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Educated: The Search For Freedom in the Face of Borderlines

Throughout *Educated*, author Tara Westover depicts the struggles associated with living under the strict constraints of a survivalist family in Idaho through the strongly interconnected symbols of transportation and geography. Westover's inability to escape the confines that her family places on her (both literally and metaphorically) is evident through not only their distrust of the medical establishment and the public school system, but also her isolation from the larger human society. In escaping her father's aggressiveness and the restrictive boundaries she was forced to live under, Westover teaches herself to cope through the following ways: educate herself to get the means to pursue higher education at BYU and receive a PhD from Cambridge. Transportation and geography are two interconnected themes present in the memoir, as she distances herself (both figuratively and literally) from her family's ideals and the restrictive orders they place on her in order to pursue higher education. Throughout *Educated*, transportation and geography are used as themes to illustrate Westover's fight for freedom and self control in establishing her desired path, further highlighting the dominant role education plays in her escape from a traumatic and restrictive past.

For me, education means more than our normal routine of sitting in a classroom and listening to a professor lecture through a one hour class. It is being able to transfer what I have learned inside the classroom to a different setting. For me specifically, this has a lot to do with my dual citizenship, as my round trips from New York to Tokyo allowed me the freedom to share the world with those who do not have the same experiences as I do. As my mother and I

start walking around midtown manhattan, touring a japanese supermarket for a box of tea and fresh greens, looking at the newly opened subway station at 2nd avenue, I realized that everyone crossing the busy streets of Times Square, everything I notice, everything that occurs to me, I store inside of me with the sole purpose of sharing it with people in Japan.

My dual citizenship always meant interconnectivity; it not only allowed me to go back and forth as I wished, but it also gave me a new understanding of what it means to be educated. While being educated can mean anything from having the ability to define the main idea of a passage from the middle ages in one sentence, to being able to define the independent and dependent variables of a biology experiment, it can also illustrate the ability to tie two worlds together. As a young child, I always dreamt about walking across the border and hearing Japanese bullet train announcements during a short walk on the Pacific Ocean. I once had a dream that my apartment building in Manhattan was on the same block as my grandmother's house in Tokyo. Although a 36 story building surrounded by skyscrapers and a medium sized country house in the middle of a large vegetable garden on the same block never looked ideal, it came up during my sleep. The next morning, I got up, one vertebra at a time, to realize that it was only a dream and that I will never experience having my two homes on the same block in reality.

When I flew to Tokyo to see my grandmother for the first time in 4 years, the memories I have of teaching her how to say certain words in english stuck with me through the flight back home. I have fond memories of placing my hand on her lap and counting syllables while saying the words "I. am. A. woman." out loud to her. Although her r's sound like w's and she kept forgetting to add the "a" before "woman," her act of repeating those same words until

she could say them correctly gave me assurance that I was doing something right. Educating her. Her words “I. am. A. Woman. This. is. A. pen. ” struck me, as her ability to say even those few words, despite her broken english, taught me how one small act of educating someone could lead to such a milestone in one’s discovery of the english language. When the taxi driver stopped by the front gate, my grandmother ran out with her umbrella, opened the door for us, and took a few steps back. The taxi began to move as she stood by the yellow line and mouthed the words, “welcome back” in Japanese.