

Title: *A Girl Like That*
Author: Tanaz Bhathena

Perspectives Category: Challenging the Status Quo

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yaseen V., Grade 10

Date Reviewed: 8/29/21

1. What is the main plot of this book?

The main plot centers on sixteen year old Zarin Wadia, a vivacious orphan who is known around school as the girl you should stay away from. Zarin is often the center of drama and gossip because of her many romances, which raise the eyebrows of the religion police. The plot thickens when she is found dead with an eighteen year old crashed on the side of a highway in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

The character that I most identify with is Zarin because she is very relatable. Although I personally have not dealt with the struggles she has in her life, I found her character traits to be similar to many people our age.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

I believe the main message of the book is not to judge a book based on its cover. For example, throughout the book, Zarin is subjected to ridicule by her classmates and her community because she is seen as a problematic girl. Due to the rumors and gossip that is spread about her, Zarin feels isolated. However, as the plot continues, readers will realize there is more to Zarin that people let on and that she is more than the facade people made her out to seem.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

No, I don't think the author made the message too "preachy" because she wrote the story through multiple perspectives so that readers would slowly piece together the message on their own.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

The two perspectives that were shown in this book were people who judge others based on rumors and people who truly get to know someone instead of believing in the rumors. I believe in the latter perspective because it is important not to make assumptions about someone based on what you hear from others. Instead, you should get to know the person and come up with your own opinions.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

My beliefs on the harm of gossip and rumors and how it is important to not let them jade your views on people were reaffirmed after reading this book. Zarin faced a lot of ridicule in her life, and reading about how she coped with her struggles made me better understand how people make feel when others make them the center of gossip and harmful rumors.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

I do not think any perspective was missing from this book. The author did a good job creating this novel because she included multiple perspectives that pieced Zarin's story together.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research,

action, etc., and if so, how?

No, this book did not encourage me to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, or action. It did, however, teach me valuable lessons.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

I would recommend this book to readers who have been involved in drama or have been the victim of gossip and rumors because it tells a poignant story of a girl who went through many periods of stress in her life.

10. What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

Another book that is a good addition to this category is Suggested Reading. The book is about a bookworm who decides to fight back against her principal when her school bans numerous classic and meaningful books and deems them to be prohibited media. Here, Clara fights against the status quo and stands up for what she believes is right.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Tatjana T., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: April 10, 2023

1. The main plot of "A Girl Like That" revolves around Zarin Wadia, a teenage girl of Parsi and Indian heritage growing up in Saudi Arabia, who faces societal and cultural pressures due to her unconventional behavior and choices. The story follows her struggles with love, friendship, family, and navigating a conservative society that often judges and restricts her.

2. I most identified with Porus Dumasia, Zarin's close friend, and confidante, who supports her despite their differences in culture and beliefs. Porus is portrayed as a compassionate and accepting character, who stands by Zarin and helps her defy societal norms. I identified with Porus because of his open-mindedness, empathy, and willingness to challenge social expectations.

3. The main message of this book is about breaking free from societal expectations and norms, embracing individuality, and fighting against discrimination, oppression, and gender inequality. It highlights the challenges faced by girls and women in conservative societies, the importance of finding one's own voice, and the power of friendship and love in overcoming adversity.

4. The main message of the book was effectively integrated into the story through Zarin's character arc and the challenges she faces. It did not come off as preachy, as it was portrayed through the experiences and struggles of the characters in a realistic and nuanced manner, rather than through overt moralizing.

5. One perspective explored in the book is the tension between tradition and individuality, as Zarin challenges societal norms and expectations. I agreed with the perspective that individuals should have the freedom to make their own choices and express their true selves, regardless of societal constraints. This resonated with my belief in individual autonomy and self-expression.

6. Through reading this book, my beliefs about gender equality and the challenges faced by girls and women in conservative societies were reaffirmed. It shed light on the discrimination and oppression faced by Zarin and other female characters in the story, and the importance of advocating for gender equality and social justice.
7. One perspective that may have been missing from the book is a more in-depth exploration of the cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia and how it impacts the characters' choices and actions. The book touches upon it, but a deeper exploration could have added more context and depth to the story.
8. This book encouraged me to pursue further reading and research on gender equality, feminism, and cultural dynamics in conservative societies, especially in the Middle East. It prompted me to reflect on my own privilege and the importance of advocating for marginalized communities.
9. I would suggest this book to mature teenage readers or young adults who are interested in thought-provoking and character-driven stories that explore themes of gender equality, identity, cultural norms, and the challenges of navigating conservative societies. It may also appeal to readers who enjoy realistic fiction with diverse representation and social justice themes.
10. "Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi and "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood would make good additions to this category of Perspectives biography, as they also explore similar themes of gender inequality, cultural dynamics, and the challenges faced by women in oppressive societies from the perspective of female protagonists.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: 10/27/2023

1. What is the main plot of this book?

The main plot of "A Girl Like That" revolves around the tumultuous life of Zarin Wadia, a teenage girl in Saudi Arabia who faces discrimination, abuse, and societal judgment due to her rebellious nature and unconventional behavior. Throughout the story, Zarin navigates complex relationships, grapples with her sense of identity, and ultimately seeks liberation from the oppressive forces surrounding her. As she confronts the consequences of her actions and experiences both love and loss, the narrative delves into themes of resilience, redemption, and the quest for freedom in a restrictive society.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

I found myself most identifying with Mishal, Zarin's childhood friend who provides unwavering support and understanding amidst the chaos of their turbulent lives. Mishal's loyalty and empathy resonated with me, as she serves as a beacon of hope and stability for Zarin, even in the face of societal judgment and adversity. Her willingness to challenge norms and defend her friend reflects a sense of moral integrity and compassion that I admire.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

The main message of "A Girl Like That" centers on the resilience of the human spirit in the face of oppression and adversity. Through Zarin's journey, the narrative highlights the

importance of defiance, self-discovery, and the pursuit of freedom, despite the constraints imposed by society. As Zarin confronts the harsh realities of discrimination and abuse, her unwavering spirit and determination to live life on her own terms serve as a powerful testament to the indomitable nature of the human soul.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

The main message of empowerment and resilience in "A Girl Like That" is seamlessly woven into the fabric of the narrative, conveyed through the experiences and struggles of the characters rather than through didacticism. For example, when Zarin asserts, "I am not your property. I am my own person," her words encapsulate the central theme of asserting one's autonomy and challenging societal norms. This integration allows the message to resonate authentically, avoiding any sense of preachiness.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

In "A Girl Like That," the contrasting perspectives on female autonomy and agency are vividly portrayed through characters like Zarin, who defies societal expectations, and those who seek to control and oppress her. While some characters view Zarin's independence as rebellious and dangerous, I align with Zarin's assertion of her right to self-determination. Her refusal to conform to societal norms challenges the status quo and highlights the importance of individual freedom and agency.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

Reading "A Girl Like That" reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of resilience and self-assertion in the face of adversity. Witnessing Zarin's unwavering determination to defy societal constraints and assert her identity reinforced my conviction that individuals have the capacity to overcome even the most oppressive circumstances through perseverance and self-belief.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

While "A Girl Like That" offers a poignant exploration of female empowerment and resistance in the face of societal oppression, it could have benefited from more nuanced portrayal of the cultural and historical context shaping the characters' experiences. Incorporating perspectives from a wider range of voices, including those of marginalized communities and social activists, could have enriched the narrative by providing deeper insight into the complexities of gender dynamics in Saudi Arabia.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?

"A Girl Like That" sparked my interest in learning more about gender dynamics and women's rights in Saudi Arabia, prompting further reading and research on the subject. Delving deeper into the cultural, social, and political factors influencing the experiences of women in the region

enriched my understanding of the themes explored in the book and inspired me to advocate for gender equality and empowerment.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

I would recommend "A Girl Like That" to readers interested in thought-provoking narratives that explore themes of resilience, identity, and societal norms. While the book's themes may resonate particularly with young adult audiences grappling with questions of autonomy and self-discovery, its powerful message and compelling characters have broad appeal to readers of all ages and backgrounds.

10. What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

"Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi would make an excellent addition to the Perspectives Bibliography, as it offers a similarly compelling exploration of female empowerment and resistance in a restrictive society. Through the graphic memoir format, Satrapi vividly depicts her coming-of-age journey in Iran during the Islamic Revolution, providing a nuanced perspective on the complexities of navigating identity and autonomy in a politically charged environment.