



Tara Westover

Tara Westover is an American author. Born in Idaho to a father opposed to public education, she never attended school. She spent her days working in her father's junkyard or stewing herbs for her mother, a self-taught herbalist and midwife. Taught to read by an older brother, her education was erratic and incomplete. She was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. After that first encounter with education, she pursued learning for a decade, graduating magna cum laude from Brigham Young University in 2008 and subsequently winning a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. She earned an MPhil from Trinity College, Cambridge in 2009, and in 2010 was a visiting fellow at Harvard University. She returned to Cambridge, where she was awarded a PhD in history in 2014.

OVERVIEW

Major Themes.....

- **Memory/Subjectivity**

"Reality became fluid. The ground gave way beneath my feet, dragging me downward, spinning fast, like sand rushing through a hole in the bottom of the universe. The next time we spoke, Mother told me that the knife has never been meant as a threat. "Shawn was trying to make you more comfortable," she said. "He knew you'd be scared if *he* were holding a knife, so he gave it to you." A week later she said there had never been any knife at all."

- **Family Relationships**

"You can love someone and still choose to say goodbye to them," she says now. "You can miss a person every day, and still be glad that they are no longer in your life."

- **Education**

"No comma, no period, no adjective or adverb was beneath his interest. He made no distinction between grammar and content, between form and substance. A poorly written sentence was a poorly conceived idea, and in his view the grammatical logic was as much in need of correction. "Tell me," he would say, "why have you placed this comma here? What relationship between these phrases are you hoping to establish?"

- **Independence**

"First find out what you are capable of, then decide who you are."

- Other themes:

- **Mental health, mentoring, diversity, dual identity**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Tara titled her book *Educated* and much of her formal education takes place in classrooms, lectures, or other university environments. But not all. What other important moments of "education" were there? Where else might our students be experiencing education outside of the University classroom?
- After Westover decides to continue her education, she finds it increasingly difficult to reconcile her life on the mountain with her new life as a student. She writes she had a "fractured mind". How, if at all, do you think UC San Diego students can relate to this? What about when you specifically think of our International students?
- Tara acquired an algebra book from the library and taught herself in order to pass the ACT. She also had never stepped foot in a classroom till her first day at BYU. How does this make you think differently about the varying levels of college preparedness that our students are entering with at the University?
- Tara finds support and encouragement from faculty at all levels of her education (Undergraduate professor, Dr. Kerry, Master's supervisor, Dr. Runciman, and PhD supervisor, Dr. Steinberg) and the Bishop at BYU, which without she may not have completed her degrees. What are concrete examples of support our faculty and staff can provide students?