

Style in War Time

Written by mlmoment

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Freedom of information, expression and opinion sometimes is taken for granted in the U.S. In Marjane Satrapi's animated autobiographical film *Persepolis*, the potential loss of those freedoms is rendered in stark relief. While the adult members of Marjane's family struggle with political oppression in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, young Marjane struggles with finding her voice and identity. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will discover the personal aspects of freedom of expression as they learn about the barriers Marjane must contend with.

Ask students to discuss rights to freedom of expression evoked in a scene from a film

AHA! This scene isn't just about what Marjane can't buy or wear, it's about the things that make it hard for her to say who she is!

Grade Level: 7-9

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are embedded in, or omitted from, this message?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Materials: Computer with high speed internet connection, LCD projector, screen; DVD or electronic copy of *Persepolis* (2.4.7 Films, 2007; PG-13, French language/English)

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subtitles).

Activity: Ask students to think of a time when they felt like someone was 'cramping' their style. What did that feel like? What did they do about it? After this discussion, give students some background on the Iranian Revolution, and the social and political repression that followed.

Introduce a sequence from *Persepolis* in which Marjane buys an "Iron Maiden" album, barely avoids being taken to the authorities, and plays monster metal 'air guitar' on her tennis racket when she's finally in the comfort of her home. The sequence begins at 26:44 when Marjane crosses the street to see the black market vendors, and ends around 29:40.

Lead a discussion in which students attempt to define what rights this sequence is 'about.' At some point, ask them how personal style figures in this conversation.

Given that this is an animated film, take at least some time to discuss the links between form and content. Why do they think that Satrapi wanted to use black and white in this sequence? What effect does it have? What techniques are used to show that Marjane feels like she's powerless? What techniques are used to show that she feels powerful? How are the black market vendors, Marjane's mother and the two devout women portrayed?

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