



NANCY: What a powerful story of mental illness, abuse and personal transformation. Tara Westover shares her life in a very compelling way, taking us into her thoughts and home life, sharing the mania and danger that lurked around every corner as she navigated her place in this family system. Her memoir unfolds an amazing triumph as she chooses to break free of the system, striving for a formal education after such difficult and humble beginnings. A book that stays with you long after you turn the final page.



KATHARINE: No wonder this is a bestseller. It deals with so many current topics... White supremacy, education/homeschooling, mental illness. Good for classes in history, religion, psychology. And although it's set in the Mormon faith, I don't think it's really about Mormonism as much as survivalism and cults.



PRISCILLA: I didn't know much about Mormons before I read this book. Are they all like this? No wonder Tara lost her faith. That's a very strange way to live and they weren't very nice people, either.



ABIGAIL: I don't think all Mormons are this way, Priscilla. It's more the backwoods experience of distrust of outsiders. This happens apart from religion. The distrust of education is common in some cultures. Appalachian culture is similar. When people get educated, they often question tradition, which disrupts the culture. Many try to keep the culture intact by limiting exposure and education.



MOLLY: I thought this book is helpful in how it shows how people learn to hate. You see it's about ignorance and not knowing about others and their cultures. Tara didn't learn about the holocaust and racial discrimination. Once she heard the terrible stories, she changed her thinking. This books seems to suggest that we could solve more problems if we focus on good education for all.



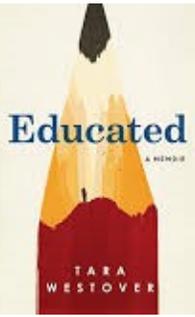
JANE: What I want to know is how did these kids get to be so smart? 3 PhDs? How did Tara and her brothers do it? Is this the ultimate commercial for homeschooling? Does denying your children schooling work as reverse psychology? What's going on here?



SALLIE: No, Jane. This is not a commercial, at least not for this type of homeschooling with a mentally ill father. I feel for these children growing up in this environment. Sick. Sick. Sick. And Tara's story tells us how long it takes for children to overcome abuse in these situations. So hard for them to find a path to sanity and a more healthy life. Many never manage.



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: Educated

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Have you known anyone without a formal education? Have you known people who do homeschooling? How does Tara's experience compare and contrast to those you've known?
3. One theme in this book is domestic violence with a sibling. How did Tara's family treat this issue? How did Tara deal with it? Have you known of similar situations? If so, how were they handled?
4. What is education? What is the education provided by Tara's parents? How does this book reflect and lift up the division in our country?
5. Toward the end of the book, Tara mentions that three of the siblings in this family get PhDs and the others don't graduate from high school. Do you find this surprising? How did this happen?
6. Tara's family's story is to a large extent a story about how mental illness transforms and contorts life in family and community. How did they deal with her father's illness? Do you find this common? What other ways can mental illness be handled in family life?
7. Tara eventually severed relationships with some of her family. Why did she do this? What does love require?
8. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this change your life or perspective?

On YouTube: "You Can Love Someone & Still Choose to Say Goodbye" | SuperSoul Sunday | OWN (4:34). "Tara Westover's journey from off-the-grid childhood to Cambridge" (6:41) CBS This Morning. A conversation with Bill Gates and Tara Westover (3:14)