

Past and presence in persepolis by marjane satrapi

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

Persepolis is a memoir written by Marjane Satrapi and is told through the perspective of Marji, the persona of Satrapi as a young girl. With increasing age, comes more with an increased amount of understanding of the actions of others. Marji was taught aspects of her society that is inconsistent with the present status of her society, however, as she goes through the Islamic Revolution in Iran, her thoughts about her country change. Marjane Satrapi's novel, Persepolis, describes that one's past encounters will shape how they become critical of the present status of their society by indicating the change of thought Marji demonstrates about her society throughout her experiences in the Islamic Revolution.

Becoming Supportive of the Revolution

At first, Marji has conflicting thoughts about the status of the Shah, but as she gains more insight as to how her family's backstory affected Iranian history, she becomes supportive of the Revolution. When Marji's teacher tells her class to "tear out all the photos of the Shah from [their] books (Satrapi 44)," Satrapi makes Marji's facial expression different from her peers since she is the only one who holds her mouth wide open. Marji was taught "that Shah was s chosen by God (44)," but she becomes confused as to why the Shah is being treated in such an "ungodly" fashion. After Marji tells her dad about what happens to her at school that day, he tells Marji the story of her family. When Marji's father tells her that, "the Emperor that was overthrown was Grandpa's father (22)," the reader can see that Satrapi shades in Marji's father's face halfway using the colors of white and black. The shading on

that panel represents the conflict that the Shah had with Marji's family, as it was the Shah's father that "confiscated everything [Marji's grandfather] owned (23)." Moreover, after Marji realizes that her family was put down the Shah, Satrapi shades in Marji's face half white and black as well on page 25. The shading on the panel demonstrates that Marji understands the conflicts that the Shah's family has put over Marji's family, demonstrating that she understands Shah might not be so "godly," after all. Previously, Marji thought that the Shah was "chosen by God (44)," however after she learns that the Shah's family had caused her family to "[live] in poverty (26)," in the past, she realizes that the Shah is not a "godly" figure and learns to support the current Revolution that is being shown in the novel. Therefore, Satrapi utilizes Marji's change of thought about the Shah to demonstrate how she becomes critical the present status of her society as she learns to support the current Revolution that is being demonstrated in the novel.

Change of Thought about Iran's Social Structure

Furthermore, Marji's past encounters caused her to think that all Iranians had access to the same depositions, however, that changes after Marji comes to the shocking realization of an evident lower social class. Mehri, the family maid falls in love with Hossein, the neighbor, by passing letters. However, their relationship falls apart after Hossein discovers Mehri is not part of the same social class as he is. In Marji's young mind, she thinks that their relationship is possible. That realization is changed when Marji's father describes that "their love was impossible (37)" as they are part of distinct social classes. On page 37, Satrapi chooses to position Marji's hand on her face and uses jagged lines when Marji asks her father "are you for or against

social classes (37)?” The fact that Marji’s hands were raised describes the shock she receives after she realizes that not all Iranians could have access to the same predispositions in the present. Moreover, the usage of jagged lines is also used to describe the fact that Marji becomes unraveled at the thought of a lower social class. In Marji’s young mind, she has always thought that Iran’s past social structure treated everyone equally, nonetheless, that changes as Marji realizes that not everyone is treated the same in her society. However, since Marji realizes there is a lower social class, she also becomes critical of her society as she “ finally [understands] the reasons for the Revolution (38).” Once Marji realizes there is a lower social class, she proceeds to attend a protest with Mehri in which Satrapi draws them using the similar facial expressions and hand gestures as the rest of the other protestors on page 38. The fact that Satrapi chooses to represent Marji’s facial expression similar to those of the rest of the protestors represents that she has become part of the unified faction that represents the current Revolution that is being demonstrated in Persepolis. Additionally, that panel is also the largest panel on that page, which symbolizes the importance of Marji’s realization of a lower class, as it causes her support the current Revolution that is being demonstrated in the novel. Marji’s change of thought about the social structure of her country causes her to become critical of the current situation in her country as she comes to the realization that not everyone in her society is treated equally.

Relationship with God

Lastly, Marji used to have daily meetings with God when she was a child, however, that changes as the Revolution grows stronger in Iran. As a young

child, Marji used to have nightly encounters with God. Marji's nightly encounters with God can be seen as comforting since the reader can see that on page eight, Satrapi chooses to draw Marji being cradled in God's arms. Marji also had a desire to be "the last prophet (6)." When her parents confront her decision about what she wants to be when she grows up, she simply tells her parents "I want to be a doctor (9)." However, Satrapi uses direct narration on page 9 in which she describes that "I felt guilty towards God," which demonstrates her growing apart from God. Furthermore, Marji's relationship with God and religion is exemplified through Satrapi's juxtaposition of drawing Marji's face in which half of her is wearing a headscarf and the other half is not. The juxtaposition of the two sides contributes to the fact that Marji's relationship with God is becoming conflicted. Additionally, on page 14, God comes to visit Marji, however, Satrapi draws Marji with her index finger to her mouth, indicating that she wants God to be quiet and is not interested in what he has to say; Marji is more interested in what her parents have to say as a movie theater was burned down that night and "there were 400 victims (15)." The fact that Marji's interest lies to listen the incident rather than listening to what God has to say represents that Marji's interests are shifting from God and religion. Moreover, Marji's interests are revealed to lay elsewhere as she talks to God about attending the demonstration, instead of her willingness to be a prophet. On page 16, Satrapi includes God includes in two of the nine panels as God seems to visually disappear from Marji's life. The fact that God can be seen nowhere to be found demonstrates that God is no longer apart of Marji's life. Marji used to find talking to God as a source of comfort in her

younger past, however, she as the Revolution grows stronger in Iran, Marji would much rather be politically active and attend the demonstration. Marji's willingness to become politically active rather than conversing with God demonstrates that she has truly become critical of the present status of her society.

Conclusion

Persepolis, a novel written Marjane Satrapi, argues that the encounters that one goes about in their past will help describe how one becomes condemnatory of the current status of their society by analyzing Marji's change of thought about her society throughout her experiences in the Islamic Revolution. One typically obtains understandings about the world around them through experiences they encounter throughout their lifetime. Marji encountered a numerous amount of experiences that taught her about the implications of how the past shapes one's present. One's past is a vital part that shapes as who they are in the moment. The actions of one's past also can dictate what others think about them and hence, it is important that one always participates in positive actions in the present because the present is an essential aspect that can describe what one will become in the future.