mother and her sister Nooria wear burqas whenever they go outside (p. 20). Parvana wears a chador and she keeps covered when she is in the market with her father (p.8). Why do they wear these garments? Is it the fashion in Afghanistan? Do you think they like these clothes? (They are required to wear these things by the government.) Does the law in the United States require citizens to dress in any specific way? (Laws can require “decency” in dress.) There are fashions or styles of dress that many people do not like (sagging, gauged ears, clothes with offensive things written on them), why don’t we have laws against wearing those things? (The First Amendment protects freedom of speech, including symbolic speech such as the clothing we wear.)

 In the landmark case Tinker v. Des Moines (see <http://www.streetlaw.org/en/landmark/cases/tinker_v_des_moines> for a simplified statement of the facts and holding) the Supreme Court said that wearing black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War was “symbolic speech.” What other examples of symbolic speech can you think of? Symbolic speech doesn’t need to be clothing, it can also be actions that communicate a message without words. (flag burning, sit-ins, protest march, wearing pink to support breast cancer research, flying the flag at half mast)

Civics Standard: 5.1.3.5.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.1.1.1

1. Many schools require a uniform. How is this the same or different than the clothing that women and girls in Afghanistan must wear? (Uniforms are worn only during school, not all the time. Students can choose a school that does not require uniforms. Punishment for failing to wear a uniform is not as severe as the punishment would be for the women.) Can public schools require uniforms for students? (yes) Since public schools are run by the government and funded through tax dollars, why can they require uniforms? Shouldn’t the First Amendment prohibit that? (The rights of children in a school can be limited if the school can show that the limitation promotes a good learning environment for all students.) Most schools have dress codes that limit the kinds of clothing students can wear. Look at the dress code for your school. Consider what kinds of clothing are prohibited. How would these garments disrupt the learning environment at your school? Do school dress codes promote individual expression or the general welfare?

Civics Standards 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.2.1.1

1. Parvana’s father is taken by Taliban soldiers (p. 30-31). Has he committed a crime? Do the soldiers say anything about why he is being arrested? (They question why he was educated in England.) What sections of the Bill of Rights would protect a United States citizen from being arrested in this manner? (4th  (no search or seizure without warrant), 5th (deprived of liberty without due process of law), 6th (be informed of nature and cause of accusation). Many people in the United States feel the police are too restricted by rules and regulations that protect criminals and that it keeps them from doing their job effectively. Why does the Bill of Rights have so many parts that protect people who are in trouble with the police? (The government, through the police, has a great deal of power over individuals. The protections of the Bill of Rights are concerned with times that government may abuse that power.)

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.2.4.4

1. How do Parvana and her mother try to help Parvana’s father? (They walk to the prison and ask for his release. p. 41) What happens to them? (They are beaten. p. 42) In the United States if a person is arrested, what is one of the first things that most people do? (Get a lawyer.) How does the Bill of Rights help citizens in this situation? (6th – right to counsel) Parvana’s family is very poor and wouldn’t be able to afford a lawyer. Read about the Supreme Court case of Gideon v. Wainwright. Streetlaw.org has a good description of the case for students in the Landmark Cases section. Gideon was a poor man accused of a crime. What did the Supreme Court rule, or decide, in the Gideon case? (That the 6th amendment right to counsel meant that the government must provide a lawyer for those who cannot afford one.) What effect would this law have on Parvana’s situation if it had been in effect in Afghanistan? (The lawyer would have requested her father’s release. She wouldn’t have been beaten.)

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.2.1.1 5.2.4.4

1. Formative Assessments:
2. Find examples of garments or fashion that you believe involves symbolic speech. Share a picture with your class, and tell them what is being expressed by the clothes. (Examples could include: a nun’s habit expresses her religion and her membership in a religious order, a military uniform expresses affiliation with the military, a Star Wars t-shirt expresses an interest in that movie, many people express affiliation to a sports team by wearing certain colors.)
3. Consider the following episodes in the book. What protections could the Bill of Rights have offered in these circumstances?
* Parvana is frightened that the soldiers will find her father’s books hidden in the cupboard. p. 32 – 4th Search and Seizure
* Parvana's mother is not allowed to publish anything she writes. p. 45 – 1st Freedom of Speech
* Parvana and her mother are beaten for asking about Father at the prison. p. 41 – 1st Petition the Government, Speech
* Shopkeepers are beaten for allowing women in their shops. p. 54 – 8th Cruel and Unusual Punishment
1. Write an essay defending you opinion on the following question:
	* Parvana is not allowed to attend school because she is a girl. The Bill of Rights does not include any right to an education, although many state constitutions do include one. Should the United States Constitution include a right to education? Why or why not?

**Chapters 8-15**

1. Mrs. Weera and Parvana's mother decide to write a magazine. How will it be published? (smuggled to Pakistan p. 101) What kind of stories will it include? (about lives of people in Afghanistan p.101) Is there a protection in the Bill of Rights that would protect citizens of the United States who want to produce a magazine? (1st – freedom of the press) Why would the government of Afghanistan want to keep such a magazine from being published? How does freedom of the press help citizens of the United States? Find examples of news stories that the United States government may not have wanted published, but that were published. (Watergate, embarrassing stories about office holders, stories critical of government spending, stories pointing out mistakes in how government actions are carried out)

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.1.1.1 5.2.1.1

1. The family starts a secret school for girls in their apartment. However, they have some difficulties. What are they? (risk of being found out, girls can’t come every day, no materials p. 132-133) In the United States children can go to public school or private school. What is the difference between public schools and private schools? (public schools are funded by the government with tax revenue, private schools are funded by tuition) What difference does this make in what can be taught at school? (public schools do not teach religion, because they are subject to the 1st amendment prohibition of establishment of a religion)

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.7.3 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.1.1.1 5.2.1.1

1. Parvana and her friend Shauzia go to a soccer stadium in hopes of selling their wares. What goes on there? (prisoners hands are cut off) Why are the prisoners punished in this way? (they are thieves) What Bill of Right protection would keep a similar punishment from being used on thieves in the United States? (8th – cruel and unusual punishment) A punishment can be considered “cruel and unusual” if it is out of proportion to the crime committed, if it is too harsh for the harm that was done. Most people would say that cutting off a hand for stealing is too harsh a punishment for the crime committed. Some people, however, might feel that it would be an effective way to keep people from stealing. Do you think very harsh punishment keeps people from doing crimes?

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.1.1.1 5.2.1.1

1. Summative Assessments:
2. The Breadwinner can make us appreciate the Bill of Rights and how it protects our liberties. Pick one of the rights protected by the document that you believe is important. Write an essay saying what right you picked, why you feel it is important, and what you feel would be the risk of not having this right.
3. The First Amendment includes 5 different rights. Each of these right could have a huge impact in Parvana's life. Make a list of the 5 rights, with an example of how it could relate to Parvana's story. (religion – the Taliban claimed religious reasons for their actions, speech – women are not allowed to speak in public, press – the magazine must be smuggled, assembly – the girls cannot gather as a group for school, petition – Parvana and her mother are beaten for asking for Father’s return)
4. The Supreme Court has said that the Bill of Rights protects students in school, but that schools can restrict students when they do things that can disrupt the learning environment. Dress codes can keep students from wearing fashions that interfere with learning. Think of your school’s dress code. Do you agree with it? Write an essay either in support of or criticizing the dress code. Make sure that you include references to student civil liberties and disruption of education.

**Notes**

This guide is made possible in part by grants from the Education Minnesota Foundation and the Minnesota Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.