“Educated” by Tara Westover

Discussion Questions

1. Many of Tara’s father’s choices have an obvious impact on Tara’s life, but how did her mother’s choices influence her? How did that change over time?

2. Tara’s brother Tyler tells her to take the ACT. What motivates Tara to follow his advice?

3. Charles was Tara’s first window into the outside world. Under his influence, Tara begins to dress differently and takes medicine for the first time. Discuss Tara’s conflicting admiration for both Charles and her father.

4. Tara has titled her book *Educated* and much of her education takes place in classrooms, lectures, or other university environments. But not all. What other important moments of “education” were there? What friends, acquaintances, or experiences had the most impact on Tara? What does that imply about what an education is?

5. Eventually, Tara confronts her family about her brother’s abuse. How do different the members of her family respond?

6. What keeps Tara coming back to her family as an adult?

7. Ultimately, what type of freedom did education give Tara?

8. Tara wrote this at the age of thirty, while in the midst of her healing process. Why do you think she chose to write it so young, and how does this distinguish the book from similar memoirs?

9. Tara paid a high price for her education: she lost her family. Do you think she would make the same choice again?

10. Westover says she believed she could “be remade, my mind recast” at her university. And in the end, she writes that she is a “changed person” from the person she was as her father’s daughter, and from her 16-year-old self. “You could call this selfhood many things,” she writes. “Transformation. Metamorphosis. Falsity. Betrayal. I call it an education.” What do you make of these final lines?

**Author Bio**

**Tara Westover** is an American author. Born in Idaho to a father opposed to public education, she never attended school. An older brother taught her to read, and after that her education was erratic and haphazard, with most of her days spent working in her father’s junkyard or stewing herbs for her mother. She was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. After that first encounter with education she pursued learning for a decade, graduating *magna cum laude* from Brigham Young University in 2008 and subsequently winning a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. She received an MPhil from Trinity College, Cambridge in 2009 and in 2014 was awarded a PhD in history. Currently, she is a Senior Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School Shorenstein Center, working on projects related to media and political polarization.