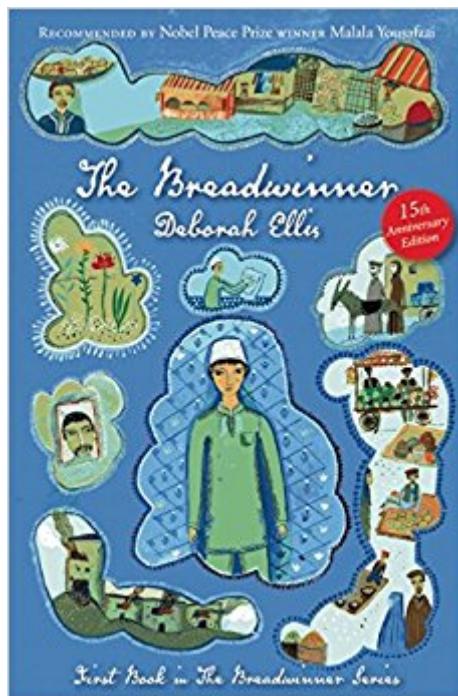


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# The Breadwinner



## Synopsis

The first book in Deborah Ellis' riveting Breadwinner series is an award-winning novel about loyalty, survival, families, and friendship under extraordinary circumstances during the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. 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 is a history teacher until his school was bombed and his health destroyed. He 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 become the breadwinner. The 15th anniversary edition includes a special foreword by Deborah Ellis as well as a new map, an updated author's note, and a glossary to provide young readers with background and context. All royalties from the sale of this book will go to Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan. Parvana's Fund supports education projects for Afghan women and children.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 700 (What's this?)

Series: Breadwinner (Book 1)

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Groundwood Books; Anniversary ed. edition (May 12, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1554987652

ISBN-13: 978-1554987658

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.4 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 236 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #7,208 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East #59 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women #69 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Self-Esteem & Self-Respect

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

## Customer Reviews

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, 11-year-old Parvana has rarely been outdoors. Barred from attending school, shopping at the market, or even playing in the streets of Kabul, the heroine of Deborah Ellis's engrossing children's novel *The Breadwinner* is trapped inside her family's one-room home. That is, until the Taliban hauls away her father and Parvana realizes that it's up to her to become the "breadwinner" and disguise herself as a boy to support her mother, two sisters, and baby brother. Set in the early years of the Taliban regime, this topical novel for middle readers explores the harsh realities of life for girls and women in modern-day Afghanistan. A political activist whose first book for children, *Looking for X*, dealt with poverty in Toronto, Ellis based *The Breadwinner* on the true-life stories of women in Afghan refugee camps. In the wily Parvana, Ellis creates a character to whom North American children will have no difficulty relating. The daughter of university-educated parents, Parvana is thoroughly westernized in her outlook and responses. A pint-sized version of Offred from Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Parvana conceals her critique of the repressive Muslim state behind the veil of her chador. Although the dialogue is occasionally stilted and the ending disappointingly sketchy, *The Breadwinner* is essential reading for any child curious about ordinary Afghans. Like so many books and movies on the subject, it is also eerily prophetic. "Maybe someone should drop a big bomb on the country and start again," says a friend of Parvana's. "'They've tried that,' Parvana said, 'It only made things worse.'" (Ages 9 to 12)

--Lisa Alward --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ellis (*Looking for X*) bases her contemporary novel on refugee stories about the oppressive rule of Afghanistan by the Taliban. Eleven-year-old Parvana must masquerade as a boy to gain access to the outside world and support her dwindling family. Parvana's brother was killed years earlier by a land mine explosion and, for much of the story, her father is imprisoned, leaving only her mother, older sister and two very young siblings. The Taliban laws require women to sheathe themselves fully and ban girls from attending school or going out unescorted; thus, Parvana's disguise provides her a measure of freedom and the means to support her family by providing a reading service for illiterates. There are some sympathetic moments, as when Parvana sees the effect on her mother when she wears her dead brother's clothes and realizes, while reading a letter for a recently widowed Taliban soldier, that even the enemy can have feelings. However, the story's tensions sometimes seem forced (e.g., Parvana's own fear of stepping on land mines). In addition, the

narrative voice often feels removed "After the Soviets left, the people who had been shooting at the Soviets decided they wanted to keep shooting at something, so they shot at each other" taking on a tone more akin to a disquisition than compelling fiction. However, the topical issues introduced, coupled with this strong heroine, will make this novel of interest to many conscientious teens. Ages 10-12. (Apr.) Women for Women in Afghanistan, dedicated to the education of Afghan girls in refugee camps in Pakistan. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Thoughts: I honestly can't walk two feet without being stopped and having this book recommended to me. This went on for about three years before I finally had enough of this and purchased the Breadwinner. And boy, am I glad I did. No one is more up for female rights than I am (I've probably written about a thousand female empowerment stories), and so this book instantly appealed to me. I loved I Am Malala, so hearing that this was in the same vein was immensely exciting. The Breadwinner is the kind of book that really anyone can read. Your age doesn't necessarily matter, since this book is written in a way that can transcend from eight to sixty year olds. But the writing wasn't what made this book impressive; the sheer character of Parvana herself, and the story she takes us along, is completely mindblowing. Sometimes, I had to stop myself and reread a section because it thrust me into disbelief. The things women had to go through under the rule of the Taliban - and STILL have to go through -.... it's just heartbreak. This book serves not only to make us, as kids, aware of this difficult topic, but also spurs us to want to get involved. I was completely gripped the entire time while reading this book, and by the end of it, I was speechless. While, at some points, this is not the most engaging book per se, it is still a fascinating story that kids of all ages will enjoy.

I bought this for our pre-teen daughter as it was her summer required reading. I wanted to read it first, and did. In one sitting. Staying up until 2 a.m. to get to the end because I was entranced and emotionally invested in the story. I was disappointed that it ended so soon, but gratefully discovered later that there is apparently a series. We will be getting them all! My daughter has thoroughly enjoyed it too and I hope it has impressed upon her additional reasons to be grateful that we live the life we live, in the country we live in. Having said that, I will note that I thought I was going to hate the book based on the foreword that was in the book. It was far too political, left-leaning, and smacked of the blatant cultural political correctness "Kool-Aid" that is being forced down our throats over the past few years. Glad I went past that and gave the book a chance....

Inspiring, heartbreak and gripping. Parvana's story brings a level of insight and humanity to the struggles of living under the Taliban, and Ellis's writing is clear enough that 5th grader could read it. I had only read it for a class assignment, but now I need to read the rest of the series!

For a children's book, this novel depicts some graphic violence and descriptions.

The Breadwinner by Deobrah Ellis is about an Afghanistan family that was very affluent prior to all of the wars that have ravaged the country for years. Parvana, a young lady, masquerades as a boy as a means of survival for her family and herself after her father is thrown into prison by the Taliban. In this emotionally engaging story you will live the life of a little girl that is forced to be The Breadwinner for her family. This is the first book in a trilogy that will allow the young reader to connect with the Parvana on a child's level, but will also challenge them to understand the hardships that millions of Afghan children have been and continue to be forced to endure. This book shows the vast differences of accepted societal norms among countries of the world. In the 21st century it is difficult to understand how female women and children can continue to be viewed as possessions of men. In the western regions of the world this type of behavior is taboo and not discussed even though it still goes on. However, in some regions of the world this is accepted and acknowledged practices. In The Breadwinner, Ellis has managed to capture the life of one young lady that reflects the true life of millions of other children.

This is the most wonderful story. I cry each time I read it. I read it to 4th graders for two years and they LOVED this book. Each time we ended a chapter, they'd groan and shout, "Can we PLEEEEASE read another chapter?!" We studied Afghanistan and, to a basic degree, the Taliban as we read Parvana's heartbreak and inspiring story. We compared Parvana's life to our own, marking all of the differences and similarities throughout the story. I used this as a basis for our "My World and Theirs" project, in which the students researched another culture and did a report on it, comparing their life to the lives of those in the other culture. This year, I'm reading it with 6th graders and I'm looking forward to the higher-level thinking we'll be able to do. I do warn that it has some graphic violence on the part of the Taliban, and the themes are mature and very sad. For this reason, I read the story out loud instead of the students having their own copies. I want to be able to guide them through those parts of the story so they can get the most out of it, rather than being afraid or upset while they read it alone. I like them to hear it from me because it is very emotional.

and I want to experience that with them. Overall, this is a phenomenal book and I recommend it to anyone of an appropriate age, probably at least 4th grade. Teachers, take note! Your students will be hanging on the edges of their seats.

Moving and accurate depiction of what happens to the women left behind in war. Great for fourth through seventh graders.

I read this book for one of my elementary literacy classes and fell in love with it. The story is one of trials, sorrow, and strength. I think it's a great book for students to read so they can realize that life is very different outside of the US. It gives them perspective on what happens in other parts of the world. Wonderful book.

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