

Title: *Educated* by Tara Westover

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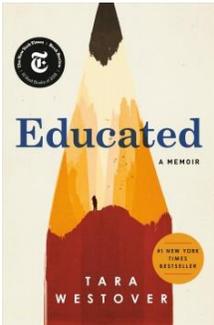
Why this Book?

Memoirs have seen a massive surge in readership in the past 20 years. Tara Westover's candid memoir will appeal to a wide intersection of readers including young adults and adults. Born to survivalists who rejected traditional education and health care, Westover's description of her off-the-grid childhood is vivid and at times heart-wrenching. Her determination to escape its constraints and violence via education is motivating. Her journey to getting a Ph.D. with few odds in her favour is a testament to her grit. There are many themes in this book that will make for a good book club discussion.

About the Author

Tara Westover was born in rural Idaho in 1986 and grew up without a conventional education. Her bestseller memoir, *Educated*, is her first book. She lives in England.

About the Book



An unforgettable memoir about a young girl who, kept out of school, leaves her family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University in 2014. Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Westover was born to survivalist parents in rural Idaho. Her erratic father led the family in stockpiling food, guns and gasoline in preparation for doomsday. Westover’s childhood was spent stewing herbs for her mother, a midwife and healer, or salvaging metal in her father’s junkyard, an “exotic” and dangerous playground. Westover grew up without health care or a formal school education. She also suffered years of horrific abuse by one brother with little intervention from her parents.

Encouraged by another brother who went to Brigham Young University, Westover began her quest for a different life. She taught herself enough mathematics and more to take the ACT and went on to graduate from Brigham Young University in 2008. *Educated* is an account of the struggle for self-invention. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty, and of the grief that comes from severing one’s closest ties. Westover has crafted a universal coming-of-age story that gets to the heart of what an education is and what it offers: the perspective to see one’s life through new eyes, and the will to change it.

(Adapted from the publisher’s summary)

Listen to a 15-minute Speedyreads summary: [Stream from Hoopla](#)

Author Interview

Tara Westover is interviewed about *Educated* by CBC. [Watch interview \(6:42\)](#)

Book Reviews

“I thought I was pretty good at teaching myself—until I read Tara Westover’s memoir *Educated*. Her ability to learn on her own blows mine right out of the water...Tara’s process of self-discovery is beautifully captured in *Educated*. It’s the kind of book that I think everyone will enjoy, no matter what genre you usually pick up.” – Bill Gates

“Born in 1986, Westover interviewed family members to help her write the first half. Her well-crafted account of her early years will intrigue teens, but the memoir’s second part, covering her undergraduate and graduate experiences in the ‘real world,’ will stun them.

VERDICT A gripping, intimate, sometimes shocking, yet ultimately inspiring work.” – Sarah Hill, *School Library Journal*

“It’s difficult to imagine a young woman who, in her teens, hadn’t heard of the World Trade Center, the Holocaust, and virtually everything having to do with arts and popular culture... An astonishing account of deprivation, confusion, survival, and success.” – *Kirkus Reviews*

“Westover examines her childhood with unsparing clarity, and, more startlingly, with curiosity and love, even for those who have seriously failed or wronged her. In part, this is a book about being a stranger in a strange land; Westover, adrift at university, can’t help but miss her mountain home. But her deeper subject is memory. Westover is careful to note the discrepancies between her own recollections and those of her relatives.” – *New Yorker*

Get the Book

Download *Educated* in your preferred format:

[OverDrive for Burlington Public Library](#)

Speedyreads [summary from Hoopla](#)

Discussion Questions

For discussion tips & tech support: [How to Start Your Own Online Book Club](#)

1. Many of Tara’s father’s choices have an obvious impact on Tara’s life, but how did her mother’s choices influence her? How did that change over time?
2. Tara’s brother Tyler tells her to take the ACT. What motivates Tara to follow his advice?
3. Charles was Tara’s first window into the outside world. Under his influence, Tara begins to dress differently and takes medicine for the first time. Discuss Tara’s conflicting admiration for both Charles and her father.
4. Tara has titled her book *Educated* and much of her education takes place in classrooms, lectures, or other university environments. But not all. What other important moments of "education" were there? What friends, acquaintances, or experiences had the most impact on Tara? What does that imply about what an education is?
5. Eventually, Tara confronts her family about her brother’s abuse. How do different members of her family respond?

6. What keeps Tara coming back to her family as an adult?
7. Ultimately, what type of freedom did education give Tara?
8. Tara wrote this at the age of thirty, while in the midst of her healing process. Why do you think she chose to write it so young, and how does this distinguish the book from similar memoirs?
9. Tara paid a high price for her education: she lost her family. Do you think she would make the same choice again?

(Questions issued by the publisher)

Read-alikes

- [*The Glass Castle*](#) by Jenette Walls
- [*The Liars' Club*](#) by Mary Karr
- [*The Great Alone*](#) by Kristin Hannah