

Analysis of *Educated* by Tara Westover: Essay #2

Instructions:

Choosing either Option A or Option B listed below, write a 3-4 page analytical review of *Educated*. As always, use MLA formatting. Support your ideas with quotations and paraphrase from the book as well as any additional articles that you use/consult. Remember to cite page numbers for any paper/print sources and to include a Works Cited list at the end of your paper.

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that you have read the book and that you are able to make critical observations about the text using support from the book itself as well as additional reviews/source material.

Note: Use PRESENT TENSE WHEN SUMMARIZING any scenes from the book.

Note: You are NOT writing a book summary and simply explaining what happens in the book. You will focus on some specific aspect of the book, making an observation/argument, and supporting those observations/arguments with evidence from the book.

OPTION A:

Instructions:

Write an analytical review of *Educated* in which you respond to one of the book's criticisms below, either agreeing with or disagreeing the critic. Support your argument with plenty of examples from the book. Also, take some time to read the complete book review so that you understand the context of the quotation (all available online).

Review Excerpts:

Michelle Dean, from *The Guardian*:

"Westover's narrative style – episodic, meditative and repetitive – doesn't embrace melodrama to the extent that many of those books did. Her voice is slightly flimsy, scaffolding with sheets of plastic floating off, as if still in the process of building itself. Other than as a sort of articulate vortex of suffering, one hasn't much of a sense of her. *Educated* relies on the conceit that Westover was saved by books, but at the end I had a sense of our narrator still hiding behind her degrees and certificates, not quite ready to step into the light."

From Kirkus Reviews (Staff written, No specific author listed):

"We learn about a third of the way through the book that she kept journals, but she is a bit vague about a few things. How, for example, did her family pay for the professional medical treatment of severe injuries that several of them experienced? And—with some justification—she is quick to praise herself and to quote the praise of others."

From Lydia Roberts, *Los Angeles Review of Books*:

“The idea of deep-seated, invisible wounds runs throughout the memoir, and the author’s hopeful conclusion is that education can heal, or reconcile, internal and external pain, allowing us to face the whole truth of our experience. And in that light, her abnegation of Mormonism — which was clearly responsible for some of her deepest wounds — rings false.

It’s true, *Educated* is not about Mormonism, but Mormonism breathes through the text. The book is written in the language of Mormonism and structured by the tenets and practice of Mormonism. The author’s denial of Mormonism, placed after the dedication and the epigraphs from Virginia Woolf and John Dewey, undermines a critical reading of the memoir.”

OPTION B:

Respond to one of the prompts below using support from the book. Make sure to also cite clearly any quotations, ideas, or information that you use from any other texts.

1. Injuries and accidents seem to occur frequently in Westover’s world, and a fair percentage of her narrative is devoted to describing such accidents. What is your theory on why Westover devotes so much time to describing these accidents? What is the significance and symbolism of this part of her life and how do you think the accidents fit into her larger purpose of describing how she found her “self” through her education?
2. Through telling her life story, what argument does Westover seem to be making about her views on education? Would you argue that she is advocating for a more self-directed and free-form education, or does she seem to be saying that without formal education she was deprived of necessary information, socialization, and study time?
3. Westover writes about becoming liberated from the forces that have held her down. Some people might say, that in this way, she is writing a feminist memoir because she is freeing herself from her father’s oppressive grip as well as the oppression in a patriarchal society that deems women “whores” when they have done nothing to deserve it. Write an argument in which you support or discount the idea that Westover has either intentionally or unintentionally, written a feminist memoir.