

Persepolis

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International Baccalaureate, Language A: Literature, Higher Level



Persepolis

Starting Points

- Persepolis is the name of the capital of what was once the Persian Empire, established in the 6th Century BC; since 1935 the country has been called Iran.
- The discovery of oil made Iran rich. After Iran declared neutrality in WWII, the Allies took over the country and established a puppet ruler, known as the Shah.
- Many Iranians opposed the West's cultural influence and exploitation of Iran's resources. In 1951, the Shah was exiled and restored to power by England & the US. Internal opposition to the Shah continued. The Islamic Revolution occurred in 1979.
- Marjane Satrapi was 9 years old when the Revolution began; her family had opposed the Shah but did not support the fundamentalist takeover and soon found themselves enemies of the regime.
- Persepolis, a comic memoir, is told from a child's perspective on these events.

Quiz on the 1st reading: The Veil / The Bicycle / The Water Cell / Persepolis

1. What does Marjane aspire to be when she grows up?
2. What does Marjane compare the revolution to in the 2nd chapter?
3. Who does God look like in Marjane's imagination?
4. What happened at the Rex Cinema?
5. Who was Marjane's great-grandfather?

Bonus (+5):

What does Marjane's father do that is strictly forbidden by the government?



Redemption Quiz: The Letter / The Party / The Heroes / Moscow

1. What does Marji do for Mehri?
2. How do Marji and Mehri celebrate Black Friday?
3. What country accepts the exiled Shah?
4. Why does Marji want to beat up Ramin?
5. Why is Mohsen Shakiba one of the “heroes”?

Bonus (+5):

Who is the uncle, idolized by Marji, who was once briefly Secretary to Fereydoon, Minister of Justice for the newly proclaimed independent province of Azerbaijan?



The Veil / The Bicycle / The Water Cell / Persepolis

- Consider the second frame. Based on what you see here, suggest a possible theme that might be applied to the four opening chapters.
- List several examples from the text showing how you think this theme might be applied. In what ways do you think this theme might similarly be applied to your personal experience, if at all?
- What contradictions are evident here that we are led to suspect will continue throughout the story?
- How does Marjane show perspectives other than her own?



The Letter / The Party / The Heroes / Moscow

- What does Mehri's story reveal about class conflict in Iran?
- What does the symbol of the dragon seem to mean?
- Can we identify the author's idea of what true heroism is?
- Dialectic Materialism...in a comic book?
Discuss the implications.



The Sheep / The Trip / The F-14s / The Jewels

- In what way is religion shown as a political tool?
How is this related to the metaphor of the sheep?
- How does Marjane's personal confusion mirror the situation in Iran?
- In the same way, how does Mali's conflict parallel Iran's?
- What do you think the jewels might represent?



The Key / The Wine / The Cigarette / The Passport

- Analyze the influence of Western culture seen here. Is it good or bad? What do you think is Marjane's point of view? Do you agree with her? Can you guess at some criticisms that have been made of Persepolis based on these chapters?
- Why is the diner called Kansas?
- What does Marjane's defiance suggest about Iran's future?
- What's the irony surrounding the character of Uncle Taher?



Kim Wilde / The Shabbat / The Dowry

Discuss the big ideas of the memoir as represented in these chapters:

- Culture
- Religion
- War
- Feminism
- Patriotism
- Heritage

