

# Themes of stones into schools essay

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The institution of education in many regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan is virtually nonexistent. Many girls don't have access to schools (Stones into Schools p.

4) and those that do usually don't graduate from high school. While Greg Mortenson's *Stones into Schools* and the documentary *The Miseducation of Pakistan* deal with two different areas, they both show many similar themes. One major recurring theme that is evident in both *Stones into Schools* and *The Miseducation of Pakistan* is the suppression of women. Both works discussed how women in the region had traditionally been discouraged from attending school or entering the workplace. The Taliban was especially opposed to women's rights. When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, one of the first things they did was close every girls' school and university (*Stones into Schools* p. 74).

Over 100, 000 elementary school girls and 8, 000 female university students were forbidden from attending their schools. Women were only allowed to leave their homes if they were with a close male relative and they had to wear a blue burka. If a woman showed her ankles she could have been whipped.

While Pakistan didn't have some of the cruel laws imposed on women during the Taliban's regime in Afghanistan, women were still viewed as lesser than men. Many girls were forced by their parents to stop attending school (*The Miseducation of Pakistan*). Both *Stones into Schools* and *The Miseducation of Pakistan* make note of this. Mortenson tells of how a woman was told by her own mother that " women should work instead of reading books" and that "

books will poison your mind you will become a worthless wife and mother” (Stones into Schools p. ).

Unfortunately, as a result of this mind set, extremists are still able to gather recruits to join jihads. Women’s literacy in these regions has been shown to decrease the number of people that follow the extremists (Stones into Schools p. 13). Another problem that is evident in both works is the road infrastructure. Geographic isolation is a problem for the people in the Wakhan corridor.

The mountains are so high that transportation in the region is very difficult. The air can be so thin that some of the farmers in the Hindu Kush region have to slice their donkey’s nostrils open so that they can breathe easier due to the thin air (Stones into Schools p. 27). The extreme terrain is a major obstacle for creating schools in the region, which is why the government didn’t build any there. Some winters in that area can last from September to June, making all transportation even more difficult. Pakistan is experiencing a similar problem.

Many regions in Pakistan are geographically isolated by various geographic features and poor roads. Thus, remote areas are more difficult to access and build schools in. A third theme that comes up is crime and violence. Mortenson discusses how many dealings involve heroin dealers and conflict stricken areas.

The schools that Mortenson’s organization built in the Kashmir region of Pakistan had to be outfitted with pitched metal roofs to deflect fallout from Indian artillery shells (Stones into Schools p. 37). He also discusses the <https://assignbuster.com/themes-of-stones-into-schools-essay/>

Taliban's violent takeover of the previous government in Afghanistan as well as many of their excessively violent and cruel punishments for violation of their laws. The Miseducation of Pakistan depicts this theme as well. One school in Pakistan that was depicted in the video couldn't have their classes in the classrooms because criminals were using them to store guns and drugs, so they couldn't go in there or they would risk upsetting the criminals. The final major common theme discussed in both Stones into Schools and The Miseducation of Pakistan is how teachers often never show up to school. Mortenson told about how when he was in Korphe that he saw eighty-two school children drawing their lessons with sticks in the dirt and that there was no teacher anywhere in the school (Stones into Schools p. 8).

This theme was very evident in the Miseducation of Pakistan as well. The video discussed how many teachers never showed up, but were still on the government payroll. Many times a student would be the one teaching the class (The Miseducation of Pakistan). On one occasion there was a single teacher who had to teach the children many subjects including ones that he didn't know how to teach. As a result, the students performed poorly in English and many other subjects.

While both works have many common themes, there were many differences as well. A theme that was depicted in The Miseducation of Pakistan was corruption in the school system. Many administrators for schools in Pakistan were secretly taking many of the schools' funds. One of the schools shown had a large scientific laboratory, however students didn't use it as all of the funds that were meant to go to the lab for experiments were diverted to the administrator's pockets. A theme that was addressed in Stones into Schools <https://assignbuster.com/themes-of-stones-into-schools-essay/>

addressed in the documentary was cultural conflicts in the region. On numerous occasions it was discussed how the three rival sects of Islam, the Sunnis, Shias, and Ismailis made it hard for people to cooperate.

Language barriers made communication difficult as well. In the Wakhan corridor, each of the three different groups there speaks a different language (Stones into Schools p. 58). A theme that wasn't addressed very much in the book, but was given importance in the documentary was how students in some areas played sports at school all day and didn't know anything about their school work. This was very apparent when they were asked basic questions about things they should have learned, but they were either unable to answer or they would answer incorrectly. Another theme addressed in the documentary, but not in the book was student attendance. Many girls as well as boys didn't attend school at all. This was evident when one of the schools didn't have a single student in it.

Administrators of the school were essentially paid to sit there and do nothing all day long. Lastly, the theme of culture in the region wasn't really delved into in the film, but in the book Mortenson goes into deep detail about the culture of the region. For example, Mortenson talks about drinking salt tea many times. He also explains the importance of horsemanship to the people of the Wakhan corridor. After reading the book and watching the video, I believe the video was more persuasive. I can imagine many of the things depicted in the book, but those images don't compare to the ones in the video. The condition of some of the schools in the video was appalling to say the least.

Before viewing the video I had no idea about what schools were like over there. I now realize how much I take our education system for granted. The book provides a large amount of valuable insight as well though.

Mortenson's depiction of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan provided much needed information as to why and how the Taliban was involved with 9/11. My opinions of the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as schools changed after watching the documentary and reading the book. I never knew the impact of schools on society. I knew that more education generally leads to higher income, but I didn't know that it could change the number of people who join terrorist groups or population growth. I now know that education provides much more than knowledge. My opinion of the people in the region changed as well. I didn't know that the people in the region were so hard working and eager to learn.

In conclusion, both *Stones into Schools* and *The Miseducation of Pakistan* expressed many of the same themes including the suppression of women, poor transportation, violence, and lack of teacher attendance. I learned a great amount about the region and the culture of its people. I also learned how great the public school system in the United States is and how fortunate we are to live in a country where a great education is free and available to all who want it.