

Sara's success in
'bread givers', written
by anzia yeziorsk



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In the book *Bread Givers*, written by Anzia Yezierska there was a prominent theme of finding oneself for the main character of Sara. Sara endures much hardship while growing up in a poor family with four sisters, a mother and an overbearing father. Her life consisted of watching her siblings lose their true love and be sold off to marry the man of their father's choosing. Sara will not succumb to such a travesty so she chooses to leave the family at the age of seventeen and find herself. In finding herself she also finds love, important an unspoken understanding of her father.

The scene of the story that I found most relevant was when Sara wins the one thousand dollar award at her commencement ceremony. " The senior year came, and with it a great event. The biggest newspaper owner of the town, who was a rich alumnus of the college, offered a prize of a thousand dollars for the best essay on " What the College Has Done for Me. "

Everybody was talking about it, students, instructors, and professors. "

(Yezierska 232.) Sara remembers what college was like when she first arrived and how she had strived to hard to fit in or just to find her place.

She certainly didn't stand out as being the most popular, smartest, nor the prettiest but she had something more – she had a story to tell. Sara could remember failing geometry and asking for her money back because she worked so hard to pay for her schooling, one failed class meant she had to pay again and work even harder. She could write about what she saw when she arrived at college, things she had never saw before, what had brought her to college and what helped her succeed.

She had ambition, she had drive, she was about to have a college degree - she had a story. I poured it out as it came from my heart, and sent it in" (Yeziarska 233.) She was happy because she had won, she had succeeded but she was sad because she had to leave. She would have to face her past once again and move on with her life. She would have to go back where she came from but she would go back with a college degree and a story. " At last a man came up to announce the winner of the contest. ' The student,' he said, ' whose essay the judges found the best is a young lady. Her name is _____' God in the world! Who was it? They were clapping to beat the band.

I only heard him say ' Will she please come forward to the platform? " " I heard clapping louder and louder. Then I saw they were all looking at me. ' Sara Smolinsky, it's you. It's you! Don't you hear? They're calling for you. " (Yeziarska 233.) This was a very defining moment in the book for me. First of all, this was just icing on the cake that Sara already had. She had fought and struggled so hard to obtain her degree, to be better than her parents, to prove to them she could be somebody. She had what she came for - a college degree but now she had been heard.

She told her story and her story was the best. She now had a story to share with her family. Next, I think that this was a defining moment because all that she had worked for and all that she was looking forward to was now in her reach. She would leave college as a winner in more ways than one. She was going to be able to start over; she had the means to do so now. She had the college degree to do so. It was all hers and hers because she earned it - she didn't have to share, she didn't have to donate any to charity - it was hers. She went through six years of college as a nobody.

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Her story does not lead us to believe that she had any friends or that she was ever invited to a party or a dance. She never mentions that college was fun, it was a struggle that she needed to do. I wondered did she feel left out, did she feel like an outsider, did her peers even know who she was. Whether I think they knew her or if she cared doesn't matter - when the end came - they knew her. " Then all the students rose to their feet, cheering and waving and calling my name, like a triumph, " Sara Smolinsky - Sara Smolinsky! " (Yeziarska 234.) This triumph was more than a thousand dollars to Sara. This triumph was proof that she mattered.

What she had to say mattered, what she had done, how she had done it - mattered - it mattered to people who didn't even know her. Sure the money helped, she could now buy the things that she envied so much when she first arrived at school, she could take care of herself and not have to work so hard to survive anymore. This money - this award, her degree, she had finally achieved what everyone said she couldn't. She became who she wanted to be, she was Sara Smolinsky - teacher. She had left all that made her unhappy and came to a place where she only found loneliness but was leaving with so much more than she had ever dreamed.

The money is not mentioned in the story much more, only to say that she bought her blue suit and some things to go along with it but to me it was a moment of victory. It was a moment that said she mattered and that she had done the right thing by leaving her family. She could be so much more than a wife and slave - she could be the Sara that Sara wanted to be. She probably would have survived without the award and money but it made it

all so much grander, so much better than she had probably imagined. She traveled and dressed like she had never been able to do.

She was going back to where she came from, back to New York. " Home! Back to New York! Sara Smolinsky, from Hester Street, changed into a person! " (Yeziarska 237.) She was her person, who she wanted to be; who she became was all by her doing. Even when she was sucked back into her father's life, she did it by her choice and her unspoken understanding and acceptance of her father and who he was. I don't think she could have had any understanding of her father and who he was if she hadn't found herself first.